

**State, Women and Democracy in Nigeria, 1999-2007**

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## **CERTIFICATION**

This is to certify that this study was carried out by Elijah Oluwaleke, OKE in the Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan under my supervision.

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my pillar: the Almighty God, the giver of life and the source of wisdom and knowledge.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

“From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the Lord’s name is to be praised”. (Psalm 113:3).

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### **List of Abbreviations**

ACN	-	Action Congress of Nigeria
AIDS	-	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AG	-	Action Group
APGA	-	All Progressive Grand Alliance
AU	-	African Union
BLP	-	Better Life Programme
CEDAW-		Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
CGSPS-		Centre for Gender and Social Policy Studies.
CLO	-	Civil Liberty Organization
DAWN-		Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era.
ECA	-	Economic Commission for Africa
FAO	-	Food and Agricultural Organization
FCT	-	Federal Capital Territory
FGM	-	Female Genital Mutilation
FNWS	-	Federation of Nigerian Women's Societies
GAD	-	Gender and Development
HIV	-	Human Immune Deficiency Virus
IDEA	-	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.
IMF	-	International Monetary Fund
ING	-	Interim National Government
JHU	-	John Hopkins University
MDGs	-	Millennium Development Goals
MPs	-	Members of Parliament
NCNC	-	National Convention of Nigerian Citizens
NCNC	-	National Council of Nigeria, and Cameroon.
NEPU	-	Northern Elements Progressive Union
NGOs	-	Non-Governmental Organizations
NORAD-		Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NPC	-	Northern Peoples Congress
NRC	-	National Republic Convention

NYM	-	Nigerian Youth Movement
PR	-	Proportional Representation
SAP	-	Structural Adjustment Programme
SDP	-	Social Democratic Party
SME	-	Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises
SDP	-	Social Democratic Party
SSRHN	-	Social Sciences and Reproductive Health Research Network.
STIs	-	Sexually Transmitted Infections
SWC	-	State of the World Children
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Programme
UNIFEM	-	United Nations Development Fund for Women.
UNO	-	United Nations Organization
USAID	-	United States Agency for International Development.
WACOL	-	Women's Aid Collective
WAD	-	Women and Development
WID	-	Women in Development
WEDO	-	Women Environment and Development Organization.
WORNACO	-	Women Organization for Representation and National Cohesion.
WRAPA	-	Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative.

## ABSTRACT

Studies on the transition from dictatorship to democracy often argue that democracy provides a great opportunity for the advancement of women's political participation. This is premised on the equal participatory opportunity that democracy offers to all adult citizens. However, the extent to which this is borne empirically is yet to be established. This study, therefore, examined the extent to which the Nigerian state, under President Obasanjo, enhanced women political participation. It explored the relationship between democracy and women political participation by investigating the factors that determine women's representation in national government structures such as senior positions in the public sector and political parties.

The study adopted a survey design supplemented with in-depth interviews and key informant interviews. Six hundred copies of a questionnaire, 100 per geo-political zone, were administered to four purposively selected samples of civil servants, politicians, academics, and parliamentarians. Twenty in-depth interviews were held, involving a Senior Special Assistant to the Minister of Education, parliamentarians, staff of the National Assembly, directors in the Federal Ministries of Women's Affairs and Education, academics, politicians. Six key informant interviews were held with leaders of women organizations purposively selected across the six geo-political zones. Library and archival documents, including official government gazettes and reports were the main sources of secondary data. Descriptive statistics and content analysis were used to analyze the data.

The number of women in elective and appointive offices increased from 10 percent in 1999 to 16.6 percent in 2003 and to 26.7 percent in 2007. The ratification of several international conventions on women's rights had raised the awareness of women's rights about productive resources like land and capital as part of fundamental rights. The level of awareness among men and women regarding existing gender gaps in access to power and political positions had become widespread. Majority of male respondents (87.2%) maintained that democracy improved women's political participation, while 50.4% of female respondents believed women's political participation was still weak. Factors affecting women participation were; persistent tradition of male dominance and obstacles placed by religion and culture on the path of women advancement and emancipation. Entrenched culture of political violence, the "winner takes all" electoral system, coupled with increased poverty and economic hardships took a heavier toll on women than men and had dire consequences for women's capacity for political participation.

Female representation in governance though increasing had been constrained by a culture of patriarchy, tense and violent character of political competition. The enlarged space for women participation in politics under democratic rule had not translated into active political participation for many of them. The limitations could be overcome over time with more advocacies by civil society groups, introduction of some form of proportional representation and a sustained programme of civil and political education for both men and women.

**Key words:** State, Democracy, Women participation, Political participation

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background to the study**

As part of the democratization, globalization and development agenda going on across the world, the clamour has been for the empowerment of women and their inclusion in societal administration on equal basis with their male counterparts. All over the world today, the quest by most stakeholders – governments, policy makers, women leaders, women organizations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), etc - has been for gender sensitive policies such that would guarantee equal representation of men and women in government and administration as well as societal issues generally. To this end, most countries have become signatories to many international agreements which are intended to boost the status of women and empower them in all spheres of life.

In the recent past, women all over the world have come into positive focus. This is evident in the active role women are playing particularly in challenging inadequate and unjust public policies (Galligan, 1998:1) that are imposed by society, culture, religion, and sundry constitutional and psychological impediments. Consequently, there has been an inclination (by governments, policy makers, women leaders, women organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), feminist groups and institutions etc) towards role equity, role change and increasing professionalism and involvement of women in government and other public institutions as far back as the 1980s (Lovenduski & Randall 1993:115). The focus is the elimination of inequities resulting from cultural, religious, and social obstacles to the full participation of women in governance and poor quality of life for most people, especially women. The disadvantages suffered by women are so pervasive and universal that the international system, especially through the United Nations Organization has had to specially focus on, and seek to address the problem. To this end, there have been international conferences on women and their interests, such as the one in Beijing (China) in September 1995, to articulate issues of concern to women, and to seek ways of significantly involving them in societal processes such as governance, while also significantly reducing the various forms of disadvantages and oppression suffered by them. Their position of disadvantage has tended to leave their potentials unexplored and restrict the scope of labour, energy, and human resources

available for (national) development. (Bassey – Ekpo & Nkoyo-Toyo 2003; Friedlander 1995; and Williams 1978). In addition, for the success of the development process itself, the need to integrate women within the development framework has been stressed (Boserup, 1970:20). One of the indexes of the progress and development of any nation is said to be the position of women in that society (Oruche, 2004:16). Thus, women represent potent agents for positive change, depending on their condition and the opportunity offered them to actualize their potentials.

The declaration of 1975-85 as the decade for women by the United Nations and the decision to proclaim 1975 the International Women's Year were consequent upon the realization of the poor conditions of women and the need to link national action on women to action at the international level (Pogoso 2004: 176). These international actions became springboards for intensified action at the regional level on women issues. At national levels, committees with representatives from research institutes, trade unions, NGOs and other experts, became actively involved in women issues.

Despite the fact that Nigeria's constitution abhorred inequality and discrimination and that Nigeria is a signatory to different international instruments protecting women's rights as human rights, Nigerian women are still discriminated against in education, employment, and politics and generally in the society (WRAPA, 2000). Consequently, women have been marginalized in nation building. Impediments to women's empowerment exist everywhere, thus denying Nigerian women equal participation and partnership in the social, political, and economic process. Thus, as part of the democratization agenda, women in Nigeria, apart from pursuing assiduously the implementation of the affirmative action, agitate for equity, equality, economic and political empowerment as well as a democratized and conducive environment that would guarantee their equal participation.

The few women in decision-making positions in Nigeria fall short of the 35 percent target now endorsed by the United Nations Economic and Social Council and which the National Policy on Women (NPW) also adopted. According to the policy, the National Assembly shall provide adequate legislation to enable women to participate freely and equally in politics and decision-making. And to this effect, affirmative action of proportionate ratio or 30 percent representation will be employed to increase the total

representation in each of the legislative houses, executive arm, party hierarchy and structures which shall be reserved for women for a trial period up to the year 2010 (NPW, 2000:37).

The policy represents the expression of the government's commitment to the development of all sectors of the population and to the institutionalization of processes that will pilot the Nigerian society towards social equity, justice and a much-improved quality. The National Policy on Women is indeed one of the most direct activities of Chapter 11, Section 17, and Subsection 2 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution, which states that:

“Every citizen shall have equality of rights, obligations, and opportunities before the law” and subsection 3:

All citizens, without discrimination on any group whatsoever, shall have the opportunity for securing adequate means of livelihood, as well as adequate opportunity to secure suitable employment”

While the constitution guarantees equal rights for all citizens regardless of gender, circumstance of birth, etc; the NPW articulates into a coherent whole, all Gender and Development (GAD) policies and programmes and also formulates new policies that will actualize the provisions of the Constitution (NPW, 2000:8).

Addressing the issue of politics and decision-making, the NPW document maintained that women's numerical strength in the population does not reflect in the political life and decision-making processes and structures of the nation. Women inadequate representation at the Senate, the House of Representatives, and State Legislatures are pointers to this. At the State Houses of Assembly and at the Local Government Councils, women are either completely absent or grossly under-represented, as well as at the highest decision making levels (executive, legislature, Judiciary) in the country. There is the need to correct the situation to ensure the full realization of democracy (NPW, 2000:36).

Sequel to the above, in the year 2000, Nigeria adopted and passed into law the National policy on women. The need for the policy as contained in the policy document was:

to fulfill the yearnings as well as (promote) the efforts of Federal, State and Local Governments, Non-Governmental Organizations, International Development Partners, the private sector, concerned corporate bodies and individuals to integrate women fully into national development, in order to remove those gender inequalities that have evolved through structures and processes created by patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism (NPW, 2000:7-8).

The focus of the policy was therefore, to the largest extent, the pursuance of legal equality for women and men and the removal of all obstacles to the social, economic, and political empowerment of women. Page 10 of the policy document, in articulating the goals of the policy, clearly states that it (the policy) draws heavily from national and international initiatives related to Women in Development. To this end, several strategic actions in different sectors sprang up to create women-focused programmes in education, science and technology, health, employment, agriculture, industry, environment, legal space, social services, politics and decision-making and media relations. All these attempted to close gender gaps in the status of women and men in these sectors.

To further consolidate on gender equality and women empowerment and in recognition of the extant National Women's Policy and other sectoral policies to respond to the challenges of gender inequalities and attendant low socio-economic indicators, a National Gender Policy has been developed to replace the women's policy (Ibrahim, 2006: Vii). The goal of the National Gender Policy is to "build a just society devoid of discrimination, harness the full potentials of all social groups regardless of sex or circumstance, promote the enjoyment of fundamental human rights and protect the health, social, economic and political well-being of all citizens in order to achieve equitable rapid economic growth; evolve an evidence-based planning and governance system where human, social, financial and technological resources are efficiently and effectively deployed for sustainable development (NGP, 2006:17).

Some of the key principles of the policy are:

- (a) Commitment to gender mainstreaming as a development approach and tool for achieving the economic reform agenda, evidence based planning, value re-orientation and social transformation;

- (b) Recognition of gender issues as central to and critical to the achievement of national development goals and objectives and a requirement for all policies to be reviewed to reflect gender implications and strategies as contained in the gender policy and implementation modalities specified in the National Gender Strategic Framework;
- (c) Realization that effective and result – focused policy implementation demands a cooperative interaction of all stakeholders; and
- (d) Promotion and protection of human rights, social justice, and equity (NGP, 2006:17).

It is a truism that there is an interface between democracy and active and full women political participation. This is borne out of the ability of advocates within nations to influence policy and the ability of democratic governments to muster sufficient political will that is necessary to address gender inequalities through legislation as well as through the wielding of fiscal and monetary policy instruments. This thesis focuses on the impact of democracy on women political participation with particular reference to Nigeria under the Obasanjo administration. In doing this, the author undertakes a critical and descriptive analysis of the literature on women. The findings there-from would add to the existing literature on the topic and further stimulate research interests in democracy and women political participation.

## **1.2 Statement of the research problem**

Generally, women all over the world represent a social force that has been slow in getting involved in the political process. Involving women in the democratization process entails all of those activities by which people consciously attempt to acquire and wield authoritative power and influence in a society. Such activities include seeking appointment to high political offices, as well as running for elected offices. The achievement of women in any of these areas has been relatively low (King, 1988:163).

This low achievement has negative consequences for development. The political environment occasioned by democracy is expected to accelerate women's political participation and empowerment. However, up till now, one can say that the democratic

environment has remained inclement, to the extent that the much – desired active and full women political participation has been low-keyed.

Mama (2000:28) notes that the constitution and legal status of women and women's participation at all levels of governance have been taken as key indicators of the general level of democracy, usually on the basis that, since women constitute a historically oppressed and marginalized group and at least half of most national populations, their level of political representation and participation is crucial. This is as true of African countries (Nigeria inclusive) as it has been of Western Europe and North America.

In 2003, globally, the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments stand at 15 percent (MDGs 2000). In Nigeria, since independence in 1960, men have dominated strategic decision-making positions in the country. Thus, in Nigeria, as elsewhere, women have experienced discrimination in societal affairs. Only very few women have been part of decision making, as politics was seen as an exclusive preserve of men. From the First Republic to the Fourth Republic, Nigeria did not produce any female president or governor. Thus, there was narrow political space for women in independent Nigeria. At independence, only women in the Southern part of the country, who were enfranchised in 1954, could vote during elections. In the North, the ruling party-Northern Peoples Congress-did not allow women to participate in politics. Northern women such as Hajia Gambo Sawaba and Ladi Shehu who participated in politics under the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) suffered immense persecution, physical assault, were ostracized, labeled prostitutes (Ityavyar D. & Ityavyar N. nd.), in the case of Sawaba, expelled from the city of Kano, and jailed 17 times during her political career. In the South, women voted and their participation helped to push up the votes of Southern Presidential Candidates. A few women contested the election into the House of Representatives even though none won. Two women were appointed to the Senate and in the 1961 regional elections, 3 women were elected into the Eastern House of Assembly (Nna Mba, 1989:71). There was no gender consideration in the appointment of ministers and so no woman got appointment as a in the First Republic (Ityavyar D.2007:8). Expectedly, women participation in the First Republic was minimal. In the Second Republic, women were more clearly visible than they had been in the First

Republic. During the elections that ushered in the civilian administration of President Shehu Shagari in 1979, a handful of women contested at various levels except the presidency and gubernatorial seats of the then 19 states. No woman was elected to the 45-member Senate even though 4 women contested for seats. The Federal House of Representatives with 450 members had only 3 women members and out of 42 seats in the State Houses of Assembly, 5 were women. President Shagari appointed 3 female ministers and 1 woman as Permanent Secretary. At the state level, each governor also appointed at least one female Commissioner into the State Executive Council. The second but short-lived (3 months old) term of President Shagari recorded the election of the first female Senator in Nigeria (Mrs. Franca Afegbua) who was the only female in the 45-member Senate. The military interregnum between 1983 and 1999 did very little at promoting women participation in governance. The persisting patriarchal culture and the state institutions have been blamed for this lopsidedness in public responsibilities (Parpart and Staudt, 1989). However, the democratic government between 1999 and now affords one the opportunity of investigating the impact(s) of democracy on women political participation in Nigeria.

The foregoing analysis depicts women's low participation in Nigerian Politics. Meanwhile, women are of paramount importance in the political process, economic development, and the social life of any nation. It is widely acknowledged that women constitute a key national resource whose ideas, creative solutions, and concerns for cohesiveness of the social fabric can help to improve the quality of life of individuals and society at large (Nkwachukwu, 2003:1).

Since the state possesses the octopoidal power to change the entrenched social norms, customs, and legal institutions that create gender inequalities (World Bank 2001:101), it should be stressed that the Nigerian state has not impacted seriously on the full political participation of women. Despite consenting to numerous international instruments and enshrining the principle of equality of men and women in the national constitution, as well as its commitment to the full implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, the Nigerian Government has failed to aggressively address the forces that inhibit the full political participation of women in all its ramifications.

This thesis therefore seeks to proffer answers to the following questions: What are the problems and prospects for women political participation in Nigeria in this age of democratization and globalization? How far has the current democracy in Nigeria tackled and addressed the issue of women political participation? What implication does the marginalization of women have for the current democratization and development processes in Nigeria? What part does the state play in establishing, sustaining, and changing those systems in which women are oppressed and subordinated to men, such as the family, the labour market, and the educational system? What type of policy environment exists in Nigeria for dealing with the issue of gender inequality and women's subordination in economic and political participation and decision-making and in capital and wealth accumulation? Has there been a sustained and determined state and international support for popularizing a gender perspective in all government policies and programmes? Within the framework of a democratic polity, what does the future hold for women active political participation? The above questions constitute the problematic matters of this study.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The general objective of the study is to examine the level of women political participation in Nigeria with a view to unravelling the democratic impact on such participation. Specifically, the study has three objectives, which are:

To analyze the impact of democracy on women political participation in Nigeria;

To analyze the role(s) of the Nigerian state in engendering gender equality and active women participation in politics; and

To examine the Nigerian government's sensitivity towards implementing domestic and international conventions and agreements on women empowerment.

### **1.4 Scope of the study**

This study covers the period of Nigeria's Fourth Republic under president Olusegun Obasanjo, that is, May 1999 to May 2007. Nevertheless, in course of our analysis, we had cause to refer to situations and events that encompass Nigeria's entire historical experience, pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial. The choice of Obasanjo's

administration is informed by the singular attribute of president Obasanjo as the only Nigerian president (to date) who has had the privilege of leading the country as a military head of state and civilian/elected president. In addition, the administration coincided with the global quest to promote gender equality and empower women through the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs).

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The quest for improved women political participation has gained ascendancy both globally and in (Nigerian) national politics in recent times more than before. Women activists, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as gender-sensitive men are clamouring for full women political participation through their inclusion in national politics as either appointed or elected officials. In Nigeria today, various interest groups advocate women empowerment and the elimination of the culture of patriarchy and other discriminations that put men at a vantage position over women in the society. In response to the above, the Federal Government of Nigeria approved the National Policy on Women as well as the National Gender Policy, which enunciates general gender policy issues for the country. In spite of the plethora of works on women empowerment / gender equity in Nigeria, not everything has been said about the phenomenon. Works of scholars like Okome (2000), Erinsho (2005), Sambo (1991), Williams (2003), Awe (1992), Mba (1992), Mama (1995), and Yusuf (1991) have been quite penetrating but definitely not exhaustive. They have in the main, addressed the problem created by the prevailing social structure(s), without actually analyzing the impact of democracy and democratic structures on their quest for gender equity. For instance, democracy is supposed to be gender neutral; applying to both men and women as equals. Since the Nigerian body polity was for a long period dominated by the military and their acolytes, not much research has been done in this regard. Thus, the clamour for more political participation by women dominated the Nigerian political landscape at the inception of the Fourth Republic with women and other stakeholders strategizing and advocating legislation towards the full participation of women in governance.

In addition, the international community under the aegis of the United Nations is seriously committed to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals

(MDGs). MDGs commit the international community to an expanded vision of development, one that vigorously promotes human development as the key to sustaining social and economic progress in all countries, and recognizes the importance of creating a global partnership for development. It sets out the international development goals to be achieved between year 2000 and 2015. These goals, especially the first three (eradication of extreme poverty and hunger; achievement of universal primary education; and promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women) have direct bearings on women political participation.

The ability of citizens (men and women) to participate equally in electing their leaders and the corresponding duty on the elected to be accountable to the people are essential ingredients to achieving the MDGs. This work is significant, in that it appraises the level of (Nigerian) government's commitment to realizing the goals of the MDGs vis-à-vis promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women. It is believed that women equal participation in decision-making, as part of their empowerment, is not only a demand for simple social justice or democracy, it is essential for achieving transparent and accountable government. This will facilitate development by providing a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society. More so, development can only thrive where government gives every component of the society equal chance of representation.

The study intends to carry out a comprehensive analysis of women's political participation in Nigeria under the Obasanjo Administration (1999 – 2007). Through this, it intends to fill the gap created by previous studies and explores the level of access, presence, and influence of women in Nigerian politics, which the state has facilitated, between 1999 and 2007. This is expected to broaden our understanding of the nature and dimensions of changes in women's political participation in Nigeria.

Furthermore, apart from its utility in adding to existing literature on gender and democracy, findings from the study will also be invaluable to politicians, transition planners, policy makers, implementers, and the state at large by forming a useful document for consultation.

Specifically, the work is a modest contribution to the emerging literature on democracy and women empowerment especially in the area of political participation in

Nigeria. It will also provide data and necessary information, which would be useful for further research in the study of democracy as it affects women political participation and human development generally.

## **1.6 Conceptual Clarifications**

We seek to clarify some concepts of the study from the outset. This is because it makes for better understanding of the concepts used in the study. Consequently, the following terms are defined: state, gender, gender equality, empowerment, political participation, equality, gender discrimination/inequality, gender mainstreaming, democratization, democracy, development, patriarchy, women's movement, and discrimination.

### **The State**

The state is defined as the most inclusive organization, which has formal institutions for regulating the most significant external relationships of the man (and woman) within its scope. It is the basic political unit, a grouping of individuals who are organized in a defined territory for the pursuit of secular common welfare, the maintenance of law and order and the carrying out of external relations with other groups similarly organized (Anifowose, 1999: 85).

In the words of MacIver, when we speak of the state, we mean the organization of which government is the administrative organ. A state has a constitution, a code of laws, a way of setting up its government, and a body of citizens (1966:22).

The original, primary, and immediate end of the state is the maintenance of peace, order, security, and justice among the people who compose it. Secondly, the state must look beyond the needs of the individual as such to the larger collective ends of society – the welfare of the group. It must care for common interests and promote the national progress by doing for society the things which the common interest require, but which cannot be done at all, or done efficiently by individuals acting singly or through voluntary associations (Chaturvedi, 2006: 294). The state includes both the government and the governed. Government is only the machinery through which the purposes of the state are sought to be realized (Appadorai, 1975: 13).

Aristotle believes that the state originated not for the sake of life alone, but also 'for the sake of the best life' (Appadorai, 1975:39). To him, the end of the state is therefore, ethical. Aristotle (Ibid) went further to maintain that:

When the state by its education and laws, written and unwritten, succeeds in evoking and maintaining in vigorous activity a life rich in noble aims and deeds, then and not till then has it fully attained the end for which it exists.

Thus, an ideal state must effectively protect and safeguard the interest of all its citizens. Essential features of a state include territory, population, government, sovereignty, independence, and a sense of nationalism or national identity.

However, over the years, there have been misgivings about the operations and performance of the various organs of the Nigerian state as well as individuals who occupy various positions (Agagu, 2005: 9). Hence, the state has not been able to adequately fulfill its obligations to the citizens just as the citizens have not been able to discharge their duties effectively to the state. According to Ibrahim (2003:45), under successive so-called democratic transition, the authoritarian grip of the state has become firmer and democratic forces as well as civil society have been receiving a very thorough bashing. It is within this context of characterized misgivings and authoritarianism of the Nigerian state that one intends to unravel and analyze the position of (Nigerian) women in political participation and governance.

### **Patriarchy**

This is seen as an integrated system of male dominance. Here, the culturally legitimated authority is predominantly male. In a patriarchal society, power, authority, and control are majorly men. Thus, a patriarchal state is defined as any state or political superstructure that functions mainly in the interests of men. It is that state that maintains or actively supports the oppression of women. In Goldberg's (1979:25) view, patriarchy is "any system of organization (political, economic, industrial, financial, religious or social) in which the overall number of upper position in the hierarchy is occupied by males". According to Hartman (1997:97-120), Patriarchy is a social relations which has a material base and in which there are hierarchical relations between men and solidarity

among them which enable them in turn to dominate women. The material base of patriarchy is men's control over women's labour power. That control is maintained by excluding women from access to necessary economically productive resources and by restricting women's sexuality. Men exercise their control in receiving personal service work from women, in not having to do household or rear children, in having access to women's bodies for sex, and in feeling powerful and being powerful. The crucial elements of patriarchy as we currently experience them are heterosexual marriage, female child rearing and house work, women's economic dependence on men reinforced by arrangements in the labour market, the state, the numerous institutions based on social relations among men- clubs, sports, unions, professions, universities, churches, corporations and armies.

### **Gender**

This refers to socially constructed roles of women and men (girls and boys) ascribed to them based on their sex, whereas the term 'sex' refers to biological and physical characteristics. Gender roles depend on a particular socio-economic, political, and cultural context, and are affected by other factors including age, race, class, and ethnicity. Gender roles are learned, and vary widely within and between cultures. Unlike a person's sex, gender roles can change. Gender roles help to determine women's access to rights, resources, and opportunities (WOMEN, 2000:3). Gender is also seen as a development issue (World Bank, 2001:69); it is socially constructed roles and socially learned behaviours and expectations associated with females and males. Women and men are different biologically but all cultures interpret and elaborate these innate biological differences into a set of social expectations about what behaviours and activities are appropriate, and what rights, resources, and power they possess. While these expectations vary considerably among societies, there are also some striking similarities. For example, nearly all societies give the primary responsibility for the care of infants and young children to women and girls, and that for military service and national defence to men.

Like race, ethnicity, and class, gender is a social category that largely establishes one's life chances, shaping one's participation in society and in the economy (Ibid: 2). Some societies do not experience racial or ethnic divides, but all societies experience

gender asymmetries – differences and disparities – to varying degrees. Often these asymmetries take time to change, but they are far from static. In fact, they can at times change quite rapidly in response to policy and changing socio-economic conditions. According to Pearson (2000:18), gender relations are part of social relations, referring to the ways in which the social categories of men and women, male and female, relate over the whole range of social organizations, not just to interactions between individual men and women in the sphere of personal relationships, or in terms of biological reproduction. In all aspects of social activity, including access to resources for production, rewards or remuneration for work, distribution of consumption, income or goods, exercise of authority and power, and participation in cultural, political, and religious activity, gender is important in establishing people's behaviour and the outcome of any social interaction. As well as institutions between individual men and women, gender relations describe the social meaning of being male and female, and thus what is considered appropriate behaviour or activity for men and women.

### **Gender Equality**

This means equal opportunities for both sexes (male and female). That is opportunities and access to resources for the full realization of all possible potentials of the person, male or female. Gender equality issues need to be addressed from a human rights perspective. This requires removing all legal barriers to women's equality; ending violence against women and eliminating administrative, cultural, social, and economic obstacles to realization of women's rights and economic independence.

The term gender equality is defined in terms of equality under the law, equality of opportunity (including equality of rewards for work and equality in access to human capital and other productive resources that enable opportunity), and equality of voice (the ability to influence and contribute to the development process) (World Bank, 2001:69).

Women's equal participation with men in power and decision-making is part of their fundamental rights to participate in political life and at the core of gender equality and women's empowerment (MDGs, 2000).

### **Gender Inequality/Discrimination**

This refers to societal practices either legally or conventionally that put men (boys) at a vantage position over women (girls). Such practices are reflective in socio-economic and political practices of most societies. A growing body of empirical evidence shows that persistent gender inequalities impose significant costs on societies – on their ability to grow, to reduce poverty and to govern effectively (World Bank, 2001:33).

### **Gender Mainstreaming**

This refers to the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated (UN Economic and Social Council, 1997). It is a goal-oriented process. It recognizes that most institutions consciously and unconsciously serve the interests of men and encourages institutions to adopt a gender perspective in transforming themselves. It promotes the full participation of women in decision-making so that women's needs move from the margins to the centre of development planning and resource allocation (NGP, 2006:124).

### **Women**

The United Nations (1986; 1995) defines women as the Feminine component of the human species who, apart from serving as a vehicle of nurturing human life, are also producers, consumers and an equally endowed agent for fostering a wholesome political, social, and economic development in the society. The participation of women in every aspect of national life is contributing to development. Women's involvement in power sharing and decision-making is a necessary, though not a sufficient condition for the sustenance of the nation's democratic experiment (Dauda, 2004:85).

Women constitute half of the world's population and have contributed significantly to the well being of the human race (Enemuo, 1999:226). In Nigeria as elsewhere, it is said that women have always played five key roles – mother, producer,

home manager, community organizer, and social, cultural, and political activist (UNDP, 1997:9). Despite their large number and crucial functions, the division of roles between the male and female sexes, as prescribed by most cultures, assigns the subordinate position to women. Consequently, women have for long suffered various forms of discrimination, inequality, exclusion, and violence.

### **Empowerment**

The process of empowerment involves transforming the economic, social, psychological, political, and legal circumstances of the currently powerless (Halfani, 1993:2). For women to have a sense of belonging and be able to contribute meaningfully, to governance and development, they should be enhanced and empowered economically, socially and politically. Economic empowerment is about equity, equality in access to and availability of educational and employment opportunities. Political empowerment raises gender considerations on planning and implementation of policies. To strengthen socially is equivalent to specific consideration of women with due regard to their multipurpose roles as wives, mothers and managers (Ogunleye – Adetona, 2003: 211). In the incisive words of Ihovbere, empowerment involves: “a form of socio-economic and political restructuring which removes the locus of power from the current custodians of state power and enables the currently disadvantaged to meet their basic needs, fully participate in decision making and provide opportunities to challenge internal and external oppression (1995:153). It equally refers to the process of ‘conscientisation’, which builds critical analytical skills for individuals to gain self-confidence in order to take control of her or his life. Empowerment of women is an essential process in the transformation of gender relations because it addresses the structural and underlying causes of subordination and discrimination (NGP, 2006:122).

### **Political Participation**

In line with McClosky (1968), political participation is defined as “those voluntary activities by which members of a society share in the selection of rulers and directly or indirectly, the formation of public policy”. Political participation is a civic duty, a sign of political health and the best method of ensuring that one’s private interests

are not neglected and a sine- qua- non of democracy. The cogent activities involved are holding public and party office, being a candidate for office, soliciting party funds, attending a caucus or strategy meetings, contributing time in a campaign. The citizenry (men and women) must participate fully on equal basis in all the activities of political participation before it can be said that they are participating in politics.

### **Democratization and Democracy**

Democratization refers to the process of achieving democracy. Democracy is about a system of government, it is about the establishment of certain institutional and procedural characteristics designed to facilitate mass participation in decision-making process and to guarantee accountability and basic material needs of the people. Generally, democracy involves the opportunity to participate in decision-making in the political process. It repudiates arbitrariness and authoritarianism. It extols the consent of the governed and it protects human personality and values. Democracy includes fundamental recognition of popular sovereignty, equal opportunity for all, majority rule, representativeness, minority rights, right of choice between alternative programmes, popular consultation, consensus on fundamental issues and more essentially, periodic elections. The concept of democracy confers the opportunity to participate in decision on all adult citizens. The citizenry enjoys widespread participation in the political process. Democratization refers to dynamism in the political system that is moving the institutional and procedural feature of such system to the condition of democracy (Mimiko 1995). Democracy is a form of government organized in accordance with the principles of popular sovereignty, political equality, popular consultation, and majority rule (Ranney, 1975:309). The principle of popular sovereignty requires that basic governmental decision-making power be vested in all members of the community and not in any particular person or the ruling class (ibid). The principle of political equality means equal opportunities for all members of the community, not actual equal participation. As long as each member has a genuinely equal opportunity to participate to the degree that he/she wishes and can manage, the requirements of political equality are satisfied. The principle of popular consultation involves two requirements. First, a democratic nation must have some kind of institutional machinery through which public

officials hear what public policies the people wish adopted and enforced. Second, having ascertained the policies preferred by the people, public officials must then put them into effect whether or not they believe them to be wise. The principle of majority rule in a democracy requires that no government decision be made against the ultimate desires of popular majorities. When the people disagree on a particular issue, the government should act on that issue as the large rather than the smaller number desire (ibid). Holden, (1988:5 Cited in Jega, A. M. (2005) defines democracy as a political system in which the whole people, positively or negatively, make and are entitled to make, the basic determining decisions on important matters of public policy. Democracy obtains where the following, considered being the minimum requirements exist:

- (i) Basic freedoms are guaranteed
- (ii) Universal suffrage exists
- (iii) Multiparty system operates
- (iv) Periodic, free and fair elections are held
- (v) Governance is based on the Rule of Law (Ibid)

### **Development**

The word ‘development’ is a multi-phased concept. As a process, development affects all aspects of the life of the individual and the society, be it political, economic or social. Development is people centred; putting human face to human affairs is an important aspect of development. In line with Hobson (1965:289);

... a developed country is one in which the great mass of the inhabitants are able to procure, with moderate toil, what is necessary for living human lives, lives of frugal and assured comfort.

Thus, indicators of such development would be seen in terms of the general material condition of the people, the level to which they have succeeded in reducing the exploitation of man-by-man, the level of popular participation in the socio-economic set up and the level of individual freedom guaranteed in the society.

## **Discrimination**

This refers to a situation of affording different treatments to different persons attributable wholly or mainly to their respective descriptions by race, tribe, place of origin or residence, sex or other local connection, political opinions, colour or creed whereby persons of one such description are subjected to disabilities or restrictions to which persons of another such description are not made subject or are accorded privileges or advantages which are not accorded to persons of another such description. According to the CEDAW document, the term “*discrimination against women*” means:

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 and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field (WACOL 2008:19).

## **Women’s Rights Movement**

This refers to social and political movements that aim to achieve women’s liberation by legislation and by changing people’s attitude. It is an eighteenth century innovation championed by the “feminist” movements to improve the status of women by political action in a number of Western nations. Like most protest movements, the women’s rights movement has no universally agreed list of demands or monolithic dogma. It has its radicals with the belief that “men are incurably hostile and oppressive, and women should have as little to do with them as possible, its moderates with the notion that “women should have the same basic rights and opportunities as men, and right thinking men can and will help women achieve them,” and its conservatives who maintained that “women will and should always be mainly wives and mothers, though perhaps they deserve a somewhat better break politically and socially than they have had” (Ranney, 1975:558).

The women’s movement also has no one dominant organization. Among its leading pressure groups are the National Organization for the Women (NOW), the

Women's Equity Action League, the Women's National Abortion Action Coalition, and the Women's Political Caucus. The prime objectives sought by these and other organizations include: the elimination of all sexual discriminations in employment opportunities, pay, and advancement; liberalized birth-control and abortion laws; expanded children's day-care programmes; liberalized tax deductions for child-care expenses; more women candidates and public office holders; and the repeal of all laws which in any way give women a legal status inferior to men's (Ibid: 560).

Among the most successful women's movement were the "suffragette" movement of the early 1900s, which played major roles in securing women's right to vote in a number of Western nations (the United States, which adopted the women's suffrage (Nineteenth) amendment in 1920, was neither the earliest nor the last to give women the vote. New Zealand did so as early as 1893, Norway in 1913 and Great Britain in 1918. France and Italy, on the other hand, did not adopt women suffrage until 1946, and Switzerland –that model democracy –did not do so until 1971) and the American women's rights (or "women's liberation" or "women's lib") movement of the 1970s (ibid: 559).

### **1.7.0 Methodology and Sources of Data**

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the methodology adopted entails the collection of data through primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained using questionnaires, interview, and Key Informant Interview.

The target group of the study is women. To that extent, women constitute the unit of analysis of the study. However, opinions of men and women as well as women focused Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) across the six geopolitical zones of the country and other relevant bodies were sought in order to have an all-inclusive, representative, comprehensive, and scientific data. This is imperative because in a democratic setting, civil society is pivotal to governance, determining the limits of state action and ensuring that actions are carried out within specified procedures and regulations (Williams, 2000:676).

### **1.7.1 Techniques of Data Collection /Methodological Analysis**

#### **(a) The Quantitative Survey**

The questionnaire contained various information seeking items that relate to democracy, women political participation, and the Nigerian state. A total of fifty two (52) open and close end questions were listed in the questionnaire. The structured (close end) questions were presented in simple statements in order to elicit the required information from the respondents.

The questionnaire itself was divided into three main sections covering bio- data, general questions on the state, democracy, and women political participation in Nigeria, and socio-cultural questions. The first section contained questions, which aimed at eliciting information on the social and economic characteristics of the respondents. These include gender, age, and marital status, level of education, occupation, and religion.

The second section contained questions that dwelt on women and political participation in Nigeria. Here we sought to know the level of women political participation under the Obasanjo presidency. Questions were also asked on the highest position (s) respondents think a woman can attain in politics and governance. We also tried to ascertain the respondents' views on whether they thought that women have been marginalized in Nigerian politics. We did this by seeking to know their views on the continued exclusion of women from the political scene. Furthermore, questions were asked to decipher the effect of democracy on women participation in politics, and to know the impact of the Nigerian state on such participation.

Questions were equally asked on the necessity or otherwise of the 30% affirmative action policy for active and full women political participation, the role of the National Assembly at engendering women political participation as well as that of the civil society.

Finally, the question touched on the societal perception of women politicians, the impact of culture and religion as well as what is needed to get more women to public office (see Appendix A).

## **(b) The Qualitative Survey**

This method has been used not only to complement the other instruments, but also to enable the researcher to have deeper and better information than that provided by the questionnaire. This is further informed by the fact that one of the objectives of this exercise is to unravel the impact of democracy and governmental activities on women political participation. The ability of this method, to elicit information on underlying behaviours, attitudes, and perceptions (Jejeebhoy, 2002; Nwanunobi 2002) has endeared it to social scientists. As noted by Rossman and Rallis (1998), this method enables the researcher to proffer answers to inquiries in the real world. This is because they are able to gather, “what they see, hear, and read from people and places and from events and activities”.

In essence, therefore, qualitative research provides an insight into the meanings of decisions and accompanying actions. It also enables respondents to participate fully in the exercise (Ulin, et al 2002; Shafritz and Roberts, 1994). In the process of using this method, a verbatim report or observation could lead to the retrieval of relevant information which otherwise could be lost using quantitative method. In using this method for this research, however, its pitfalls were noted. These include its lack of a clear and systematic set of guidelines for planning and conducting research (Jejeebhoy, 2002).

In-depth interview (IDI) sessions were conducted for this research project; the essence of this was to enable the researcher to probe deeper on certain questions from the respondents. This method allowed the researcher and the respondents an understanding of the issues as the interview was conducted in a relaxed and comfortable setting (Robin and Rubin, 1995).

### **Interview Schedule**

In-depth interviews were held with a number of women activists /leaders, officials in women governmental organizations, academics and members of the public, women and men politicians, women parliamentarians, Special Assistant to the Minister for Education and other relevant personalities. These people were interviewed on issues related to women’s political participation, the impact of the on-going democracy on

women empowerment in Nigeria, the factor(s) militating against women's political participation, the role(s) of the Nigerian state in engendering gender equality and active women participation in politics, government sensitivity towards implementing domestic and international conventions and agreements on women empowerment and what can be done to combat them and enhance women's participation in the process of governance. The study relied significantly on qualitative analysis of findings (see the Bibliography for the comprehensive list of those interviewed).

### **Key Informant Interview**

The avenues provided by such activities like the celebration of the International Women's Day, International Women's Food Day, Rural Women's Day, Advocacy visits, conferences, public hearings on bills and summits availed the researcher the opportunity to interview key and active members among the participants.

For this exercise, interviews were held with selected women in the six geopolitical zones, relevant individuals, and organizations, with a view to generating discussion and getting their views and opinions on politics, knowing why they are participating or not participating in politics and eliciting information about the impact of the on-going democracy on women empowerment in Nigeria. This enabled the researcher to get firsthand information. In addition, the opinion of some of the selected people who might not be literate enough to fill questionnaires was sought through this medium.

For this project, data were gathered from six women- focused Non-Governmental organizations (NGOs) with one chosen from each of the six geo – political zones in the country. The NGOs with the interviewed leaders and the key informants are as listed below:

**Table 1.1: NGOs with the interviewed leaders and the key informants**

Name/Organization	State	Geo-political zone
Dr. (Mrs.) Lydia Umar, Gender Awareness Trust (GAT). *Mrs. Fatimat Sani	Kaduna	North West
Hajia Ramatu Bala Usman, National Council of Women Society (NCWS). *Mrs. Jancita Magang	Adamawa	North East
Chief (Mrs.) Bisi Ogunleye (O.F.R), Country Women Association of Nigeria (COWAN). *Mrs. Bose Anifowose	Kwara	North Central
Bar. (Mrs.) Akiyode-Afolabi Abiola, Women Advocates Research, and Documentation Centre. *Mrs. Bolaji Oyeniji	Lagos	South West
Bar. (Mrs.) Joy Ezeilo (OON), Women Aid Collective (WACOL). *Bar. (Mrs.) Martina Mamman	Enugu	South East
Mrs. Alice Eyong, Women in Nigeria (WIN). * Mr. Jimoh Ologun	Cross River	South South

\* **Key Informant**

**Source:** Fieldwork conducted in 2007

The organizations fall into the different geo-political zones of the country. They exist purposely to advance, promote, and project women and women related issues.

### 1.7.2 Sampling Method

The study makes use of the non-probability sampling technique, and under this, purposive sampling was employed. The choice of purposive sampling was to ensure that a representative percentage of the population is included in the sample and for the researcher to pick women purposively and not just randomly.

At least one member in six women NGOs that has national spread was interviewed in each of the six geopolitical zones of the country totaling six members in all. This becomes imperative to have representative views and opinions across the zones with respect to women's political participation. Active members of these NGOs were also interviewed as key informants.

Furthermore, within each of the six (6) selected zones, a purposive sampling was done to select 100 respondents. The study surveyed and administered questionnaires on these 100 persons from each of the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. The questionnaire was designed to give insight into the level of women's political participation in Nigeria under the current democratic government headed by President Obasanjo. It also covered some socio-economic and political factors that are believed to be influencing and affecting women's political participation generally. Such demographic variables as age, education, and marital status were given priority before selecting the sampled population. A total of 100 questionnaires were administered on the respondents in the areas as follows:

Table 1.2 Questionnaire Distributed, Retrieved, and Analyzed per zone

Zone	No of Qs Distributed	No of Qs Returned	% Returned	Female	Male	Total	% female total
South West	100	95	95	72	23	95	75.78
South East	100	90	90	60	30	90	66.66
North West	100	89	89	65	24	89	73.03
North Central	100	91	91	70	21	91	76.92
North East	100	93	93	64	29	93	68.81
South South	100	88	88	66	22	88	75.0
Total	600	546	91	397	149	546	72.71

**Source:** Fieldwork conducted in 2007

The above table shows that the survey covered six (6) geo-political zones. One hundred (100) questionnaires were distributed in each of the six (6) zones. It reveals that, of the 600 questionnaires distributed to the respondents, 546 were retrieved, representing a response rate of 91 percent. The total of completed and returned questionnaires is a good representation of the sampled populations. The response is this high consequent

upon the close contact and cordial relationship established with the respondents. For the purpose of analysis however, 546 of the questionnaires made up of 397 and 149 for female and male respectively, were found usable which represents 91%. The gender ratio of 70:30 (female /male) was not attained with regard to the analyzed questionnaire. However, the minimum response for female in the six zones was not less than 65%.

### **Secondary Data**

Secondary data were sourced from relevant documents on women issues, like journals, articles, texts, monographs, United Nations publications, newspapers, magazines, and reports of various conferences and workshops on women. The work also made use of information from the internet.

### **The Study Area(s)**

Utilizing Nigeria as the study area, attention was concentrated on the six geopolitical zones of the country. This enhanced the national spread of the research work. In addition, concentrating attention on six geo-political zones guaranteed fairness and representativeness of the data so-collected by ensuring that all the zones in the country were involved.

### **Data Analysis**

Relying on the Statistical Package for Social Scientists, (SPSS), the study utilized simple statistical analysis such as tabulations, percentages, and figures. Essentially, the strength of the analysis depended on descriptive interpretation, critical argumentation, and narrative report.

#### **1.7.3 Problems Encountered in the Field**

Researchers usually encounter problems in the conduct of research. This arises from the fear of possible outcomes of the study and the use to which it is put thereafter. It becomes more problematic when one embarks on a sensitive issue like gender in a patriarchal society like Nigeria. Gender remains one of the most sensitive areas both in general discourse and research especially in a society that is based on

patriarchal values. Many male respondents are gender biased, to the extent that they hardly listened to any issue that touches on the need for gender parity and equity.

Another problem encountered was that of establishing rapport with the respondents (mostly male) with a view to securing their cooperation. This is against the backdrop that many of them lacked the essence and culture of research to appreciate the significance of the exercise either for them or for the society. Thus, it was not amusing when some of them felt that they were rendering a favour by completing the questionnaires and therefore deserved to be compensated.

There was also the problem of improper handling of the distributed questionnaires. Some of the respondents outrightly lost the ones given to them while some returned theirs mutilated. For those who lost their own and were persuaded to further participate in the exercise, new set of questionnaires were provided. This no doubt affected the time and budget of data collection.

In addition, there was the problem of tracking down the political office holders, especially at the National Assembly, like the Senators, members of the House of Representatives, women ministers, and clerks of the National Assembly etc for either questionnaires administration or interview.

More so, some respondents completed and returned the questionnaires halfway with serious excuses bordering on lack of time. The initial problem of confidentiality during the in-depth interview (IDI) exercise was surmounted through assurances.

By and large, the fact of the researcher's experience in fieldwork came handy in addressing the highlighted problems. The ability to lobby the respondents, and persevere ensured the establishment of the necessary rapport and friendly atmosphere for the conduct of the survey. These actually facilitated good interactions with the respondents thus ensuring that the quality of the data used for this study were reasonably reliable and valid. Moreover, the opportunity offered by public hearing on bill (s) afforded the researcher the opportunity of gaining access to the concerned parliamentarians and in some cases access to these parliamentarians was facilitated by their personal assistants who in most cases were friendly. In addition, the avenues provided by the collaborative opportunity offered by the Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre (WARDC), and Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) Women's fora to

Sensitize and Commit the men aspirants to accord women high recognition and appointment in politics across the six states in the South – West also helped significantly.

### **1.8 Organization of the study**

The study is divided into six chapters. The first chapter introduces the study. It includes background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, justification for the study, methodology, sources of data and organization of the study.

Chapter two contains the theoretical framework and the literature review.

Chapter three gives the historical background to women's political participation and struggle in Nigeria. This chapter discussed and analyzed how women have fared and participated in Nigerian politics in the past.

Chapter four examines the policymaking environment and women political participation in Nigeria.

Chapter five focuses on the state and women political participation in Nigeria under the Obasanjo Presidency (1999-2007). Here data are presented, analyzed, and interpreted. In addition, the findings are discussed.

Finally, chapter six provides a summary of the findings, makes some recommendations and offers some concluding remarks.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.1 Literature Review

This aspect of the study focuses on the views of scholars who have worked around women in societies. This is to enable one situates their views within the context of women and the state, participation in governance, participatory democracy and the status of women in Nigeria. The review begins with views on the state, women, women democracy, and development and it concludes with a discussion of those factors that have contributed to women's low status in most societies.

#### 2.2 The State

The definition of the state has remained controversial. Some scholars deny the existence and/or relevance of state as a social concept (Olson, 1982; Crozier, 1975); others acknowledge the existence of the notion of state but argue that the theory of state has lost its normative and prescriptive values (Cassese, 1986). Nevertheless, a number of writers have made a staunch defence of the concept of the state (Therborn, 1986; Von Beyme, 1986).

According to Osaghae (1989:32), there is virtually no subject that one considers in Africa without emphasizing the role of the state. The state not only leads, it also, in a sense, embodies the society in Africa.

Commenting on the state, Anifowose (1999:85) argues that there is no definition of the state which is acceptable to all men and all purposes. He defines the state as the most inclusive organization which has formal institutions for regulating the most significant external relationships of the men within its scope. The state is seen as the basic political unit, a grouping of individuals who are organized in a defined territory for the pursuit of secular common welfare, the maintenance of law and order and the carrying out of external relations with other groups similarly organized (Ibid).

According to Laski (1967:15), the study of politics "concerns itself with the life of men in relation to organized states". Thus, to study politics is to study the state. Since the

term “the state” is commonly used in everyday political discourse, its nature must be clearly understood if one is to understand the subject matter of political science.

The development of the modern form of the state, as a public power separate from the monarch and the ruled, and constituting the supreme political authority within a defined territory, is associated with the slow institutional differentiation of the “Political” and the “Economic” related to the growth of the centralized absolutist state and the spread of commodity production. Absolutist states arose in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Western Europe under the Tudors in England, the Habsburgs in Spain, and the Bourbons in France. These European dynastic states exhibited many of the institutional features, which characterize modern states. The introduction of a standing army, a centralized bureaucracy, a central taxation system, diplomatic relations with permanent embassies, and the development of the economic doctrine of mercantilism informing state trade policy, all date from this period. It is at this point that the term “the State” is first introduced into political discourse (Mclean & McMillan, 2003:513).

The most influential definition of the modern state is that provided by Weber in *Politics as a Vocation*. Weber emphasizes three aspects of the modern state: its territoriality, its monopoly of the means of physical violence, and its legitimacy. Without social institutions claiming a monopoly of the legitimate use of force within a given territory, Weber argues, a condition of anarchy would quickly ensue. In raising the question of why the dominated obey, Weber draws our attention to a fundamental activity of the state, the attempt to legitimate the structure of domination (Ibid).

A typical African state, which has been variously described as weak, soft, decayed, over-swollen, prebendalistic, patriarchal etc, has also been seen as the only viable existing institution. According to Williams (2000: 663), the African state is in debt and teleguided, yet the state in Africa remains largely unchallenged in the absence of independent organizations outside the control of the state.

In Africa, not much attention was focused on the study of the African State in the early years of independence. However, a generation of neo-Marxist theorists recognized the importance of the State in social analysis and began to highlight it in the early 1980’s. Ake (1985) defined the state as “a specific modality of class domination”. The essential feature of the state is that its system of institutional mechanisms of domination

autonomizes and becomes largely independent of the social classes and groups. The state thus appears even to those it systematically dominates and represses, as “an objective, independent, impersonal and impartial force standing alongside the society” (Eteng, 1998:24). The main function of the state is to “mediate social relations in the society”, and to alleviate conflicts of interests (Engels, 1978). For the state to effectively discharge this task, it must “rise above social contradictions and struggles in the society and appear as an impartial arbiter, always striving for consensus” (Ibeanu, 1999:12).

The literature is replete with various views on the nature of the Nigerian state. The Nigerian state is a colonial creation. Historically, it came into being as a super-imposed and, arguably, over-developed (Alavi, 1972), colonial structure attending to the requirements of British conquest and imperial domination.

As a facilitator of capitalist development processes, the Nigerian state has been both a major owner of the means of production and a stakeholder in several capitalist enterprises (Beckman, 1982). It collaborates with both domestic and foreign capitalist interests in playing this role. As Beckman has noted, sometimes it tends to serve as an agent of imperialism; at other times, it may tend to serve the interest of the domestic bourgeoisie, but at times, it serves the interest of capital in general.

According to Jega (2000:28-29), the role of the post-colonial state in Nigeria has been drastically affected and conditioned by essentially three major factors: its colonial origin; excessive factionalism amongst a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and regionally segmented elite; and prolonged military authoritarian rule. The Nigerian state, which is supposedly patrimonial and prebendal in nature, (Diamond; 1988, Joseph, 1987; and Graf, 1988), is accounted for by these three conditioning factors.

Through the country’s expanded revenue, accruable from oil, and massive public expenditure, the state has effectively established its presence in virtually all aspects of the political economy, especially in critical sectors such as construction, commerce, industry, and banking, and in the delivery of goods and services such as education, health, and social welfare. Access to the state resources has thus become a major avenue for accumulation, especially through contracts, patronage and corruption, or abuse of public office. Under the circumstances, the Nigerian state has assumed the stature of an ideological canopy of power in some fundamental respects, propped up by a relatively

strong technocratic class, bureaucracy, and institutions of law and order. It expanded the horizon of capital accumulation for a nascent capitalist class dependent on the state.

In Nigeria, like in other African countries, the state has failed in its role of mediating the competing needs and interests of social groups and that of providing equal opportunity for all citizens. Because of this, some social categories have tended to overpower, overwhelm, and dominate others in the society (Nkwachukwu, 2003: 5). In some cases, the dominant groups drag the state into the struggle for power by employing state power in perpetrating their hold on power. The inability of African states to perform their mediation function has led to their description as being ‘weak’ (Whaites, 2000; Ake, 1995). A weak state leaves vacuums of power, which are readily and easily filled by the dominant social groups. In the case of Nigeria, the state has been hijacked by dominant gender, ethnic, religious, and other special groups to satisfy specific interests at the expense of less powerful social groups (Ibeanu, 1999; Joseph, 1997, Ekakwe, 1986).

This state of affairs has had a number of consequences for politics and society in Nigeria (Ake, 1995; Ihonvbere, 1989). One of these consequences is that state power is overvalued and security tends to depend only on the acquisition of more and more power. Because of this, politics, which is essentially the struggle for control and use of state power, becomes warfare. Nkwachukwu (Ibid) argues that due to the value attached to state power, there is hardly any restraint on the means of acquiring it, holding it, and using it. Elections and the electoral process are manipulated by the dominant groups in their favour. Because of this situation, political violence and instability become endemic, leading the political class to operate in a state of siege. In these circumstances, disadvantaged groups such as women, who have little power, are usually either denied the opportunity to fully participate in politics or are discouraged by the nature of the political game (Ibid). In addition, interests and aspirations of women hardly feature in the formation of public policies. Thus, the weakness of Nigerian state reinforced the marginalization of women, leading to their loss of access to source of political, economic, and social power (Udegbe, 1998; Mba, 1989).

Due to the near anarchical nature of Nigerian polity and society, women who want to participate in politics usually contend with the political, economic, and social environments that are often unfriendly. Since men are the dominant gender group in the

political arena, the tendency is for them to formulate the rules of the political game and also to define the standards for evaluation. Consequently, men assumed control of the access to political networks and therefore, enjoy more party support than women enjoy.

Nigeria emerged from decades of colonial rule with no well-defined political culture. The ruling elites at independence were anything but cohesive. In their disparate political formations, they nurture a political culture of domination, repression, and kleptocracy. No concrete formular was in place to enact genuine political development that can transform people and society. The ruling elites, instead, were rancorous, cantankerous and belligerent- each trying to outwit another in their desperate bid to cling on to power using ethnic formulars where expedient to secure regional allegiance and support rather than genuine development. In this political ecology, interest articulation, aggregation, and expression were subjected to the vagaries of forces, the result of which was intense politicking that carried violence as its anchor (Aina, 2011:36).

The bottom line is that the “neo-colonialist capitalist character of the Nigerian state” supported by an unbridled accumulation of wealth has produced many distortions- distortion in democratic pluralism, distortion in federalist structure, distortion in electoral guidelines and the sanctity of election outcomes (ibid).

The character of the Nigerian state is seen as the real challenge to women’s demands for equality with men. The argument is that the male-centred patriarchal state permeated the larger values of Nigerian society, in patriarchal context, and as such, must implement the dominant norm of male supremacy. Such norms and values rendered women’s struggle to engender politics an uphill and complicated task, as the “opponents” to the gender agenda tended to be in the most dominant institutions of power (IDEA, 2000: 112). In the emerging democratic situation in Nigeria, the political culture limits and is simultaneously constrained by the dominant state structure, potentially jeopardizing the entire democratic process. (Ibid: 116). Thus the need for an alternative democratic culture, as a means to create a level playing field and enable the effective participation of a plurality of voices, becomes paramount.

The Nigerian state was a colonial creation meant to serve imperialist interests. It emerged as a peripheral, dependent, pseudo-capitalist formation to replicate and consolidate dependent capitalism. The skewed nature of the Nigerian political economy is

linked to the lopsided nature of the global economy where the creditor states and institutions dictate the global agenda. The emergent local governing elite assumed political power to widen the basis of capitalist expansion within the context of peripheral capitalism.

To Ihonvbere (2003:187), the Nigerian state is a failed state, which is precipitated by the continuing crisis of power and governance, the inability to construct hegemony or a national project, and deepening socio-economic crisis. In similar vein, Ihonvbere & Shaw (1999) went further to assert that;

while there have been critical tendencies, coalitions and counter-coalitions within the state and the constituencies of the political elite, the Fundamental and structural character of the state as a violent, privatized, insensitive, unstable, vulnerable, and non-hegemonic force remains intact (Ihonvbere & Shaw 1999).

Ihonvbere (2003: 188), states further that Nigerian politics continues to reflect and carry the stamp of its colonial and neo-colonial experiences as well as the elite that lacks hegemony and a sense of nation. These elite, lacking a strong and viable base in production turn to the state as its primary instrument of primitive accumulation. In this process, the state is mangled and rendered impotent in the quest for nationhood, growth, and development, much less democracy. Interestingly, the state that the political elite hopes to utilize as the weapon for nation-building and for facilitating accumulation has remained unstable, inefficient, ineffective, and incapable of building hegemony. Consequently, the state, privatized by the corrupt elite to substitute for its tenuous relation to productive activities, relies on violence, repression, and other forms of manipulation to reproduce itself and maintain a form of political domination.

Essentially, the post-colonial Nigerian state is patrimonial; a carry-over from colonialism, as it differentiates domestic authority from political authority exercised beyond kinship boundaries and which no longer relies only on relatives but on faithful followers, clients, and patrimonial servants who constitute a veritable staff (Medrard 1991). Clientelism, undoubtedly, encouraged the development of the dominant features of post-independence politics, including factionalism, ethnic politics, and corruption. These features affected, among others, women's wings of parties and women's voluntary organizations. It instituted a system of domination, control and dependence, with the

subordinate clients (women) jostling for the favour of patrons (male political actors) (Ogbonna, 2003:7). The clientelist politics also brought, in its wake, the emergence of a dominant class in the consolidation of the chainlike military incursion in Nigerian politics for close to 16 years unabridged (Dec 31, 1983-May 28, 1999). The state is thus masculinist, militarist and repressive in character.

The character of the Nigerian state continues to be directly responsible for reproducing the country's deepening socio-economic and political contradictions. The state has never been able to build an appreciable degree of confidence among Nigerians, ensure some discipline within the ranks of the elite, manage the economy in the interest of the people, or construct the much-needed platforms of inclusion, tolerance, and participation. As well the state has been captured and privatized by a tiny fraction of the elite that use public institutions and resources to terrorize non-bourgeois communities, abuse human rights, loot public funds, and mortgage the future of the citizenry (Ibid:189). Ihonvbere (Ibid) summed up his analysis of the Nigerian state by his insistence that; "at all levels, economic, political, social, and ideological, even spiritual, the state and its custodians have failed woefully". To him, the plight of marginalized (women inclusive) and minority communities and nationalities all over the country arise from the situation and patterns analyzed above.

Thus, the fierce struggle to capture state power, because of its overbearing influence and importance, coupled with the prevailing culture of patriarchy, further relegated the women into the background, as men were the "heir apparent" to state power at independence. Rather than being democratized, the Nigerian state has largely been militarized by the struggle for power amongst the various contending groups in the polity. The rise of ethnic militias, inter-ethnic clashes, civil disturbances, and politically motivated killings of opponents are pointers to increasing or simmering militarism and a huge question mark on the democratic nature of the Nigerian state. Thus, the Nigerian state has been found culpable for the low status women occupy in the society. According to Rafsanjani (2007: 173);

the continued subversion of democratic tenets, deliberate and conscious exclusion of women through gender discrimination policies, brutal abuse of the rule of law, violations of human rights, official corruption, state sponsored political killings,

insecurity, unemployment, increased poverty, a total collapse of the health services, the collapse of the education system, condescending remarks on oppositions and shameful monumental rigging of elections accounted for this culpability.

In this study, state is used most synonymously with government since government is the agent for state action. It is in this militarized state that women are striving to contribute meaningfully to governance. The examination of their lot globally and in Nigeria constitutes what follows.

### **2.3 Women**

Women through the ages have contributed immensely to the social, political, and economic development of various countries in Africa, Asia, America, Europe and other developed countries of the world. Considerable number of women had in the past two decades participated actively in the political processes of these nations. Consequently, women's participation in politics all over the world is witnessing tremendous increase in leaps and bounds (Omede, 2002:179). In the African continent and other developing countries, however, only a small percentage of women are actively involved in both politics and in the decision-making processes. Women participation in politics in the developing world (Nigeria inclusive) is concentrated mainly in the lower echelons of public administration, political parties, and trade unions. Only very few women occupy top decision-making positions.

According to Omede (Ibid), many reasons abound for low women participation in active politics. Women, who try to succeed in the world of politics discover that the hurdles they have to face whether based on cultural factors such as tradition, societal or institutional barriers like state-imposed legal restrictions and policies, are compounded by the obstacle of their birth, that is, gender discrimination in the overall societal setting. Arguably, the issue of gender is a major factor contributing to women's subordinated position in social, economic, and political endeavours. Thus, the natural physiological and biological differences between the sexes as well as the cultural and religious beliefs have greatly hindered the effective participation of women in politics.

It was not until the United Nations Decade for Women (1975 – 1985) that the women’s questions (issues) started to surface in the political agenda in Nigeria. Various national development plans (before and post-independence), were gender blind, and gave no specific place to gender issues. (Aina, 1998:20). However, in response to the United Nations Decade for Women (1975 – 1985), and the subsequent global awareness drawn to the “woman’s question”, various African governments, International Agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and activists, became concerned with the need to raise the socio-economic status of women through access to functional education, economic opportunities, and health facilities, among others (Ibid).

The reality of the marginalization of women in Africa is definitely beyond contention as it manifests in all facets of social life (Williams, 2000:678). To this end, some fundamental facts about women and the need for gender equality have become established as indisputable facts in recent years to the extent that they have become the main axis of reference in most presentations on women and gender equality. Thus, in the view of the UNDP (1994:31):

In no society are women secured or treated equally to men . Personal insecurity shadows them from cradle to grave. In the household, they are the last to eat. At school, they are the last to be educated. At work, they are the last to be hired. And from childhood through adulthood, they are abused because of their gender.

The Nordic countries; Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Scandinavia with some other countries like Uganda and Rwanda are already committed to achieving gender equality through some feasible measures that could substantially reduce women’s poverty, economic inequality, and gender gap in decision-making. Besides, they have engaged in participatory monitoring and evaluation of their progress towards gender equality at the country level while building into their development assistance projects a strategy to contribute to the accession by all countries without reservation to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (NORAD, 1997).

Essentially, the role and responsibilities of women in almost all societies around the world are subordinated to those of men thus making sex dichotomy a fact of social

life (Zollinger & Smock, 1997:3). The phenomenon of women subordinated role can be attributed to practical, social, and psychological restraints placed on the woman who wants to step outside the traditional role of home making. In addition, other factors such as socialization and stereotyping, institutional and legal barriers as well as male prejudice contribute significantly to the suppression of women's ability to fully realize their political potentials (Omede, op. cit: 182).

The Nigerian woman is born into a culture of male supremacy, as exacerbated in the general preference for a "male child". In the past, this was because, sons were believed to provide more economic support for the parents, while the continuity of the family name, depended on whether or not there is a male child, with permanent residence in the ancestral home. Contrary to this perception, girls leave home at marriage, and subsequently become their husbands' "properties". Thus, it is not unusual for marriages to break down on account of the lack of a male child, while the arrival of the first son strengthens the position of the wife in the family. According to Claristie Achebe (1987), among the Igbos of Eastern Nigeria, a woman who has three boys in quick succession is honoured by her husband by killing a goat to celebrate the feat. On the contrary, the birth of female children in succession leads to anxiety and sometimes shame for the mother. Yet, failing in procreative roles for women, was like a total life failure. Not only will the woman lose prestige formerly accorded her by her marital status, another woman could be brought in to carry on from where she had failed. A Western-world view of women sees women as an appendage (Pilcher 1999), that is a spare tool to be called upon only when required. Consequently, in all societies, distinctions are made between males and females on the belief that both are not equal. Hence, there is a worldwide pattern of division of labour and women are given inferior status and therefore subordinate to men (Chambers 1998).

Recently however, there have been sweeping changes across the globe to reduce the gap between the men and women in the political, social, and economic spheres. More women are taking up paid jobs as well as participating in full time politics and decision-making. Through these processes, women's primary role as home keepers is gradually diminishing while at the same time, women's option outside the home in the areas of education, employment, and politics are widening even further (Patai, 1967:15).

Specifically, the expansion of the role of women outside the confines of the home can be attributed to certain factors, which are the outcome of consistent and well-focused struggle for the political emancipation of women in all aspects of human relationships. Some of the factors contributing to the empowerment of women in general include:

- (i) Worldwide democratic ideals along with economic development.
- (ii) Economic growth and the expansion of government services.
- (iii) Social thinking about sex roles and the concern with the promotion of personal liberation.
- (iv) Trend toward role sharing by husband and wife in modern family system where both spouses earn income for the family (Lockwood, 1974:1)

Omede (op. cit: 183) opined that these factors are not mutually exclusive nor are they all-inclusive yet, they represent attempts to turn inherent disadvantages into concrete and achievable goals.

Thus, today, the level of women's participation in societal affairs has increased tremendously. Issues pertaining to women have taken the front page in recent years. The last three decades, in particular, have witnessed monumental increase in global interest and emphasis of the cause of women (Ariyo 2004). But things have not always been like this. In fact, it can be stated that the current level of women development can be attributed to persistent protestations against the relative low status of women (Albrow 1999). Prior to the early 1960s which can be referred to as a renaissance for women development the world over, the status of women had been subordinated (Pearson, 1995:597-619). Women were at best seen as a helper, a spare item useful only when necessary. In some societies, women are regarded as commodities or property and could therefore be inherited or disposed of (Lloyd 1975; Amadimme, 1987; Cutrufelli, 1983). They were subordinated to men. Women's roles are seen as predominantly those of child rearing and housekeeping (Ofeogbu 1994; Onaeko, 1995; Oganwu and Omotor 2000; SSRHN 2001).

To probe further, this literature review focuses on the following two areas:

- (a) Women in indigenous societies, and
- (b) Women in contemporary societies.

This division affords one a better examination of the roles women have played over time in the various societies across the globe and a discussion of their lot in modern states.

**(a) Women in Indigenous Societies**

Women share similar history all over the world. Sivakami (1997: 21-32), notes that in India's tradition, a woman's place is at home and that her employment outside the home is an aberration and is therefore looked down upon by the society. This is against the belief that a woman's decision to engage in economic activity, away from home can affect the child's health negatively. To the Hindu woman, according to Brijbhushani (1980), her husband is her God, service to him being her highest duty. She caters for his whims, check herself so that he could take pleasure in her, bear his children (naturally preferably sons) and fasts to ensure his health and longevity. She always eats after him and sees that she gets the choicest morsels and the greater portion of whatever the budget allowed. She also joins her husband in death.

European – Christian's culture also portrays women as evil and that she has been tainted with the sins of Eve. They are, in consequence, confined to housework and prayer. They are prevented from teaching religion or to perform baptisms ostensibly not to contaminate the congregation (Leslie and Korman, 1985). Among the Jewish indigenous society, patriarchy subsists such that power and authority are vested in males. Patrilineal descent, patrilineal inheritance, patrilocal residence and primogeniture, symbolize male dominance. Adewale (2004) also notes that women are equated with objects not persons. He goes further to state that:

Women to men are in the category of what the men own like slaves or donkeys or oxen or any other object. It is the same principle that underlines the custom that when a man dies, the wife is to be inherited by the younger siblings as his other properties are.

The woman has no recognition in laws governing inheritance and this underscores the diminished personality of the woman in Jewish society.

Akumadu (1998), referring to the Talmud, representing the exposition of the Jews, remarks that:

... it is written, a daughter is a vain treasure to her father. From anxiety about her, he does not sleep at night during her early years, lest she does not find a husband, when she is married, lest she is childless, and when she is old, lest she practiced witchcraft.

Consequently, the woman is treated as perpetual “minors, under the guardian of her father, her brother, her husband or her husband’s brother” (Boje, 2003). Furthermore, Akintunde (2001) cites Rabbi Eliezer that “teaching one’s daughter the Torah is teaching her lechery”. At the religious level, therefore, Jewish tradition disapproves of women becoming rabbis or lay readers. According to Adewale (2004), the Jewish traditional prayer book contains “a benediction for men in which he would bless the name of God for having not made him a woman”. A version of the benediction, as used by Rabbi Juday ben Elai, situates the women in Jewish culture thus;

... one must utter three doxologies everyday; Praise God that He did not create me a heathen. Praise God that He did not create me a woman. Praise God that He did not create me an illiterate person (Jewett, 1980).

Examining the Greco-Roman society, Adewale (op. cit.) remarks that the situation of women is a little bit better than under the Jews, even though it still exhibits entrenched bias against the women. The difference occurs simply because, as he notes, it is not an overtly patriarchal society. In fact, within the latitude of freedom available, women have “goddesses and priestesses”. Notwithstanding this leverage, women are still treated as second-class citizens. In the words of Adewale (ibid) Plato, a veritable pillar of Western philosophy opines that reincarnated men who are cowards were women in the previous life. This hatred towards and suppression of women culminates in Oepke (1972) noting that “harlots are for our pleasure, concubines (Pallakus) for daily physical use, while wives are to bring up legitimate children and to be faithful stewards in household matters”.

Within Arab countries and Islamic nations, Brijbhushani (1980), remarks that the Qur’an asserts the equality of men and women. He notes that Prophet Mohammad himself placed women in high esteem, as he was cautions of their difficulties. However,

no sooner did he pass on that “the patriarchal quality of Arab society asserted in itself and through various interpretation of the Holy Writ and the negligence to follow its injunctions, “than the rights of women became considerably diluted”. The above represents the subordinate status that have been the lot of women in indigenous societies and on which subsequent actions towards them have been based.

Consequent upon the socialization process, women by their low status are not expected to be visible in political activities. Even where they are to be seen, they are not to be heard. They are to settle to their roles as wives, mothers, and sisters and merely give support to the men (Olaitan, 1998:73-82). This actually points to the fact that the traditional political systems are dominated by men (Fortes and Evans – Pritchard, 1975). Where women wield any semblance of political power, it is consequent upon their relation to the men like chiefs and kings. As noted by Karanja – Diejomaoh and Scott (1988: 34-45), women are ascribed power or authority. This assertion is underlined by Richards (1975:124-151) in his analysis of the Bemba tribe of North Eastern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) when he notes:

Women of the royal line, the mothers, sisters, maternal nieces, and grand daughters of the chiefs are called banamfumu, and are treated with much the same deference, as are the men of the family.

In many African societies, men and women play complimentary roles. In these societies, the family is the basic unit of production. Agriculture and textiles are the main industries where women played indispensable roles. In the textile industry, women are engaged in weaving, spinning, and dyeing of yarn. In agriculture, women are involved in planting and harvesting of farm produce. The woman combines the above roles with those of childbearing and childcare. It must be noted, however, that the fact of complementarity of roles between men and women does not indicate equity of sexes (Aina, 1998:3-30). The degree of inequality between them however varies depending on such factors as ethnic group, social class, location, and history. Aina (Ibid) further notes that men enjoyed greater value and prestige than the women. In actual fact, whatever value a woman had, it was derived from her being both a mother and a wife. According to SSRHN (2001:92-108);

society may not see the woman as having any value, except in terms of her ability to perform her traditional role in the household... males on the other hand are generally referred to as the head of the household or in terms of the position or occupation.

Patriarchy dominates most of the societies and as a system of social stratification based on sex; it provides material advantage to men to the detriment of women on whose path several constraints had been placed. Males dominate females and this often form the basis of gender relations in these societies. In these societies, women are largely ignored during family meetings and their opinions do not count (Oyekanmi, 2000:105-127). The girl is seen as some man's daughter, some man's wife, or some child's mother. She does not have an identity of her own.

Women have been socialized to play a subordinated role to their husband and all other men in the family (SSRHN Ibid). Women are even seen and treated as a factor of agricultural production. They are "procured" to help in farm work under the marriage system of polygyny (Oyekanmi op cit). Aina (op. cit) states that "the number of wives and children a man has was an indication of his success in life". In other words, multiple wives (women) are an index of wealth. Among the *Yoruba* people, the value of women is located in the saying: "*Oko lo lowo ori aya*" (the husband owns the wife). Their general status is also depicted in "*obinrin ki ije kumolu*" (a woman does not symbolize bravery). Ityavyar (1992) notes that a similar situation occurs in traditional Tiv society. Leadership is allocated to men while girls are socialized to believe that one day, they will be exchanged in marriage. The status of women is reflected in the saying "*kwase hemen iyany ga*" (a woman does not lead a battle).

The status of women in traditional Tiv, in North-Central part of Nigeria, is put in more perspective by Tsaaior (2004:3). He dwells into gender politics and naming strategies in Tiv society using oral narratives. According to him, the rite of naming in Tivland has symbolic gender significance. He notes that "naming is cultural just like any name has its cultural essence, matrix meanings, as well as its political concomitants."

All over the world, peoples and cultures are the repertory of names embedded in their values, mores, and worldviews. This universal position is reflected in the view of Daly (1977:42) that:

The power of naming was conferred by God on Adam but not Eve, and in naming the animals, Adam took dominion over them ... woman will remain powerless until they themselves exercise the power of naming.

Individual person's name, therefore, reflects a strategy in instituting power hierarchies in social relations.

Arising from patriarchy and what it represents, Tsaaior (op. cit.) notes that Tiv names belong to the people and that it requires the quality of maleness to confer them on individuals. Women are, thus, portrayed as the source of evil – the arche-typical Eve. He adds that in Tiv tales, women are nameless and as such bear derogative names like *Wantor* (the princess), *ngokwase* (old woman), *chankwase* (poor woman), and *ikomkwase* (barren woman). Thus, women in indigenous Tivland are depicted as “unreliable and irresponsible” as they collude with evil forces to eliminate their enemies, that is, men. Jande (2004) also quotes Abraham (1940) as noting that in Tivland;

wives are the personal property of a man while she is alive and that the members of the village have not the right of promiscuous intercourse with one another's wives ... on the death of the senior, the widow and her family are inherited by the next senior male in the direct line.

Citing Aduba (2002), Jande (Ibid) reiterates that the practice of woman inheritance exists among the Tiv and Idoma of Benue State, the Berom of Plateau State and the Igbo of South-East Nigeria.

Among the Igbo, there is preference for male children and where this occurs in quick succession, a feast is made of it (Achebe, 1987, Amadimue, 1987). Nzekwu and Crowder (1963) tell the story of young Eze who was going back to school and his father, Okonkwo, called him for a piece of advice and said:

You must beat all the boys in any examination you take .... You must take first place always. And if you are stupid enough to let a boy beat you, never, my son, never let the girl, Chinwe, beat you.

Amadimue (op.cit), however, notes an exception among the Igbo peoples. Writing on the Nnobi people of Igboland, she notes that women, using their population, industry, their ambitions, and their independence play important roles in the development of their area. She further asserts that unlike in Europe where male attributes and status referred to

biologically male sex, man and female attribute and status referred to biologically female sex, woman.

As a result, Igbo gender construction is flexible enough to separate gender from biological sex. Hence, daughters could become 'son' and 'males', while daughters and women could become 'husbands' to wives and consequently 'males' to their wives. In view of this, therefore, Amadimue (1987), notes;

In rare cases, women owned land as 'male daughters' when they had been accorded full male status in the absence of a son in order to safeguard their father's obi line of descent and the property associated with it.

She, however, avers that first sons are more advantaged than their younger brothers just as brothers experience superiority over sisters. Sons and 'male daughters' inherit property such as land and trees like kolanut and palm tree. On the other hand, 'daughters have women cloth, certain trees and their mothers' household utensils'. As daughters are regarded as males in relation to wives, it follows that sex contextually does not equate with gender. Amadimue (Ibid) maintains that in spite of contradictions in indigenous Nnobi, gender relations, which is between subjection and autonomy, "subordination of the female did not necessarily result in subjugation".

Among the Hausa of the Northern part of Nigeria, the '*Kulle*' system whereby females are held in seclusion definitely does not provide the platform for the female to discover themselves. Since they are not free to mix with people (especially men), considered strange, women are constrained from embarking on activities outside their homes but are rather restricted to the confines of their homes. Aina (1998) notes that the "Hausa culture of '*Kunya*' (modesty and shyness) encourages that girls remain shy and obedient. Thus, young girls are married out to older men without questions". This practice of seclusion, therefore, gives men an advantage over women outside the home (CGSPS, 1998). She is the custodian of the values of the society (Aina, 1998:3). Even when women show the capacity to participate in and contribute to economic development, they are inhibited by various factors including capital, access to land and control over their own resources.

Generally, therefore, women's lack of autonomy in the indigenous societies means that they wield little or no political power. Men occupy the most prestigious political positions as traditional rulers like Obas, Emirs, and Chiefs. However, woman presence in the political scenes for instance, in Yorubaland, is symbolized by the position and status of the Iyalode. Incumbents are usually powerful politically and through then women's adequate representations are guaranteed (Aina, 1998: 3-30). There is also the institution of Iyaloja. As the head of the market women, the Iyaloja is highly regarded as she is expected to fight for the political and economic rights of women.

Aina (Ibid) further reveals that though indirectly, some women title-holders exercise political influence in the politics of their communities. Such title-holders are the *Iya-aafi*. This is usually occupied by the most senior wife of the king and she functions as head of palace administration. There are also *Ayabas* – wives of the king and the *Iya-Oba* – the reigning king's mother. Aina (Ibid) also reports that among the Edo of Southern Nigeria, there is the Queen mother, while the Nupes of North Central Nigeria have the *Sagi* and the *Sonya*. Royal princesses also exist among the Kanuri in Borno area of Nigeria. All these have some influence on local governance and politics of these indigenous societies.

Among the Nnobi society in Igbo land, Amadimue (1987) discloses that the unique flexible gender system allowed certain categories of women to play male role through such practices of *nhanye* (male – daughters) and *igba ohu* (female husbands). Through these institutions, women were elevated to favourable positions necessary for them to acquire wealth and formal political power and authority. For instance, the 'male-daughters' could break the kolanut, which was of much political significance. Nnobi women also exercise 'structural and formal power' through the '*agba ekwe*' woman, who is the symbol of womanhood derived from the worship of the goddess.

Furthermore, the tangible form of education existing in the traditional societies was the socialization process which succeeded in "educating" women to the extent that they are to submit to the authority of men (Adefolaju 2005: 27). In Yorubaland, male children are trained to become independent from an early stage and this prepares them for the future leadership roles expected of them in their households and families. On the other hand, female children's training is geared towards becoming good housewives and

mothers. In the words of Adeleke (1990: 36-37) “we had all been brought up to believe that a woman’s place was in the home and in that sense, she was supposed to be married, have children and stay at home and look after the children”.

The woman is therefore expected to portray such feminine peculiarities as gentleness, decency, kindness, and patience. She is also to be proficient in childcare, cooking, and other wifely talents (Akor, 2004). As she is born into a culture of male dominance, the indigenous woman is orientated into the culture of female subordination. This is to her spouse and other males in her own family orientation as well as all members (male and female) of her husband’s family (Aina op. cit.). Ironically, “the function of socializing children fell squarely on women” (Onimode, 1988: 46 – 58).

Even the missionary schools gave more preference to men than women in educational matters (Karanja – Diejomaoh and Scott 1988: 34-45), little preferences was however given to women to do soft courses like nursing and teaching. Also, since women in the traditional societies wielded little political power, it is apparent that they could not have had a high jural status. Women were in most cases excluded from inheritance and succession (Ibid.) Yakubu (1998:33) states that women were even regarded as part and parcel of societal beings. The issue of women inheriting property or succeeding someone did not arise, as they were actually themselves, properties to be inherited (Adefolaju op. cit.).

The distribution of property rights is the origin of male-child preference. The need to preserve family property is embedded in the system of patriarchy. Hence, inheritance rules and customs are in favour of male children to the detriment of female children (Jegade 1998). This position is, however, moderated by a flexible gender system among the Igbo as revealed by Amadimue (1987).

It can therefore be concluded that women in the indigenous societies were discriminated against and subjugated to men though some were very active in the administration of their various societies. Thus, the indigenous practices served as the harbinger of the prevailing marginalized status of women, it is this marginalized status that attracts global attention.

**(b) Women in Contemporary Societies**

According to Williams (2003:271), until recently, the 'Woman Question' was largely ignored not only in studies of developing areas but also of developed areas. As an "added-on" in extant literature, the focus is on 'women' or 'females'. Thus, the 'Woman Question' has made the transition from merely being 'personal' to become 'political' (Adamson et al. 1988). Kate Millet explains the phrase 'the personal is political' as the most intimate human relationship' (Millet 1969). She underscores the fact that it is collective action in political arena and not individual action in each person's private life" (Adamson et. al. 1988:201, Millet 1969, cited in Gibbins, 1994:19, 21). Williams (1999) insists that 'the realization and acceptance of the woman as an important variable in development in Africa is a recent phenomenon'. She stresses that the pervasive underdevelopment in Africa affects men and women differently. Invariably, it is often worse for African women because they 'are among the most deprived and marginalized of all groups' (Emeagwali, 1995).

Jane Papart (1996) documents the gradual shift in the focus of the international community to the 'Woman Question' by citing that liberal feminist embraced 'Women in Development', WID, that focuses on 'equity' between men and women and the NGOs popularized school of thought 'Women and Development' WAD, that aims at helping women achieve self-reliance free from capitalist, elite and male control and domination as the harbingers of the contemporary women movement.

The mobilizing and sensitization activities of both WID and WAD finally drew the attention of the United Nations Organisation, UNO, which declared 1975-1985 the decade for women. They were concerned about the formulation of more adequate approaches to the study of women, particularly, African women and their issues (Williams, 2003:271).

Nonetheless, Feminists from the South conscious of their own unique needs, formed their own group called 'Development Alternatives with Women for a new Era, (DAWN). DAWN stressed the need to listen and to learn from women's experiences and knowledge. It was committed to breaking the structures of inequality between genders, classes, and nations. DAWN also worked within the ambit of modernization and cultural diversities in the Third World. The Nairobi conference of 1985 led to the emergence of

another approach by feminists of both North and South called Gender and Development, (GAD). GAD understands the problem of women in the global context of class, race, and gender inequalities. Therefore, it concentrates on social construction of gender roles and relations and their transformation (Ibid).

According to Williams (Ibid.), amidst these activities, patriarchy, a commonly employed term in the feminist literature on development, was jettisoned for the concept 'gender' because of its inclusiveness under the guise that patriarchy has abated with development. However, in line with Sylvia Walby (1996: 19-33), patriarchy historically has not abated "as a central organizing principle of societies and social relations". "If," she contends, "systematically structured gender inequality" is a key element of the definition of patriarchy" then it is not eliminated. It merely changes form as women move from one socio-economic and political system to another.

Thus, in the contemporary societies, patriarchy still subsists and has been maintained and sustained by "cultures, customs, religion, mores, norms and values" of diverse ethnic groups (Centre for Gender and Social Policy Studies (CGSPS), 1998). It still also survives through gender stereotyping of the work of males and females. This has subsequently led to unequal gender division of labour. The persistence of inequality between men and women is located in folklore and literature, which have formed the basis for social construction of gender. As noted by CGSPS (Ibid), feminists have illustrated how these processes have been detrimental to women's images and self-esteem in the society. It stresses, "socio-cultural beliefs shape attitudes and determine the nature of traditional practices that determine or enhance the welfare of women".

Within this system, men's dual roles both as custodians of the lineage interests and provider for the family inadvertently make their wives and children to be dependent on them for their needs (Feyisetan, Oyediran and Ishola, 2000:201-224). These beliefs, theories, philosophies, convictions, attitudes, etc., have in very subtle ways, shaped daily living. These values that entrench the practices are transmitted from one generation to the other, well internalized, and therefore, become permanent. These beliefs have survived and still thrive consequent upon their acceptance by the society. CGSPS (1998) believes that "Community elders, opinion leaders, ordinary men and women" subscribe

to these socio-cultural beliefs. Proverbs, myths or folklores become the references points to validate the continuation and perpetuation of these negative practices.

Different traditions and culture can be projected as responsible for the varied influence on women and their reactions to their subjugation. Invariably also, patriarchy has been held responsible for Nigerian women's continued subjugation (Williams, 2003:275). Westernization, indirect rule and quasi-federalism, generated diverse reactions from women to colonial policies within their own locale. This explains the misconceived acquiescence of Nigerian women to their 'subjugation'. Williams (1998), explores the different forms of subjugation among Nigerian women and the 'Woman Question' in Nigeria and submits that though it could be suggested that some pervasiveness and uniformity existed in Nigerian women's subjugation, some peculiarities were also evident. Some scholars also imputed religion as responsible for the stark differences among Nigerian women. Others held Western influence or its absence as responsible for the differences. Adesina Sambo, (1991: 52-53), attributes politics to the 'Woman Question' and argues that, it requires 'political strategy' as solution. He elaborates:

The various explanations for the low status of women in our society have political undertones.... In a male – dominated society, power resides with men and too often, they promote policies which effect and reinforce the subordination of women. As the superstructure of society, whatever happens in the political subsystem has consequences for other subsystems such as the economy. What is implied by this characterization of politics is that any attempt at altering the subordinate condition of women must begin and end with the political game of grappling and exercising it.

Williams (op.cit.) ascribes the political passivity of Northern Nigerian women not merely to the practice of 'Patriarchal Islam' but to the way the powers that be, manipulated that tenets of Islam to enhance men's inherent desire to subjugate women (Al-Hibri, 1982). It is instructive that in the non-Islamic areas of Northern Nigeria, women have more freedom than their counterparts do in the Islamic areas. Williams also compares the position of northern Muslim women with their counterparts in Western Nigeria. According to her, the Southern Muslim women seemed to display more freedom

than the former. Yet, when the attitude of Northern Christian women to public affairs was evaluated against those of their Southern Counterparts, some comparability exists in their reservations to public affairs like their Muslim counterparts. Thus, Southern women, both Christian and Muslims, were considered more 'brazen' politically than northern women were. Southern Nigerian women rejected colonial policies that impinged on their traditional roles and freedoms. When southern women discerned the collusion between the colonial and indigenous males against them, they embarked on protracted protest, otherwise known as "women's wars" in 1929 and 1948 respectively (Mba, 1992: 73-88 and Awe 1992: v-xi, 1-9). No similar protests occurred in the North though they experienced similar discriminations.

The overall observation is that as far back as 1976 when Nigerian women's political participation was permitted, the envisaged uhuru never became real, and neither did it boost their stance. Women's political involvement is still ad hoc, piecemeal, and opportunistic (Williams op. cit: 276).

Some observers have also attributed the failure of women to make the desired political impact on several issues. These include cultural, religious, corruptive elements of politics, counterproductive mass media and the inability of women to rise above their powerlessness as barriers and, women's poor educational status (Yusuf 1991: 62-65, Sambo 1991:52-59). One basic reason advanced for Nigerian women's failure at the various polls was education. According to Williams (op. cit), illiteracy still looms large among women, not only in Nigeria, but also in the whole of Africa. Education (formal) especially that of women and girl-child has been identified as a major impediment to the realization of the goal of gender equity. The literature attests to the supremacy of men/male gender over that of women/female gender in education (Awe, 1992; Nicholson, 1987; UNO; 1995; Sani 2001; Ajayi, 2005, Austin et al, 2000). Female access to education in Nigeria remains lower than male access as is clearly demonstrated in the statistics. The Primary school enrolment statistics for 2006: shows that 55.9% of enrolments were boys and only 44.1% were girls. In secondary schools, the breakdown is boys 55.45% and girls 44.55%. At the level of tertiary institutions, only 39.70% of graduates from universities are female and the percentage of female polytechnic graduates is lower still at 37.54%. The school dropout rate also remains consistently

higher for females than males. Literacy rate for adult men is 74.6% while for adult women, it is 56.8%. Secondary school completion rate for girls is 44%, while that of boys is 75% (WACOL 2008:43-44). In addition, this remains the 'critical mass' for the emancipation of women in Africa.

The level of women's participation in governance, alongside the constitutional and legal status of women, is generally taken as significant indicators of the general level of democracy in a society (Mama 1995). As the antithesis of democracy, the existence of prolonged military rule in Nigeria has been characterized by an extreme marginalization of women in governance (Mba 1989). Whilst the Babangida and Abacha regimes adopted highly instrumentalist and tokenistic approaches to the problems faced by women, the regimes were also characterized by increasingly personalized forms of rule, desperate bid to cling to power as well as deeply repressive and barbaric methods of eliminating dissent (Pereira, 2003:292). There is a substantive body of literature on the military and militarism in Africa but scant attention is paid to the analysis of gender dynamics or the position of women, whether within or in relation to military agencies and regimes (Luckham 1994, Falola et al. 1994; Gofwen 1993).

Nina Mba's (1989) overview of women and the military state in Nigeria addresses the question of whether women's participation in government and their access to political power is increased or decreased under military rule. She asks further whether military government alters the legal and administrative systems in ways that enhance or diminish the status of women. Mba concludes that women were marginally represented, if at all, in the bureaucratic centralism characteristic of militarized states. Such centralism greatly increased the power of the central federal government in relation to state governments and society, and generally served to alienate government from the people.

Thus, women have generally not been recognized as political agents except in the case of a few outstanding individuals (Mba 1982; Shawulu 1990). Women have been most often visible in a 'supportive' capacity; as cooks, cleaners, dancers and entertainers, and mobilizers of other women to turn out as voters for male candidates contesting elections (Pereira 2003: 304). Pereira (Ibid) went further to assert that even when women's groups and networks have formed with the aim of representing the interests of specific female constituencies... there is no guarantee that their interests will not be

subsumed under the interests of politically dominant groupings of men in the course of struggles around identity politics (Imam, 1991).

Preferring solution for effective and equitable participation of women in public life, Pereira (Ibid) advocates a fundamental restructuring of existing gender divisions of labour. In her words, such restructuring should be in the direction of greater egalitarianism, and would therefore require men taking on greater day-to-day responsibility for child rearing, care of other family members and the upkeep of the home. Here the state is highly pivotal, as she possesses the octopoidal power to decide happenings within the system / polity.

Historically, women play triple roles in every society, which are the reproductive, productive and the community socio-political responsibilities (Awopegba, 2004:472)

The reproductive work of childbearing and rearing guarantees the maintenance and reproduction of the labour force. It includes not only biological reproduction but also the care and maintenance of the workforce. Although biological reproduction refers rigidly to the bearing of children by the women, the term reproduction of labour extends further to the care, socialization, and maintenance of individual through out their lives to ensure the continuation of society to the future generation. This role is otherwise known as 'physical reproduction' or 'human reproduction'. These concepts differ from the 'social reproduction', which is described as the production and maintenance of the wage labour force as well as the reproduction of social capital itself. A crucial issue about the reproductive role of women is that because it is viewed as natural work as different from those of employed labour. It is therefore invisible or taken for granted.

The productive work of women refers to work done for which wages are paid in cash or in kind. Women work as agricultural labourers, independent farmers, and wage or salary earners in other sectors of the economy. According to Andrew Natsios, USAID Administrator, it is the contributions that women make to the economic, social and political lives of their nation, communities, and families and the next generation that constitute the key factors in effective development. More than 800million women, according to him are economically active worldwide in agriculture, small and micro enterprise and, increasingly, in the export processing industries that drive mobilization. In addition, over 70 percent of these women are said to be living in the developing regions

of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Furthermore, women's unemployment rates were considered to be much higher than those of men and when employed, earn less than men for same work. Hence, women constitute 60 percent of the rural poor (Natsios, 2003). There are still widespread limitations faced by women in the performance of their roles worldwide and particularly in developing economies. Women are still not accorded equal opportunities to contribute toward development since political leadership positions are still largely occupied by men.

Gender division of labour has structured work relations such that women work on subsistence food production while men produce cash crops in a typical traditional agricultural community (Awopegba op. cit.). In case where women have access to land or own land, they work as independent farmers and also make contributions as unpaid farm labour in household farms owned by their husbands or male members of the household. They also contribute to farm labour in terms of hoeing, weeding and harvesting to earn extra income to supplement family income. However, the modern sector employment tends to reduce the nature of women's job in the primary sector. However, the majority of women are still in the rural and informal sector while 60 percent of them constitute rural poor. As observed by Shoetan (2002:5) and Olawoye (2002:7), women's reproductive work limits their time and income while subsidizing men's work. Since production and reproduction are inter-woven in the daily lives of African women, it increases the burden and physical stress on women who have to produce and procreate (Davison, 1988:23 and Olawoye, 2002:7).

Women's role in the community refers to the role performed by women in the community to provide and maintain scarce resources in the area of water supply, health care, and education. It is often regarded as the voluntary unpaid work done during free time. Community managing is provided free of charge by women and usually do not increase their visibility (Soetan, 2002). Women have been noted for their ability to mobilize to meet not only the individual consumption needs at the household level but also those of a collective nature at the neighbourhood or community level. Thus, women consider community participation an important responsibility.

As observed by the Mc Auley Institute (1999), women's respectful relationship with community members provides the foundation for community participation. The

sense of personal commitment of women leaders in the community makes them not to place barriers between their personal lives and their community work. The study also revealed that women leaders see their communities as women-and-child-centred, designing their goals and programmes in response to the expressed needs of their clients and their own perceptions of the community needs. Their broad view of community development integrates economic and social needs both at the community level and at the individual level (McAuley Institute, 1999).

However, empowering women is increasingly being recognized as a precondition for and as an indicator of the level of success in the attainment of sustainable human development. It is also being accepted that 'women's rights are human rights'. Much of the current discourse on the status of women and strategies for uplifting their conditions has employed the term gender and its derivatives. Thus, there is now more concern about the need to upgrade the level of gender awareness in society, for policy-makers to become gender sensitive, for social scientists to employ gender constructs, for the political process to be genderised, etc (Enemuo, 1999:226).

#### **2.4 Democracy, Women, and Development**

Women's ability to actively shape political processes at the national and local levels and better participate in politics is predicated on the existence of democratic institutions and a stable political environment. However, over the past few years there has been an increasing recognition that in conflict situations characterized by instability and weak application of the rule of law, women's participation in peace processes is essential to ensure their long-term success (African Report 2006: i). Since politics is about conflict and conflict resolution and democracy can only thrive in a peaceful milieu, women have assumed a fundamental role in democratic governance.

Thus in the modern world, the term democracy has assumed a vantage position over all other forms of government, and has been so universally attractive that most nations could claim it as a label to be attached to its name. Hence, an overtly despotic regime still laid claim to being democratic. However, majority of views tend to see democracy from its popular participation perspective from which the power to vote and to enthrone a government flows.

Part of the attraction of democracy lies in the refusal to accept in principle any conception of the political good other than that generated by 'the people' themselves. From the pursuit of elements of popular sovereignty in early self-governing republics to the diverse struggles to achieve a genuinely universal franchise in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, advocates of greater accountability in public life have sought to establish satisfactory means for authorizing and controlling political decisions. Democracy has been championed as a mechanism that bestows legitimacy on political decisions when they adhere to proper principles, rules and mechanisms of participation, representation, and accountability. In the East European revolutions, the principles of self-determination and consent to government action have again challenged the principle of 'single person' or in these particular cases 'single party' rule (Held 1996: 297). Democracy has been re-celebrated as a way of containing the powers of the state, of mediating among competing individual and collective projects, and of rendering key political decisions accountable (Oke, 2006: 1). In political circumstances constructed by a plurality of identities, cultural forms and interests, each perhaps, articulating different perspective regimes, democracy is seen, to offer basis for tolerating and negotiating differences.

The ideals of democracy is sustained and internationalized by the citizenry through the process of democratization that has become a global phenomenon. The collapse of authoritarian socialist system and the emergence of numerous democracies since the 1980s have intensified the quest for researchers to explain democratization and to evaluate its prospects (Vanhanen, 1986: 11).

In the words of Finer (1971: 62), no political term has been so subjected to contradictory operationalization as democracy since it has become fashionable for regimes and states to claim to be democratic. Harvey and Harvey (1989: 269) opined that democracy means much more than the issue of "one man one vote". They believe it involves among others, "settling affairs according to known rules of government, toleration towards minority views, regular elections, freedom of speech and above all, observance of rule of law". Thus, Harvey and Harvey saw democracy as an ideology as well as politics. In line with this, Obasanjo and Mabogunje (1992: 1-2) submitted that; ideologically, democracy is the philosophy of governance which places a high premium

on the basic freedom or fundamental human rights of the citizens, the rule of law, the right to property, the free flow of information and the right of choice between alternative political positions. Politically, it is concerned with the institutions, processes and procedures of governance elicited towards consensus building.

Another useful definition, which also agrees with the above positions, is that given by Larry Diamond; Juan Linz, and Seymour Lipset (1989: xvi). According to these authors, democracy is a system of government that meets three essential conditions;

Meaningful and extensive competition among individuals and organized groups (especially political parties) for all effective positions of governmental power at regular intervals and excluding the use of force; a highly inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies, at least through regular free, fair and peaceful elections such that no major (adult) social group is excluded and a high level of civil and political liberties – freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom to form and join organizations sufficient to ensure the integrity of political competition and participation.

There is no doubt that the strength of this definition derives from its focus on the generic phenomena of competition, participation, and liberty rather than the specific institutional expression of democracy. Here the authors did not specify any constitutional configuration or condition to have democracy. Democracy is assumed as a universal phenomenon.

Philippe Schmitter and Terry Karl (1991) have offered another dimension to the concept of democracy, they define democracy in process oriented, and action oriented contexts. From study of the past decade of democracy and democratization, the two scholars point out that democracy is the word that resonates in people's mind and spring from their lips as they struggle for freedom and better way of life. They argue that a lot of research on democratization therefore favours a procedure or minimalist conception of democracy over a substantive or maximalist conception embracing economic equality and social justice (Ibid). Though they recognize that there are many types of democracy, it is believed that a specific form of democracy takes its contingent upon a country's socio-economic condition as well as its entrenched state structures and policy practices.

Generally, democracy involves the opportunity to participate in decision-making in the political process. It repudiates arbitrariness and authoritarianism. It extols the consent of the governed and it protects human personality and values (Ake, 1991). Democracy, whether liberal or African or modern includes fundamental recognition of popular sovereignty, equal opportunity for all, majority rule, representativeness, minority rights, right of choice between alternative programmes, popular consultation, consensus on fundamental issues and more essentially, periodic elections. The concept of democracy confers the opportunity to participate in decision by all adult citizens. The citizenry enjoys widespread participation in the political process. Democracy is seen as the people's rule, for themselves and by themselves. It follows then that both sexes should be engaged in rulership (Simbine, 2003:142).

Democracy thrives on participation and inclusion, the nature of which is important to people's appreciation of the ideal of democracy (International IDEA, 2000: 120).

Osaghae (1999) stated some recursive elements to be present in democratic regime. These are:

- Pluralism and multi-partyism including free and fair competitive politics in which opposition parties have a realistic chance of coming to power and relatively autonomous civil society,
- Popular participation in the political process including in the main universal suffrage and free choice by the people of those to govern them, provided those elected remain accountable and can be voted out if they no longer enjoy the people's support,
- Rule of law, respect for human rights and the equality of access of all citizens and groups to state power and resources (which does not, however exclude policies designed to enhance the access of members of disadvantaged and marginalized groups) and;
- Constitutional or respect for the 'rules of the game', which includes civil control of the military and the efficacy of representative, judicial and oversight institutions.

Derivably, the participatory opportunity offered the citizenry in the choice and selection through periodic election of credible representatives confers inestimable avenue for psychological self-satisfaction and self-fulfillment. Democracy also assures the citizenry's overt expression of public opinion, the freedom of speech and association. Finer (op. cit: 63) believes that the free expression of opinion implies some opportunity and machinery for making that opinion known and it is a kind of suffrage, some kind of a voice or vote.

From the foregoing, it is clear that democracy does not favour inequality and discrimination in all its ramifications. Thus, democracy is all about equality of equals. Hence, the notion of gender discrimination and inequality is incongruous to democracy and consequently development.

Only through vigilant struggle, can a country secure, anchor, and deepen democracy. The following indications or benchmarks of performance are seen as a sine-qua-non in the journey to a consolidated constitutional democracy:

- A successful and transparent fight against corruption;
- Poverty reduction;
- Economic performance;
- Security;
- Provision of physical infrastructure;
- Gender equality;
- Ethnic, religious and regional harmony;
- Strategy to facilitate citizen participation in governance processes and to encourage strategic thinking, a national outlook, patience and tolerance among the elite;
- Innovative management of civil-military relations to foster military subordination to civil authority (IDEA, 2000: 15).

In Nigeria today, the level of democratic governance is a very important aspect of the political system and it makes a difference from the perspective of people living under a particular political system. The difference is that, it is the duty of the democratic government to take care of and serve the interest of the majority of the people in the

endless struggle for survival, whereas by nature, autocratic systems seek to serve the interest of the few. This difference is an inevitable consequence of the fact that all those who have power tend to use it for their advantage. Power is shared by many in a democracy and used for the advantage of many. This is the reason why subjugated and common people living under autocratic systems dreams of democracy or something like it and why they start to struggle for power and democracy as soon as they are able to challenge their leaders (Vanhanen, 1986: iii).

The need for democracy as a system of government is very crucial and important. This is because a fully 'democratized' country will enjoy a high level of development that is very important to any nation. Most countries, which are not democratized today, still go through many problems because there is the absence of freedom, equality, and participation, which are very important for the smooth running of any state. The retardation of democracy occasioned by the prolonged military rule in Nigeria and the imperative of a good life and dignity of the many that democracy guarantees enhances the quest for it. It is in this quest that the struggle for gender equality, increased women political participation, and general women empowerment are situated.

In the words of Nnoli (1994: 3), most countries and people in Africa have predicated their struggle for democracy on the desirability rather than feasibility of democracy. They capitalize on the link between development and democracy, as well as the intrinsic goodness of democratic values. With respect to the link between development and democracy, it is well known that unless there is peace development is not possible. On the other hand, peace cannot be sustained without democracy, which ensures the full liberation of the creative energies of individuals and groups in all facets of the life of the society. Such liberation presupposes the enjoyment of certain rights such as the right to work, food, education, health services, and freedom of speech, assembly, movement, privacy, and participation in the decision process that affects one's life. In the absence of these values the individual becomes alienated from society, withdraws legitimacy from governmental authority and the people cannot be fully committed to the creation of new values on the basis of collective of ethos, tolerance, trust, consensus, patriotism, and loyalty to governmental authority. One direct consequence of this is armed resistance and eventual civil war or other forms of sociopolitical instability, which

also shatter the peace of the country. In addition, without such peace development is not possible (Ibid).

For any nation to realize the noble idea of democracy with its emphasis on participation, competition and liberty of the people, there is need for the promotion of gender equality. Any democratization process will be incomplete without the active involvement and participation of the two sexes. Notwithstanding how the society perceives women, no matter the societal constraints, if politically educated, financially strong and aware of their environment and rights, their level of political efficacy can be enhanced. As was aptly observed and summed up by participants at the forum on “women in politics” (*Newswatch*, 2000:18):

The concept of democracy will only assume true and dynamic significance when political parties and national legislations are decided upon jointly by men and women with equitable regards for the interests and aptitudes of both halves of the population. Changes in fundamental, and long-lasting political orientations of women can only occur through sustained self-consciousness, the imbibing of new orientations, as well as radical change in societal gender-biased traditional, cultural beliefs and stereotypes.

In spite of the rich elaboration of prescriptions for sustainable democracy, very little attention has been paid to the potential roles of women in the subject of democracy in Africa (Nigeria inclusive). The low profile of women in the subject of democracy and good governance reflects the sexist bias in the study of politics (Olojede, 1999:243).

Women participation in governance at every level can be taken as an index of the level of democracy in a country since women often constitute a significant proportion of the population of most countries (Ibid). In many African countries, available evidence shows that the participation of women in democratic governance has been generally low. In liberal democracies, political parties, legislative assemblies and executive councils, are vital sources of decision-making, among other power centres. Political parties in particular provide the citizens with the opportunity of participating in the management of a country's affairs, and constitute a major platform for selecting and promoting candidates for elections. They also provide avenue for mass mobilization and provision of political leadership for the nation. Political parties also organize and share power in parliament as well as influence the decisions of government and other executive bodies.

Since the emergence of indigenous political leadership in 1960, Nigerian women have remained invisible in the party system. Women were grossly under-represented in party membership as well as in decision-making organs. The marginal showing of women in political parties has made it difficult for a visible women party constituency to emerge or develop (Ibid).

Thus, today, democracy is in tandem with the observance of human rights. This observance may take a variety of forms. Hence, Linz notes that we consider a government democratic if it provides regular constitutional opportunities for peaceful competition for political power to different groups without excluding any significant sector of the population by force (Linz, 1964: 295; Hermet, 1991: 252). According to Dahl (1987: 167), modern democratic regimes are distinguished by the existence, legality, and legitimacy of a variety of organizations and associations that are relatively independent in relation to the government and to one another. Therefore, democracy not only implies institutions guaranteeing freedom of political choice, they also require the pre-existence of social interests that can be represented.

A democratic regime may be viewed as a political system, which grants to all its citizens the regular and constitutional possibility of replacing the government, by peaceful means if they decide to do so by a sufficient majority. It enables them to avail themselves of non-violent, freely established parties and associations of their choice, with none debarred, with a view to playing their roles as citizens, and which allows them in practice to enjoy fully all the commonly accepted civil rights, safeguarded by legal guarantees written into a body of law that has higher authority than the government and is submitted in the event of complaints to a judicial organ independent of the government (Nnoli, 1994: 5). From this perspective, democracy cannot exist if a public sphere or political society (civil society) is not recognized (Hermet, op. cit: 255). Democracy is a product of the sweat, toil, creativity, blood, and sacrifice of millions of people across the space and time of human kind in the struggle of peoples for a better life. Its advancement can only be result of further successes in this struggle, with successes in one part of the globe affecting those in other areas (Nnoli, op. cit: 6)

Nigeria's long history in democratic project is designed to culminate in popular elections that will lead to popular government. However, this has not been so. Thus, the character of the state has implications for democracy and who exercises its powers.

The political economy of electoral contest in Nigeria cannot be divorced from the political economy of the Nigerian state itself. The political economy of the state is one that rests squarely on opportunism, conflicts, and parochial interests. It is one that capitalizes on impoverished population for significant political action or behaviour. Supported by the presence of hero worship, the political society is almost decidedly mindless, surrendering sometimes as it were, to ethnic jingoism and religious bigotry- all pointers to the violent nature and character of political contest in Nigeria (Aina, 2011:36).

Gender equality is inextricably tied to democracy. Both gender and democracy underscore the fundamental values of equality, equity, freedom, and well-being of persons. Given free as well as proper articulation, democracy and gender equality free the individual man and woman from the shackles of unwholesome customary and traditional values, observances, and practices. These factors encroach on the individual man and woman's inalienable rights and opportunities for participation in the political and social processes of their society as well as on their capacity to develop to full potentials (Ogbuagu, 2000:5).

Gender differences are created and sustained by society through its traditions, customs, conventions, mores, and regulations. In the words of Udegbe, the gender notions about male and female include traditional stereotypes that characterize women as submissive, illogical, passive, talkative, emotional, easily moved to tears, etc. Men, on the other hand, are assumed competent, logical, and independent. These stereotypes tend to reflect men and women as belonging to opposite ends of bipolar adjectives in which men have desirable qualities while women have undesirable ones. Societal norms and stereotypes also function as a traditional ideology that relegates women to housewife roles while promoting men as actors, providers, and final authority (Udegbe, 1998; 3-4).

Gender inequalities undermine the effectiveness of development policies in fundamental ways. Yet this is an issue that often lies only at the periphery of policy dialogue and decision-making, both in national and international arenas. Part of the neglect comes from policy-makers' 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 real (or feigned) ignorance about the nature of gender disparities and the costs of those disparities to people's well-being and countries' prospects for development (King & Mason, 2001: xiii).

Scholars have stressed the need for women empowerment and of integrating them within the development process itself. They have pointed out a situation where development efforts failed because women were not considered such as the Gambia irrigation project in the 1970s (Dey1982, Carney1988), wheat production in North-West Bangladesh, (F. A. O., 1984) etc.

Thus, in no region of the developing world are women equal to men in legal, social, and economic rights. Gender gaps are widespread in access to and control of resources, in economic opportunities, in power, and political voice. Women and girls bear the largest and most direct costs of these inequalities – but the costs cut more broadly across society, ultimately harming everyone (World Bank, 2001:1).

For the above reasons, gender equality is seen as a core development issue – a development objective in its own right. It strengthens countries abilities to grow, to reduce poverty, and to govern effectively. Promoting gender equality is thus an important part of a development strategy that seeks to enable all people – women and men alike – to escape poverty and improve their standard of living (Ibid). This is in tandem with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) developed at the United Nations Millennium Summit in year 2000. These are developmental goals that commit the international community to an expanded vision of development, one that vigorously promotes human development as the key to sustaining social and economic progress in all countries. The goals have been commonly accepted as a framework for measuring development progress with a target year of 2015 for evaluation of achievement. Specifically, Goal 3 seeks to promote gender equality and empower women: eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and to all levels of education by 2015. The goals have the following targets:

Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, improve maternal health, achieve universal primary education, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, promote gender equality and empower women, ensure environmental sustainability, reduce child mortality and develop a global partnership for development (MDGs, 2000).

According to the World Bank (Ibid), economic development opens many avenues for increasing gender equality in the long run. To the institution, a considerable body of evidence around the world supports this assertion. Nevertheless, growth alone will not deliver the desired results. Also needed are an institutional environment that provides equal rights and opportunities for women and men and policy measures that address persistent inequalities.

The World Bank (2001:1-2) report argues for a three-part strategy for promoting gender equality viz:

- Reform institutions to establish equal rights and opportunities for women and men. Reforming legal and economic institutions is necessary to establish a foundation of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men.
- Foster economic development to strengthen incentives for more equal resources and participation. Rising income and falling poverty levels tend to reduce gender disparities in education, health, and nutrition. Higher productivity and new job opportunities often reduce gender inequalities in employment. Moreover, investment in basic water, energy, and transportation infrastructure help reduce gender disparities in workloads.
- Take active measures to redress persistent disparities in command over resources and political voice. Because institutional reforms and economic development may not be sufficient – or forthcoming – active measures are needed to redress persistent gender disparities in the short to medium term.

Despite improvement in the absolute status of women and in gender equality in most developing countries, significant gender inequalities in rights, resources, and voice persists in all developing countries and in many areas the progress has been slow and uneven (Ibid: 4). In no region (of the world) do women and men have equal social,

economic, and legal rights. In a number of countries, women still lack independent rights to own land, manage property, conduct business, or even travel without their husband's consent. In much of sub-Saharan Africa, women obtain land rights chiefly through their husband as long as the marriage endures, and they often lose these rights when they are divorced or widowed. Gender disparities in rights constrain the sets of choices available to women in many aspects of life-often profoundly limiting their ability to participate in or benefit from development (World Bank 2001:1-2).

In terms of resources, women continue to have systematically poorer command over a range of productive resources, including education, land, information, and financial resources. In South Asia, women have only about half as many years of schooling as men, on average, and girls' enrolment rates at the secondary level are still only two-thirds of boys. Many women cannot own land, and those who do generally command smaller landholdings than men do. In addition, in most developing regions female-run enterprises tend to be undercapitalized, having poorer access to machinery, fertilizer, extension information, and credit than male-run enterprises. According to the World Bank (2001) report, such disparities, whether in education or other productive resources, hurt women's ability to participate in development and to contribute to higher living standards for their families. Those disparities also translate into greater risk and vulnerability in the face of personal or family crises, in old age, and during economic shocks.

Limited access to resources and weaker ability to generate income – whether in self-employed activities or in wage employment – constrain women's power to influence resource allocation and investment decisions in the home. Unequal rights and poor socio-economic status relative to men also limit their ability to influence decisions in their communities and at the national level. Women remain vastly underrepresented in national and local assemblies, accounting for less than 10 percent of the seats in parliament, on average (except in East Asia where the figure is 18-19 percent) and in no developing region do women hold more than 8 percent of ministerial positions.

Gender inequalities persist among both the rich and the poor, but they are often greatest among the poor, particularly for household investments in education and health (Ibid: 61). Similar patterns also emerge when comparing poor and non-poor countries.

While gender equality in education and health has increased noticeably over the past 30 years in today's low-income countries, disparities between females and males in school enrolments are still greater in those countries than in middle-income and high-income countries. Moreover, despite the links between economic development and gender equality, women's representation in parliaments remains minimal. A few low-income countries, such as China and Uganda, have made special efforts to open parliamentary seats to women, achieving levels of female representation even higher than those in high-income countries do. They demonstrate the potential impact of a social mandate for gender equality (World Bank 2001: 7).

The relationship between poverty and gender inequality can differ significantly across countries as well as across dimensions of inequality, and higher incomes do not always imply greater equality in every dimension. In some contexts, specific forms of gender disparity confer status on the family. In some societies, for example, the higher a family's socioeconomic status, the greater the investment in female modesty and seclusion – symbols of that status (Chen, 1995). Nonetheless, there is a strong association between poverty and gender disparities in basic education and health that are critical to girls' and boys' ability to participate in development and to attain a basic quality of life (Ibid: 63). This realization must have informed the commitment of the global community to eradicating poverty through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Though policy-makers often treat gender issues largely as women's issues, a substantial body of evidence now indicates that the costs and consequences of gender inequality are much broader – that gender is a development issue (Ibid: 69). For example, when low investments in female education translate into poorer health and nutritional practices by mothers, all children felt the effects. This can have significant impacts on the health, well-being, and productivity of an entire generation. And when gender discrimination or social norms that restrict women's activities prevent large segments of the female population from participating fully and productively in society – whether in the economy or in community or national affairs – then a great deal of a country's talent, skill, and energy remains untapped. This again can have important consequences for countries' capacities to generate economic growth, to reduce poverty, and to govern effectively.

Gender inequalities undermine development – so improving gender equality has to be part of any sustainable strategy for development. Inequalities in rights, resources, and political voice generally disadvantage women, but they also disadvantage the rest of society and impede development. The costs of gender inequality are particularly large in low-income countries and within countries, they are larger for the poor (Ibid: 73). In the view of World Bank, societies with large, persistent gender inequalities pay the price of more poverty, more malnutrition, more illness, and more deprivations of other kinds.

The toll on human lives is a toll on development – since improving the quality of people’s lives is development’s ultimate goal. In addition, gender inequalities impose an indirect cost by hindering productivity, efficiency, and economic progress. By hampering the accumulation of human capital through prejudice in the home and the labour market – and by systematically excluding women or men from access to resources, public services, and certain productive activities, gender discrimination diminishes an economy’s capacity to prosper and provide for its people (Ibid).

Finally, gender inequality weakens the quality of governance in a country—and thus the effectiveness of development policies.

Findings from the World Bank (Ibid: 86), show that in the formal wage sector two phenomena reveal gender discrimination in the labour market—around the world women’s earnings are on average lower than men’s and women and men are on average occupationally segregated. These reflect several biases:

- More investment in the human capital of sons than of daughters.
- Employers with discriminatory preferences about whom to hire or pay well.
- Sexual harassment in the workplace that makes working conditions unpleasant and dangerous and reduces worker morale and productivity.
- Women’s dominant role in raising children and maintaining the household.
- Social and religious norms that restrict women’s ability to choose to work outside the home and to choose among kinds of work.
- Labour laws and legislation intended to protect women against occupational hazard that keep them out of certain jobs instead.

All these biases imply that norms and prejudice rather than efficiency determine the labour supply and labour demand in an economy. The resulting misallocation of labour means that some competent female workers are overlooked because of their sex.

According to Enemu (op.cit), gender bias against women manifested in the following areas: economic exploitation and impoverishment; the vital contributions which women make to the economies of all human societies are very often unrecognized, unrewarded and constantly entail arduous exertions. For instance, women are not paid for their housework and family labour and their role in the informal economic sector tends to be ignored in the computation of the gross national product, GNP. It has been noted, with respect to the rural women, that they, 'bear excessive burden in fetching and carrying water and wood for fuel, in hoeing and weeding, harvesting, transporting, storing and food processing ... (they) are the most disadvantaged people in the world. They undertake three-quarters of all agricultural work in addition to their domestic responsibilities (UNDP, 1997:61-62). Even when women secure employment in the formal sector, they have to contend with the challenge of balancing their family responsibilities with their official duties and with other covert and overt acts of discrimination and sexual harassment (Enemu op. cit).

Studies have indicated that women suffer poverty on a more widespread basis than men, and that their experience of poverty is quite different because of expectations about gender roles. Thus, the term 'feminization of poverty' is sometimes used to denote the propositions that more women are likely to experience poverty as poverty levels increase, that women stand a greater risk of poverty than men and that there are specific impact of poverty on women (Alcook 1993:122).

The present economic recession in Nigeria has been having its toll on the average individual. The global economic recession has further pauperized the women. It has heightened their level of poverty. The effects have been diverse, extensive, and saddening. Poverty and hunger have contributed significantly to extensive breakdown in social order, resulting in vices such as robbery, internet crimes (a.k.a 419), Niger Delta crisis, hard drug business, corruption at various levels, criminal vices; kidnapping and assassinations, examination malpractices, suicide, prostitution and murder (Aderibigbe, 2011:10). Thus the hitherto feminization of poverty has been worsened to the extent that

it is now far from exaggeration to equate women with poverty. Gender inequalities play a key role in the persistent poverty levels of women in Nigeria (Oke 2010:81). According to the *African Economic Outlook* (African Development Bank-AfDB, 2009), the prevailing global economic crisis has seriously affected African economies with GDP growth falling by more than half from a projected 5.7% to 2.8% in 2009. The report indicates that the crisis has diminished consistent economic growth recorded by many African countries (Nigeria inclusive) in the past five years. It predicts that due to the recession, the continent can expect only 2.8 % growth in 2009, less than half of the 5.7% expected before the crisis (Moyo 2010:38). Under this situation, women are mainly affected.

Underscoring the impact of the global economic recession on women, the United Nations hosted a conference on the status of women. Addressing the conference, U. N. Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs Sha Zukang (2009:50) opined that, “historically, economic recessions have placed a disproportionate burden on women”. He contended that women are more likely to be in vulnerable jobs, to be underemployed or without a job, lack social protection, and to have limited access to and control over economic and financial resources. Findings revealed that since the economic meltdown, more married women, than before, now go for abortion to secure good jobs and to better manage the hardship of the economic meltdown (Oyetimi and Olurounbi, 2009:52).

Moreover, the economic crunch has affected the education of the female gender drastically. This has combined with the age long practice of gender discrimination in child education to relegate the female gender to the background of educational attainment in Nigeria. The tendency, especially among the illiterate and semi-literate parents, is to withdraw their female children from school in preference for the male ones. This is capable of increasing the prevailing social gaps between men and women thereby increasing the number of disempowered women. Couple with this is that the economic realities now dictate the career choice as well as the course(s) of study embarked upon by women. Women are apt to taking up courses with low duration and cost (Imonkhuede, 2009:52).

Furthermore, the World Bank in a report on the effects of global economic crisis on women affirmed that the current challenge combined with food price increases would

have a serious consequence for women in poor countries and their children. The bank listed some of the likely impacts to include higher infant mortality, more girls being pulled out of school, and women's income drastically reduced. The study identified 34 developing countries where women and girls in poor households are particularly vulnerable to the effects of the global economic and food crisis. Fifteen of these, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa, are likely to see both low female schooling and high infant and child deaths as well as slowing economic growth, making women's and girls' situation, especially precarious (Iroegbu, 2009:19).

Overall, it has been estimated that "women constitute 70 percent of the world's 1.2 billion poor (Okagbue, 1996:336). The economic plight of women has worsened greatly in countries that adopted the Structural Adjustment Programme, SAP, fostered by the International Monetary Fund, IMF, and the World Bank. According to the report of a commonwealth study group, it was women in these adjusting countries who have had to 'find extra work to supplement family incomes ... who have re-arranged family budgets; switching to cheaper foods ... (and) who have been most severely affected by cuts in health and educational facilities and by rising morbidity and deaths among their children' (Soetan in Enemu op. cit). Since SAP heralded inflation, it curtails women's purchasing power and thereby reduces their capacity for capital accumulation and wealth generation. This scenario hampered their (women) political participation in a monetized democracy like Nigeria.

The essence of the Structural Adjustment Programme in Nigeria is a market-based exchange rate and trade liberalization that upholds removal of import bans, development of a new tariff schedule and implementation of policies to encourage export growth. Specifically, Taiwo (1997:84) summarizes the elements of the SAP as follows:

- The adoption of tight fiscal and monetary policies to rationalize public expenditures and to reduce inflationary pressures.
- The adoption of a market-determined exchange rate policy with exchange rate controls dismantled.
- The liberalization of the trade regime through various policy instruments.
- Financial sector reforms.

- Privatization and commercialization of public enterprises and the abolition of marketing boards.

In the words of Taiwo the effects of SAP from a gender perspective are monumental. It worsens the economic condition of the country and that of the women. The rate of unemployment continues to plummet as government drastically pegs public-sector employment. Less than 3 percent of female graduates in Nigeria could find jobs in the formal sector (Ibid). The private sector is not better than the public service in terms of providing employment opportunities for people during the SAP period. This sector has been faced with multiple challenges occasioned by its peculiar structure in response to the SAP policies. These policies have had a negative impact on manufacturer's level of productivity as companies have had to operate within low levels of capacity utilization 30-35 percent in manufacturing. The implication of this for the level of employment was drastically retrenchment.

The gains recorded increasing awareness towards female education has therefore been lost in terms of lack of employment opportunities. The ensuring result is that the unemployed, especially women, are expected to seek alternative employment opportunities in the informal sector, which is ill-equipped to accommodate them. The industrial policy within SAP sought to promote employment through the small-and medium-scale enterprises (SME) sector, yet the definition employed cuts off majority of women who operate at lower scales from possible assistance (Ibid).

The poor enabling environment in the informal sector does not offer much attraction for women to engage in self-employment enterprises. This therefore leads to the high incidence of crimes in the society. Women's rate of participation in crimes is now on the increase. Unlike in the pre-SAP period, women are now more prominent in drug trafficking, armed robbery, cultism, etc. Women's historical subservient status in crimes has been replaced by their actual involvement in hard crimes.

The phenomenal increase in the incidence of criminality and range of criminal offences among women has been adduced, in part, to the economic crisis (Ibid). Underscoring the impact of the global economic recession on women, the United Nations hosted a conference on the status of women. Addressing the conference, U.N. Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs Sha Zukang (2009:50) opined that,

“...historically, economic recessions have placed a disproportionate burden on women”. Another strategy being adopted by women to stem the tide of unemployment is to engage in commercial sex work (CSW). This phenomenon is now on the increase in major cities, truck stops, and oil-producing areas not minding the grave consequences of such action. The trend emerging is that most of them take to this occupation because of their inability to get alternative employment.

SAP promoted and encouraged inflation, which reflected in low purchasing power and weak effective demand occasioned by fall in real wages. In view of this, expenditure as well as activity patterns will have to shift. Considering women’s role in social reproduction, literature has proved that in such situations, women experience a disproportionate burden in terms of workload, time use patterns, consumption and expenditure patterns. Elson (1991) succinctly demonstrated the likely effects of economic signals on women. In her words:

If the price of a crop falls far enough, it may be uprooted, or left to rot; if there is insufficient demand for a manufactured good, the factory is closed and machinery mothballed, sold off second-hand or scrapped. Nevertheless, if the demand for labour falls, if unemployment rises, and wages fall, mothers do not ‘scrap’ their children or leave them to rot intended.

Elson concluded that human resources have an intrinsic, not merely instrumental value. Therefore, the success of macro-economic policy goals may be won at the cost of a harder and longer working day for many women. When mothers get pushed to the wall, some of them resort to extreme abnormalities such as child abandonment or murder (*Daily Times*, November 21, 1988. p.3).

According to Akanji (1997:101), against the general backdrop of “getting the price right”, several implications of SAP in the agricultural sector were induced by the instrumental fiscal and monetary policies. Price Deregulation led to substantial reduction in input subsidies. This, in turn, led to a rise in cost of all critical inputs such as fertilizers, agricultural tools, and services. Interest Rate Deregulation led to a heightened cost of capital and inaccessibility of formal-sector loans to agricultural practitioners due to the prevailing price-cost squeeze and the attendant repayment considerations.

The fallouts for women in farming households and women farmers came, on one hand, from enhanced agricultural prices and, on the other, from incremental farm wages. The rise in price of food commodities led to loss of livelihood for many erstwhile women farmers, as men reclaimed food croplands (Ibid: 102). In many farming systems, women's on-farm roles were de-emphasized. Labour-use efficiency was called for which saw an inflow of skilled male labour into export crop production. Women's labour was retained to less specialized domains while there was greater demand on their conjugal and other filial roles in agricultural labour, greatly affecting their productivity in own-account farms (Ibid). Thus, in agriculture, which is the single largest employer of labour in Nigeria, women face numerous challenges within the sector, including lack of control over land, capital and even their own labour. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, women own only 10% of land in Nigeria<sup>1</sup>. Generally, because of their restricted access to land, female farmers find it more difficult to undertake commercial scale farming, a situation that has a severe impact on widows.

The table below gives an indication of the economic activities undertaken by men and by women. It is striking that men have over twice the level of purchasing power as women and have far more access to disposable properties.

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<sup>1</sup> "National Gender Profile of Nigeria", An Assessment Submitted to UNIFEM, For The United Nations Systems in Nigeria, by Professor Jadesola Akande, LL.B (Hons); Ph.D; OFR (Consultant) And Tyoor, F. M Terhemba, Ph. D; FIAMN, August, 2007.

**Table 2.1: Gender Disparity in Core Development Indicators**

<b>Gender Stratification within the Overall Nigerian Economy and Private Sector</b>		
<b>Development Issue/Sector</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
Below Poverty Line	35%	65%
Purchasing Power	\$1,495	\$614
Federal Civil Service	76%	24%
Management Staff	86%	14%
Medical Doctors	82.50%	17.50%
Informal Sector	13%	87%
Industrial Sector	30%	11%
Land Ownership	90%	10%
Agricultural Work	30%	70%
Animal Husbandry	50%	50%
Food Processing	10%	90%
Marketing Inputs	40%	60%
Properties Disposable at Will	95%	5%

*Source: National Bureau of Statistics – CWIQ, 2006*

Most critically, SAP has given insufficient attention to the social cost of adjustment, especially the short-and medium-term impact on the poor and other vulnerable groups especially women (ECA, 1989). Consequently, over the past several years, poverty has increased in a number of states in Nigeria. Because of low income earning capacities, a substantial number of women and young girls resort to transactional sex. This has profound implications for the health of the women and young girls and has helped to fuel the spread of HIV/AIDS and STIs in the country (WACOL 2008:55). The World Bank acknowledged the eroded power of women in market oriented production and their sweat as a safety net for household food security (Guttinger, 1990). Thus, although many women diversified into cash-crop production, their gains were short-changed due to the falling real value of farm income vis-à-vis their increasing need for household food provisioning.

Another manifestation of gender bias against women as opined by Enemuo (op. cit) is in the area of discriminatory laws and customs. Societal customs and practices are such that subjugate women to men and undermine their self-esteem. In Nigeria for

instance, the cultures of Nigerian communities approve such practices as preference for the male child, payment of bride price, female circumcision, or female genital mutilation, FGM, negative attitude towards childlessness, degrading widowhood practices and inheritance practices that discriminate against women. The traditions of some communities also approve giving away girls in marriage early and without their consent (Obasanjo & Mabogunje, 1991:44).

The negative cultural norms are such that have engendered very low regard for women, entrenched a feeling of inferiority in the individual woman and place her at a disadvantage in relation to her male counterpart. The widespread preference for the male child means, in part, that families often prefer to send the boy to school and not the girl since she is expected to stay at home to help nurture her siblings and to be married off soon. The resultant effect of this is the higher level of illiteracy among women. Girls given out early in marriage do not only have their education aborted but are additionally exposed to early pregnancies and the attendant consequences.

Another area of bias against women is in the area of exclusion from public life. Given that most women command very limited economic resources and that the prevailing cultural norms see their place as being in the home, it is not surprising that women are grossly underrepresented in public life and decision-making positions in most modern states. Indeed, it has been estimated that women make up less than five percent of the world's heads of state (Osinulu, 1996:315). In the case of Nigeria, the situation is considered worse. According to Udegbe (1998:13), the representation of women in positions of leadership in the three tiers of government in Nigeria in the last three decades has been low, 'hovering around 2%. She notes further, that appointment of women into political offices has been 'characterized and motivated by tokenism' and that women in positions of authority 'find themselves working in groups that are in essence predominantly male', thereby aggravating their feeling of 'marginality'.

For decades a group of Scandinavian and Northern European Countries had led the world in women's representation in parliament, with percentages ranging from 35 to 45 percent by early 2000. Such high percentages represented a slow and steady increase over time and resulted from a combination of factors, including the secularization of society, the development of an extended welfare state, women's increasing educational

attainment and labour force participation, pressure from women's organizations on receptive social democratic political parties, and the selective use of particular electoral systems and party-based gender quotas (Dahlerup, 2004). By contrast, in the course of just one election the percentages of women in Rwanda's national legislature jumped to 48.8 percent (Bauer & Britton, 2006: 1).

Over the last decade, several African countries have moved from the very bottom to the very top of the list of countries in terms of women's representation in national legislatures. South Africa and Mozambique paved the way with elections in 1994 that saw significant numbers of women (25%) elected to their respective parliaments; in elections in 2004 both countries achieved a better than 32 percent representation of women in their national legislatures. In early 2005, three other African countries – Seychelles, Namibia and Uganda – all had women in at least 24 percent of seats in their lower or single houses of parliament. In other African countries women activists and women politicians were busy mobilizing civil society organizations and pressuring political parties to follow suit (ibid: 1-2). This is seen as a noteworthy development in a world in which regional averages for women's representation in parliaments range from 6 percent in the Arab states to only 18 percent in the America (approaching 40 percent only in the above mentioned Nordic states) ([www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm](http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm)).

Thus in five African countries of Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, and Uganda – significant advances in women's political representation have been realized despite pervasive gender inequality, patriarchal social relations and historically male dominated politics (Bauer & Britton, op cit: 2).

Several arguments are made for increasing the level of women's political representation in elected office. Anne Phillips (1998: 228) identified four groups of arguments: “there are those that dwell on the role model successful women politicians offer; those that appeal to principles of justice between the sexes; those that identify particular interests of women that would otherwise be overlooked; and those that point towards a revitalized democracy that bridges the gap between representation and participation”. Phillips (ibid: 228-238) privileges three of these four arguments, asserting that achieving gender parity in political representation is necessary because for men to monopolize representation is “patently and grotesquely unfair”, because changing the

composition of elected assemblies will help to increase and enhance democracy, and because without such change women's needs, interests, and concerns will not be adequately addressed.

In general, the literature on women's representation in legislatures draws a distinction between "descriptive" (or demography) representation and "substantive" (or strategic) representation. Anne Marie Goetz and Shireen Hassim (2003: 5) view this as the difference between a "feminine presence" and a "feminist activism" in politics. Richard Matland and Michelle Taylor (1997: 201) note that the degree of descriptive representation in a legislative body is important for three reasons:

first, to the degree that groups are excluded because of some descriptive attribute (colour, sex), the polity does not benefit from the talents of that portion of the population. To the degree that women are denied access, society loses the contributions of 50 percent of its most talented people. Second, to the degree that underrepresented groups have different perspective on public issues, denying them access impoverishes the public debate.... Third, to the degree that these groups have different policy priorities, their lack of representation means the priorities of the elected assembly will not be representative of the public as a whole.

Goetz and Hassim (op cit.) suggest that the distinction between descriptive and substantive representation may be overdrawn. In their view, it may be more useful to consider descriptive representation as "a necessary first step to the institutional transformation that is required if substantive representation is to be achieved".

Underlying the notion of substantive representation is an assumption that there is a set of issues or interests that may be considered women's issues or interests and that once in office women will seek to act upon these. According to Joni Lovenduski (1997: 718) for women parliamentarians to make a difference, "it is necessary for women Members of Parliament (MPs) to have distinct views on women's issues, to bring a women's perspective into political decision making, or to bring a different style and set of role expectations to politics". Citing the examples of Great Britain, Lovenduski and Pippa Norris (2003: 100) find that women in all the major parties "do bring a different set of values to issues affecting women's equality, in the workplace, home and public sphere", and conclude that with time, "the entry of more women into Westminster has the

capacity to make more than simply a symbolic difference to the face of British representative democracy”.

With 45 percent of MPs, women in Sweden have made two further advances with significant implications for elected women everywhere. First, according to Diane Sainsbury (2004: 65), they have “redefine (d) women’s issues as demands for gender equality”. In so doing “they have transformed women’s issues, which were earlier regarded as peculiar to women who were a special minority, into major party issues. In effect, this change recast the conditions for substantive representation. Second, they succeeded in “gendering the demand for greater democracy”. Framing the issue of women’s representation in this way strategically converted political women from a minority within each of the parties into a majority of the citizenry – improving the potential for descriptive representative”.

In addition, it has been argued that translating women’s descriptive representation into an effective substantive representation requires that a critical mass of women – at least 30 percent - be elected into a given legislative body. The concept of critical mass applied to women’s representation in politics first appeared in the work of Drude Dahlarup (1988). Lovenduski and Azza Karara (2002: 2) note that Dahlerup’s studies of women MPs in Sweden showed the impact of a critical mass: “women politicians worked to recruit other women, and developed new legislation and institutions to benefit women. As their numbers grew it became easier to be a woman politician and public perceptions of women politicians changed”.

At the same time, other scholars have suggested that even a critical mass of women legislators may not be enough (Child and Krook 2005). Citing the Kenyan, Ugandan and South African cases, Hannah Britton (2005: 18) argues that many other factors that may affect the ability of women to succeed in office include patronage politics, patriarchal social norms, and social authoritarianism.

In June 2000, the Women Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), based in New York City, launched the 50/50 campaign, an effort to raise to 50 percent the level of women’s participation in politics and decision making around the world. In launching the campaign WEDO organizers cited their reasons for joining the struggle for women’s increased political representation thus: “We recognize that numbers are a

necessary but not sufficient condition for women's full, equal, active and informed participation in economic, social and political decision making. There is evidence, however, that when women enter decision making bodies in significant numbers, such issues as child-care, violence against women and unpaid labour are more likely to become priorities for policy makers" (WEDO n. d.).

Bauer & Britton (op cit: 5), identifies a number of key factors that have helped to bring more women into national legislatures. These include the manipulation of electoral systems (the use of particular types of electoral systems and gender based electoral quotas), the ideological orientation of the major political parties and the pressure exerted upon them by national women's movements and social and cultural trends over time. Women candidates must also be available to stand for national political office.

According to Ballington (2004: 125), those countries that have historically had the highest representation of women in their national legislatures – Sweden, Norway Finland and Denmark (with 45.3, 38.2, 37.5, and 36.9 percent in women, respectively, in early 2005) – all use a proportional representation (PR) electoral system and (with the exception of Finland) some form of voluntary, party based quota, now or in the past. The type of system and use of electoral quotas are particularly significant because "unlike other strategies to increase the level of women's legislative representation, such as changing political culture and the level of economic development... Institutional structures are relatively easy to change" (Gray, 2003: 55). As Matland (2002:5) notes: "changing the electoral system often represents a far more realistic goal to work towards than dramatically changing the culture's view of women".

Electoral systems are key because the choice of system "maximizes or minimizes the ability of political parties to manipulate the slate of candidates" (Meintjes & Simons, 2002: 167). In general, it is considered that PR systems are more favourable towards women than plurality – majority systems or semi-proportional systems (Matland, 2002: 2-3). Several reasons are given for women's more favourable electoral outcomes under a PR than a plurality – majority electoral system. Most important, perhaps, is the fact that quotas are more easily implemented under a PR than a majoritarian system (Ballington, 2004: 126). Another reason is that "Contagion" – parties adopting the policies of other

parties – is more likely to happen in PR systems than in majoritarian systems (Matland, op cit: 7).

In a similar vein, gender based electoral quotas are meant to bring more women into politics and may take various forms. Quotas may be constitutional, as in Uganda and Rwanda, Legislative, as in many parts of Latin America or adopted by political parties, as in South Africa and Mozambique (Dahlerup, 2004: 18). Uganda's 1995 constitution provides for "reserved seats" for women – one parliamentary seat in each of the country's districts is reserved for a woman.

Social democratic parties in some of the Scandinavian countries used political party-based quotas in the past. In 1983, the Norwegian Labour Party decided that "at all elections and nominations both sexes must be represented by at least 40 percent". In 1994, Sweden's Social Democratic Party took the more dramatic step of introducing the principle of "every second on the list a woman" for its party lists (ibid: 4). In the words of Bauer and Britton (op cit 8), parties in Southern Africa have dubbed such rosters "Zebra lists" – men and women alternate like the black and white stripes of a Zebra. Many observers have attributed Scandinavia's high representation of women since the 1970s to the use of quotas.

Moreover, political parties are the gatekeepers to women's participation in politics because it is largely as candidates from particular parties that women stand for political office (Matland 2002). Ballington (2002: 77) identifies parties as "the final determinant of women's presence or absence in political institutions and consequently in the public domain. Moreso, in her late – 1990s study of twelve advanced industrial countries, Miki Caul found that certain characteristics of political parties enhance the likelihood of women's increased political representation. Caul (1999: 94) argues that "high levels of institutionalization, a localized level of candidate nomination, and leftist and postmaterialist values all individually enable parties to increase the representation of women". Further, she contends that "high levels of women working at internal party offices and the presence of formal rules designed to increase the number of women MPs are both conducive to women's representation". Caul underscores the significance of women's political representation. Such activism is crucial, she suggests to the adoption of electoral and quota rules that will facilitate women's greater political participation.

Indeed, the importance of mobilized women's movements and the pressure they exert upon political parties has been noted. In Scandinavia, according to Dahlerup (2002:4), it was sustained pressure from women's groups within political parties and women's movements more generally that resulted in the adoption of quotas by several political parties. Saxouberg (2000: 154-155) argues that in post-transition Eastern Europe a lack of strong women's movements has meant that the type of electoral system has had little impact on women's representation. Without the ability to pressure political parties to nominate more women to winnable seats, women's organizations stand little chance of increasing women's representation in parliaments (Baver & Britton op cit: 9). The support of women's movements has also been found to be crucial in ensuring that women legislators promote an agenda in which women's issues are prominent (Bystydzienski 1992, Carroll, 1992). Moreover, as Sylvia Tamale (2000: 14) notes, a strong women's movement is particularly important in assuring that female legislators are aware of the strong need to "reconstruct political structures according to feminist principles".

Government is pivotal to the promotion of gender equality; improving equity is commonly viewed as a central concern of the state. Most national constitutions promise equal basic rights and freedoms for all citizens and most explicitly promise to safeguard equality regardless of age, race, or sex. Nearly all governments have signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and most have signed several international conventions protecting women and children – such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), regarded as the international bill of rights for women.

A compelling argument for state intervention is the spillover effects of greater equality, what economists refer to as "positive externalities". Gender equality benefits those directly affected, such as women who experience discrimination, and society as a whole. The presence of externalities, coupled with the high human costs of gender inequality, makes a powerful case for public intervention. Moreover, just as the costs and benefits of achieving gender equality go beyond what any individual experiences, what is required to reduce inequalities often falls outside what an individual can reasonably accomplish. Entrenched social norms, customs, and legal institutions that create gender inequalities are extremely difficult, if not impossible, for an individual or small group to

change (Ibid: 101). Moreover, market failures in the availability of information – which contribute to gender discrimination – are pervasive and costly to overcome.

The state can intervene in many ways. It can tax and subsidize, persuade and regulate, prohibit and punish, or provide services. It can tax to finance (or subsidize) investments to counterbalance gender inequalities in investments by others – such as when it subsidizes more schooling for girls or more job skills training for women. It can directly prohibit prejudicial behaviour – such as when it requires enterprises to hire workers based on skills rather than based on sex, and sanctions or fines violators.

In most circumstances the first role of the state is to “level the playing field” for women and men. For the regulatory framework, this means safeguarding basic rights for all; imitating or removing discriminatory elements embodied in civil laws, government functions, and market structures; and enforcing such laws and regulations. Thus, active policies are often warranted to catalyze change or to redress persistent gender disparities.

Coupled with the above, where the state is dilatory in engendering gender equality, civil society groups have been found to be useful alternatives. In many cases, local civil society and the international community can be an important force for change. Civil society groups have caused social and economic change by initiating public debate, lobbying the state, empowering communities, and undertaking informed advocacy (Ibid: 103).

To achieve gender equality, development strategies must transform legal and regulatory frameworks, markets, and organizations into institutions based on the principles of equal rights, equal opportunity, and equal voice for women and men. A fundamental step is to establish equal basic rights especially in family law, protection against gender-related violence, property rights, and political rights.

## **2.5 Factors Affecting Women Participation in Governance**

A number of factors have been adduced as contributory to women's low status (politically & economically) in most societies. Some of these factors are hereby discussed.

### **Globalization**

Globalization implies a coordination of the world's political, economic, and even social systems. It is a coming together of the world in a never-before experienced manner. Within this burgeoning new world, gender in conceptual analysis and its application and applicability to African women's issues and experiences must be subjected to critical examination. Although, the neo-liberal proponents of globalization argue that the phenomenon presents numerous possibilities of benefits to humanity, and although one can clearly see how advances in communications technology have made the world smaller, via unhindered communication and interaction, networking and through the face book, not all people enjoy the advantages equally. While most people have control over, and access to the latest technology, others do not have the means to purchase such technology. While technology advances have eased a lot of the tedium of modern life, they are responsible for a myriad of problems that affect the environment, and consequently, the health and well-being of the consumers of technology and the labour that produces technological goods, sometimes without the financial ability to purchase and use such technology.

Thus, most African women feel the challenges of globalization in a myriad of ways. In most African countries, the idea of the welfare state is non-existent. People must fend for themselves from birth to death, with the largesse or benevolence of the extended family as the only cushion against the vagaries of an uncertain world (Okome, 2003:6). For these women, globalization has caused tremendous dislocations, since the opportunities that exist for them to participate are often as low paid overworked, no-benefit labour. Globalization has also broadened the spectrum in terms of locale of employment. Those African women who are participants in the labour market could either work at home, in their country of origin, but given the dearth of foreign direct investment in most African countries, participation in the global job markets where there

is better pay, and better conditions of service is increasingly, only available abroad. Regardless of geographical location, many African women must begin from the lowest rungs of the ladder and claw their way up to some semblance of regular, decent employment (Ibid).

In short, the global trend to integrate the world economically, socially and politically has been identified as a threat to the much-sought-after women empowerment and increased participation in the democratization process. According to Mama (2000), “there are positive opportunities which we (women) need to be aware of and be quick to grasp”. In addition, “there are causes for concern because of the existing division of labour. Those who are already marginalized are poorly equipped to take up opportunities presented unless there is concerted action, and it does not seem that the necessary steps are in place”. The Progress of the World’s Women 2000 report, launched in July (2000) by the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), points out that globalization opens up new opportunities to educated women with professional skills, but for some unskilled women, the international competition has meant a loss of livelihoods or labour rights (Dede, 2000:10).

The UNIFEM report drew attention to a paradox inherent in commitments made at a series of international conferences. The commitments reflect an expectation that governments are responsible for implementing policies to improve the well-being of women, especially poor women, but they do not effectively address the ways in which market liberalization and privatization may undermine the capacity of governments to discharge these responsibilities, especially to poor women’ (Ibid). According to Joama (2000:16) globalization and World Bank /IMF have led to the removal of subsidies on social services and this adversely affect women. Thus, globalization has occasioned imbalances in the distribution of wealth between the developed and underdeveloped countries of the world making the latter to be poorer. This is further reflected in harsh economic policies that in most cases undermined the saving and purchasing power of the women thereby curtailing their ability to successfully navigate the political terrain.

## **Colonization**

Africa's colonial experience contributed significantly to the current political marginalization of women on the continent. Colonialism is the policy of a nation seeking to retain its authority over other people and their territories (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1984). Prior to colonization, women in many Africa communities occupied positions of power in specific spheres of social life. There were indeed a number of places where they occupied the pre-eminent political position. These situations got reversed under colonialism (Enemuo, 1999; Okome, 2003). Although in their religion, the colonized had indispensable roles for women to play as both deities and priestesses, with the imposition of Christianity such roles were defined out of existence, and sometimes even criminalized. Whereas motherhood formerly implied power, it now came to be seen as an impediment. Whereas motherhood and gainful employment were not mutually exclusive, they were soon construed as such with the unrelenting imposition of Westernization upon Africa. Although being a woman was not coterminous with being the weaker sex, this became the norm (Okome, 2003:16). Indeed, one of the most important institutions upon which a woman's claim of power could be made – motherhood – became irrelevant because of the separation between the public and private sphere that was an integral part of the colonial enterprise. As actors that were restricted to the private realm, women were domesticated and subject to the discipline of those recognized as the heads of households – men .

Two colonial policies have been identified as particularly inimical to the status of the African woman. In the ethos of the European colonialists and colonists, 'only men can be active in the public sphere and earn a living to support their families' (Assie-Lumumba 1996). Accordingly, it was mostly African males who were given some education and who were recruited into the colonial civil service and merchant houses, albeit as subordinates. This practice served to reinforce and generalize patriarchal values in Africa. Besides, it marked the beginning of the under-representation of women in the formal agencies of government, a situation that transcended into the post-independence period (Enemuo, op. cit. 232).

As is commonly known, colonialism restructured the traditional African economies and communities to make them ready markets for European manufacturers

and sources of cheap raw materials for their factories. Among other things, the attainment of these objectives required the promotion of the production of export crops by men who were thereby granted economic power in relation to women who were concentrated in the production of food crops. Control of greater economic resources from cash crop production and merchandising by men greatly facilitated their domination of the political scene immediately after independence (Ibid).

In the same vein, other scholars (Van Allen, 1976; Okonjo, 1976; Rodney, 1972) maintain that the passive role women play in the politics of contemporary Africa is not natural but rather historical. These scholars again argue that colonialism led to the decline of social, religious, constitutional, and political rights and privileges of African women. Women's declining role in African politics, it is argued is a product of the disruption of the traditional sexual division of labor by colonialism. Colonial rule came with the introduction of commoditization of labour, and this forced many African men into seeking for paid employment, leaving women at home to cater for unpaid domestic tasks. Since men alone are in the money sector, women's work became greatly inferior to that of men, as the new value system set by colonialism failed to acknowledge it. This situation led to the deterioration of the status of African women and their loss of hitherto political power and prestige. One of the legacies of this denial is the absence of the female equivalent of the male political class. Access to education and to employment is the key ingredients for individuals in a modern society to obtain if they want to exercise political power. The education of an individual, both formal and informal, enables her / him to have access to a job or profession that guarantees economic control resources. These resources coupled with an organizational base, which teaches leadership skills give a person self esteem.

The immediate effect of colonialism, therefore, was that the African kingdoms, empires, and peoples lost their freedom (Akintoye, 1976). In all the conquered countries, it was then the European colonial authority that decided how the people would be ordered, and their economic resources disposed of (ibid.). The implication, therefore, was that indigenous political and economic structures were reordered to facilitate colonial purpose (Olojede, 2009:12). With the institutionalization of the colonial state in Nigeria, Britain ruled its new territory based on its own gender ideology of separate spheres for

men and women. More men than women were educated and thus recruited into the new (emergent) power structure. Women, unlike before, became confined to the domestic sphere. Etienne and Leacock (1980) reiterate that : in pursuing this transformation concurrently with the ideological action-the colonizers addressed their demands and technical innovations to men, thus favouring men's access to cash , the economic dependency of women and as a result , the emergence of the patriarchal nuclear family. These changes were often compounded by the transition from group rights in land to private property also accomplished to the advantage of men. Politically, the position of women took a bad turn. Women who used to wield political power in the pre-colonial societies were marginalized with the introduction of native administration. Men (for reasons of their exposure to literacy) were recruited into the new administration to the neglect of women. Women political titles (like *Iyalode*, *Iyaoba*, *Iyaafin*, *Erelu*, *Iyakere*, and *Ayaba*) fell into disuse. Thus, women stopped functioning in the political sphere. In Igbo societies, the native court effectively replaced the judicial functions performed by women's meetings.

This new economic and political structures were reinforced by the inculcation of the ideology of mission schools. At the early life of colonialism, the missionary enjoyed a virtual monopoly of education in Nigeria, particularly in the southern parts. This arose out of economic imperatives of British policy. Since the government was neither interested in nor had the money to provide education, the missionaries took control of the educational arena (Crowther, 1966). Because the missionaries had a virtual monopoly of schools, they were able to use them as a means of further conversion in all aspects of life. Women were inculcated with the spiritual values for the "home" and the "needy". It is not a surprise that most of the first Nigerian women who attended schools in the South felt obliged to become teachers and nurses. Sexism became manifest in educational practices-range of subjects open to girls, contents of textbook and teachers' attitudes. Thus, women were encouraged to take subjects, which were complementary to their domestic roles, while men were orientated towards professions, which tended to enhance their leadership (Olojede, op. cit: 13).

The differentiated educational orientation of men vis-à-vis women contributed immensely to the range of opportunities available to men at independence in 1960 and

thereafter to accede, not only to leadership positions in the affairs of modern Nigeria, but also to a higher social status (ibid.). Thus, decades of strong colonial hegemony inflicted great havoc on women's positions. By the time the colonial state decided to accommodate women through the principle of representation in the 1950s, decades of exclusion, neglect and oppression had severely handicapped women in the race for decolonizing states. The gendered colonial ideology thus denied women equal access to resources as men; women thus lost a source of political power.

## **Culture**

Most of Nigeria's different ethnic groups share the same notion about a woman's place in the home and society. They subscribed to 'patriarchal ideologies' which suggest that some forms of behaviour and some social roles are more appropriate for men than women and vice versa. Patriarchal ideologies reinforce men's dominance over women by suggesting for example, that 'a woman's place is in the home'. As Abott and Wallace have put it:

Patriarchal ideologies have the effect of disguising the actuality of male power. Men defined themselves as powerful because of their ability to master nature – to be dominant. Women because of their biological role in reproduction are defined as being closer to nature than men, thus justifying their domination by men. Male ideology confirms and reinforces men's dominant status by devaluing women's work and reproductive functions while at the same time presenting male work as of cultural importance and as necessary (Abott & Wallance, 1997:10).

The crucial elements of patriarchy as we currently experience are; heterosexual marriage, female child rearing and housework, women's economic dependence on men (enforced by arrangements in the labour market), the state, the numerous institutions based on social relations among men – clubs, sports, unions, professions, universities, churches, corporations and armies (Hartman 1997:103-104). These cultural practices put women in a subordinate position to men and any attempt to go contrary to its dictates is seen as arrogance on the part of the women. A 'responsible' woman must of necessity get permission from her husband before participating in politics. For example, men create a hostile climate for women in their demands. The oft-stated slogans and warnings by

male politicians of the dire consequences of women's equality and empowerment, such as soaring divorce rate, a rise in illegitimacy, and the loss of African customs, create a siege mentality for women's attempts to participate in politics. Ambition (especially political) is culturally acceptable for men but a liability for women.

More than cultural demands, one other factor, which prevents women from active involvement in politics, is the money element introduced into elections. Of recent, electoral contests have been reduced to avenues for flaunting wealth as people now buy votes with money<sup>2</sup>. The seemingly waived nomination fees for women in the present dispensation by all the political parties (in Nigeria) presently have palled into insignificance in this regard. Since most women do not have that kind of money to flaunt, it means that their chance of being elected would be reduced. Not until the use of money in politics is discouraged would the Nigerian women take their rightful place in the politics of the country.

### **Mass Media**

The media otherwise referred to as the 'fourth estate of the realm', performs three basic functions, which exerts a lot of impact on the political process in any country. The mass media educate, inform and entertain. The media have contributed to the cultivation of gender biases and stereotype about 'a women's place' and the notion of a 'weaker sex'. This is because of the widespread trend to depict women as 'sex object' by identifying and objectively certain notions of beauty and attractiveness relating more to women's physical capacities than to their mental faculties.

More typical of the mass media, is the presentation of topics that hardly promotes women's sense of worth and respect that would encourage them to take position of public responsibility (Taye, 2008: 1538). Women have a duty in contributing to the building of a better society according to a paradigm that reflect their values, strengths and aspirations, thereby reinforcing their ability to be attracted to and to participate in the process of governance. The mass media have a duty in this direction to ensure that this is made possible by helping to promote women's sense of worth and encourage them to

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<sup>2</sup> Personal experience at the 2007 and 2011 General Elections in Nigeria. Voters were seen collecting money in exchange for their votes in many parts of Ekiti state during the Elections.

take up position of public responsibility such as active participation in the process of governance.

### **Poverty**

There is no doubt that poverty is one of the root causes of the women problem especially in Africa and the third world. Certainly, a society that had for long neglected the proper education and economic empowerment of women had wittingly or unwittingly ensured that her women fold is kept in the dark economically and otherwise. Broom and Selznick (1973:174) observe thus:

The economic status of women is a special case because their prestige and authority are... seen as a by-product of the achievement of their husbands, because their position in the labour force is ambiguous and intermittent.

In other words, men control, dominate, and distribute the earth's resources according to their fancies. While women make up about 50 percent of the world's population, they earn only one tenth of the world's income and own less than one percent of property (MDGs, 2004/5: 2-5). One percent of the world's property is registered in their names. Osarenren (1993:90) observes that in Sub-Saharan Africa, only 47 percent of women aged 15 and above are economically active compared to the 85 percent among the men folk. Therefore, in the light of poor financial strength, women are really relegated to associate positions.

### **Religious Factor**

Uchem (2001:1570) writes that very often, religion has been used for providing a rationale for the subordination of one sex to another. This tendency to perpetuate subordination in God's name through religious ideologies has been observed in all human cultures and religions in every part of the world. Oduyoye (1990:77) succinctly puts it thus:

...religion plays such a key role in enforcing societal norms and ethics ...socio-political participation is truly imbued with religion even when they are not explicitly stated.

Uchem (2001:158) holds that this can be seen in the United States and Europe, where in spite of the achievement of the women's movement, white male supremacy and female cultural subordination continue to be very much in place due to religious conservatism and the effect of biblical/christian cultural myths. Thus, literal approach and biblical proofs – texts have been and are still being invoked to support women's subjugation much the same way that some fathers of the church used the Bible to justify slavery for many centuries before it became eventually outlawed.

### **Attitude of women themselves**

It can be said that an unconscious low self – image and lack of self-confidence, characterize the situation with most women. It is marked by a deep sense of insecurity resulting in psychological dependence on the male folk. In fact, Broom and Selznich (1993:116) opined that, “Women tend to have low aspirations thereby perpetuating their disadvantages. For example, even though many young women have the ability to be physicians, they do not aspire beyond becoming nurses”. Fitzgerald (1967:7) is also of this view when he notes “women ... have less imagination, less impulse suppression, a greater fear of the unknown, and a greater apprehension that they will not succeed.”

Besides, fellow women frustrate even the little efforts made by some women to rise above this low level. Thus, many women prefer leadership by men to that of their fellow women; they are politicians' women rather than women politicians. Beyond the calls for gender equity and equality and the general empowerment of women, there is need to appropriate most women's values in politics especially in the face of the daily opposition being mounted by male dominated politics to guarantee their active participation. Of particular importance, here is women's preference to be supportive of men in electoral contests as shown in the Fourth Republic Elections of 1999, 2003, and 2007 where women voted overwhelmingly for men. Out of the 47 million people who voted in 2003 general elections, 27 million were female, yet men were mainly elected (INEC 2007). More so, the 2006 census figure revealed that women constituted about 50% of the country's population composed of 68,293,683 while men constituted 71,709,859 of the total 140,003,542 population (Census 2006 in the *Nation*, January 11 (2006:3). The above scenarios call for the re-examination of women's attitude and their

value system towards participation in politics. They also bring into fore the concept of monetized conscience and its effects on women in Nigerian politics as most women in most cases traded-off their vote due to monetary inducement by the wealthier men. Thus, women will continue to be politically subservient to men for as long as they allow their conscience to be monetized.

## **Education**

Education is the process of acquiring societal useful skills, knowledge, and abilities. Education encompasses literacy, which includes the development of character and mental powers. Education is both formal i.e. knowledge gotten through schools and educational institutions and informal through such agencies of socialization like the family, mass media, religious institutions etc. Education arms the individual with the skills needed for survival, social interactions, as well as contribution to societal development.

The British colonial notion of education which Nigeria inherited because of its 'Victorian values' which considered it natural for men to play economic roles have little recognition to the traditional economic and socio-political status of women rather prioritizing the education of men. According to the 2004/5 Millennium Development Goals report, two-thirds of the world's population is women. Globally, there are just 96 girls for every 100 boys in primary school, with disparities at the secondary level even more acute. Since men predominantly hold the positions in the economy, the attitude and outlook of men and women begin to diverge such that the political role of women began to be perceived as natural. The educational opportunities of women in the country are generally affected by such factors as early marriage, male child preference, domestic activities, and labour among others.

Even in cases where women manage to overcome these obstacles to their educational careers, it is observed that much of the education received by women tend towards domesticating and assigning them to managing gender segregated roles. This greatly limits the participation, progress, and advancement of women in the process of governance. Education has a great role to play in democratic governance. Today, one of the first gender issues being advocated by developing world policy makers is the

importance of educating girls. Highly educated women have more atoms than uneducated women do (Pogoso, 2004:185). Therefore if a woman is educated it enhances her human capital and consequently serves as a major force for her to obtain political power and exercise it effectively in taking decisions that will affect the nation as a whole.

### **Nature of Political Party Formation**

At the level of political party formation, it is usually in form of club and informal meetings initiated by male friends and business partners. Other members of the society, including women, are contacted for membership at a much later stage when party structures are already put in place. Thus, women are excluded at the formative stage of political parties and are therefore denied the benefits accruing to foundation members.

### **The issue of Indigeneity**

This constitutes another major barrier that militates against active women participation in politics. The people from that constituency usually regard women who are married outside their constituencies of birth, but who contest elections in their marriage constituencies, as non-indigenes (at least by birth). This is a worse case if the woman is married from entirely different ethnic group. Such a woman will be regarded as being over ambitious and may be prevented or discouraged.

### **The Political System**

By and large, Nigerian women are marginalized in governance and political participation. Despite years of sacrifice and struggles by advocates, women have continued to play only a subordinate role in the public affairs of most nations (Nigeria inclusive). They are a negligible minority in the parliaments of the world and have only token representation in most cabinets. In other words, women are underrepresented in the institutions of governance in spite of the well-known fact that they constitute half of the population of most nations.

In its response to the question of why few women are still participating in politics, the United Nations “State of the World’s Children”(SWC) 2007 (54-55) outlined the following reasons:

Women are unlikely to run for political office. Double burden of public and private responsibilities: women’s work burdens are generally much heavier than men’s, leaving less time and energy for involvement in political life. A culture of exclusion: in many countries, men control both political and financial networks. Cultural practices that serve to nurture and consolidate bonds of male solidarity within these networks, such as drinking, smoking or golfing, are key stepping-stones on the path to political office. Higher participation in education. Those women, who run for office successfully, especially in developing countries, tend to be educated to tertiary level at least. The lack of women educated to tertiary levels in many countries can therefore act as a barrier to their participation in politics and government. Women face an uphill struggle to win over public opinion. Women leave politics in some cases due to electoral violence and death threats.

In similar vein, the “State of the World’s Children” 2007 (Ibid) discusses the following myths about women in politics. One, that every woman will make a difference for women and for children. Here it maintained that women parliamentarians are more likely than their male counterparts to use their political leverage to effect change in support of children, women and families. Two, that women are unsuited to the ‘hard’ jobs. While almost a third of all ministerial jobs held by women fell in the area of family, children, youth and social affairs or women’s affairs and education, women accounted for only 13 ministers of defence and 9 ministers of the economy worldwide (or 1.5 percent and 1 percent, respectively) (Ibid). This curtails their (women) chance to influence policies in these areas in their favour and thus contributes to their subjugation in governance.

Research suggests that male legislators today are increasingly aware of the importance of issues related to women and families, and, in many cases are partners in promoting gender equality. This is reflected in three Latin American countries of Argentina, Colombia, and Costa Rica where there is strong support among male legislators for both women’s issues and family and children’s issues (Schwindt-Bayer, 2006:15).

Changes in legislative priorities have been accompanied by subtle but significant transformations of the parliamentary environment. Examples of such changes relate to parliamentary schedules and the availability of childcare facilities in national legislatures. As a direct result of women entering legislatures in greater numbers, parliaments in several countries – including South Africa and the United Kingdom – have amended their sitting hours to accommodate the schedules of women with family responsibilities (SWC, 2007:56). In northern Europe, Sweden’s parliament has established a day-care centre for legislators while in Scotland’s National Assembly, a crèche was put in place for visiting constituents to “ensure that those with childcare responsibilities (usually women) can seek out and meet their representatives” (Azza & Lovenduski, 2005:194).

Despite the fact that women are often among the most active political advocates for children, women and families, and that increasing their participation in parliament is a key objective of the Millennium Development Goals (Specifically MDG 3), the number of women in national parliaments remains low. Women are under-represented in all national parliaments and in July 2006 accounted for just fewer than 17 percent of parliamentarians worldwide. Ten countries have no women parliamentarians, and in more than 40 others women account for less than 10 percent of legislators. Nordic countries have the highest rates of participation, with women representing around 40 percent of parliamentarians in the combined upper and lower chambers. Arab states rank lowest, with a regional average of less than 8 percent (< [www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm](http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm)>, accessed July 2006).

There are, however, encouraging trends, largely due to the introduction of quotas in an increasing number of countries. The number of parliaments where women account for 30 percent or more of the legislature – the critical yardstick of women’s parliamentary participation recognized by the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action has increased fourfold in the past 10 years. Some of the most dramatic changes in women’s political representation have occurred in countries formerly ravaged by conflict, such as Afghanistan where women were once excluded from politics but now account for 27.3 percent of legislators. Burundi and Timor-Leste are also examples of post-conflict countries where women now account for a sizeable number of parliamentarians (30.5 percent and 25.3 percent respectively). The levels of women’s representation in all these

countries are examples of the successful introduction of quotas during their political transitions. (<[www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/wmmmap05\\_en.pdf](http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/wmmmap05_en.pdf)>, accessed July 2006)

In the particular case of Nigeria where there is no statutory reservation of quota for women (in deference to the Beijing Platform for Action), women representation in the two houses of the National Assembly is abysmally too low. Thus, there is a continuing trend of male domination of political and other public positions. Lack of internal party democracy has created a conducive atmosphere for discrimination against women based ostensibly on cultural and patriarchal perceptions of inequality, roles, and potential between women and men. In addition, weak compliance with democratic ethos has encouraged corruption and violence against women within the political parties. Political parties encourage women's nomination as deputies thus conforming to the notion of censored participation and second fiddleism of women in Nigerian politics. There has been no female state governor in Nigeria. During president Obasanjo's first four years of democratic rule, (1999-2003), there was only one female deputy governor (Kofo Bucknor-Akerele, Lagos State). The National Assembly election results of 1999, showed gender-bias in favour of men. There were only 3 women senators out of a total of 109, and 12 women out of 360 in the House of Representatives. At the state assembly level, there were 12 women to 978 men. Only Benue had a female speaker of the state house of assembly, Margaret Icheen. At the local government level, only 143 women were councilors, against 8, 657 men. In the second phase of the Fourth Republic, the situation of women has not improved significantly; the results of national elections showed that at the federal level, men occupied the positions of president and vice president. The 109-member Senate still had just four females. Though there was an increase in the number of women in Lower House, the 360-member House of Representatives had 23 female members as against 12 in the 1999-2003 tenure while at the state assembly level; there were 38 women to 952 men. (Field Research, February 2007).

Thus, the violent nature of Nigerian politics has kept many women who would have been interested in contesting from participating in elections. Other impediments are patriarchal dominance in political parties, godfatherism, indigeneship, intra-party rigging, political violence, thuggery, and high level of intimidation (INEC, 2006:5). The 2007 election, like all previous elections, was characterized by a wave of assassinations,

murders, arsons, looting and kidnappings. Given the general abhorrence of women for violence, many of them were discouraged from participating. Coupled with the above, the monetization of the political process by the state and the political class is another major impediment to women participation in politics. Available evidence shows that the monetization of the political process during the 2007 elections served as a disincentive to the participation of women in contesting for elective offices in major parties – Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) and All Nigeria's Peoples Party (ANPP). In Nigeria, politics is money and money is politics. Unfortunately, many Nigerian women do not possess the wherewithal to mobilize for elections. Most women in the past or present have not occupied political offices such as president, governor and local government chairman through which they could have enriched themselves (Olojede *ibid.*) In Nigeria, the surest way to funds is through political office or friends in those offices. Money politics was seen in action across the federation (Economist, 2007). For example, in Kano (Central) the PDP budgeted 35 million naira for political mobilization, and the main opposition party ANPP budgeted 40 million naira for the presidential election. In one ward, Fagge A (Kano), the PDP budgeted 594,000 naira for 21,000 registered voters. This scenario manifested in most states of the federation. Since many of these men have a strong financial base, they were able to campaign effectively. Campaign offices of these contestants were visibly located in all the Nigerian states. Other campaign components such as vehicles, transportation (air, road, and water) for campaign teams, posters, handbills, radio and television advertisements were conveniently financed. In general, the political landscape during the 2007 election was characterized by financial profligacy. Consequently, many female aspirants who, of course, were in the majority of financial "have nots" in the political scene, have tended to loose out more in electoral contest as witnessed in intra-party and inter-party elections regardless of their competence and leadership qualities (Olojede, *op cit.*).

The election of Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as President of Liberia in 2005 and of Michelle Bachelet to the presidency of Chile in early 2006 marked important moments in the history of women's political leadership in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America respectively. In Eastern Europe, Latvia became the first former Soviet Republic to choose a female president as Chief of State in 1999. Finland, Ireland, and the Philippines also

currently have women presidents (in the first two countries the president is the Chief of State, while in the latter the president is both Chief of State and head of government). Women are heads of government in Bangladesh, Germany, Jamaica, New Zealand and Mozambique, Netherlands Antilles and the Republic of Korea (SWC, 2007:57).

At the ministerial level, women are less well represented than they are in parliament. As of January 2005, women held 858 portfolio in 183 countries, accounting for only 14.3 percent of government ministers worldwide (<[www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/wmnmmap05\\_enpdf](http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/wmnmmap05_enpdf)>). Nineteen governments had no women ministers at all, and among those governments that did include women, most had a token presence of around one to three women ministers. As of March 2006, only three countries – Chile, Spain, and Sweden – had achieved gender parity in ministerial portfolios (SWC op. cit). Thus, women's representation in national parliaments is certainly a critical measure of their political empowerment and of a country's commitment to ensuring that powerful advocates for children can be heard (Ibid). Presently, over 95% of all countries of the world have granted women the two most fundamental democratic rights: the right to vote and the right to stand for elections. Despite this, the reality is that women's right to vote remains restricted principally because the only candidates to vote for in most cases are men.

Governments, in conjunction with women's organizations and political parties, have a vital role in ensuring women's empowerment. They do so by promoting gender-sensitivity among officials or establishing comprehensive women's policy forums such as women's ministries and equal opportunity bureaus. It is opined that what matters most in terms of a government's response to the needs and interests of women is not simply the number of women in parliament but that of equal importance are institutional mechanisms, such as support from political parties for women's rights, and the strength and coherence of women's organizations (Weldon, 2002:88).

Political parties and women's groups are central to the advancement of women's participation in politics. Parties have a critical function in recruiting and endorsing candidates for elections and putting their weight behind specific items in parliamentary agendas (Matland, 2005:96). Women's groups often provide the civil society impetus and expertise that are required to promote, develop, and sustain the legislative initiatives and

accountability mechanisms that can advance the rights of women and children. Thus political parties are pivotal to active participation of women in politics as they provide the platform for acquiring political offices. However, in the particular case of Nigeria, political parties that should ordinarily serve as platform for accession into political offices are very repulsive to women as they are dominated by men who, in most cases, are violent and wealthier to the extent of dislodging women at will. With no institutionalized party policy and legislation for women empowerment, Nigerian women seem to be experiencing censored participation in politics. Political parties in Nigeria have always been, and are still, dominated by men. Party manifestoes and activities are yet to fully reflect women's issues. The only position given to women in the executive arm of the political parties is in most cases that of the women's leader which does not advance the cause for women political participation significantly. Political parties thus constitute the institutions that prepare, present, and support candidates for elective positions and other key decision-making positions; therefore, for women to have access to these positions there is need for them to have the support of the political parties. Today, there is still a high level of corruption, godfatherism, violence, and thuggery within the various parties. In addition, the prevalence of patriarchy at various levels prevents the recognition of women as equals with men and their inclusion in party decision-making body as such. Therefore, though women are increasing numerically in the political parties: they are striving to make an impact.

The participation of women in local politics can have an even more immediate and direct impact on outcomes for women and children than national legislation or policies. In India, for example, women's increasing participation in local politics has led to a more equitable distribution of community resources, with direct benefits for women and children, especially girls (SWC op. cit: 58). In Norway, children's issues, and particularly the lack of childcare spaces, are one of the most cited reasons for women entering local politics. The most significant finding in Norway is that women in local government have the greatest policy impact early in their careers because they bring a new set of concerns to the political agenda (Bratton & Leonard, 2002:435).

In the United States, an analysis of more than 9,800 bills introduced in three states over a two-year period found that women legislators were twice as likely as their

male counterparts to sponsor child health bills (Davis and Any, 2004:295-302). Another study, which examined women's political representation, showed that US states with a high percentage of women in the legislature are likely to be more supportive of efforts to address violence against women, increase child support, provide women with more extensive employment and unemployment benefits, and promote reproductive health care (Caiazza, 2002:2,4).

In developing countries, research on the impact of women in local government is an emerging area of enquiry. The most comprehensive findings currently available come from India, where in 1998 one third of all leadership positions in village councils were reserved for women (Chatopadhyay et al, 2004: 1409-1443). An extensive research project examining the impact of the reservation policy initially surveyed 165 village councils in the state of West Bengal. The study examined the level of public goods provision in councils that had reservation policies compared to those without such quotas. The study found that in villages with reservation policies, investment in drinking-water facilities doubled that of villages without quotas and that the roads were almost twice as likely to be in good condition. Furthermore, major roadways were 20 percent more likely to have been recently repaired; new biogas (a substitute for cooking fuel and electricity) projects were introduced in 26 percent of the village with reservation policies (compared to 6 per cent in the villages without quotas); and, due to active monitoring, the number of visits by health workers in the six months covered by the study was significantly higher. These improvements were highly beneficial to women and girls, who bear the primary responsibility for collecting fuel and water and looking after family healthcare needs, particularly those of children (SWC, 2007:60).

Thus simply having a greater number of women in local government, however, will not guarantee their effectiveness as advocates for the interests and rights of children, women, and families. In South Africa, for example, an analysis of the problems and opportunities faced by women in local government revealed that, as with their colleagues in parliament, their effectiveness was largely determined by factors other than their numerical presence. These included cultural norms and expectations of women's roles; local hierarchies; the abilities and attributes of individual councilors; and the extent of political parties' commitment to gender equality (Mbatha, 2003-:196). It is evidenced

from the above that most of the inhibitions being experienced by women in national development and political participation are embedded in the myths inherent in the socialization process. These inhibitions are reinforced and sustained in most societies/states. Nonetheless, it has become expedient that both sexes (male and female) must cooperate and contribute to development, the impediments such as the “early gender-socializing process from the family level must be a major target for sensitizing parents about the need for positive changes based on the goal of actualizing individual potentials of children regardless of the sex” ( SSRHRN, 2001:92). The state also needed to be rigidly committed to gender sensitiveness by enacting law(s) and providing an enabling environment for both sexes to thrive. Sustainable development should, therefore, hinge on gender complementariness and procedural equality.

Doubtlessly, Nigerian women are daily confronted with daunting challenges narrowing their participation in governance. These challenges revolve round the issues of globalization, colonization, culture, the political system, religion, poverty, education, mass media, attitude of women themselves, nature of political party formation and the issue of indigeneity.

. Thus, women’s participation in governance in the Obasanjo administration shows that Nigeria still has a long way to go. Their participation in the 2003 election was less than 10 percent and the last general elections held in April 2007 in Nigeria were not too encouraging. The 2007 general election was very important in many respects. First, it was the first time when the incumbent civilian administration conducted elections and handed over power to another government. Secondly, women participated in these elections; though the target of achieving one – third in all elective offices could not be realized as the elections were flawed as attested to by the international and local observers. A comparative analysis of women participation in the 2007 generally elections does not reflect a significant improvement to that of 2003 general elections. The figures are based on data collected from the website of Nigeria’s Electoral Commission (INEC). The data excludes election conducted for the local council chair for the FCT. 7,160 candidates participated in the April elections, out of these numbers, 628 were women (INEC, 2007). From the aforementioned data, it can be deduced that the percentage level of women participation for different offices is still low. Among the 50 political parties

that participated in the April 2007 election, women had only 6% representation of the total number of candidates who contested for offices and majority of them contested for positions in the House of Assembly and House of Representatives (INEC, 2007). This low participation can be accounted for in the light of the above factors. The above factors are relevant to our discussion to the extent that they aid our understanding of the gender problem and subsequent solution towards envisioning a more gender inclusive world. The factors needed to be addressed while a democratic culture of empowering women is sustained to make meaning of active involvement and women participation in politics. Thus, rather than concentrating on the extant problem created by the prevailing social structure(s) in tackling women's low political participation, the work analyzed the impact and potency of democracy and democratic structures on women political participation. Women within the polity needed to be strengthened to constitute a 'critical act' within the National Parliament as numerical strength may not guarantee the needed empowerment.

## **2.6 Theoretical Framework**

Scholars have propounded theories to explain the origin of gender biases against women and their subordination to men in a bid to put them on equal footing with men in all spheres of life: political, social and economic. Such feminist theories include liberal feminism, radical feminism, Marxist feminism, and social feminism.

While upholding the basic tenets of each of these feminist theories, the study is situated within the Modern Radical Feminist concept of patriarchy. Patriarchy brings together ideas that are scattered throughout the work of earlier feminist writers, and transforms them from isolated notions into a systematic theory; it also makes sense of the opposition encountered by earlier feminists and their failure to achieve all the changes for which they had hoped, by showing the vested interests and power structures involved. The Concept (of patriarchy) has also been utilized by many Marxist and Socialist feminists who find existing theories inadequate or incomplete (Bryson, 1992: 186).

Radical feminism sees the oppression of women as the most fundamental and universal form of domination and its aim is to understand and put an end to this. It views patriarchy as central to the oppression and domination of women. In line with the concept, women as a group have interests opposed to those of men; these interests unite

them in a common sisterhood that transcends the division of class or race, and means that women should struggle together to achieve their own liberation. Finally, radical feminist analysis insists that male power is not confined to the public worlds of politics and paid employment, but that it extends into private life. Thus traditional concepts of power and politics are challenged and extended to such 'personal' areas of life as the family and sexuality, both of which are seen as instruments of patriarchal domination.

Radical feminism developed systematically as a self-conscious theory in the late 1960s (ibid: 182). Originally, Radical feminism was a self-conscious political strategy based on the premise that women's problems were shared and that they could be ended by collective political action (Morgan, 1970; Brooke 1978). To the Radical feminists, "the personal is political", from this perspective, no aspect of life lacked a political dimension and political struggle could therefore take many new forms. Women's struggle was seen as a matter for immediate political action, and this struggle was to be waged against the universal oppressor-man.

Of all the radical feminist theorists (Betty & Theodore 1969, Robin Morgan 1970, Michelle Wander 1972), Kate Millet's 'Sexual Politics' stood out as it introduced into modern feminist thought the key concept of Patriarchy (ibid : 24). In her work "Notes Towards a Theory of Patriarchy" (1985:24), Millet provides a starting point from which many later theories have developed and her work encapsulates many of the central concerns of radical feminist thought, her discussion of the concept is also considerably more rigorous and thoughtful than that of many later writers to the extent that many of the criticisms against the concept do not apply to her original analysis.

Derived from the Greek patriarchies, meaning 'head of the tribe', patriarchy was central to 17<sup>th</sup> century debate over the extent of monarchical power; here supporters of absolute rule claimed that the power of a king over his people was the same as that of a father over his family, and that both were sanctioned by God and nature. Millet (Ibid: 25) seems to take such familial power as her starting-point so that 'the principles of patriarchy appear to be two fold; male – shall dominate female, elder shall dominate young'. Millet explores the first of these principles and she does not distinguish between male power within the family and in society as a whole; despite the efforts of some writers to restrict the term to strictly family-based power (Randall 1987; Cocks 1989).

Millett used the term 'Patriarchy' as shorthand for a social system based on male domination and female subordination.

Millett's central claims essentially represent a formalization of the ideas that were already current in the new women's movement. According to her:

In all known societies, the relationship between the sexes has been based on power, and they are therefore political. The power takes the form of male domination over women in all areas of life; sexual domination is so universal, so ubiquitous and so complete that it appears 'natural' and hence becomes invisible, so that it is 'perhaps the most pervasive ideology of our culture and provides its most fundamental concept of power' (Millett, 1985:25).

She went further to assert that:

The patriarchal power of men over women is therefore basic to the functioning of all societies and it extends far beyond formal institutions of power. It overrides class and race divisions, for economic dependency means that women's class identity is a 'tangential, vicarious, and temporary matter', while 'sexism may be more endemic in our society than racism' (Ibid: 38-39).

A process of social conditioning, which starts with childhood socialization within the family and is reinforced by education, literature, and religion to such an extent that men and women alike internalize its values, primarily maintains patriarchy; for some women this leads to self-hatred, self-rejection, and an acceptance of inferiority. Despite the success of this 'interior colonization', patriarchy also rests upon economic exploitation and the use or threats of force; its history is a record of man's inhumanity to woman. In all societies too, patriarchy relies upon sexual violence and rape. In this context, sexual relations between men and women are but an expression of male power. According to Millett, (Ibid) love, too, can be a confidence trick; part of patriarchal ideology designed to hide the realities of power; not until patriarchy has been overthrown and sexuality radically transformed can men and women relate in any way as equal human beings.

Unlike most conventional political theory, modern radical feminism does not see state power as the central political issues but rather the state is seen as one manifestation of patriarchal power, reflecting other deeper structures of oppression, and women's well-documented exclusion from its formal institution is a symptom rather than the cause of

gender inequality (Bryson, 1992:194). The concept blamed the exclusion of women from power on the structures and institutions of the state that are made by men and embody their (men) interests rather than those of women.

For the modern radical feminists, therefore, state power is not to be understood in its own terms, but as part of a ubiquitous system of patriarchal power. The patriarchal domination of women by men is seen as the central and defining feature of state power (Ibid). In addition, the radical feminists are of the opinion that women are economically exploited as women, rather than as gender-neutral members of the proletariat. The exploitation of their labour both in the paid workforce and in the home is one dimension of their oppression by men. The global nature of this exploitation is summed up in the 1980 United Nations report that:

Women constitute one half of the world's population, perform nearly two thirds of its work hours, receive one tenth of the world's income and own less than one hundredth of the world's property.

More specifically, the well-documented lower pay and marginalization of women in advanced capitalist economies is seen as a means of maintaining women's dependence upon men and hence forcing them to service their domestic and sexual needs. Millett and other theorists of the modern radical feminist theory of patriarchy are of the opinion that patriarchy's chief institution is the family (Op. Cit: 33). The family is seen as a central part of society's power structure; as such, it both sustains patriarchal power in the 'public' world and is itself a source of women's oppression. Within families, decisions were made about who should stay home to look after children and do housework and who should earn wages, which had wide-reaching impact on the composition of the workforce. Such decisions were never made in an ideological or economic vacuum; they represented a complex and often-unconscious balance between basic need, existing ideology, and practice regarding gender roles, the structure of the economy, and the particular economic conjuncture (Bradbury, 2001:108). Patriarchy and capitalism thus contribute to women's oppression by creating unequal access to work by women on the same terms as men not only perpetuated women's position in the home, but tragically disadvantaged those single women and widows who alone, or supporting children or

elderly parents, had to live on such wages (Ibid). Patriarchal ideas within the working class, elements of male pride and self-interest, economic pragmatism, and the daily needs of mothers and housewives thus interacted; creating a situation in which most girls served an apprenticeship in domestic labour prior to, or in conjunction with, entering the workforce (Chodorow, 1978).

The radical feminist theory of patriarchy has been criticized for being descriptive rather than analytical lacking in origins of male power, it is said to be based on a false idea of 'man as the enemy', it is said to be a- historical and based on 'false universalism' and in the final analysis, the theory is criticized in that while describing the wrongs done by men over the centuries, it sees women simply in the role of passive victims, rather than the co-makers of history and the agents of change in the future.

To Millett, "Conjecture about origins is always frustrated by lack of evidence. Speculation about pre-history ... remains nothing but speculation" (1985:27 & 28). Albeit the reticent of other theorists here, there seems to be a fairly widespread consensus that a matriarchy in which women were in positions of power and domination has never existed, but that some very early societies have been much more women-centred than our own and that some may have been based on matrilineal descent and a degree of sexual equality (Lerner, 1986). Thus to the modern radical feminists what is important is to identify and understand the structures and institutions that maintain patriarchy today in order that these may be overthrown (Spender, 1985:42). On the criticism that claims that patriarchy is essentially a-historical ..., Millett's original theory saw the importance of women's struggles in the past and argued that these had made 'monumental progress' and provided the basis for future change (Op. Cit: 64); by making patriarchy visible and identifying the battles that have to be fought she sees her own work as itself a part of that struggle. This means that changes in the nature or degree of patriarchy become visible, as do women's challenges to it. Thus from this perspective, a central shared experience is domination by men. This domination is experienced not only in the public worlds of politics and employment, but also in the family and in personal relationships. Power and politics are therefore redefined and seen to pervade the whole of life.

Thus, the situation of Nigerian women can be analyzed within the modern radical feminist theory of patriarchy. The post-colonial State has remained largely patriarchal;

the state has not consciously promoted women's interests in most, if not all, spheres of the polity; social, economic, political, ethical, religious etc. The Nigerian state has remained largely masculine with male norms, values, and lifestyles built into the political system. In addition, the state has remained largely capitalist; a feature of patriarchy, with her aggressive drive to privatize public enterprises and this has implication for women political participation. Since men are the major beneficiaries of the privatization drive in the country and largely determine public policy, state interests in most cases remained at best men's interests. Moreover, that democracy affords the citizenry the opportunity to challenge unjust societal practices and legislations, the modern radical feminist concept of patriarchy affords women and other gender sensitive entities to challenge, within the ambit of law, societal and state practices that are deleterious to women political empowerment and gender equality. The celebrated Priye Iyalla-Amadi's victory on women's right to international passport in June 2009 in the verdict given by justice G. K. Olotu attests to this<sup>1</sup> ( The *Guardian* Friday June 19, 2009:22).

The extent to which the (Nigerian) women have fared in governance and political participation in Nigeria formed the basis for discussion in the succeeding chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> In Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Dr. Priye Iyalla-Amadi, wife of the renown author Elechi Amadi, won a legal battle against the Nigerian Immigration Service, which has brought into the fore the need to do away with all obnoxious laws that appear to have entrenched gender inequality in the nation's social milieu. Mrs. Iyalla-Amadi had sought a replacement of her international passport in February 2008 and was told by immigration officials in Port Hacourt that she needed written permission from her husband first. Apparently irked by this administrative policy that trampled on her right, she headed straight to the court and was not disappointed, Justice G. K. Olotu, presiding judge of the Federal High Court, in his verdict said: "This kind of policy has no place in 21st century Nigeria". Indeed the judgement has once again brought to the fore the issue of discrimination against women in the country which is still being sustained by discriminatory laws, policies and socio-cultural practices.

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**CHAPTER THREE**  
**HISTORICAL SURVEY OF WOMEN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN**  
**NIGERIA**

**3.1 Introduction/Background**

The place and role of women in politics in Nigeria is situated in the histories of the different nationalities that make up the country. They have always had roles to play either as wives of kings and chiefs or titleholders in the community (for example the traditional titles of “Iyalode” for women in Yoruba traditional councils of chiefs). The contributions of such women in the administration of their communities were immense, before the colonial era, though such contributions were often discounted and unrecognized (Womaniesto, 2006:37). Whatever the nature of the kingdom, the emphasis in historical writing, particularly on the beginnings of these societies, was on the contributions of men (Awe, 1992:26).

However, a look at oral traditions shows quite clearly that women featured quite prominently in our traditional societies and took part in the decision- making that affected those societies (ibid). In the view of JHU (1997:12):

Oral tradition has it that women played prominent roles in the political history and decision-making processes of some traditional societies. The legendary roles played by Princesses Inikpi of Igala-land and Moremi of Ife, as saviours of their societies during warfare, to the extent of sacrificing their lives to ensure victory were remarkable. Other notable women of valor who helped in directing the course of history of their traditional societies in the pre-colonial era included Queen Amina of Zaria (a formidable female ruler who led Military expeditions and expanded her territory as far as River Niger, the Kwararafa empire and Kano in the North), Queen Kambasa of Ijaw and Queen Owari of Ilesa.

In the same vein, Awe (ibid) opined that these women played the role of saviours of their societies at critical periods when those societies were besieged by invaders and were subjected to constant warfare. They stepped most decisively into the breach and saved those societies by sacrificing their own lives. Awe (ibid) is of the opinion that Moremi’s escapade was perhaps the first account of espionage in our history. The duo paid the supreme sacrifice to salvage their communities.

The participation of women in politics is as old as our history as a people in our various societies and more recently as a nation. Throughout the whole sweep of that history, the factor of gender has always been present and significant in the sharing of political power. That history can be divided roughly into three periods.

- ◆ The Pre-colonial Era
- ◆ The Colonial Era
- ◆ The Independent Era: 1960 to the present

### **3.2 The Pre-Colonial Era**

Okeke Anya and Taiwo Adegbuyi (2003:11-12) traced the place of women in Nigeria's political past and provided an insight into the pre-colonial era arrangement where women played equal roles with men in government and governance in this manner:

Nigerian women before the advent of the colonial master were operating at the same level with their male counterparts, they were part of decision-making, and they were accorded much the same respect as men. Since they lived within a cultural milieu, the values and norms associated with some beliefs allowed the male and female to rule at any level. Women were known to be in active governance of communities through various traditional structures and even participated in the prosecution of wars {refer Queen Amina}. As a result, it can rightly be said that women were not excluded from the political space as evidently shown in the political history of pre-colonial Nigeria. The transition from a cultural society to a modern society thus brought a lot of changes particularly to the status of the Nigerian women.

In Igbo-land, for instance, where there had never been any monarchy but rather, very republican...village democracies (Uche, 1989:14), there were a dual political system that allowed the women to run their own affairs. As Jean O'Barr noted, an official (a woman) called the Omu among the Igbo of the Eastern Nigeria was in charge of women's affairs, including the regulations of market trade (1984:144). The community's affairs could therefore only be run with due consultation between the men and women groups.

In some traditional Igbo societies, there existed a dual political system, which reflected the position of women. Women had structures of political participation

equivalent or parallel to those of the men. In such traditional Igbo societies for instance, women did not act as individuals but rather were represented by various women groups. Their political participation was generally as a group that represented women in community matters. This enabled their voices to be heard from household to communal level (Sani, op.cit:117). One of the major groups was the Otu Umuada, which comprised all the Umuada (married daughters) who were dynamic, powerful, and well respected by the community. In Igbo-land, wealth, wisdom, and eloquence were highly revered qualities, which gained prominence when considering a person for leadership position irrespective of age. The Umuada extended its jurisdiction even beyond the village boundaries as women were married outside the Umunna (native towns) to other neighbouring towns. The Umuada exercised considerable political influence. They were arbiters in quarrels and played very prominent roles in establishing peace in the market and the community at large. They compelled debtors to pay their debt and slanderers to pay fines. There were in addition, various women organizations, which were active in mobilizing women for the welfare of the society. In some cases, they participated in political decision and actions or showed some form of disapproval of conduct of their political leaders. Also among the Ika people of Delta State, women participated actively in local politics, where they exercised considerable power and authority they participated in decision making at most levels. While the rituals surrounding the Omu, the Queen, paralleled those of the Obi and the king; they did not correlate with political status (Mba, 1997:23-24). Nonetheless, the Omu had specific responsibilities toward the whole community, as well as toward the women, and acted as the representative and spokeswoman of the women in the Obi's council.

Thus, prior to the colonial era, Igbo societies had a system in which political interest groups were both defined and represented by sexes. The political role of Igbo women and men was well defined. In Igbo-land especially among the Ika people, politics was traditionally the sphere of male as well as that of female.

The Otu Alutaradi is another women group among the Igbo people of Owerri, Sani (op. cit: 118) opined that the members had great influence in the socio-political setting of their societies. This group had the autonomous right to convict or acquit, levy fines and carry

out judgments on their fellow women. They appeared to be the watchdogs of their communities and held meetings to deliberate on and air their stands on various issues.

Among the Yoruba of Western Nigeria, women occupied important social, economic, and political positions and actively participated in traditional governance. Oral traditions recall female oba in several areas of Yoruba land. Yoruba societies were organized into kingdom under the headship of the king (oba) who oversees the various villages of the kingdoms. The practiced monarchy arrogated much power and influence to the oba who must rule in due consultation with his head chiefs (baale) but women were quite powerful in the public sphere. Nina Mba (1982:2) noted that the traditions of Oyo, Sabo, Ondo, and Ijesha record reigns of female Oba. Women also participated actively in governance as public officials. Oyo was said to have been ruled by a female regent Orompoto around 1555 that drove the Nupe from Oyo. In Ijesha, five of thirty-eight owa (kings) had been women, Ondo traditions claim that the town was founded by the twin daughter of one of the wives of Oduduwa, while the male twin founded the neighbouring town of Epe. There had also been a female Ooni (king) of Ife known as Olowu who was said to be a “tyrant” (ibid).

In both old Oyo and new Oyo, the Oba known as the Alaafin, developed a highly centralized and complex palace administration, which kept the Ogboni chiefs and the Oyomesi kingmakers in the background. Women played various important roles in the palace administration (Mba, op. cit: 3).

The traditional titleholders like *Iya Oba* that acted as king’s mother had great influence and power in the traditional political process. The king’s wives, *Aya’ba*, were also very close to the king and controlled both men and women in the palace. Among the *Aya’ba*, the *iyaaafin*, - wives of the preceding *Alaafin* – were closest in rank to the king among those who lived in the palace. They were always in attendance when anyone was with the king. The *Erelu* was a woman member of the *Ogboni* cult in her own right and she represented the interests of the town. She was selected based on merit in leadership ability, wealth, and contributions to the well-being of her natal town. The *Iya’ Kere* who was next to the king’s mother was in charge of the king’s treasury. In each town, the position of the *Iyalode* differed in terms of the power associated with it. However, the original *Iyalode* title was the female equivalent of the warrior line of titles, the *Ologun*

(Mba, 1997:6). In Ibadan, the *Iyalode* title was introduced in 1850 in recognition of a wealthy women trader's assistance to the war chiefs and fielding her own soldiers. Women organizations like the *Egbe Iyalode* constituted a recognized pressure group in the society. The *Iyalode* was the official president of the association who represented the association in the council that managed the business of the state (Sani, op.cit:119).

The fact that representation was given to women meant that there was no sex segregation in traditional Yoruba government. Though their participation was limited vis-à-vis, the men, Yoruba women, through their *Iyalode*, not only ran their own affairs but also participated directly in communal decision-making. Individual *Iyalodes* of outstanding personality, in the crises of nineteenth century Yoruba-land, achieved great political power.

Thus, Yoruba women occupied the highest public office in the past, they were allowed formal direct participation in the political process through the institution of *Iyalode* and the *Erelu Ogboni*, as palace priestesses in Oyo and *Ogboni* in Abeokuta and Ijebu, they were involved in judicial processes affecting the whole society, they effectively controlled their own affairs and were also involved in executive responsibilities covering the whole society. Though women did not have representation and authority in the Yoruba political system equal to that of men, there was no sex segregation in politics, and sex was not used as the basis of political role differentiation (Mba, op. cit: 13). Women also participated actively in governance as public officials. Sometimes, as in the case of the *Iya-Afin* (Mother of the palace), *Ayaba* (Wife of the king) and *Erelus* (Female members of the political decision-making body), women were considered indispensable for a proper running of the kingdom (Olojede, 1990: 81).

The early history of Hausa-land equally records a strong presence of women in the public sphere (Nwankwo 1996:14). Also organized in kingdoms, parts of Hausa-land were said to have been ruled by women. One of such powerful women was Queen *Amina* of Zazzau. According to Iyabo Olojede (Op cit: 79):

Amina... waged wars on (the other polities of) Hausa-land and took them all, so that the men of Kano and the men of Katsina brought her tribute.

The early 19<sup>th</sup> Century Jihad and islamisation of Hausa-land, which resulted in the seclusion of women, seemed to have curtailed their occupation of the public sphere. The pre-colonial Hausa politics of Northern Nigeria or the pre-Islamic society shows a record of women who held political offices and titles like the Magajiya (Queen) and Iya (Queen mother) before the 1804 Jihad. The women were said to have wielded administrative power in the community like their male counterparts (Sani, 2001:119). Queen Amina of Zazzau in the sixteenth century was a renowned military and political leader who fought many wars. She conquered many towns and extended her jurisdiction as far as Nupe, Kano and Kwararrafa Rivers. In traditional Hausa politics, there were certain positions permanently reserved for women before the advent of the colonialists. Other notable powerful women were Bazoa Turrunku, Daurama of Daura and many others. In Borno, key female figures in the political organizations included Magira (Queen mother). The Magira was also one of the principal field holders in the state and possessed a full complement of administrative staff including men – at – arms whom she used to impose her political authorities. Through her assistants, Magiram and dogoma, she decided and judged cases among the harem and extended her political control to other territories (Olojede, 1990). After the Islamic Jihad of 1804, the practice of purdah confined Muslim women to the house and greatly reduced their political influences.

In Benin, there was also an impressive host of palace women, the most notable being the *Iyaoba*, the Queen mother. The most famous was Idia, king Esigie's mother, who was thought to possess magical powers, which ensured her son's victories. She was the first to have her own separate court with the same royal paraphernalia as the Oba. She had her own army and led her forces to war. Her army was responsible for the defeat of Idah army (Awe, op.cit:28).

In sum, during the pre-colonial period, women were not left out of the political decision-making process in some societies. It must be admitted however that virtually in all cases, the men had a constant and greater grip over the political life of their society; but there were various ways in which the women were able to have an input into decision making (ibid:29). The form of participation differed from society to society, but at no point could the women be ignored. The emphasis was on complementarities of roles rather than on stiff or straightjacketed opposition.

### 3.3 The Colonial Era, 1900 – 1960

During this era, the various societies in Nigeria lost their independence and were made subservient to the British for about 60 years. The colonial era that started in 1900 drastically changed the political set up, the era brought with it new policies that had detrimental effects on women. In 1914, Lord Lugard brought the Northern and Southern Protectorates together, leading to the amalgamation. Due to this, different ethnic groups with different political beliefs and values were merged together. It was essentially a regime that set out to exploit Nigeria for the benefit of Britain (Awe, *ibid*: 29). The process affected both men and women with women mostly affected as they suffered more in terms of economic opportunities, allocation of resources and political offices. These deprivations to a large extent made Nigerian women second-class citizens (*ibid*).

Along with the abolition of the kingdoms, the colonial government largely eroded the dual political systems. In the kingdoms where there were women chiefs, they lost their power base and were no longer reckoned with in the decision making process. In the eventual redistribution of positions and power, the colonial authorities ignored women. The British authorities did not consider women in their appointments of local staff to run the colonial government. Even in markets where women were used to wielding power in the allocation of stalls and imposition of levies, the government appointed men to take charge (Nwankwo, 2006:10). The colonial rulers introduced new rules and regulations to govern the colonies and this drastically reduced women's participation in traditional political activities. The Victorian concept of the place of women in society was introduced and this greatly contracted the public space, which women occupied among different ethnic groups. According to Olojede (1990: 84), "British ruled its new territory based on its gender ideology of separate spheres for men and women" the colonial rulers focused their attention only on males. Thus, women chiefs and leaders of all categories did not enjoy any recognition and they ceased to be part of any official decision-making body (Sani, *op.cit*:120).

The sidelining of women during the colonial era was behind the earliest mass protest movement by women in Eastern Nigeria, the Nwaobiala movement in 1925 (Mba, 1982:68). The protest eventually culminated in the 1929 women's war (also known as the Aba Women's Riots). The women's war was both a political and economic protest

against the colonial authorities. The women's grievances included a planned taxation programme and the population census being conducted by the British authorities (JHU, 1997:14). In Western Nigeria in 1946, the Abeokuta Women's Union, which was led by Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, also protested because of taxation and the inherent high-handedness which took away the powers women had over the markets.

The first attempts to govern were directed at using the traditional institutions of government essentially the traditional rulers and chiefs – through the indirect rule system. In the process, attention was focused primarily and solely on the rulers and many of his chiefs stopped sharing power with him. As the sole ruling authority, the ruler became an agent of the British administration whose dictates, rather than the wishes of his people as expressed in the traditional council of chiefs, he had to carry out (Awe, op. cit:30). In the words of Awe (ibid):

Women chiefs of all categories, be they palace women or leaders of women, ceased to have recognition and any input into decision-making. The stipends given to them to maintain their positions were stopped in most cases, and many of the lesser chieftaincy titles among women fell into abeyance.

She continued:

it is important to stress that in northern Nigeria some of these titles had disappeared because of Islamic beliefs that women should not participate in public life. It was only in Bornu that these titles survived until the coming of the British administration. In both cases, women were thus formally disenfranchised.

This plight of women was attributable to the concentration of power in the hands of the sole native ruler as well as the transfer by the British administration of the anti-feminist cultural prejudice prevalent in Europe. The basic premise of the colonial gender ideology was therefore the domestication of women. They were not to function in the public domain like the men.

Thus, Nigerian men gained enormously from the intrinsic gender discrimination of the colonial system of government. They did not have to co-rule with women as in the pre-colonial period. With the new system, they are empowered to make decisions for women. Women on the other hand were encouraged to defer to their husbands while the domestication of women was encouraged as a sign of affluence and self-sufficiency. As

men succeeded economically, educationally, and politically they conceitedly held on to power and inadequately dispensed resources (Omonubi-McDonnell, 2003:14).

The acceptance of Western gender stereotypes did immeasurable harm to Nigerian women. Liberated from the checks and balances inherent in pre-colonial administration, gender discrimination was heavily constructed into policies, programme, and structures of the system to preserve it for men. The outcome was the development of a politically inactive women population and prejudicial self-service men (ibid).

The colonial administration with its policy of indirect rule relegated women into the background as they were striped off of their hitherto wielded traditional titles before the advent of the colonial rule. Thus, women did not take part in political decision making during this period. However, the men unwittingly were being prepared for the possibility of such participation in the future. One major instrument for this purpose was education. Schools were opened to enable men to serve as clerks, interpreters etc, for the colonial administration. This put the men on the ladder for upward mobility. Even though they were discriminated against initially and given what were termed “African posts”, this access to education made them an important pressure group during the colonial era (Awe 1992:30). Those who had attained high levels in administration had a chance to have an input into decision-making. Those in the private sector masterminded the nationalist movement, which eventually transferred power into the hands of Nigerians in 1960 (ibid). In contrast, such educational opportunities were not given to girls.

Colonial training was geared towards making women good mothers, good housewives and epitomes of elegance and reticement or as Awe (ibid) noted; “good wives, good mothers and good ornaments of society”. Although there were mission schools like CMS girls’ school established by missionaries in 1872, it was only in 1927 that Queen’s College, the first government girls’ secondary school was founded in Lagos. Even then, it was because of intensive pressure from Lagos women organizations rather than government initiative. The few educated women mounted pressure on the colonial officers to modify their policies towards women. For instance, Mrs. Charlotte Obasa formed the Lagos Women’s League in 1927. This league put pressure on the government to establish government’s girl’s colleges. The northern states government girl’s colleges were established in Katsina and Kano in 1927. The main thrust of the schools was not to

equip the girl-child for public life but to orient her towards domestic life. The result was that British colonialism had considerable negative impact on women, as there were only a few women who were qualified to work in the public service and this was even at lower levels e.g clerks. Groups like the Lagos Women's League campaigned for the expansion of educational opportunities for women, more government employment, equal pay for equal work, more training institution for shorthand typists, nurses, cooks, teachers and better working conditions for girl hawkers and domestic servants (Sani, 2001:121).

A major highlight in the political development of women during the colonial era was the formation of a women's party in 1944 spear headed by Mrs Oyinkan Abayomi, the party was exclusively for women and had apparently been formed out of the frustration the women felt with their lack of headway in the then only political party, the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM). However, Mba (1982:224) noted that:

Despite its name, the Women's party was never organized as an active political party seeking to obtain representation in government. It did contest the Lagos Town Council elections in 1950 but that was its only attempt to seek political power. It did not have a political program as such, but its leaders shared certain definite political views, which were to lead them to support another political party – the Action Group – at a later stage.

When other political parties came on board - the NCNC in 1944, the AG in 1948 and the NPC in 1951 – women resorted to forming Women's Wings of the parties. In general, the parties related with women through the Women's Association. However, some women stood on their own merit as party members and won party elections to attend conventions independent of the Women's Association. Some of the women who achieved such feat included four NCNC women namely Mrs. Margret Ekpo, Mrs Henrietta Lawson, Mrs. Keziah Fashina and Mrs. Mary Ededem (ibid: 236). Mrs Ekpo was later nominated to the Eastern House of Assembly in 1953.

According to Chief (Mrs) Fola Akintunde Ighodalo, the greatest impact, which British colonialism had on the Nigerian woman, was her marginalization (cited in Awe op.cit:31). The attendant frustration coupled with the obnoxious system of indirect rule and excruciating taxation imposed on the people sparked off the famous Aba women riot in 1929; the most widely reported in most historical accounts of the colonial period. The

women's uprising and protest in Eastern Nigeria in 1929 was a protest against British administration as seen in its taxation programme and its population census and about 50 women lost their lives. According to Nina Mba, most writers on the Aba women's riot (Awe for example) see the main causes of the protest as primarily political and only secondarily economic. They are of the opinion that women took the action because the colonial administration allowed them no other means of expressing their grievances. They rejected the whole colonial order. These women employed their traditional organizations to mobilize all women in most parts of South-Eastern Nigeria to assert their right to political participation as had been the case in the pre-colonial era (Awe op.cit:31). The Aba Women's Riot of 1929 no doubt demonstrated the zeal of Igbo women to participate in the political life of their country and gain economic independence. It can be rightly stated that the riot accelerated the women's demand for their political right.

The colonial system of indirect rule with its attendant exclusion of women from decision making in Western Nigeria while conferring unprecedented power on the (male) traditional rulers made women to redirect and re-strategize towards political relevance at this time. The women took the initiative of organizing for political action through the Abeokuta Ladies' club of Mrs Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, which later transformed into the Abeokuta Women's Union in 1946 and drew into its fold both the educated and illiterate market women. Its objectives included organization of women to gain political power, to demand suffrage, participation in government and, if necessary, changes in the system (ibid: 32). A campaign was launched against unjust enforcement of women's taxation and the highhandedness of the Alake of Abeokuta who had become the mouthpiece of the British administration. That campaign led to the Alake's temporary abdication.

Towards the end of the colonial era, women mounted more pressure on British officials using petitions, propaganda, legal processes and the press to improve the positions of Nigeria women. The important feature of this period was that despite constraints and the marginalization, women in many parts of the country were able to fight for their rights and assert themselves. They succeeded in being acknowledged as a potent force in political issues. The emerging political parties encouraged women to join the movement and many women became politicians within these parties. For example,

Madam Pelewura's Market Women's Association entered into an alliance with the Nigerian National Democratic Party led by Herbert Macaulay. Other women like Abayomi, Adekogbe, Wuraola Esan, Alhaja Humani Alaga and Alhaja H. Alade were with the Action Group while Margaret Ekpo, Ransome-kuti, and Janet Mokelu joined the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC). Gambo Sawaba was with the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU). These women worked in conjunction with the men to fight for Nigeria's independence. They attended constitutional conferences to determine the laws that would govern the country.

### **3.4 Post-Colonial Era: First Republic**

Nigeria formally secured her independence in October 1960. The First Republic ushered in a renewed interest of women in politics. The potential political contribution of women was so valued that all the four major political parties had women's wings. Notable women like Hauwa Kulu Abata, and Mrs Oyibo Odinamadu headed these women's wings. These women fought to secure a place of prominence in the political scene of the country (Sani, op.cit:23).

However, the preference for male politicians as well as the disenfranchisement of women of northern Nigeria hampered women's effective participation in politics (Awe, op.cit:33). In spite of the political activism of women leaders like Mrs Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti in her umbrella organization: Federation of Nigerian Women's Societies (FNWS) as well as Mallama Gambo Sawaba, the leader of the NEPU's women's wing, women in northern Nigeria were disenfranchised until 1979 when under the new constitution that ushered in the Second Republic, all adult Nigerians were given the vote. In southern Nigeria, women were given voting right in 1959. Nonetheless, the performance of women in politics has not been very encouraging. This can be attributed to the fact that unlike women in the pre-independent Nigeria that can be regarded as feminists, most women politicians in independent Nigeria are not feminists but are rather playing politicians who are out not for any significant improvement of the womenfolk but for self enrichment and personal gain.

At the point of independence in 1960, the 36 members' senate had only one woman, Mrs. Wuraola Esan, nominated by the Western Region. The 312 member House

of Representatives had no woman among them. The Federal cabinet also had no woman. The three Regional governments East, West and North, had no woman minister in their cabinets. In the 1961 general elections, two women, Mrs Margaret Ekpo and Mrs Janet Mokelu, won seats into the Eastern House of Assembly. A third woman, Mrs. Ekpo Young also won through a bye-election into the Eastern House in 1963. In 1964, another woman, Mrs. Benice Kerry joined Mrs. Esan at the senate. The newly created Mid-Western Region nominated Mrs. Kerry. It has been opined that Mrs Esan was noted to have given an excellent account of herself in the senate through her numerous contributions and activism especially with issues that had to do with women's rights (Mba, 1982:273).

The political crises and the attendant violence occasioned by the results of the 1964 general elections degenerated to very intolerable levels and seemed to have provided the excuse for the first military incursion into Nigerian politics in January 1966 thus bringing the First Republic into an abrupt end. There was a counter military coup in July 1966. The violence and killings that followed culminated in the Nigeria Civil war, which lasted from 1967 to 1970. Apart from bringing untold human suffering and abuse of women, especially on the "Biafran" side, the war further diminished women's political space (Nwankwo, 2006:14). The existence of the military regime for most of the period has also affected the quality and quantity of female participation in politics. Military administration being a male dominated one did not accord women position in the higher echelons of government. Even when the first military regime in 1966 involved some civilians in government, there was no woman among them.

### **3.4.1 The Second Republic**

The Second Republic lasted between October 1979 and December 1983 when it was terminated by a military coup. The post independence Nigerian constitution, of 1979, established equal political rights for both male and female. It declared that every Nigerian who attained the age of eighteen is eligible to vote and be voted for. The constitution formally removed the gender discrimination in political participation, which had been bequeathed to the country by the colonialist. Specifically, Section 42(1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria states that:

A citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not, by reason only that he is such a person be subjected to any form of discrimination.

The Second Republic witnessed more participation of women in politics. When the ban on political activity was lifted in 1978, about 52 political associations sought to be registered as parties. Among the associations, women floated two, eventually only five parties were registered and none of the women parties was registered.

The five registered political parties were; the Great Nigeria Peoples Party (GNPP), the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the Nigeria People's Party (NPP), the People's Redemption Party (PRP), and the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN). Women then resorted to forming women's wings of the registered parties and to campaign for the men (Nwankwo, 1996:18). This practice could be attributed to the fact that most women politicians today are neither representatives of women nor feminists but are rather just plainly politicians who are in most cases orchestrating politically for selfish end. During the election that ushered in civilian rule in 1979, a handful of women contested at various levels except the presidency and gubernatorial seats of the (then) 19 states. Four women contested for positions in the 45 members' senate but none won. A meagre three got into the Federal House of Representatives and only a total of five got seats in the State House of Assembly. The civilian government that was sworn in 1979 had three female federal ministers and most states had at least one female commissioner (Mba, 1982:81-82).

There was another election in 1983. Though fraught with contentions and allegations of malpractice, the election led to a marginal increase in the number of female legislators at the federal level with the election of Princess Franca Hadiza Afegbua as the only female senator of the Republic. She launched the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) in her ward in Etsako Local Government Area of the then Bendel state. She became the women leader in her Local government Area (LGA) and state and was a member of the state and national executive councils of the party. She won the nomination from among eight interested candidates in her senatorial district. She later won her district's senatorial seat in the National Assembly, thus becoming the first democratically elected female senator in Africa (Sani, op.cit:124). While in the senate, she served in the ministerial

screening committee, and was very active. There were two female House of Representatives members. Their term lasted only three months because of the December 1983 coup.

Women political participation in Northern Nigeria during the second republic was also encouraging. In 1983 election, three women were elected into the Federal House of Representatives. These women were Hajiya Kande Balarabe from Kano state (Secretary general of the women's wing of the PRP), Mrs., Sarah Dokotri and Mrs., Elizabeth Wuyeb both from Plateau State. Also in the south, Mrs. Sylvia Aisha Bakari from Cross River and Mrs. Olivia Ogbajoh were elected into the legislative arm of government. indeed the national election of 1983 showed that the number of women in the House of Representatives increased and in fact more than doubled; from three in 1979 to eight in 1983. At this time, women like Alhaja Basirat Ajiborisha became prominent politicians in Lagos and she was the first woman who contested for gubernatorial election in Lagos State under PRP (Sani, op.cit:125).

The Second Republic witnessed the emergence of the first set of women ministers. Among these ministers were Mrs. Adenike Egun Oyagbola, Minister of National Planning, the first women cabinet members; Late Mrs Janet Akinrinade, Minister of State for internal affairs; Mrs. Elizabeth Ivase, Minister of State for Education, Late Dr. Simi Johnson, Youth and Social Development and Mrs Asinobi, Minister of State for External Affairs. It is equally noteworthy that during the Interim National Government of Chief Ernest Shonekan, women served as secretary of state, which is equivalent to ministers of states. Women in this category included Chief (Mrs.) Bola Kuforiji-Olubi (Commerce), Mrs. Laraba Dagash (Health) and Bimbo Akintola.

### **3.4.2 The Third Republic**

General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida pioneered and aborted the Nigerian Third Republic. His administration lasted between 1985 and 1993. Except for the visibility of the First Lady, Mrs. Maryam Babangida who had a pet project, the Better Life Programme (BLP), which sought to enhance the living conditions of rural dwellers and women in particular, women remained underrepresented in governance. The BLP and the fanfare associated with it gave women some visibility and its beneficiaries enjoyed

enhanced economic power (Nkwankwo, 2006:16). However, the seeming gain and empowerment of women during this period has been christened 'femocracy'; the BLP and the succeeding Family Support Programme (FSP) were elitist and did not advance women's interest in real term (Mama, 1995:41). This post-colonial development in Africa gender politics i.e. femocracy is seen as "an antidemocratic female power structure which claims to exist for the advancement of ordinary women, but is unable to do so because it is dominated by a small clique of women whose authority derives from their being married to powerful men, rather than from any actions or ideas of their own. Femocracy exploits the commitments of the international movement for greater gender equality while actually only advancing the interests of small female elite and in the long-term undermining women's interests by upholding the patriarchal status-quo". It is defined as a feminine autocracy running in parallel to the patriarchal oligarchy upon which it relies for its authority and which it supports completely (Mama, 1995:41). This negates the notion of feminism, which is the popular struggle of African women for their liberation from the various forms of oppression they endure. Thus rather than empowering women, femocracy ties them to the apron string of men and makes them their (men) appendages. This is a blow to women real empowerment which thrives in a situation of independence and self assertiveness. Succinctly put, femocracy cannot be said to have enhanced gender equality or to, in any way, challenge conservative attitudes to women rather it has generated promises to appoint token women, and made the parading of expensively attired wives into a political tradition (Mama, 1995:56). In fact, it can be said that the practice during this period obliterated the hitherto collective struggle by Nigerian women that characterized women activism in the pre-colonial, colonial and first republic Nigeria. Ever since, women involvement in politics tends to depend largely on their affinity, relationship or closeness to powerful male politicians and or being the wife or daughter of an influential male citizen.

By the Third Republic, Nigerian women had improved slightly in terms of their political participation in the previous republics. Women mobilized themselves through seminars and conferences to gear themselves towards the transition. The prolonged transition witnessed progressive change in the participation of women in politics at all tiers in Nigeria. The 1987 local government election on non-party basis witnessed the

emergence of Chief (Mrs) Titi Ajanaku as the chairperson of Abeokuta Local Government in Ogun State despite contesting against many male aspirants. Similarly, women won elections into the chairmanship and councillorship positions in different parts of the country.

In Kano State, twenty-eight year old Mallama Yelwa Ha'u and Ladi Gwaram became councillors in Wudil and Dutse respectively. Also other women actively participated in party politics to the extent that three women politicians were leading the National Republic Convention (NRC) in Plateau, Lagos and Benue States at a time. These women were Helen Gomwalk – Plateau, Abosede Osinowo – Lagos and Susan Adagio – Benue. Even though women were actively involved in politics, only three women emerged as governorship aspirants. Chief (Mrs) Titi Ajanaku of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) came third in the governorship election in Ogun State out of ten male aspirants. Chief Segun Osoba eventually became the governor. Mrs Oluremi Adiukwu of the NRC came second in the governorship election in Lagos State out of six male aspirants. Michael Otedola who eventually became the governor narrowly defeated her. Mrs Hanatu Chollom contested the gubernatorial election in Plateau State under the NRC. In Cross River State, Cecilia Ekpenyong became deputy governor (Sani Op.Cit:127).

In preparation for its promised return of power to civilians in 1993, the military government conducted the local government and governorship elections in 1990. Out of a total of 1,297 local positions nation-wide, women won only 206. No woman was elected as the governor but two were chosen as Deputy Governors. In the 1992 elections to the National Assembly, only one woman got into the 90 member senate while 12 women won seats in the 638 members House of Representatives (Nwakwo, op.cit:19).

During the 1993 presidential election primaries that were suppose to conclude the process, there was a female presidential aspirant in the person of Mrs. Sarah Jubril of the Social Democratic Party. However, her presidential aspiration was cut short by her inability to win her party nomination in the primaries as she came fourth in the primaries (ibid). After the election had been won and lost by the men, the military government annulled the result and eventually handed over to an interim government headed by Chief

Ernest Shonekan. Of the 32 members in the Interim National Government (ING), only one, Bola Kuforiji Olubi, was a woman.

The ING was however terminated by another military government under the leadership of General Sani Abacha (now late) in November 1993. The military government, the sixth in the history of Nigeria, created the Ministry of Women Affairs in January 1995 to address women issues. In addition, the regime appointed two women – Mrs Mobolaji Osomo and Mrs Ada Adogu – as Minister and junior Minister of the ministries of Establishment and Agriculture respectively. These were the highest appointments women had ever got in a military regime in Nigeria.

The third Republic featured the election of only one female member in the 91 – member senate, 13 females in the 58–member House of Representatives, and 2 female deputy governors. In the presidential race, a number of women emerged as presidential aspirants in the different political parties. Mrs Sarah Jubril of the Social Democratic Party in particular demonstrated the enthusiasm of Nigerian women to take part in politics. The third Republic witnessed an unprecedented number of women going into active politics.

However, there is still a gap that has to be bridged in the different political parties. It has been said that women’s participation in politics has been hampered by tradition, financial constraints, and thuggery and negative male behaviours towards women (Sani op. Cit: 127). Nevertheless, there were fourteen elected women representatives in the National Assembly, one Senator and thirteen in the House of Representatives in the Third Republic<sup>2</sup>.

Thus, the political activities of women in the Third Republic can be summarized as follows: In 1992 out of 300 gubernatorial aspirants, nine were women and none of them won. Women held only four percent of party executive posts. In 1991, only 27 (2.3%) of 1,172 legislators in the various Houses of Assembly were women. At all levels, women constituted only 3.99 percent of SDP party executive and 4.32 percent of NRC. Women constituted only two percent of members of House of Representatives in 1992, up from less than one percent in 1980.

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix C for details

The death of the military head of state, General Sani Abacha, paved another way for the process of civilian democracy again. Thus, General Abdusalami Abubakar on whose shoulder the mantle of the leadership fell after Abacha was able to conduct elections in 1998 towards returning the country to another civilian regime in 1999.

### **3.4.3 The Fourth Republic**

The coming of General Abdusalami Abubakar as the Head of State in June 1998 started a fresh transition programme, which ushered in the Fourth Republic under the democratic government of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo in May 29, 1999.

A new political timetable was set up, beginning with the December 5, 1998 local government election under the nine political parties that were given provisional registration. The short period of the transition, in which there was a series of elections within a span of less than one year adversely affected women participation resulting in few women occupying elective offices. As a result, in the civilian government of 1999-2003, women held less than three percent of elective positions. At the Federal level, the President and Vice President were both men.

In the 109-member senate, there were only three women and in the 360 – member House of Representatives, there were just 12 women (UNIFEM, 1999:60).

Of the 36 states, there was no female governor. Of the 36 deputy-governors, there was only one woman; Senator Kofo Bucknor – Akerele and out of the 36 speakers of the State House of Assembly, there was only one woman, Mrs. Grace Icheen of Benue State, first of its kind in Nigeria and Africa, who was later forced to resign. The 36 State Houses of Assembly had 990 members, (an average of 28 members each) out of which there were 12 women, which implied that most states did not have any female member.

In the December 5, 1998 local government and councillorship elections, out of 8,810 councillors, only 143 were women, and out of 774 chairmen, only nine, were women. (Nwankwo op. cit: 17-18). The figures for elected officers by sex are as shown in the table below:

**Table 3.1: Number of men and Women Elected in 1999 Elections**

<b>ELECTIONS</b>	<b>MALE</b>	<b>FEMALE</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
L.G. Councillors	8,667	143	8,810
Chairmanship	765	9	774
State House of Assembly	971	12	983
Deputy Governors	35	1	36
Governors	36	0	36
House of Representatives	348	12	360
Senate	106	3	109
Vice President	1	0	1
President	1	0	1

**Source: Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), 1999**

Despite the spirited efforts put up by prominent women politicians like Chief (Mrs.) Titi Ajanaku, Chief Iyabo Anisulowo, Laila Buhari, Chief Joy Emordi, Oluremi Adiukwu and Dr. Stella O. Dorgu, no woman emerged as governor. There was however, one female deputy governor in the person of Chief (Mrs.) Kofo Akerele Bucknor for Lagos State, three Senators – Mrs. Khairat Abdulrazaq – Gwadabe (Abuja Municipal Area Council), Chief (Mrs.) Ita Giwa (Cross River State) and Mrs. Stella Omu (Delta Central). Out of 360 members, there are only twelve female legislators in the House of Representatives namely, Lynda Ikpeazu (APP, Anambra), Patricia Etteh (AD, Osun) Febisola Adeyemi (AD, Ondo), Mercy Almona – Isei (APP, Delta), Binta Garba-koji (APP, Kaduna), Dorcas Odujirin (AD, Lagos), Iquo Inyang (PDP, Akwa-Ibom), Gbemisola Fowora (APP, Kwara), Temi Harriman (APP, Delta), Omotola Abiola Edewor (AD, Lagos), Florence D. Aya (PDP, Kaduna), and Mary Edoni (PDP, Bayelsa). A total of twelve women emerged as members of State Houses of Assembly. In addition, out of 774 chairmen of local government council, only nine are women while 143 women emerged as councillors (Sani op. cit: 131).

It is noteworthy that the Second Republic marked the beginning of inclusion of women as members of the Federal Executive Council (ibid). Ever since, successive regimes have included women in its Executive Council although the number has

remained minimal. Through 1985 to 1997, Mrs. Emily, Aig – Imoukhuede served as Minister of Social Development, Youth and Sports. Mrs. Ada Adigu served as Minister of State for Agriculture while Mrs. Osomo was the Minister of establishment. Also, Ambassador Judith Attah served as pioneer Minister of Women Affairs, while Chief Iyabo Anisulowo and Professor Mariam Ikejiani – Clark served as Minister of State for Education and FCT respectively. This was followed by the appointment of Chief (Mrs.) Onikepo Akande as Minister of Industry, Mrs. Hajo Sani as the second Minister of Women Affairs and Dr (Mrs.) Rose Achunine as Minister of State for Education. In 1998, Dr. Laraba Abdullahi was appointed as the then new Minister of Women Affairs while Princess Adebisi Ogunneye was appointed Minister of State for FCT.

At the inception of the fourth Republic in 1999, there was an increase in the number of women ministers. For the First time in the history of Nigeria there were six (out of 49) women ministers. They were Dr (Mrs.) Kema Chikwe, Honourable Minister of Aviation who earlier served as Minister of transport, Hajjia Aishatu Ismail, Honourable Minister of Women Affairs, Dr (Mrs.) Bekky Igweh, Honourable Minister of State for Women Affairs (she was formerly with the Ministry of Solid Minerals), Mrs. Pauline Tallen, Honourable Minister of State for Science and Technology, Dr (Mrs.) Amina Ndalolo, Honourable Minister of State for Health, Chief (Mrs.) Modupe Adelaja, Honourable Minister of State for defence. In the same vein, Chief (Mrs.) Titilayo Ajanaku was appointed the special Adviser to the president on Women Affairs, and Dr (Mrs.) Catherine Acholonu, Senior Assistant on Culture and Tourism.

A Cabinet Minister reshuffle in February 2001 ushered in Mrs. Boma Bromilow Jack as the Minister of Culture and Tourism, bringing the number of female Cabinet Minister in the administration to three (ibid).

The above development is indicative of the recognition that women were capable of heading important and sensitive ministries in Nigeria. For instance, in the last military regime, Chief (Mrs.) Onikepo Akande was Minister of Industry, the first female in the nation's history to occupy such position. Dr Kema Chikwe became the first female Minister of Transport and later of Aviation. This is remarkable because men have for a long time dominated these ministries. At the state level, there were a good number of

women as commissioners. In addition, at the local government level, there were elected female councilors, supervisory councilors and chairpersons.

The 2003 elections further paved way for women progressive participation, though still marginal, in politics and governance. With the widening of the political space as evidenced by the eventual registration of 30 political parties for the 2003 elections, more women than ever before vied for various positions. At the end of the primaries, two women won their parties' nominations as presidential aspirants. These were Mrs. Sarah Jubril of Progressive Action Congress (PAC) and Major Mojisola Obasanjo of the Masses Movement of Nigeria (MMN) (CLO 2003:6). Two other women Hajia Mairo Habib and Hajia Asmau Mohammed of Justice Party and African Renaissance Party respectively won Vice-presidential Party nominations. Another two women won the gubernatorial nominations of their parties. In addition, five women got their parties' nominations for the positions of Deputy Governor in the 36 States. Many more women won nominations to various positions but most were with the newer and not-so-viable parties.

The results of National Elections showed that at the Federal level, men occupied the positions of President and Vice president. The 109 – member Senate still had just four females. Though there was, an increase in the number of women in the lower House, the 360 – member House of Representatives had 22 female members as against 12 in the 1999 – 2003 tenure (Field Research February 2007). At the Federal Cabinet level, women accounted for four out of 49 ministers (8.2%) in 1999, this increased to six (12.2%) in 2003, and 10 (20.4%) in 2007. There were also 10 women out of 35 Special Advisers (23%). Of the total 655 Career Diplomats in the Foreign Service, 77 are female, while out of 87 ambassadors, only 7 are female, of which there are 2 career and 4 non-career diplomats (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Abuja 2006). Also compared to the last administration, women were placed in more key ministries and advisory positions. For the First time in the history of Nigeria, two women – Mrs. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala and Mrs. Esther Nenadi Usman were in-charge of the Finance Ministry as Minister and Minister of State respectively. A woman Mrs. Mobolaji Osomo was the Minister of Housing. At the advisory level, two women – Mrs. Oby Ezekwesili and Mrs. Remi Oyo handled budget

and media respectively (Nwankwo op. cit: 18). Mrs. Oby Ezekwesili later became the Minister of Education.

It should equally be noted that there was no elected female governor during this period, of the 36 deputy governors, there were two women representing an increase since there was just one in the 1999 – 2003 dispensation. The two female Deputy Governors – Alhaja Salimat Badru and Erelu Olusola Obada – were those of Ogun and Osun States respectively. There were also two female speakers of the State Houses of Assembly – Ogun and Anambra States – Hon. Titi Sodunke – Oseni and Hon. Eucharika Azodo respectively (Hon. Azodo was however impeached prematurely). This equally represents an increase from the one female speaker the country had between 1999 and 2003. It should however be remarked that Mrs. Virgi Etiabu from Anambra State later emerged deputy governor due to the electoral victory accorded her party – All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) by the Election Petition Tribunal. She eventually emerged the governor of Anambra State, for a very short period, when her boss Mr. Peter Obi was controversially impeached by the state legislators. She however reverted to her position of Deputy Governor when the Law Court nullified Obi's impeachment (Field Research February 2007)

Thus in all of Nigeria's political history including the previous attempts at democratic rule, women were severely sidelined in terms of representation in government. Although they constitute about 50 percent of the population and 51 percent of voters in elections, women have never had more than three percent representation in National government (Nwankwo op. cit: 19). With military governments, women have been virtually non-existent in governance. However, as said earlier, beginning from the Babangida administration, women involvement in politics tends to depend largely on their affinity, relationship, or closeness to powerful male politicians and or being the wife or daughter of an influential male citizen. A cursory glance at the pattern of women who contested the 2007 election revealed that most of these women are those who have powerful political connections with powerful politicians by reasons of birth or marriage. Maryam Ali, who contested the 2007 senatorial elections in Delta North Senatorial constituency, is the wife of the then National Chairman of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) (The Punch 2007). Zainab Kure, representing Niger South Senate Constituency, is

the wife of the former Niger state Governor. She was at the time referred to as a political “green horn”. Her political credential was her eight-year rule as the wife of the Governor (Saturday *Punch*, 2007). Emen Ekaette is the wife of the former Secretary to the Government of the Federation. She represents Akwa-Ibom on the platform of the PDP. It is also believed that she would bring to the Senate the reputation of her husband. Iyabo Obasanjo-Bello is the eldest daughter of the former President Olusegun Obasanjo; she represents PDP Ogun Central Senate Constituency. Gbemisola Saraki-Fafowora, who represents the PDP Kwara Central Senate Constituency, is the daughter of the strongman of Kwara politics- Dr. Olusola Saraki. These women are not known to be women activists. They have no history of feminist activism. This political situation of women in contemporary times is contrary to what obtained of women leaders in the past (Olojede, 2009:13). Women leaders in the past (pre-colonial and immediate post-colonial periods) were in the forefront of the improvement of women’s political citizenship. In 1946, Abeokuta’s Women Union, under the leadership of Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, projected the special interests of women. This association was an amalgam of illiterate market women and educated women. These women were committed to the alleviation of the hardship of women as well as removal of fundamental causes of hardship (Olojede, 2009:13). These women leaders developed within their communities and therefore had no choice but to protect the special interests of the women they represented.

In Nigeria, the gender imbalance in the legislature was so pronounced. The situation could be seen from the analysis below.

**Table 3.2: Gender Distribution of the Senators (2003 - 2007)**

<b>GENDER</b>	<b>NO. OF SENATORS</b>	<b>% DISTRIBUTION</b>
Male	105	96.3
Female	4	3.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Office of the Clerk of Senate, National Assembly, Abuja, Nigeria**

From the above table 3.2, out of 109 Senators:

- (i) Four (4) Senators were female, accounting for about 3.7% of the total number of senators:
- (ii) Male Senators were one hundred and five (105) constituting about 96.3%;
- (iii) The ratio female Senators to male is 4:105, which approximately represents 1:26;
- (iv) This means, that to every twenty six (26) male Senators, in Nigeria, there was only one (1) female Senator; and
- (v) It showed a great gender imbalance and the reality that women were (and are still) not well represented in the law – making process in Nigeria.

In the same vein and against the global advocacy for gender equality in decision making in any nation to promote a better society, the situation in Nigeria is abysmally too low as men still dominate the stage. The table bellow equally shows the gender distribution of honourable members in the National Assembly.

**Table 3:3: Distribution of Honourable Members by Gender (2003 - 2007)**

<b>GENDER</b>	<b>HON. MEMBERS</b>	<b>%</b>
Men	338	93.9
Women	22	6.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Personnel Management Department, National Assembly, Abuja, Nigeria.**

From the table 3.3 above, out of 360 honourbale members in the Fifth Assembly (2003-2007) in Nigeria:

- (i) Twenty two (22) honourable members were female this accounted for about 6.1% of the total number of honourable members:
- (ii) The male honourable members were three hundred and thirty eight (338), which constituted 93.9%;
- (iii) The ratio of female honourable members to male honourable members was 22:338, which approximately 1:15;
- (iv) It then means that for every fifteen (15) honourable members, in Nigeria then, there was only one (1) female.

The above analyses show a great gender imbalance between male and female legislators in the House. It can be concluded that women were not well represented in the law-making process in Nigeria. For the emerging democracy in Nigeria to be sustained, all groups within the population must be actively involved in governance. Women's voice need to be heard and their experiences and expertise utilized for the optimal growth and development of the country. The empowerment of women and their involvement in governance will contribute to the development and deepening of the democratic system. These empowerment and women political participation require an all-inclusive and friendly policy and policy environment that will project and promote women values and bring them into the limelight in governance and societal administration generally. The examination of the policy environment and women political participation in Nigeria constitute the basis for discussion in the following chapter.

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**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**POLICY ENVIRONMENT AND WOMEN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN**  
**NIGERIA**

**4.1 Introduction**

The various challenges facing women in the face of the vital and enviable roles, which they play in the development process is well documented. Over the years, some considerable concern and commitment to issues affecting women have been generated. However, a major challenge for women, like other disadvantaged groups, is to seek ways and means for their self-emancipation and empowerment. One way by which women can do this is for them to avail themselves of the various opportunities provided by relevant national and international agencies and organizations interested in and or committed to their advancement by working assiduously towards influencing policy in their favour. It is imperative that any society that claims to be just, democratic, representative and progressive, must ensure women's significant presence and participation in the higher-level public policy decision-making positions. This chapter specifically addresses the policy environment and its impact on policymaking vis-à-vis women political participation in Nigeria. It is believed that participation in the policy process is pivotal to women active participation in politics since it is the policy outcome that determines the fate of women within the polity.

According to Kousoulas (1982:314), public policy is an aggregate of decisions and plans formulated by governmental authorities to deal with public and social problems and to determine the disposition of state revenues and other resources. It is a general plan of action adopted by government to solve societal problems. Policymaking is always largely influenced by the institutional arrangement of each political system; its hallmark is the desire on the part of the policy actors to make efforts to provide alternative ways of addressing public problems. A survey of the various aspects of Nigeria's public life since independence portends a state of pathology (Agagu, 2010:10). Agagu contends that public policy in Nigeria is characterized by instability. According to Agagu (Ibid), this observable phenomenon, which has implications on governance and political stability, is a product of four inter-related factors, Viz; one, the nature of the country's public policy

making and implementation, two, our policy actors, three, public institutions, and four, public policy environment.

The processes involved in policy making in any political system is reflective of the society, whether it is developed or underdeveloped; democratic or undemocratic. Nigeria is a heterogeneous state and a colonial creation. Thus, various contending interests are competing for relevance and supremacy within the polity. Therefore, policymaking tends to tilt in favour of that group or institution that can influence the power- that- be most. Since Nigeria is a patriarchal state, the men in most cases dominate the policy process and get their wish (es) implemented.

Policy framework in the country has been conducted in either a constitutional context (under Civilian Government) or autocratic context (under the military). In both cases, it is dominated by men and characterized by constant change, unethical behaviour, continuous pressures, conflicting values and competing political objectives. Public policy in Nigeria is elitist and top-down. Since men constitute the bulk of policy makers and implementers, most policies in Nigeria are masculine and are put up (inadvertently) to reflect the wishes and aspirations of the makers.

The policy environment in Nigeria suffers from most problems confronting many third world countries. These problems range from policy imposition, hasty adoption of imported policies, lack of policy goals, lack of social acceptability, lack of continuity in commitment to policy, lack of clear definition and co-ordination, as well as compromises during implementation. Others include lack of political will as well as lack of confidence in government policies by the citizenry (Egonmwan, 1999:242-251). Added to these is the problem of corruption, which affects policy choice and all aspects of policy process, as well as the dualist nature of Nigerian legal system that prevents automatic domestication of international agreements (especially those that have bearing on gender equality and women empowerment).

In the main, Nigeria's policy environment is said to be characterized by the following (Agagu, op cit.):

The first is importation of policies. This denies the citizenry of the necessary participation expected of them. Inability to accommodate inputs of the citizenry robs most policies of their expected richness and necessary support from the people. In other

words, policies are made for the people and not with the people. This portrays leadership in Nigeria as imposition in which governance is synonymous with the capricious will of those at the helm of affairs. In this wise, women are further relegated since formulated policies in most cases are men's and they protect patriarchal interest. The effect in most cases has been policy summersault and legitimacy crisis.

Second and emanating from above is the unnecessary rush in the adoption of policy. It is as if government alone knows everything about the people and the society. From these two features, policies become nothing short of imposition. Policymaking becomes devoid of policy analysis as well as implementation analysis. It is therefore not surprising that many of our policies end up in confusion and failure.

Third, policy implementation is often subjected to whims and caprices of the chief's executives or his associates. This implies that there is no commitment to policy continuity or stability. This is because policies are not tied to national goals. Deriving from the above is the culture of constantly abandoning policies initiated by previous governments.

Fourth, policy implementation is often affected by erratic budgetary allocations. Usually, this is governed by the fluctuating price of oil at international level as well as government's priority in terms of policies and programmes. Fifth is the late release of funds for programmes even when funds are available. One uncharitable development in the country since 1999 is late passage of federal budget. This greatly affects policy implementation. Sixth, the socio-political factors in the country greatly have serious effects on policy formulation and implementation. Some of these include resistance to change-attitudinal change. Seven, is the devastating effects of corruption on policy implementation. Many policies in the country have been truncated by corruption. In some cases, funds meant for the implementation of programmes have been diverted or embezzled through corruption, thus, signaling the end of the policies. Corruption has become a malignant cancer. Eight, is the impact of the uncertain economic environment. These have serious effect on funds available for executing policies. The location of Nigeria in the international capitalist system impinges greatly on the public policy process and in most cases subjects it to the dictates of the metropolitan countries and their

agents. Nine is the impact of international environment, which can have a commanding or demonstrating effect.

In the Nigerian environment, policy and practice are two different things largely due to lack of political will to ensure that signed policies by government are pursued with vigour to operationalise them. Constitutional provision of section 26 (2) defines who is a Nigerian citizen and it may be acquired by naturalization and registration. No provision is made for the process by which non-Nigerian men married to Nigerian women and who are so desirous may become Nigerian citizens as provided for foreign spouses of males.

A level playing ground can be attained through some constitutional policy reforms and a change of mindset and attitude acquired from the highly patriarchal society we are living in. It will however take the efforts and contributions of all, men, women, youths, the aged, the disabled, boys, and girls. It is a collective responsibility to be facilitated by leadership at all levels.

Thus, the existing structures and institutions as well as other avenues for policy formulation have not pursued gender sensitiveness with all the seriousness it deserves. Of particular relevance here was the composition of the on-going National Political Reform Conference, which is predominantly male dominated. Out of the 420 delegates to the National Political Reform Conference (NPRC), 31 were women. This had implication for policy formulation and women empowerment to the effect that policies, deliberations and legislations emanating there-from were likely to be more masculine friendly (Oke, 2005:52).

The Nigerian government has also formulated specific policies to resolve problems facing women in gaining entry into the Nigerian public administration. A notable government action was taken through the 1999 constitution to guarantee women's equality with men. Section 17 (1) of the 1999 Constitution states that the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be based on the principles of freedom, equality and social justice. Chapter II of the same constitution deals with non-justiceable directive principle of state policy. The state is enjoined to direct its policy towards ensuring that all citizens without discrimination on any ground whatsoever have the opportunity for securing adequate means of live-hood as well as adequate opportunities to secure suitable employment [Section 14 (3), Section 15 Sub-Section 12]. In addition, discrimination on

grounds of ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion, or political opinion is prohibited. Thus, a Nigerian citizen is not to be subjected either expressly, by or in the practical application of any law in force in Nigeria, or any executive or administrative action of the government, to disabilities or restrictions to which citizens of Nigeria or other group, place of origin, religion, political opinion or gender are not subject (Section 42) (1) (a) (b). Furthermore, a citizen of Nigeria is not to be accorded any privilege or advantage, which is not accorded to other citizens of Nigeria of other ethnic groups and interalia, gender (Olojede, 2009:12).

The underlying principle deducible from the constitutional provisions is that of equality of men and women before the law. This implies equality of rewards for work of the same kind performed by both men and women alike. Similarly enshrined is the right to work without discrimination on ground of gender. Legally, women have a right to equal place with men in decision- making bodies such as boardroom, parliament, and executive councils. However, in practice, the position is not that simple. There is a wide gap between theory and practice.

The reality is that all over the world there are numerous problems confronting citizens. At the same time, the state is seen as a problem-solving mechanism, while public policy is regarded as deliberate decisions to act (or not) in response to societal problems (Johnston, 2001:298). The inability of the Nigeria's patriarchal state, within its ability as a problem-solver, to accede to the imperatives of gender equality and active women political participation in governance, constituted the bane of women empowerment in the country. The state influences how women are viewed in society in various ways: through legislation, in how public institutions are staffed and run, and through social policies. These mechanisms can affect whether women are seen as autonomous individuals or as dependent of men (Oke, 2005:53). The Nigerian state has assumed the role of an octopoid that authoritatively allocates the country's resources as she likes and since men constitute the bulk of those wielding the state power; women are somehow relegated through the state practices.

## 4.2 The Nigerian State and its Constitution

Literature attests to the fact that from colonial time, constitution making in Nigeria has always excluded female legitimacy (Ityavyar, 2007:2). The Clifford Constitution of 1922 restricted the electorate to adult males in Calabar and Lagos who have been resident in the city for at least one year and had a gross annual income of N100:00. The Richard Constitution of 1946 only reduced the property qualification to N50:00. The Macpherson Constitution removed property qualification but still restricted the electorate to only adult males who pay their taxes while the Lyttleton Constitution of 1954 gave universal franchise in the East and West of Nigeria but limited to adult males in the North. Only in 1979 was the right to vote extended to all Nigerian women (Ityavyar, 2007:2).

Even in post-independence Nigeria, the country's constitution is always written in masculine language as if only men exist in the country. The constitution does not guarantee economic, social, and cultural rights to women, and the 1999 constitution does not provide any precise affirmative action clause. Though Section 26 of the 1999 constitution makes it possible for any man to confer citizenship on his foreign spouse by registration, no such provision is extended to women. Chapter 4, Section 42 of the 1999 constitution grants every citizen freedom from discrimination on the basis of their place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion (1999 Constitution FRN). Apart from the constitutional provision, Nigeria has also ratified international and regional human rights instruments such as Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (CRC), as well as being part of the International Consensus in the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), yet there are still widespread practices that discriminate against women participation in the political processes of decision-making. Article 12 of the Nigerian Constitution makes it impossible for Nigerian women to press for implementation of sections of those international and regional human rights instruments ratified by Nigeria prohibiting gender discrimination. The section states clearly that "no treaty between the (Nigerian) Federation and any other country shall have any force of law except to the extent to which any such treaty has been enacted into law by the National Assembly. Thus, Nigerian women criticize the 1999 Constitution as being largely gender insensitive.

One of the consequences of political discrimination against women is that it limits their opportunities to develop their full potential based on equality with men.

It is submitted that discriminatory practices to which women are subjected in politics and decision-making bodies cannot be justified under the constitution. Under the Electoral Act 2006, every citizen of Nigeria is qualified to vote and be voted for. Accordingly, women are not subjected to any legal disability, which their male counterparts are not subjected to under the laws dealing with local and national elections in the country. Although they can vote and be voted for, women have been relegated to the background in the politics of the nation as men constituted the bulk of decision-makers. Thus, men dominate the governance of the country contrary to the constitutional provisions of equal participation in governance.

Specifically, the following legal provisions and practices need to be repealed and outlawed to enhance more women participation in politics and gender equality:

- i. Section 26(2) of the Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999. The section provides that “a woman who is or has been married to a citizen of Nigeria; or every person of full age and capacity born outside Nigeria any of whose grandparent is a citizen of Nigeria.” This means that unlike her male counterpart, a Nigerian woman cannot confer residency rights on her spouse who is not a citizen of Nigeria.
- ii. Section 55(1) of Penal Code application in the Northern states provides that “Nothing is an offence which does not amount to infliction of grievous harm upon any person and which is done by a husband for the purpose of correcting his wife.” This is a violation of her right to dignity guaranteed by Section 34 of the 1999 Constitution.
- iii. The police Act (Cap 158) Laws of the Federation provide that a woman in police force must seek the permission of the Commissioner of Police in her area of service before she can marry. This law, which restricts the rights of policewomen to marry, is not applicable to their male counterparts.

- iv. Section 55 and 56 of the Labour Act which provides for the exclusion of women from underground work and restricts women from being employed for certain jobs are discriminatory provisions.
- v. The requirements for corroboration before conviction for rape in offence of sexual assault against a woman has continued to encourage the act of violence against women as conviction is usually difficult to secure even in cases that are manifestly bad.
- vi. Genital mutilation, a very deadly practice that has been outlawed in certain states in Nigeria but unfortunately this practice has not been prohibited by specific laws in most parts of the country.
- vii. The award of the custody of children of failed marriages to their fathers in accordance with the patrilineal nature of Nigerian society is discriminatory. Even where the father has proved to be irresponsible in the cause of the matrimonial relationship, the children's custody is awarded to him because "the rightful place of a child is the father's house" and not the mother's house."
- viii. Section 18 of the Marriage Act (Cap 218 LFN 1990) provides that if either party to an intended marriage is less than 21 years of age, a marriage license could be granted or a certificate issued but parental consent would have to be sought and it is the consent of the father that is required. This provision elevates the status of a father above that of the mother. It is discriminatory and should be discarded.
- ix. Early marriage has constituted so many problems to the girl-child as early marriage and eventual child pregnancy increase the risks of complication arising from Vesico-Vascular Fistulae (VVF) and Maternal Mortality; it also terminates abruptly the education of the girl child. Efforts should be made to outlaw this practice in all the States of the federation (Falana, 2009:8).

Conclusively, a lot of efforts have been made through judicial activism to get some of these discriminatory practices and laws struck down by the law courts

for being inconsistent with the constitutional provision of freedom from gender discrimination and therefore illegal but the obstacles and brick walls of locus standi have remained a stumbling block in the liberation of women through the law. Nigerian courts would therefore need to follow the new trends on the issue of locus standi in respect of corporate rights litigation. It is worrisome to note that Nigerian's Courts still hold on to the narrow interpretation of locus standi of "if your interest is not directly affected you cannot complain." Even fundamental rights provisions within Chapter IV of the Constitution also require that the litigant must have been directly affected. Section 46 of the Constitution provides that "any person who alleges that any of the provisions of this Chapter has been, is being or likely to be contravened in any state in relation to him may apply to a High Court in that state for redress." From the provision of that section, any other person or organization outside the person directly affected by the infringement will be termed a meddlesome interloper by the Courts. This trend is not healthy especially in a country like ours where about 75% of women folk are ignorant of their rights under the law. Non-governmental organizations and human rights activists should have access to court to protect and challenge the infringements of the rights of the less privileged and illiterate members of the society.

#### **4.3 The Nigerian State: National Policy on Women and National Gender Policy**

The democratic imperatives of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are such that has made most countries of the world to ascribe to the clarion call for gender parity and fairness. Most governments, NGOs and other stakeholders are now propagating the ideals of gender equity in all segments of life. The many years of unnoticeable clamour by women and other concerned bodies for gender equality has thus given way for gender sensitiveness by most governments of the world to address the problem of gender disparity and marginalization across the globe. To this end, Nigerian women have been strategizing, agitating, and orchestrating in their bid to engender parity within the polity. Nigerian government has also become a signatory to many international covenants and conventions to usher in women empowerment and gender equity.

The various activities embarked upon by the Nigerian women towards their empowerment paid off with the approval of the Federal government under president Obasanjo of the National Policy on Women (NPW) to address the plethora of problems and issues being confronted by the women fold, after failed attempts by four former heads of Nigeria's government, shortly after the inception of the Fourth Republic in 1999.

The National Policy on Women is the gateway for instituting stable democratic governance, where women's input in national development would be recognized and appreciated. It is therefore a policy for women's security and a guarantee for a future that is full of hope and promise. The policy fulfils the yearnings as well as efforts of Federal, State and Local Governments, Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), International Development partners, the private sector, concerned corporate bodies and individuals to integrate women fully into national development in order to remove those gender inequalities that have evolved in our society overtime through structures and processes created by patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism. The policy is expected to consolidate largely salient revolutionary changes already stimulated by past and current women in development programmes (NPW, 2000:7-8).

Equally, the National Policy on Women is seen as one of the most direct activities of chapter 11, section 17, and subsection 2 of the 1999 Nigeria Constitution, which states that:

“Every citizen shall have equality of rights, obligations, and opportunities before the law”. And subsection 3:

“All citizens, without discrimination on any group whatsoever, have the opportunity for securing adequate means of livelihood, as well as adequate opportunity to secure suitable employment”.

While the constitution guarantees equal rights for all citizens regardless of gender, circumstance of birth, etc; the National Policy on Women articulates into a coherent whole, all Gender and Development (GAD) policies and programmes and also formulates new policies that will actualize the provisions of the constitution (ibid). The philosophy behind this policy is based on national constitutional stipulations, the need to restructure the economy and our political and social institutions to ensure social equity and economic

growth; it also derives from our traditional commitment to the stability of the family and the complementariness of gender roles.

### **Goals of the Policy**

Specifically, the NPW aims at achieving the following:

- \* Raising national awareness of the citizens' constitutional rights and on a long-term basis, mobilizing and educating the public on human rights in order to remove legal, cultural, religious, and other constraints against the attainment of social justice and equity in the society.
- \* Ensuring the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.
- \* Instituting an effective Gender and Development (GAD) management structure for the co-ordination of all GAD activities in the country and ensuring the efficient implementation by all sectors concerned. The Ministry of the Women Affairs and Youth Development should coordinate these activities.
- \* Empowering women through enhanced strategic human resources development.
- \* Establishing a data bank based on the implementation of a comprehensive (nation wide) base line survey.

### **Objectives of the Policy**

Government is committed to the full integration of women into the development process to enhance their capacities for improving their economic, social, and political status as a means of developing fully the nation's human resources for national economic growth. The objectives of the National Policy on women are:

- \* Ensuring that the principles and provisions as contained in the Nigerian constitution are effectively enforced.
- \* Bringing into the mainstream gender perspective in all policies and programmes based on a systematic analysis at all levels of government.

Without doubt, the National Policy on Women is one of the dividends of democracy. It symbolizes the result of years of struggle by women NGOs, individual women and concerned gender sensitive organizations as well as international agencies working on gender issues. The policy thrust covers equity, social order and social well-

being, resource allocation, economic growth and efficiency, patriarchy, ideology and framework as well as culture.

Sectorally, it deals with women issues under education, science, and technology, health, employment, legal services, politics and decision-making, agriculture, industry, environment, social services etc clearly stating both the objectives and the implementation strategies. According to the new policy, the National Assembly shall provide adequate legislation to enable women to participate freely and equally in politics and decision-making. In addition, affirmative action of proportionate ratio or 30 percent representative will be employed to increase the total representative seats in each of the legislative houses, executive arm, party hierarchy, and structures, which shall be reserved for women for trial period up to the year 2010. Even under the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida, it was remarked by the president “the development of the nation will be carried out in partnership with the women and no one gender will be seen as the senior or junior partner in relationship”. (The very essence of section 2(h) of the National Commission for Women Decree 30 of 1989) (See *Daily Times*, 18<sup>th</sup> January 1993, pg.18).

Thus, there has been general progress around raising awareness on gender issues, but the degree of shift in mindsets is harder to assess. The future for women empowerment will depend very much on government’s willingness to back up their commitments to gender equality with resources. Women need to put their money where their mouth is and deal with the resistance to enforcing these rights. The grudging acceptance that “fine, women have rights”, is one thing, but the future of ordinary women depends on this recognition being translated into programmes on ground.

A cursory perusal of the National Policy on Women (NPW) signaled a superlative intention of the Obasanjo administration towards gender sensitiveness. It represents the first major attempt, albeit on paper, to integrate Nigerian women fully into national development and as such, it is seen as a plus for women struggle and democratic governance.

However, despite the fact that Nigeria’s constitution frowns at inequality and discrimination and Nigeria is a signatory to different international instruments protecting women’s rights as human rights, Nigerian women are still being discriminated against in education, employment, state and Federal legislature, state and Federal cabinet etc. as at

today. For example, in the first tenure of Obasanjo's government (1999 - 2003), there were three female senators out of 109 and the House of Representatives had 12 female members out of 360 members (*Daily Champion*, June 3, 2003:35). In the second tenure (2003-2007), the situation has not changed significantly. Men occupied the positions of the presidency and his vice. In the 2003 Senate, 4 out of 109 members were women (3.7%) while in 2007, 9 out of 109 members are women, constituting 8.3%. In the House of Representatives 23 out of 360 members were women in 2003, an insignificant 6.4%, 2 Deputy Governors out of 36 members resulting in 5.6% and the state Houses of Assembly have 38 women out of 990 members' totaling 3.8%.

In addition, the following statistics from the Federal Civil Service Commission equally reveals disparity in the number of men and women employment with men dominating the stage.

**TABLE 4.1: Percentage of Women & Men in selected Federal Ministries**

<b>Ministry</b>	<b>% of Men</b>	<b>% of Women</b>
<b>Presidency</b>	69.9	30.1
<b>Defence</b>	60.3	39.7
<b>Justice</b>	81.3	18.7
<b>Labour</b>	61.7	38.3
<b>Power</b>	68.5	31.5
<b>Women</b>	59.4	40.6
<b>Works</b>	72.1	27.9

*Source: Federal Civil Service Commission, 2007*

From the above, it is noted that the Nigeria state has not taken the problem of low participation of women in politics as well as their discrimination in the society seriously. Despite consenting to numerous international instruments such as the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948), the Covenant on Human Rights, and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, as well as enshrining the principle of equality of men and women in the national constitution, the Nigerian government has failed to aggressively address forces that inhibit gender equality. The myth of the women as a sexual domestic functionary still persists and

abides in many cultures. Under the common law tradition and in most of our indigenous cultural practices, a woman ceases legally to be a person upon her marriage. She was then without legal capacity. A husband and wife were regarded as the person, and the person was the husband. The personality of the wife is submerged into that of the husband (Omoleke and Bisiriyu, 2004:19).

To further consolidate on gender equality and women empowerment and in recognition of the extant National Women's Policy and other sectoral policies to respond to the challenges of gender inequalities and attendant low socio-economic indicators, a National Gender policy was developed to replace the women's policy (Ibrahim, 2006: Vii). The goal of the National Gender Policy is to "build a just society devoid of discrimination, harness the full potential of all social groups regardless of sex or circumstance, promote the enjoyment of fundamental human rights and protect the health, social, economic and political well-being of all citizens in order to achieve equitable rapid economic growth; evolve an evidence-based planning and governance system where human, social, financial and technological resources are efficiently and effectively deployed for sustainable development (NGP, 2006:17).

Some of the key principles upon which the policy is premised are:

- (a) Commitment to gender mainstreaming as a development approach and tool for achieving the economic reform agenda, evidence based planning, value re-orientation, and social transformation.
- (b) Recognition of gender issues as central to and critical to the achievement of national development goals and objectives and a requirement for all policies to be reviewed to reflect gender implications and strategies as contained in the gender policy and implementation modalities specified in the National Gender Strategic Framework.
- (C) Realization that effective and result – focused policy implementation demands a cooperative interaction of all stakeholders.
- (d) Promotion and protection of human rights, social justice, and equity. (ibid.)

The purpose of the National Gender Policy is to bring a gender perspective into all aspects of planning policy, developing legislation and transforming activities in

Nigeria. The gender policy should address the systematic inequalities between women and men in society without ignoring the fundamental differences between them. It prioritizes the empowerment of women as a way of achieving gender equality and is based on the premise that gender inequality is about power relations between men and women, and that any policy, plan, or practice that seeks gender equality must balance these power relations for the optimum benefit of both parties (NGP, 2006:7).

The National Gender Policy is to promote a cooperative approach within and across sectors, as gender becomes a crosscutting issue in development. This will thereby enable each sector to adapt and adopt gender frameworks into their policy thinking, planning, and practice as a matter of necessity and responsibility to the national mandate of ensuring gender equality in all national institutions, and projecting gender equality as a norm (ibid.)

The main goal of the National Gender Policy is therefore to establish a clear vision and framework to guide the process of developing laws, policies, procedures and practices that will ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men in all spheres and structures of government as well as in the workplace, the community and family.

The specific objectives of the National Gender Policy are to:

- \*Create an enabling environment for translating government commitment to gender equality into reality.
- \*Establish policies, programmes, structures, and mechanisms to empower women and to transform gender relations in all aspects of work at all levels of government as well as within the broader society.
- \*Ensure that gender considerations are effectively integrated into all aspects of government policies activities and programmes.
- \*Establish an institutional framework for the advancement of the status of women as well as the achievement of gender equality.
- \*Advocate for the promotion of new attitudes, values, and behaviour, and a culture of respect for all human beings in line with the new policy.

\*Strengthening the voice of women in civil society, in parliament and in other legislatures who have already made visible impact by challenging gender-blind laws and policies.

\*Enhancing the work that is already being undertaken by the Ministries of Women Affairs and the National Centre for Women Development at the national, state, and local government levels and those of other development agencies committed to issues of women empowerment, gender equality, and equity for all.

\*Guide the development of the National Gender Action Plan (NGAP) (ibid.).

The core strategies for achieving the objectives of the National Gender Policy include:

\*Policy, partnership, and programme reforms through mainstreaming of gender concern at all levels;

\*Gender education and capacity building to enhance necessary technical expertise and positive gender culture;

\*Legislative reforms to guarantee gender justice and respect for human rights and

\*Economic Reforms for enhanced productivity and sustainable development, especially that which addresses the needs of women and children, and other vulnerable groups.

Information and communication, research data as well as monitoring and evaluation are supportive strategies for achieving the policy goal (NGP, 2006: viii).

Lofty as the intention, purpose, goals, and objectives of the National Gender Policy are, a clear demonstration of lack of political will by the government for implementation as well as confronting patriarchy and mobilizing resources for achieving result have impeded their realization.

#### **4.4 Women and the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy**

##### **(NEEDS)**

The condition of women in Nigeria demands; target-specific and result – oriented strategies, to promote women’s visibility in the economy. Thus, it is imperative that women’s concerns are considered at both the level of planning and implementation of

national economic plans or policies. Since women are generally poor (Womanifesto, 2006:2), the process of economic reforms should provide an opportunity for economic empowerment of Nigerian women. Unfortunately, the conceptualization, stated priorities and implementation of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) seems to indicate that the economic development of women is not a priority under the reform agenda. The challenge for women and women's organization is to identify the gender issues in the economic policies and find ways to engender their implementation (Womanifesto, 2006:3-4).

The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) was the response to the development challenges of Nigeria. NEEDS is Nigeria's plan for prosperity. It is the people's way of letting the government know what kind of Nigeria they wish to live in, now and in the future. It was the government's way of letting the people know how it plans to overcome the deep and pervasive obstacles to progress that the government and the people have identified. It is also a way of letting the international community know where Nigeria stands in the region and in the world and how it wishes to be supported. The primary aim of NEEDS is to create a new Nigerian citizen who values hard work and who realizes that one cannot have something for nothing (NEEDS Document, 2004: VIII).

In the Nigerian democratic setting, women do not participate actively, this is attributable to the masculine democratic culture in the country. A true art of democratic development and change requires a partnership of governance between men and women. Hence, the democratic culture of partnership should have theoretical connections with gender reformative policies as the feminist's challenge to the Nigerian experience of patriarchal democracy.

The inevitability of change in the relations of economic empowerment of women is very imperative today, if at least half of humanity is to be carried along in the nation's development. In the quest for power and disentanglement from the shackles of diverse crippling indoctrination that tends to dis-empower women; there is the need for a proper perceptive analysis of the central concept of political autonomy, which definitely points

to the stimulating and overriding impact of accumulative economic resources on politically oriented matters (Adadevoh, 2004:19). Thus, the clarion call for democratic empowerment of women must be preceded by their economic empowerment. Though economic empowerment may not readily translate into political empowerment, nonetheless women's economic empowerment acts as a catalyst to other modes of empowerment like political, social or educational. On this ground, the place of women on the economic positional ladder of any democratic nation affects their political empowerment in significant ways.

The NEEDS vision is based on the constitution; The Kuru declaration; previous initiatives, such as vision 2010; and the widespread consultation and participation throughout Nigeria that was part of the NEEDS process.

The Kuru Declaration embodies the vision:

To build a truly great Africa democratic country, politically united, integrated and stable, economically prosperous, socially organized, with equal opportunity for all and responsibility from all, to become the catalyst of (African) Renaissance, and making adequate all-embracing contributions, sub-regionally, regionally and globally (Ibid).

The NEEDS vision is one in which Nigeria fulfills its potential to become Africa's largest economy and a major player in the global economy. Its major focus is therefore economic empowerment.

NEEDS focuses on four key strategies: reorienting values, reducing poverty, creating wealth, and generating employment. It is based on the notion that these goals can be achieved only by creating an environment in which business can thrive, government is redirected to providing basic services, and people are empowered to take advantage of the new livelihood opportunities the plan will stimulate. It specifies that all citizens, regardless of gender, race religion, or politics, should feel that they have a stake in Nigeria's future and that their loyalty and diligence will be rewarded.

To improve the lives of the Nigerian people, NEEDS includes plans for creating jobs, creating affordable housing, improving health care services, strengthening peace and security.

The NEEDS documents identified six groups as being vulnerable, these are the rural poor, the urban poor, women, youth, children and the rural communities. In the particular case of women, the NEEDS targeted instruments for protecting them include; affirmative action to increase women's representation to at least 30 per cent in all programmes, education, including adult education; scholarship; access to credit and land, material and child health.

As a necessary complement to NEEDS, State Governments are developing State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (SEEDS). Within the states, local government will be encouraged to develop medium term development programmes, specifying programmes, benchmarks and targets, deliverables, timelines and implementation guides. These plans, called Local Economics Empowerment and Development Strategies (LEEDS), will complement SEEDS and NEEDS. NEEDS recognizes that effective planning at the local level is critical to reducing or eliminating waste and inefficient resource allocation and to ensure integrated rural development and poverty reduction. Local governments and state governments are much closer to the people and are better positioned to deliver many social services (NEEDS Document, 2004: 103-104)

However, as costly as the goals and vision of NEEDS are it should be stressed that Nigerian women did not provide the necessary input(s) into its formulation as well as implementation. Men dominated the formulation and implementation stages of NEEDS. Since the interest of the neglected is in most cases neglected in policy formulation and when represented, such interest does not usually reflect the wishes and desires of the neglected. The comatose nature of the economy coupled with male dominance has ensured that women are relegated into the background. The stiff economic realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have made most financial institutions to be moribund. Thus, women are

really affected by the harsh economic realities. There is no legislation to ensuring that the affirmative action to increase women's representation to at least 30% in all programmes; education, scholarships, access to credit and land, maternal and child health is implemented. Therefore, women lack the necessary collateral to access bank loans and worse still, there is no provision for gender budgeting. This has contributed to the economic hardship of women as well as their quest for gender equity. Mrs. Umar corroborated this when she reiterated that:

NEEDS is not gender sensitive, men have access than women. The so-called gender economic empowerment strategies in the granting of soft loans, both at micro and macro level, palled to insignificance considering the capital needed to start a worthwhile business in the present day Nigeria. Women should be helped to be processors at the rural level through more access to credit from the government<sup>3</sup>.

Women constitute about 70% of agricultural labour force, yet, most of them do not have access to land, training, credit and neither do they have access to the basic socio-economic infrastructure such as maternal health-care and family planning services, water supply, electricity and so on. Women are subjected to enterprises that require little or no capital and training. Government has low investment in socio-economic infrastructures that are of vital importance to women, such as education, health, water supply e.t.c. For instance, in Nigeria, about 47% of the urban population is not supplied with water, yet potable water constitutes 48% of major household problems. The economic marginalization of women has resulted in the feminization of poverty and declining living condition in Nigeria, as is pronounced in social indicators such as the Human Development Index (Womanifesto, 2006:2)

Economic reforms and the attendants liberalization of the economy affect women more as they become the economic "shocks absorbers" of their households. Their roles in

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<sup>3</sup> Personal interview with Dr. (Mrs.) Lydia Umar at the office of Gender Awareness Trust, Barnawa shopping complex on 18/12/2007 in Kaduna

the provision of food and water expose them to services hardships due to increasing costs of foodstuff, water, and cooking fuels. Women are disempowered by their limited access to and control of economic resources. This is because there are gender biases in the allocation of state resources (Ibid). Women have not benefited from the privatization of the commanding heights of the economy, which is one of the key policies of the present government. Men occupy the top echelons of corporate Nigeria, and most women lack the financial capacity to buy into privatized companies.

The issue of health and the Nigeria woman has become a serious one, as women's reproductive role has continued to expose them to health risks. Poverty has put the high cost of medical services out of reach of most women. This is also coupled with lack of economic empowerment and poor nutrition. According to UNICEF rating, Nigeria has one of the highest mortality rates in sub-Saharan Africa. The mortality rate is about 704 per every 100,000 births. Furthermore, women's failing health is also closely linked to that of infant mortality rate because of the reproductive role of women. Infant mortality rate is 105 per 1,000 live births while under -5-mortality rate was placed at 178 per 1,000. In addition, Nigeria has the second highest number of maternal deaths in the world approximately 37,000 maternal deaths per year (WHO report 2004 in Womanifesto, op. cit. 41-42).

To cushion the effect(s) of these economic realities on Nigerian women and to also benefit from the NEEDS policy, government should establish special credit schemes for small, medium and large scale women entrepreneurs and as well encourage entrepreneurial spirit in women through public enlightenment programmes .

#### 4.5 Nigerian State and the Electoral Act 2006

The Electoral Act 2006 establishes Independent Electoral Commission and regulates the conduct of Federal, State and Area council elections. It also repeals the Electoral Act, 2002. The Act specifies the modalities for the establishment and functions of Independent National Electoral Commission. It deals largely with all the processes and procedures involved in the peaceful conduct of Elections in the country. The Act contains 166 sections and 10 parts. It is however disheartening that none of these sections and parts addresses issues of concern to women. Since men dominate the country's political space, the language of the Act is masculine and no special provision/reservation is made for women. For example, section 109, which discusses the qualification for election in the country, maintains that; A person shall be qualified for election under this Act if **he**:

- a. is a citizen of Nigeria;
- b. is registered as a voter;
- c. has attained the age of 25 years for councilor and 30 years for chairman and vice-chairman;
- d. is educated up to at least the school certificate level or its equivalent; and
- e. is a member of a political party and is sponsored by that party (Electoral Act, 2006:A54).

Thus, it can be said that the Act as enacted does not provide for any succour for women and women politicians. Since the Act was couched in masculine languages and has not given any special consideration for women, it exposes those (women) to stiff and unreserved competition with men. Given the violent nature of Nigeria politics and its characterized insecurity in the hands of the male dominating elements, women are further schemed out of political existence by the Electoral Act. For women to be more

accommodated by the Act, it is suggested that special provisions in terms of waiver be incorporated into the Act to allay the fear of Nigerian women for partisan politics.

Apart from the National Gender Policy on women, all the other policies/strategies/Acts on women discussed in this section, have very little input from women who are routinely absent from their formulation. Government has not taken adequate measures to ensure participation of women in issues affecting them. Women bear most of the economic burdens of the family; they are therefore more susceptible to effects of climate change, as it affects their economic power. There is no faithful implementation of the established policy framework hence there is a wide gap between policy prescription and practice.

#### **4.6 INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT AND POLICIES**

In discussing the policy environment, attempt is also made to examine policies in the international environment with consequential impact on women political participation in Nigeria. This is because these international policies have provided the necessary impetus for the women's movement generally. Consequently, this section discusses the African Union: Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, the New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD) and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

##### **4.6.1 African Union: Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa**

The Heads of State and Government of Member States of the African Union, meeting in the Third Ordinary Session of their Assembly in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 6-8 July 2004 opined as follows:

“Reaffirming our commitment to the principle of gender equality as enshrined in Article 4(1) of the Constitutive Act of the African Union, as well as other existing commitments, principles, goals and actions set out in the various regional, continental and international instruments on human and women's rights, including the Dakar Platform for Action (1994), the Beijing platform for Action (1995), the Convention on the Elimination of

All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW-1979), the African Plan of Action to Accelerate the Implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platform for Action for the Advancement of women (1999); the outcome Document of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Implementation of the Beijing platform for Action (2000). UN Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security; and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and peoples' Rights on the Rights of women in Africa (2003)... hereby agree to:

1. Accelerate the implementation of gender specific economic, social, and legal measures aimed at combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic and effectively implement both Abuja and Maputo Declarations on Malaria, HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and other related infectious Diseases.
2. Ensure the full and effective participation and representation of women in peace process including the prevention, resolution, management of conflicts and post conflict reconstruction in Africa as stipulated in UN resolution 1325 (2000) and to also appoint women as Special Envoys and Special Representatives of the African Union.
3. Launch within the next one year, a campaign for systematic prohibition of the recruitment of child soldiers and abuse of girl children as wives and sex slaves in violation of their rights as enshrined in the African Charter on Rights of the child.
4. Initiate, launch and engage within two years sustained public campaigns against gender based violence as well as the problem of trafficking in women and girls; Reinforce legal mechanisms that will protect women at the national level and end impunity of crimes committed against women in a manner that will change and positively alter the attitude and behaviour of the African society.
5. Expand and Promote the gender parity principle that we have adopted regarding the Commission of the African Union to all the other organs of the African Union, including its NEPAD programme, to the regional Economic Communities, and to the national and local levels in collaboration with political parties and the National parliaments in our countries;

6. Ensure the active promotion and protection of all human rights for women and girls including the right to development by raising awareness or by legislation where necessary;
7. Actively promote the implementation of legislation to guarantee women's land, property, and inheritance rights including their rights to housing;
8. Take specific measures to ensure the education of girls and literacy of women, especially in the rural areas, to achieve the goals of "Education for All" (EFA);
9. Undertake to Sign and ratify the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa by the end of 2004 and to support the launching of public campaigns aimed at ensuring its entry into force by 2005 and usher in an era of domesticating and implementing the Protocol as well as other national, regional and international instruments on gender equality by all States Parties;
10. Establish AIDS Watch Africa as a unit within the Office of the Chairperson of the Commission who should render annual report on HIV/AIDS situation in the continent during annual Summits; and promote the local production of anti-retroviral drugs in our countries;
11. Accept to establish an African Trust Fund for Women for the purpose of building the capacity of African women and further request the African Union commission to work out the modalities for the operationalization of the Fund with special focus on women in both urban and rural areas;
12. Commit ourselves to report annually on progress made in terms of gender mainstreaming and to support and champion all issues raised in this declaration, both at the national and regional levels, and regularly provide each other with updates on progress made during our ordinary Sessions;
13. We request the chairperson of the African Union Commission to submit, for our consideration an annual report, during our ordinary sessions, on measures taken to implement the principle of gender equality and gender mainstreaming, and all issues raised in this Declaration both at the national and regional levels.

The African Charter on Human and People's Rights, in Article 2 reaffirms the pledge to eradicate all forms of colonialism from Africa, coordinate and intensify efforts to

achieve a better life for the peoples of Africa, taking into consideration the virtues of the historical tradition and the values of African civilization, to consider the Chapter of African Union (AU) which stipulates that “freedom, equality, justice and dignity are essential objectives for the achievement of the legitimate aspiration of the African peoples. This is a unique charter that entrenched political rights as well as socio-economic and cultural rights which include non-discrimination on the basis of race, sex, colour among others, and equality before the law, respect for life and integrity of person, non-exploitation, right to liberty and security of persons etc. Article 18 (3), states that states shall ensure the elimination of discrimination against women and also ensure the protection of the rights of the woman and the child as stipulated in International Declarations and Conventions (WACOL 2001:11). Nigeria ratified this charter on 17 March 1983.

Lofty as the above resolutions are, it should be stressed that the resolutions if implemented are capable of reducing the gender imbalances in most African countries. The resolutions served as impetus to women empowerment and further reinforced Article 3 of the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights. Specifically the Article maintains that,

- i. every individual shall be equal before the law
- ii. every individual shall be entitled to equal protection of the law (JDPC 1998:110)

However, it can be said with regard to the implementation of the Resolutions in Nigeria that implementation is haphazardly done with minimal success in most cases. Concrete steps like legislation, waiving of nomination fees, and special reservation have not been taken towards enhancing women’s feasibility and active participation in politics and governance generally. While countries like South Africa, Botswana, Rwanda, Uganda e.t.c have taken bold steps that have enhanced women political participation, the Nigerian state is still grappling with the problem of domesticating

these international resolutions. This has culminated among other factors, in the low-level participation of women in governance. The absence of strong political will to prosecuting gender equality implies low political participation for women as in most cases the enabling legislation and environment are not there.

#### **4.6.2 The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)**

The programme is anchored on the determination of Africans to extricate themselves and the continent from the malaise of underdevelopment and exclusion in a globalized world. The objective of NEPAD is to provide an impetus to Africa's development by bridging gaps in priority sectors to enable the continent catch up with the developed world. This will make 'Africa not to be wards of benevolent guardians but 'architect of their own sustained upliftment'.

The rules that regulate the behaviour and values of men and women in a given society and the status derived thereof, that is, its gender system have the potentials to impact nearly on every aspect of the NEPAD document which is to ensure that the continent achieves the agreed International Development Goals (IDGs). NEPAD then, enumerates the IDGs as "to reduce the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by half between 1990 and 2015, to enroll all children of school age in primary schools by 2015, to make progress towards gender equality and empowering women by eliminating gender disparities in the enrolment in primary and secondary education by 2005, to reduce infant child mortality ratios by two thirds between 1990 and 2015, to who need reproductive health services by 2015 and to implement national strategies for sustainable development by 2005-2015 so as to reverse the loss of environmental resources by 2015.

Past leaders have been very 'corrupt and badly managed the economy coupled with slavery' where African women were sexually abused by slave masters. The blame can, therefore, not be put at the doorstep of women because the political scene has been the exclusive preserve of men. It was, therefore, auspicious when NEPAD constructively acknowledged that women need to be included in the new phase of governance. The inclusion of women is propitious given that democracy and state legitimacy have been redefined to include accountable government, a culture of human rights and popular participation as central elements.

This by implication means that ‘States shall take appropriate measures to ensure to women, on equal terms with men and without any discrimination, the opportunity to represent their Governments. However, most international instruments that the Nigeria’s state has ratified are not fully implemented due to their declarative nature. More so, the country’s political and cultural environment equally prevented the domestication and implementation of these instruments’. Good governance will ensure the integration of gender perspective in legislation and public policies programmes and projects. It also entails establishing and or strengthening effective national machinery, supported by gender mainstreaming throughout government department, to advise on the impact on women of all government policies, monitor the situation of women comprehensively and help formulate new policies and effectively carry out strategies and measures to eliminate discrimination. This is because development programmes that do not articulate the peculiar interest of women are bound to fail. Thus part of the primary aim of sustainable development in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general should be to ensure a better standard of living for present and future generation of women. It is in consequent of the foregoing that the joint responsibility that African leaders agree to take in achieving the objectives of NEPAD, needs to be revisited so as to mainstream gender into them since only one of the responsibilities is gender specific.

Another goal of NEPAD is ‘to ensure that the continent achieves the agreed International Development Goals (IDGs). It is recognized that gender equality is important for achieving the MDGs where NEPAD goals is drawn from. It follows, therefore, that gender equality is necessary for achieving NEPAD. This makes gender a cross cutting concern for achieving NEPAD. Although the document failed to formulate goals and objectives to articulate current discourse on women’s rights; there is urgent need for women’s human rights advocates to call for inclusion of a broader range of gender equality initiative in the strategies to be adopted to achieve NEPAD at the national and sub- regional level to ensure success at the continental levels. The observation of the 2003 Human development Report on achieving the MGDs that gender equality is at the core of whether the Goals will be achieved – from improving health and fighting disease, to reducing poverty and mitigating hunger, to expanding education and lowering child mortality, to increasing access to safe water, to ensuring environmental sustainability

(UNDP 2003) is apt to achieving NEPAD more so that NEPAD seeks 'to achieve the agreed IDGs (NEPAD Document); in Africa, 340 million people, or more of the population live on less than US\$1 per day (ibid.), women constitute the bulk of this population bracket. Poverty eradication cannot be achieved without special focus on women who constitute a great percentage of the population and the work force in the informal sector. In addition, the AIDS epidemic has had a devastating impact on individuals, communities, national development, the mortality rate of children under 5 years is 140 per 1,000, and life expectancy at birth is only 54 years. Only 58% of the populations have access to safe water. The rate of illiteracy for people over 15 is 41%. NEPAD calls for the reversal of this abnormal situation by changing the relationship that underpins it. African leaders are:

'Convinced that a historic opportunity present itself to end the scourge of underdevelopment that afflicts Africa. The resources including capital, technology and human skills, that are required to launch a global war exist in abundance are within our reach. What is required is to mobilize these resources and to use them properly is bold and imaginative leadership that is genuinely committed to a sustained human development effort and the eradication of poverty, as well as a new global partnership based on shared responsibility and mutual respect.

Optimal use of human resources may be elusive against the backdrop that African women are mostly excluded from the political process and decision-making. This is capable of having far-reaching effect on dialogues on Gender and NEPAD even where gender issues have been integrated into NEPAD framework with development agencies. This calls for sustained advocacy on women's participants in the political process and decision-making in Africa. Strategies that could be adopted to achieve this objective include sustained advocacy campaign to compel political parties to mainstream gender in their framework and raising awareness of women who form a veritable percentage of the voting population to hold them accountable.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) acknowledges that the new phase of globalization is associated with the emergence of concepts of security and self-interest, encompassing the right to development and the eradication of poverty and promotion and protection of women's right. Poverty eradication cannot be achieved

without special focus on women who constitute a great percentage of the population and the work force in the informal sector. Development programmes that do not articulate the peculiar interest of women are bound to fail. This implies that women and their complex social and economic relation should constitute an important part of the primary referents of security. Thus, part of the primary aim of sustainable development in Nigeria should be to ensure a better standard of living for present and future generation of women.

Another instance at the gender neutrality of the NEPAD document is the objective that seeks to bridge the education gap ‘to work for improvements in curriculum development, quality improvements, and access to ICT; to expand access to secondary education and improve its relevance to Africa’s development, to promote networks of specialized research and higher education institution’. Not only were also genders neutral. It failed to mention that information technologies would be integrated into girls’ education and women’s literacy programmes to expose girls to new technologies at early stages and allow for much needed integration of these two programme areas. Beyond access to basic education, girls and women must be equipped with skills to prepare them for a range of roles as information users, creators, designers, and managers. Therefore, actions could have indicated increasing the number of women and girls studying subject in formal schooling and seeking IT training outside of school, as well related areas to help them fully utilize IT skills.

In principle, NEPAD favours equal right for women. One of its goals is ‘to make progress towards gender equality and empowering women by eliminating gender disparities in the enrolment in primary and secondary education by 2005. But in practice it proposes almost nothing on the form of action to realize these principles’. The expected outcomes of NEPAD are gender neutral. For instance, it did not state the ratio of men to women that employment will be provided for. It also did not state percentage of women that would be economically empowered in order to achieve reduction in poverty and inequality.

Furthermore, actions to achieve the sectoral priorities are gender neutral in NEPAD. This defeats the primary purpose of sustainable development as far as it fails to ensure a better standard of living for present and future generation of women. Nothing is proposed in the areas of democracy, good governance and human rights which are not only crucial

for women's advancement but which are supposed to be NEPAD's priority areas of interest. NEPAD's introductory statement on gender equality, therefore, proves to be nothing more than window dressing, lip services, and hot air. They are not followed by any identification of the gender issues in these areas, let alone the formulation of goals and objectives to address gender issues in these areas.

Other strategies to bridge the education gap going by the requirement of CEDAW and Beijing include the obligation on the part of government to ensure gender equality at all levels of education primary, secondary and university, as well as in technical training, continuing education, and literacy programmes. This involves not only providing equality of opportunity to enter school, but also taking whatever measures are necessary to ensure that girls and women are supported to be able to complete their education on a basis of equality with boys and men. The huge gender gaps in literacy, education, wealth, and access to power are the result of discriminatory practices. These practices do not exist only at the social and traditional level. To different degrees, in all African countries, these discriminatory practices are entrenched in law and in the general regulations governing government and corporate bureaucratic practice. Government is the principal perpetrators of discrimination against women and the enforcers of their continued oppression. Government must take the special obstacles that prevent girls and women from obtaining education into account and develop approaches to overcome them. The implication of the foregoing is that a wide range of economic, social, and cultural barrier must be addressed to achieve gender equality in primary education including demands for girls' labour at home and income-generating opportunities will be limited. All measures sensitive to the particular obstacles blocking girl's access to education need to be implemented.

#### **4.6.3 The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979 and it came into force in 1981. The Nigerian Government ratified CEDAW in 1985. The United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) has rightly described CEDAW as 'a Bill of

Rights for Women'. CEDAW has placed women at the centre of human rights concerns. Consisting of a preamble and thirty articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. The Convention provides the basis for the realization of equality between men and women through ensuring women's access to equal opportunities in all spheres of life: political, economic, social, and cultural. CEDAW has been a veritable instrument for the guidance of State Parties on measures for the protection of women against all forms of discrimination against women to guarantee equality, development, and peace. Many State parties, however, including Nigeria have been unable to fully comply with their obligations under CEDAW, which has resulted in continued inequalities that adversely affect women in all spheres of human endeavour and permitted societal acceptance of various forms of violence against women. CEDAW is yet to be domesticated in Nigeria more than 26 years after its ratification. This is due to many inter-related factors; however, primarily there is a lack of political will. The general political and social climate is not supportive to the implementation of CEDAW. Cultural and religious norms perpetuate ingrained inequalities between the sexes and everyday life in Nigeria is marked by patriarchal attitudes. The promise of equality, which CEDAW holds for Nigerian women, thus remains unfulfilled.

Nigeria as a State Party to CEDAW in fulfillment of its obligation under *Article 18* submitted its 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Periodic Country Reports (covering the period 1994–2002) outlining progress recorded on the implementation of the Convention. The reports were considered at the CEDAW Committee's 638<sup>th</sup> and 639<sup>th</sup> meetings during its 30<sup>th</sup> Session held in New York from the 12<sup>th</sup> -30<sup>th</sup> January 2004. The country also submitted its 6<sup>th</sup> periodic report to the committee for review in June 2008. The obligation on State Parties to give periodic report to the CEDAW committee has largely been an effective mechanism to monitor the implementation of Government's commitment to the implementation of the CEDAW Treaty. The Nigerian 6<sup>th</sup> report is a commendable attempt to give a situational analysis and evaluation of the outcomes of its efforts to fulfill its obligations under CEDAW. The report, however, has not presented the full account of the status of women within the reporting period. This inaccuracy is, in part, due to an acute lack of in-depth statistical information and failure to record issues that

affect women. This dearth of reliable data acutely handicaps the compilation of Nigeria's country reports and prevents the Government from presenting an accurate account of the progress of implementation. In addition, the failure to domesticate CEDAW, despite several attempts and legislative advocacy by both civil society groups and the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, has resulted in the absence of the necessary legal imperatives to fully implement Nigeria's obligations under CEDAW.

Since the adoption of CEDAW, it has become a reference point for the women's movement in the demand for gender equality. The Convention "reflects the depth of the exclusion and restriction practiced against women solely on the basis of their sex by calling for equal rights for women regardless of their marital status in all fields-political, economic, social, cultural, and civil. It calls for national legislations to ban discrimination, recommends temporary special measures to speed equality between men and women" (UNESCO, 1999:6). Thus, it is now internationally recognized that the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, including discrimination from participating in public affairs, is a veritable means of redressing exclusion and gender lopsidedness of power structures, as well as a potent instrument of national development (Ibeanu, 2009:1). This recognition has given a great fillip to wide interest and support for a gendered expansion of the political space, particularly in "underdeveloped emerging democracies like Nigeria.

As a policy instrument for the advancement of women's cause, attempt is therefore made here to appraise efforts of the Nigerian Government at domesticating CEDAW as well as strengthening the mechanisms for implementing its provisions. This appraisal is done alongside five major Articles of the Convention that I considered germane to gender equality and women political participation as follows:

#### **ARTICLE 2:**

##### **Obligation of the States to eliminate discrimination against women, to implement principles of equality between men and women**

*States Parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women and, to this end, undertake:*

*(a) To embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation if not yet incorporated*

*therein and to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle;*

*(b) To adopt appropriate legislative and other measures, including sanctions where appropriate, prohibiting all discrimination against women;*

*(c) To establish legal protection of the rights of women on an equal basis with men and to ensure through competent national tribunals and other public institutions the effective protection of women against any act of discrimination;*

*(d) To refrain from engaging in any act or practice of discrimination against women and to ensure that public authorities and institutions shall act in conformity with this obligation;*

*(e) To take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organisation or enterprise;*

*(f) To take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs, and practices that constitute discrimination against women;*

*(g) To repeal all national penal provisions which constitute discrimination against women.*

#### **4.6.3.1 Overview of the Situation/Problem Statement**

Nigerian laws that are discriminatory are still being enforced without any attempt by the Federal Government towards repeal or amendment.

- There is no organized system that provides mechanism, which addresses the problem of legal aid for women at government level or support efforts of NGOs in bridging the gap and providing access to justice to thousands of women and girls.
- The Sharia Penal Code is still practiced in over thirteen Northern States in Nigeria. It has been misunderstood to mean same thing with culture and tradition. Consequently, Sharia is still an obstacle to women's rights. The provisions still include discriminatory stoning to death and flogging for committing fornication and adultery. This poses a real threat to women's rights as seen in the cases of Saffiya Tugartudu and Amina Lawal.
- Rule of evidence under Sharia are particularly weighted against the women. The evidence of a woman is half of a man in Islamic jurisprudence.
  - Section 55 of the Penal Code, which operates in Northern Nigeria, allows a man to beat his wife in "so far as it does not constitute grievous harm". This section is not only discriminatory, but also encourages violence against women.
  - The Police Regulation 127's requirement that a female police officer desirous of marrying must first apply in writing to the commissioner requesting permission to marry and giving the name, address and occupation of the person she intends to marry, is discriminatory, as it is not also applied to male officers.

- Section 124 of the Nigeria Police Force Act discriminates against the woman by requiring that an unmarried police officer who becomes pregnant shall be discharged from the force, and shall not be re-enlisted except with the approval of the Inspector General”
- Policies in banks and other private corporations, in Nigeria also discriminate against women.
- The Marriage Act’s requirement of a mother’s consent only when the father of the child is dead or of unsound mind or out of the country is discriminatory.
- Marital rape is at yet unknown in the Nigerian criminal justice system.

#### **4.6.3.2 Legal and Policy Framework**

Apart from the general provision of Section 42, which prohibits discrimination on grounds of sex amongst others, there are very few anti-discriminatory laws at the national level. Some state laws (within the federation of Nigeria) now exist to address specific issues of concern for women such as FGM, early marriage, drop out of school by girls for purposes of marriage, maternal mortality, reproductive health services, trafficking, and other forms of violence. Additionally 18 out of the 36 states of Nigeria have passed the Child’s Rights Act in their states. While commending these laudable efforts at state levels it should be clearly noted that none of these recent legislative developments targets elimination of discrimination and promotion of equal opportunity and access to women and girls in all spheres of life.

However, it is found out that existing impediments in religious spheres still constitute obstacles to the promotion and protection of women’s rights. The state laws are limited to the states where they are in operation. Hence, there is need for nationwide national laws on many of these issues.

### **ARTICLE 3:**

#### **Measures for Ensuring the Full Advancement of Women**

*States 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.*

#### **4.6.3.3 Overview of the Situation/Problem Statement**

Though efforts have been made to give more women political appointments, the ratio of women to men is still insignificant. Socially, women are still regarded as inferior and denied equal treatment in the family, religious bodies and in political associations. Women still constitute the poorest group in the society. Some women have been given chieftaincy titles but that does not allow them to be part of decision-making or ascend to the position of becoming a traditional ruler in their constituencies/localities. Apart from the National Gender Policy on women, all the other policies on women have very little input from women who are routinely absent from their formulation. Government has not taken adequate measures to ensure participation of women in issues affecting them. Women bear most of the economic burdens of the family; they are therefore more susceptible to effects of climate change, as it affects their economic power.

#### **4.6.3.4 Legal and Policy Framework**

Chapter IV of the Nigerian Constitution on Fundamental Rights is addressed to both men and women, and does not specifically seek to advance gender parity. However, there is no faithful implementation of the established policy framework hence there is a wide gap between policy prescription and practice. Resources are not budgeted towards accomplishing goals and objectives even where policies are made on specific issues. There is low awareness of state laws that seek to protect the rights of women. The budgetary allocation to the Women Ministry for successive years has been low; accordingly they cannot meet the expectations women have of them. These constraints have made the women ministries redundant and distant from their primary constituency.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Personal interviews with Mrs Grace Akpabio; Chief Women Development Officer and head women organization division, Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development, Abuja on 14/2/2007

#### **ARTICLE 4:**

#### **Temporary Special Measure to Accelerate Equality between Men and Women**

*1. Adoption by States Parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination as defined in the present Convention, but shall in no way entail as a consequence the maintenance of unequal or separate standards; these measures shall be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved.*

*2. Adoption by States Parties of special measures, including those measures contained in the present Convention, aimed at protecting maternity shall not be considered discriminatory.*

#### **4.6.3.5 Overview of the Situation/Problem Statement**

Gender inequality pervades Nigerian society at all levels. The government has not instituted any special measures to improve the situation of women in Nigeria. For instance, there are no targeted measures to prevent girls from dropping out of school, or to overcome traditional attitudes that constitute obstacles to girls' education. More than 80% of Nigerians still live below the poverty line and women constitute a sizable portion of this. Women are still denied the right to inherit property in many parts of the country. With an estimated 54,000 maternal deaths annually, Nigeria has the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest maternal mortality rate in the world at 800 – 1600 per 100,000 live births. Additionally many women die because of unsafe abortions and HIV/AIDS, which has a high prevalence among women. Yet, most health facilities are non-functional and drugs are not readily available. Have we not reached a crises point deserving of drastic government measures?

#### **4.6.3.6 Legal and Policy Framework**

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria prohibits discrimination against any citizen of Nigeria on the grounds of ethnicity, place of origin, sex, religion, political opinion, and circumstances of birth. This provision is commendable but there have been unsuccessful moves by the women's movement in Nigeria for its amendment to include gender as one of the grounds.

The Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policies in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN) provide that it shall be the duty

and responsibilities of all organs of government to direct its policies towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate opportunities for all irrespective of sex, to access employment, education, governance, and to harness resources and health facilities. However, these provisions in Chapter II though laudable, are not mandatory obligations on the government.

The National Gender Policy adopted in 2006 incorporates the principles of CEDAW and other global and regional frameworks that support gender equality and women empowerment in the country's laws, legislative processes, judicial and administrative systems.

Two out of 36 states have passed Gender and Equal Opportunities Laws (Imo and Anambra 2006). The laws also incorporate and enforce certain aspects of CEDAW. They provide for the adoption of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women, such measures shall not be considered discrimination.

#### **4.6.3.7 Gaps and Challenges**

The National Gender Policy on Affirmative Action is yet to be operationalized and translated into action.

- Policy statements by Ministries of Women Affairs in Nigeria are difficult to implement because of the failure to legislate on Affirmative Action or adopt a legal framework for gender mainstreaming.
- Lack of gender-disaggregated data is a major constraint to the achievement of equality of women and men before the law, depriving gender actors' evidence to argue for affirmative action and gender specific concessions and interventions as a strategy for attaining gender equality. There is need to have useful data on the prevalence and pattern of violence against women and discriminatory practices in the various parts of the country.
- The political climate is still not gender friendly. Women are not able to compete favourably with men, thus making it difficult to accelerate equality in political participation and governance in general.

**ARTICLE 7:  
Women in Political and Public Life**

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*States 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 levels of government;*

*(c) To participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.*

#### **4.6.3.8 Overview of the Situation/Problem Statement**

The gender roles and stereotypes, which predominate in Nigeria, militate against the full participation of women in political and public life. The place of women is seen to reside in the domestic sphere. They are also often in a poorer position than their male counterparts both financially and educationally which functions to exclude them from contesting for political positions or taking other leadership roles. The number of women who are members of political parties in Nigeria is negligible. Very few occupy executive positions in political parties and no pro-active measures are being undertaken to increase women's participation in the political arena. Although, parties like the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the Alliance for Democracy (AD) waived payment fees for nomination forms to female aspirants, they often demand other payments that are unaffordable and unacceptable for most women. These payments, though unofficial, are usually in form of monetary gratification for party leaders, mobilization due for party hierarchies and 'sexual settlement'.<sup>5</sup> In the PDP National Convention held on March 8, 2008, only five women made it onto the list of the party national executive committee out of 41 posts representing 12.19%. None was elected into any substantive post. Only very few women contest for elective positions. The level of women's involvement has,

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<sup>5</sup> Senator (Mrs) Iyabo Anisulowo maintained that some powerful men do harass women sexually as a precondition for their (men) support for women. Senator Anisulowo attributed her failure to get nomination to the Senate under the platform of the People Democratic Party (PDP) for the second time to this unhealthy development from men. ( Sunday Sun, March 4, 2007.pg. 10)

however, improved from mere voting and belonging to women's wing of political parties where they act as dancers or mobilisers. Women are now more frequently involved in constructive participation in politics by contesting for elections. This notwithstanding, it remains very difficult for women to successfully stand for elective positions, and their representation at all levels of politics and especially at the national level is woefully low. The table below shows the regrettably low numbers of women elected in the last 3 general elections.

**Table 4.2: Number and percentage of female candidates who successfully contested in the 1999, 2003, and 2007 General Elections**

S/N	Position	No of Available Seats	1999		2003		2007	
			No of women Elected	% of Total	No of women Elected	% of Total	No of Women Elected	% of Total
1.	Presidency	1	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
2.	Senate	109	3	2.75%	4	3.7%	9	8.3%
3.	House of Representatives	360	12	3.33%	23	6.38%	27	7.5%
4.	Governorship	36	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
5.	Deputy Governorship	36	1	2.7%	2	5.55%	6	16.7%
6.	State Houses of Assembly	990	12	1.21%	38	3.84%	54	5.5%

**Source:** Field research 2007

*[Please see Appendix B for a full list of female politicians who were successfully elected at the state and national levels in 2007]*

Women are also vulnerable and come up against rival male candidates who can draw on political networks and utilize underhand tactics to undermine and even threaten their female opponents. Many female candidates in the 2007 elections reported that they were either schemed out by their male counterparts or openly threatened to step aside.

“Indigene-ship” also works to hamper women’s electoral bids; female politicians are hindered if they go for a position without being an indigene of the state in which they are contesting. As woman’s state ‘of origin’ changes on marriage and the high value

given to indigene-ship means that women are rarely considered for political position unless they are married and also come from the same state as their husband. The above position worsens in the case of a foreign woman married to a Nigerian who may never be appointed into any noteworthy political office, because she can never be considered a true ‘indigene’ of any state.

A similar scenario can be seen in the domain of political appointments where women have frequently had to contend with tokenism. It is also common to find the few women in appointive positions occupying junior ministerial positions or heading Ministries dealing with issues traditionally seen as the women’s realm such as the Ministries of Women Affairs and Social Welfare. These ministries themselves tend to often be marginalized and under funded. The marginalization of women in politics and the public sphere is very detrimental. For politics provides a vital channel through which women can affect laws, policies and practices of their communities and this is why it is important that government ensures that women are there.

#### **4.6.3.9 Legal and Policy Framework**

Section 77 (2) of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria confers upon all citizens equal rights to belong to political parties, to be entitled for registration, to vote and be voted for, during elections and form or belong to any political party. Although in 2003 and 2007, political space in Nigeria was liberalized and this has created more opportunities for the participation of women in politics. Disappointingly, the last election did not produce a significant number of women in elected posts. The improvement of the position of women in politics in Nigeria has thus been marginal and significant progress remains to be made. Political Party programmes and manifestos are yet to articulate women issues. The unfavourable political terrain characterized by thuggery, monetization of politics and entrenched patriarchal attitudes have discouraged many women from participating in politics. Concept of ‘godfatherism’ and male centred politics implicitly exclude women from politics. The low financial status of women also hinders their ability to contest for political positions and to influence policy. Cultural practices inhibit women’s participation.

**ARTICLE 10:  
Education**

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*States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:*

*(a) The same conditions for career and vocational guidance, for access to studies and for the achievement of diplomas in educational establishments of all categories in rural as well as in urban areas; this equality shall be ensured in pre-school, general, technical, professional and higher technical education, as well as in all types of vocational training;*

*(b) Access to the same curricula, the same examinations, teaching staff with qualifications of the same standard and school premises and equipment of the same quality;*

*(c) The elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education by encouraging coeducation and other types of education which will help to achieve this aim and, in particular, by the revision of textbooks and school programmes and the adaptation of teaching methods;*

*(d) The same opportunities to benefit from scholarships and other study grants;*

*(e) The same opportunities for access to programmes of continuing education, including adult and functional literacy programmes, particularly those aimed at reducing, at the earliest possible time, any gap in education existing between men and women;*

*(f) The reduction of female student dropout rates and the organization of programmes for girls and women who have left school prematurely;*

*(g) The same Opportunities to participate actively in sports and physical education;*

*(h) Access to specific educational information to help to ensure the health and well-being of families, including information and advice on family planning.*

#### **4.6.4.0 Overview of the Situation/Problem Statement**

Education delivery in Nigeria has suffered major setbacks over several years. The decay started with the huge decline in the provision of social services by the State in the 1980s.

Education along with nearly all-social welfare sectors were neglected in this period.

Nigeria's education system remains seriously flawed:

- Nigeria's literacy rate is currently 65.7%
- 49% of the teaching force is unqualified.

- There are acute shortages of infrastructure and facilities at all levels—primary, secondary, and tertiary (WACOL 2008:43)

Worryingly, according to the Nigerian Millennium Development Goals 2005 report, literacy levels in the country have steadily and gradually deteriorated, especially within the 15-24 age groups (ibid.). This decline in literacy amongst the group, which has the most recent contact with the Nigerian education system, is damning indeed. Gender issues and socio-cultural beliefs and practices, inhibit access to education and there are wide disparities in the educational standards and learning achievements between men and women. Families regularly prioritize the education of boys over girls.

Imonkhuede (2009:52) gave a painful stereotypical statistics of students' enrolment survey in polytechnics in Nigeria in 2008/2009 session. According to her, there is gender stereotyping in certain professions and careers as revealed in the following data.

**Table 4.3: Statistics of students' enrolment survey in polytechnics in Nigeria**

<b>HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA</b>	<b>MALE</b>	<b>FEMALE</b>
Accountancy	4338	2076
Soil and Water Engineering	41	1
Architecture	320	39
Chemical Engineering	143	29
Catering and Hotel Management	81	254
Computer Studies	130	63
Electronic Engineering	329	22
Fashion Designing	12	17
Graphic Arts	74	7
Printing	124	38
Bilingual Secretary	-	14
Secretarial Administration	628	1366
Physics	2	2
Textile Technology	205	26
Wood and Paper Technology	7	2

In addition, admission statistics into Nigerian Universities by institutions and sex revealed that out of the 70,997 total students admitted in the 2006/2007 Academic Session, 42,953 students were male while 28,044 students were female (JAMB, 2007:152). The above analyses reveal the inappropriate ratio of exposure to education between both sexes. The reasons for this are varied but often centre on stereotypes, which means that it is more likely for a girl to be withdrawn from school to care for relatives or take on other domestic responsibilities. There is also discrimination in handling of pregnancy in schools. The girls are sent out of school and there is no programme to re-integrate them back into the school. This puts women at a disadvantaged position, as they will be forced to do menial jobs.

Thus, by way of recommendation, education and public enlightenment on the contents of the Convention through simplification and translation into local languages must be encouraged. More so, additional anti-discrimination legislation that will entrench the principle of equality and expand constitutional provisions to create equal opportunities for both sexes should be enacted. This legislation should ensure legal action can be taken against discrimination and create institutions and procedures for claiming equal rights. There should be general review of Nigerian law to pave way for the amendment of all laws that are discriminatory. To ensure the full advancement of women, there should be an increase in allocation of budget and proper dissemination of information to the women in rural areas to be more educated on issues of national interest. Government should take positive efforts towards passing the Bill on Violence against Women into law; and the domestication of CEDAW. Gender should be mainstreamed in all government and non-governmental establishment to ensure collation of gender disaggregated data that will inform national planning and engender budget and resource allocation that will make a difference in women's lives. Equally, there should be abolition of obnoxious cultural practices and massive public enlightenment on the need for girl-child education and shunning of the practice of early marriage. Chapter II of the Nigerian Constitution on fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy should be amended and made justiciable. In addition, Affirmative action principles should be integrated into the national constitution, state laws, and constitutions of political parties. The National Assembly particularly the committee on women affairs and

MDGs as well as relevant development partners should work together to draw up an action plan to implement appropriate Affirmative Action measures. All Harmful Traditional Practices (HTPs) should be outlawed. An Equal Opportunities Commission should be created to replace the Federal Character Commission so that besides geography and ethnicity, gender and disability are reflected in the criteria for operating the federal character principle/policy. Moreover, the judiciary should be more active by applying the repugnancy test when confronted with discriminatory customs and practices.

Furthermore, Nigerian government should institute a quota system in appointments and elective positions. Quota systems adopted by many countries including African countries, have motivated political parties to actively recruit women to fulfill the quota. This has enabled women to overcome the issue of tokenism and as they become part of a “critical mass” and are thus able to act as a centre of power to influence change. While commending the government for adopting the National Gender Policy that provides for a minimum 35% of representation of women at all levels of political participation, it has become imperative to back this up legislatively. We recommend therefore that the 35% representation should be integrated into the appropriate provision in the constitution or instituted via other specific legislation. Gender mainstreaming must become mandatory in all government, political party, and private sector policies in Nigeria. Political parties should be compelled to address the problem of violence within the parties, as this constitutes a hindrance to women’s participation in politics and generally distorts the political terrain. Political parties should be required to waive all nomination fees payable by female candidates. Measures should be taken to ensure that party officials do not reintroduce these fees in another guise. Government should ensure that all appointments conform to the National Policy on Women, which stipulates that at least 35% of all positions should be reserved for women. Political Parties working in collaboration with the Federal and States Ministries of Women Affairs should establish a trust fund for women political aspirants as part of the affirmative action measures. Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is obviously overburdened and cannot effectively monitor campaign finances for parties and candidates, this responsibility should be given to another institution. The electoral law should be re-examined and reformed where appropriate, to take gender issues into account. The same representational levels of

women demanded in political parties and in government should apply to the electoral institutions. A woman should have a choice in residency/state of domicile for the purposes of elections – rather than having to battle with the indigene-ship issue.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE STATE AND WOMEN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN NIGERIA: 1999 - 2007

#### 5.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapters three and four, extensive historical analysis of women and their political participation as well as the analysis of the Nigerian policy environment in aiding such participation was done. This no doubt has given us a fillip into the phenomenon of women political participation vis-à-vis their quest for gender equity in Nigeria. Since political participation as well as representation thrive well in a democratic system than in any other system, the long lap of democracy in Nigeria (spanning 12 years at once) since independence affords us the opportunity to appraise its impact on Nigerian women with particular reference to their participation in politics especially at the upper echelon of governance.

Discussions in this chapter are specifically done under two sub-headings. The first addresses some of the various activities of the Nigerian state/government under President Olusegun Obasanjo between May 1999 and May 2007, towards engendering gender equality/equity and ushering in more active participation of women in politics. The second is devoted to presentation and analysis of the result of the interview conducted, supplemented with relevant ones in the literature, as well as the questionnaire administered in the field. While the findings from the interview conducted were descriptively analyzed in line with the methodology of the work, findings from the various questionnaires administered were analyzed utilizing the simple percentage method.

Thus, the above discussion provided an insight into the analyses expected in this chapter.

#### 5.2.0 Nigerian State and Women Participation in Governance

On assumption of office in May 1999, President Olusegun Obasanjo showed that women are the focal point of his administration as significant numbers of women were appointed into the administration. These women who, to a large extent, demonstrated the capability of women in position of authority, among others, included: Obiageli

Ezekwesili (who has worked in the Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence and Implementation office under the presidency as well as minister of Solid Minerals Development and Education), Leslye Obiora (Mines and Steel Development), Inna Maryam Ciroma (Women Affairs), Helen Esuene (Environment and Housing), Esther Nenedi Usman (Finance), Joy Ogwu (Foreign Affairs), S.A. Jankada (Youth and Development) Halima Alao (Minister of state for Health) and Grace Ogwuche Minister of State for Agriculture and Water Resources). Before the above women, there were Dr. Ngozi Okonjo – Iweala, Princess Funke Adedoyin, Mrs. Becky Igwe, Mrs. Pauline Tallen, Hajia Ndalolo, Obong Rita Akpan, Dr. Kema Chikwe, Mrs. Chikwe Obaji.

The ministries of Education, Finance, Solid Minerals, and Foreign Affairs, for the first time since independence have women as ministers. Some women were also appointed by the president to head extra - ministerial departments and agencies and they equally distinguished themselves. They included Professor Dora Akunyili, Director – General of the National Agency for Food, Drugs and Administration and Control, NAFDAC, and Mrs. Maureen Chigbue, Director General, Bureau of Public Enterprises, BPE. Simbo Akintimilehin described them as “lionesses who have threaded where lions were reluctant to dare” (Newsworld, 2007:17).

The success of these women in the various ministries and agencies has humbled many of the male counterparts. Mrs. Oby Ezekwesili for instance, before her appointment as Minister of Solid Minerals and later Education headed the Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence and Implementation Unit, BMPIIU, otherwise known as due process. The President had initiated this policy as a measure to curtail indiscriminate and over inflation in the award of government contracts. Prior to this policy, contract inflation and over-invoicing were the order of the day. Ezekwesili confessed on appointment that “I initially thought surmounting the challenges starring at me would be almost impossible. Nevertheless, she would after 18 months beat her chest for recording outstanding success even though critics accused her of slowing down government business. Ezekwesili had noted. “In the last 18 months, we have saved about N2billion for government which would hitherto have gone down the drain through dubious contract inflation and over invoicing”. She also observed that the possibility of the old order of indiscriminate contract award returning was high if there was no legislation to back the establishment of

the BMPIIU. To this end, she initiated the Procurement Reform Bill, which was eventually enacted by the National Assembly. Her promotion, as it was, to head the ministry of Solid Minerals Development (later Ministry of Mines and Steel Development) was informed by her performance at the BMPIIU.

Ezekwesili was exasperated on resumption at the Solid Minerals Ministry: “I met a rotten ministry” and promised to restructure the mining sector. In less than six months, she “right sized” the ministry, created an autonomous mining cadastre, privatized the ministry’s liabilities and insisted that for the nation to maximize the huge benefits it stands to gain in the sector it had to be private sector driven. She initiated the Minerals and Mining Act 2006 to provide a legal framework for the reforms in the sector. The bill was eventually passed by the two houses of the National Assembly- Senate and House of Representatives.

In another cabinet reshuffle in 2006, President Obasanjo moved Ezekwesili to the Education Ministry. Her sojourn there also witnessed many a number of reforms to reposition the sector. Shortly after taking over from her predecessor, Mrs. Chinwe Obaji, Dr. Ezekwesili rolled out the new reform agenda for the sector that were categorized into long, medium, and short-term programmes. She explained that these measures were aimed at rescuing the education sector from collapse. According to her, “the federal ministry of education and 20 parastatals as presently constituted, represent dysfunctional structures unable to articulate and deliver sound education policy and planning for the development of our human capital”. It was on the basis of this that she sought the approval of the president to reduce the 20 parastatals under the ministry to “five brand strategic groupings for effective management “(Newsworld, 2007:17). In addition, the minister planned to privatize the unity schools throughout the country under the public private partnership, PPP initiative. Her recommendation to the presidency for the privatization of these schools was because, according to her, they have become a sorry sight in the landscape of secondary education,” adding that schools are substandard with the absence of basic infrastructure and amenities (ibid: 8). She proposed the Education Sector Restructuring Bill which among others sought to merge Federal Universities with Polytechnics and Colleges of Education. The merger arrangement, according to the minister is, “in order to increase the number of academic spaces for admission into

tertiary education by over 500,000 per annum, and therefore eliminate the HND/Bachelor degree dichotomy in the country”.

Another woman who was a prominent member of Obasanjo cabinet is Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala. Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala was Nigeria’s first female Minister of Finance. She was a former Vice-President of the World Bank. The Harvard trained minister who later resigned from Obasanjo’s cabinet after her posting to head the foreign Affairs ministry was in control of the finance ministry while in office. She also headed the country’s economic team and was able to steer the turnaround reform policies of the nation’s economy. As arrowhead in the country’s campaign for debt cancellation, Okonjo-Iweala scored a feat when she eventually succeeded in getting far reaching debts relief for Nigeria. Having realized that Nigeria’s public servant was found wanting in the management of public funds, she initiated a bill called the fiscal Responsibility Bill. One of the key objectives of the bill is to hold public servants accountable for government expenditure. Well respected in international circles, Okonjo-Iweala played a key role in improving Nigeria’s external reserves, which surpassed \$40 billion during her tenure (ibid: 19).

Mrs. Nenadi Usman who succeeded Okonjo-Iweala built positively on the foundation already laid by her predecessor. She was Minister of State in the Finance Ministry when Okonjo-Iweala was substantive minister. In an unprecedented step, a few months after her appointment as minister, Usman paid local contractors outstanding debts some of which had dragged for as long as 10 years. The ministry under her has also paid the backlog of pension arrears to pensioners (ibid: 20).

Professor (Mrs.) Leslie Obiora as a Minister of Mines and Steel Development also significantly impacted on the ministry. She insisted on and got the approval of the Senate in passing the Mining Reform Bill before the February 1, 2007 International Mining Conference. In her reaction to the passage of the law, the minister enthused:

“The timing of the passage of the law makes it all the more significant. It is truly a historic moment, positive proof that the system works. It was a leap of faith, when we invited the world at large to converge on February 1<sup>st</sup> for the International Mining Conference. Now, it is a reality.” (ibid)

Professor Dora Akunyili's appointment as the Director General of NAFDAC by President Obasanjo's government has been described as 'one of the high points of the administration'. As a trained pharmacist, Akunyili embraced the job with a deep knowledge and insight of the basic challenges facing the pharmaceutical and other allied industries. She was a victim of fake drugs having lost a sister to the incidence of fake drugs "Vivian, her sister was a bad experience. So this job was an avenue for her to prevent others from passing through the same experience," Alhaji Abubakar Jimoh, NAFDAC's CPRO maintained. Before her appointment in April 2001, for over two decades, fake, counterfeit and substandard products were awash in the markets due to the poor state of regular activities in Nigeria. There were expired products without expiring date or "best before" date, or re-labeled with the intention of extending their shelf-life, amongst of the myriad of problems (*ibid*:21).

First, Akunyili carried out a restructuring, re-orientation, and modernization of both material and human resources in NAFDAC. According to her, "the evil of fake drugs is worse than the combined scourge of malaria, HIV/AIDS, and armed robbery put together. This is because malaria can be prevented, HIV/AIDS can be avoided and armed robbers kill a few at a time, but counterfeit/fake drugs kill enmasse". Professor Akunyili then identified the factors militating against effective food and drug regulation in Nigeria. Some of the factors she identified included the following; corruption and conflict of interests, discriminatory regulation by exporting countries, insecure and unfriendly environment, and chaotic drug distribution amongst others. Akunyili evolved strategies to combat the problems by first re-orientating and motivating NAFDAC staff. The regulatory processes were also structured. NAFDAC then embarked on public enlightenment campaigns. The agency also beefed up surveillance at all ports entry and started mopping up what is already in circulation. Importation of fake drugs at source to Nigeria was monitored and stopped when exposed. Today, NAFDAC has to a very large extent sanitized the food and drug industry and created a reasonable well regulated environment which has saved the lives of millions of Nigerians and boosted the nation's economy by encouraging local industries, genuine importers and foreign investors (*ibid*).

Akunyili's efforts have also been acknowledged by local and international organizations. She has over 400 awards of excellence in this regard including the 2003

integrity award by Transparency International, which came at a time Nigeria was rated as second most corrupt nation in the world. As a reflection of the confidence Nigerian women has in her, a group approached the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, national secretariat to obtain a presidential nomination form for her just before the party's primaries. She was recently appointed director of mobilization of the Yar-Adua/Jonathan Presidential campaign organization. The appointment is reported to have been facilitated by president Obasanjo himself, who has often boasted that the women may have contributed more than 50percent in the overall achievements of his administration (*ibid*).

Thus, women in the Obasanjo cabinet have really demonstrated the capability and mettle of Nigerian women in position of authority/governance. A common feature of these women is that they are educated, have exposure and have been propelled to succeed, because they suddenly found themselves in an, otherwise, exclusive reserve for males where they had to prove a point. Doubtlessly, the Nigerian democratic government under President Olusegun Obasanjo impacted on women participation in politics. In 1999, there was one (3 percent) deputy governor, and in 2003, two (6 per cent). There was 3.3% female representation in the lower house of the National Legislature in 1999, 6.4% in 2003 and 7.5% in 2007. In the 1999 Senate, there were 2.8% women representation which increased to 3.7% in 2003 and further increased to 8.3% in 2007 (Field Research 2007). Findings from the tables below clearly attest to this:

**Table 5.1 No of Women elected in 1999, 2003, and 2007 Nigerian Elections**

S/N	Position	No of Available Seats	No of Women in 1999	No of Women in 2003	No of Women in 2007
1	Presidency	1	0	0	0
2	Senate	109	3	4	9
3	House of Reps	360	12	23	27
4	Governorship	36	0	0	0
5	Deputy Governorship	36	1	2	6
6	36 States Houses of Assembly	990	12	38	54
Total		1532	28	67	96

**Source:** UNIFEM 2007 'Comparison of Representation of Women in Elected Positions from 1999-2007.

*pg.1.*

*Table 5.2 Numbers of Men and Women in the State Houses of Assembly and National Assembly (1999-2007)*

Houses of Assembly	Total No of Seats	Men	Women	Percentage of men	Percentage of Women
1999	990	978	12	98.8%	1.2%
2003	990	952	38	96%	4%
2007	990	936	54	94.5%	5.5%

House of Representatives	Total No of Seats	Men	Women	Percentage of men	Percentage of Women
1999	360	348	12	96.7%	3.3%
2003	360	337	23	93.6%	6.4%
2007	360	333	27	92.5%	7.5%

Senate	Total No of Seats	Men	Women	Percentage of men	Percentage of Women
1999	109	106	3	97.2%	2.8%
2003	109	105	4	96.3%	3.7%
2007	109	100	9	91.7%	8.3%

**Source:** The Nigeria CEDAW Coalition Shadow Report (2008), New York, United Nations Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (updated).

### 5.3.0 Nigeria's Democracy and Women Political Participation

For this, personal interviews were conducted on some twenty eight (28) Nigerians across the six geo-political zones of South West, South-south, South-East, North-East, North-West and North-Central; and the Federal Capital Territory Abuja where principal members of the National Assembly (men and women) were interviewed. The interviews were conducted in different locations across the country. These locations are Lagos, Akure, Ado-Ekiti, Ibadan, Ilorin, Offa, Abuja, Kaduna, Enugu, Adamawa, Owerri, Calabar, and Ikere-Ekiti. In addition, towards sustaining and expanding the gains made

by women in reducing their political marginalization, a chronicle of documented experiences of Nigerian women in politics was done. This is with a view to supplementing the empirical findings. It also provided further first-hand information on training, advocacy, and civil action to improving participation of women in politics. Subsequently, six women politicians; one each from each of the six geo-political zones of the country, were considered for this exercise. The women were:

Name	State	Geo-political zone
Hon. Bintu Masi Garba	Adamawa	North East
Hon. Saudatu Sani	Kaduna	North West
Hon. Afiniki Dauda	Niger	North Central
Hon. Mulikat Akande-Adeola	Oyo	South West
Senator Chris Anyanwu	Imo	South East
Hon. Ruby Benjamin	Bayelsa	South South

The respondents were sampled in the following areas:

- (a) Nigerian state and women political participation
- (b) Democracy and women political participation in Nigeria
- (c) The nature of Nigerian politics and Women Political Participation
- (d) Culture and or religion and Women Political Participation in Nigeria.
- (e) The future of Women Political Participation in Nigeria

These are treated according to the sub-headings:

(a) **Nigerian state and women political participation**

In the survey, all the respondents (100%) were unequivocal in maintaining that the Nigerian state is largely patriarchal, competitive, oppressive, and exploitative. Most

respondents also attested to the pecuniary advantage offered by political positions which have made the struggle for power within the polity a fierce struggle and in another dimension assuming the posture of “do or die”. This, to most women (100%), has contributed to the low participation of women in politics as women are easily scarred amidst danger.

According to Barrister (Mrs.) Joy Ezeilo (Field Research 2007);

Women continue to face severe obstacles to their effective participation in politics, public life, and decision-making. The last general elections of 2007 revealed a 6% representation of women across all levels of elected offices; a gross under representation of the nearly 70 million women who make up about 50% of the Nigerian population. The situation could have been improved with the existence of a clear legal framework for women’s political participation in accordance with the object and purpose of Articles 4, 7 and 8 of CEDAW provisions<sup>1</sup>.

In her response to the question on the impact of Nigerian state on women political participation, Hajia Bala Usman maintained that:

Nigerian state has become signatory to many international conventions and agreements aiming at promoting gender parity like CEDAW, 35% Affirmative Action etc. However, these documents are yet to be domesticated to the extent that they transform into active participation for women in politics. With no concrete legislation for women political participation, the Nigerian state engages in much talk and less action and has not fundamentally demonstrated the political will to promoting active participation of women in governance<sup>2</sup>.

Honourable Ruby T. Benjamin expressed the fact that the marginalization experienced by women is not only outside the party but also prevalent within the party. She asked the question,

Who are the people controlling the political parties? The man!  
The highest position they give the women is the position of the

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Barrister (Mrs) Joy Ezeilo, the Executive Director and Founder of Women Aid Collective (WACOL) Enugu June 24, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Personal interview with Hajia Bala Usman, President, National Council for Women Society (NCWS)

“woman leader”. They over – emphasize that position, “national woman leader” “when it is almost an inevitable position. But what about having a woman as the party chairman? What about the position of the secretary of the party? Men always take up all the sensitive positions in the party, that is why women are crying, and that is the rationale for all the various initiatives by NGOs, CSOs and international organizations it is also part of the reason for this research project. It is so difficult to have a female governor; they try so hard to give a few women the position of the Deputy Governor or Secretary to the State Government (SSG). Then, how many women are SSGs in the 36 states in the country? For many other positions, women are marginalized and refused the opportunity to serve. For instance, how many women have been attorneys general?<sup>3</sup>

In her response to the question on the problem contributing to low women political participation in Nigeria in spite of the democratic governance, Mrs. Bisi Ogunleye (O.F.R) attributed this to two major problems viz:

Women do not value themselves to be something; our tradition gives rooms for participation in all spheres of the society. This is reflective in the Yoruba saying that “owo omode ko to pepe, ti agbalagba ko wo keregbe’ (meaning that both the youth and the elderly are important in nation building). Thus, everybody has a role to play. Our tradition and culture are supportive of God’s intention of women rendering helping hand to men and vice versa. However, in Nigeria, the various cultural practices relegated women in the family, community and the society. Government that fails to give people participatory role cannot be people centred and democratic. It is the women who put themselves down, they do not take step to go forward. Women do not look for their seats, they are waiting for somebody to give them seat, but this is impossible. This accounted for their inability to convert their numerical advantage to political. Secondly, Nigerian politics is highly monetized and men are dominant here, due to the advantage of keeping old school and business friends and networking, they are able to galvanize money for active participation in politics unlike women whose interaction and connection to old school friends is curtailed and regulated by their husbands. This affects

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<sup>3</sup> Election HERstories, political Experiences of Women in Nigeria. Eds. Mangwat, J., Ibeanu, O., & Mahdi, S. 2009. United Kingdom. DFID. Pg. 226

the ability of women to raise money for politics and culminated in their prevailing low political participation<sup>4</sup>.

Responding to the question on the impact of Nigerian state on women political participation, Hajia Bala Usman maintained that:

Nigerian state has become signatory to many international conventions and agreements aiming at promoting gender parity like CEDAW, 35% Affirmative Action etc. However, these documents are yet to be domesticated to the extent that they transform into active participation for women in politics. With no concrete legislation for women political participation, the Nigerian state engages in much talk and less action and has not fundamentally demonstrated the political will to promoting active participation of women in governance<sup>5</sup>.

(b) **Democracy and Women political participation in Nigeria.**

When asked about the impact of democracy on women political participation, respondents (100%) were of the opinion that democracy has facilitated more participation of women in the process of governance. The fact that democracy guarantees and allows the right to association, meetings, and expression is seen as a plus in this regard. According to Barrister (Mrs.) Abiola Akiyode – Afolabi;

Democracy has enlarged the space for women political participation especially in appointive positions in the National cabinet though not so much but at least beyond what it used to be. Between 1999 and now (2007), there is a bit difference compared to the period of the military. Though women participation has moved beyond what it used to be especially under the military, yet it is still a tokenism because it has not been done in accordance with any of the international instruments which Nigeria has ratified; the Beijing Conference, the Beijing Platform for Action, the CEDAW, the Protocol on the Rights of Women and the Constitution even still have not done much to address the issue<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Personal interview with Mrs Bisi Ogunleye President, Country Women Association of Nigeria (COWAN) on 6/2/2008, Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria

<sup>5</sup> Personal interview with Hajia Bala Usman, President, National Council for Women Society (NCWS)

<sup>6</sup> Personal interview with Mrs Akiyode-Afolabi at Owena Motels Akure, Ondo State on 1/4/2007

She reiterated that, the so-called tokenism is attributable to democracy. This according to her is premised on the fact that women would not have got the opportunity to negotiate under the military regime. Democracy to her has really enlarged the scope for women.

Akiyode–Afolabi (ibid) equally opined that the issue of women political participation has assumed a global dimension; a world – wide global view and attention that have led to an increase in the demand for gendered democracy as one of the direct consequences for development.

... in South Africa for instance, we talk about the faces of women within the cabinet of Thabo Mbeki ditto Liberia, Germany e.t.c. This has been facilitated by democracy and globalization where people are saying that development should be made much broader and if you do not have a gendered democracy, there is the possibility that the democracy will be faulty.

In Akiyode–Afolabi’s view, the broader participation of women in politics is attributed to the underlisted three (3) reasons;

It is becoming a progressive thing for countries to do, it is also based on the fact that women movement in Nigeria has consistently been doing the same thing about the need to enlarge the space for women in Nigeria and that to a large extent has also helped in bringing the issue of women into fore, women have also demonstrated their capability in governance.

In a similar vein, Hajia Saudatu Sanni; the House (of representatives) leader on Women Affairs corroborated the opinion expressed above. In her view though Nigeria still remains largely a patriarchal state, the opportunity offered for participation (by democracy) has broadened the space for women participation in governance both in appointive and elective positions but mainly in appointive positions. According to her;

If democracy endures and little emphasis is placed on money/ money politics and violence the participation of women would be better enhanced<sup>7</sup>.

Furthermore, while responding to question about the impact of democracy on women political participation in Nigerian, Hajia Bala Usman (ibid) affirmed thus:

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with Hon. Saudatu Sani, National Assembly Complex, Abuja,

Democracy has widely opened the door for active participation of women in politics by increasing the political relevance of women. Now, through the activities of the civil society organizations (NGO's), international organizations and global networking, the prospect for more participation of women in politics is high. Through democratic environment, Nigerian women are now able to influence policy options in their favour and through this the accountability or otherwise of a leader is ensured. By this environment, the accountability or otherwise of a leader is ensured<sup>8</sup>.

Responding to the question on whether or not democracy has influenced women political participation, Mrs. Akinnagbe answered this way:

Democracy has given women more opportunity to influence and lobby men in positions of authority to accord women positions in governance and to better negotiate for placement, recognition and inclusion in governance. Mrs. Akinnagbe advocated more roles commensurate with the numerical strength of women in political participation. This she maintained is possible by adopting the principle of proportional representation, quota system, and legislation against subjecting women to violence both at home and in the public places<sup>9</sup>.

Still on her position on women's participation, Alhaja Mulikat Akande-Adeola said:

Women are great performers. We need more women in governance. I have always believed in women. More women in government means increased stability. We do not have women trying to plot against government. We have more compassion. In my constituency, we have given the people a different life. There is truth in the saying educate a woman, you educate the nation. When women are empowered, they are ready to lay down their lives. Indeed, we are better managers of resources. In Nigeria, we are only about seven per cent in parliament. In other African countries, they are up to 50 per cent in parliament. More women need to come out. More need to be supported<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Personal interview with Hajia Bala Usman, President, National Council for Women Society (NCWS), Abuja, 4/3/2008

<sup>9</sup> Personal interview with Princess Iyabo Oyegbemileke Akinnagbe of the NCWS on 22/4/ 2007

<sup>10</sup> Election HERstories, political Experiences of Women in Nigeria. Eds. Mangwat, J., Ibeanu, O., & Mahdi, S. 2009. Unired Kingdom. DFID. Pg. 88

Describing how she managed to mobilize so much support and who her strongest supporters were, she mentioned family, friends, the incumbent Governor amongst others. According to her,

My family supported me financially. They encouraged and prayed for me. In addition, my friends mobilized some resources for me. Some picked bills for specific items e.g. mobilization materials like T-shirts etc. When I say people gave me money, it was not a huge sum. They all gave their widow's mite and that went a long way. In addition to family and friends, my Governor was solidly behind me. He believed that I was the right candidate. His support further mobilized support from other party members<sup>11</sup>.

In spite of this, the PDP stands out as one political party that has waived nomination fees for women. Evidence however abounds that in most cases where there was a stalemate on party candidature, women were directed to step down since they did not pay any nomination fee, hence have nothing to loose. Such was the case of a good intention turned into disadvantage for some PDP women thus emphasizing the point of non – equality. Female members of the PDP however feel that action that is more pragmatic is needed to ensure women's inclusion. According to a former President of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo,

Democracy requires that men and women have unrestricted access to spaces of power where they can realize their political value and where their individual demands and preferences can be manifested and satisfied. The absence of women in political debates and the decision-making process distorts the appreciation of women's interest. Women's interests are not clearly articulated because male representatives and their interest groups do not possess adequate and appropriate knowledge, interest, or both. Development indices show that the involvement of women in governance promotes development because women form the bedrock of the society<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Election HERstories, political Experiences of Women in Nigeria. Eds. Mangvwat, J., Ibeanu, O., & Mahdi, S. 2009. Unired Kingdom. DFID. Pg. 89

<sup>12</sup> Cited in Election HERstories, political Experiences of Women in Nigeria. Eds. Mangvwat, J., Ibeanu, O., & Mahdi, S. 2009. Unired Kingdom. DFID. Pg. 87

Commenting on what led to her victory at the poll in 2007 in comparison with her 2003 experience, Hon. Mulikat said:

In 2003, it was like fighting against your party really. There was nothing anybody could do. There were no primaries. We only had kangaroo primaries. At the end of the day, I had to join hands with my party to make sure that our candidate won. This time around, I think the people decided that it was high time they voted for their own person. I had the support of virtually everybody. The reasons they gave for their support were that I was patient, I did not get angry. I was loyal to the party and took part actively in the elections despite the disappointments. They all felt this woman had tried. She had been consistent. Let us give her a chance. They have had men all along. They decided; let us try a woman this time. At the primary election, there was really no obstacle. Most of the people knew me. The primaries were no difficult for me. This time there was a proper primaries; not like the Kangaroo one that was earlier conducted. It was a landslide victory. Out of the 1,400+ votes, my opponent could not have scored 20. My opponent was a man. My commitment and consistency won me victory. My constituent trusted me. I always told them the truth. I told them I had never been to the House of Representatives but I would do my best to represent them well. I never lied to them. Today, they are not disappointed 'sic',<sup>13</sup>.

Asked if she considered the experience in the House of Representatives worth her while, she responded thus:

I will say it is worth my while because I have learnt a lot in the area of Legislator's responsibilities and general procedures of the House. Also being in the House, one realizes that not all the issues discussed end the way you want them<sup>14</sup>.

Speaking further, she maintained that:

In a democratic setting, decisions do not necessarily favour you or your group all the time. National issue are managed to avoid national crisis. On the whole, I will say being in the House has afforded me the opportunity to do a lot for my people in terms of

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<sup>13</sup> Election HERstories, political Experiences of Women in Nigeria. Eds. Mangvwat, J., Ibeanu, O., & Mahdi, S. 2009. Unired Kingdom. DFID. Pg. 87-88

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

improving their standard of living and attracting infrastructural projects to my constituency and a lot more<sup>15</sup>.

Asked if she would like to remain in politics, Mulikat says:

Yes of course, this is because politics is like another type of education where you start from one point and get to the top. I will like to be the speaker of the House of Representatives if Allah permits one day and while occupying the position, I will like to mentor other young female politicians and teach them what I have learnt so far<sup>16</sup>.

While justifying the need for more participation of women in politics, Mrs. Ogunleye (ibid) averred that:

Naturally, women are more caring than men are. Women are the custodian of a caring culture. This culture is a strong pillar of democracy. Without looking inward into our culture therefore, there cannot be democracy. Governments that have performed well in Nigeria like Awolowo and Ajasin for example, in conjunction with their wives, had caring hearts for them to be developmental. Thus for the country (Nigeria) to develop; women must be actively involved in governance<sup>17</sup>.

To Alhaji Umar Faruk; the secretary to the Senate Committee on Women Affairs, the issue of women political participation viz-a-vis democracy is still largely an individualistic affair in Nigeria, as the enabling law that would have facilitated more women participation in Nigeria has not been enacted.

According to Umar;

Affirmative action has never become a law in Nigeria, this kind of Affirmative Action where they say 30% of positions (appointive and elective) be reserved for women is just a political agreement, a political consensus, political manouvre, political strategy, political jungular. Each political party now come up with an idea of position(s), okay so and so percentage will now

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Election HERstories, political Experiences of Women in Nigeria. Eds. Mangvwat, J., Ibeanu, O., & Mahdi, S. 2009. United Kingdom. DFID. Pg. 91

<sup>17</sup> Personal interview with Mrs Bisi Ogunleye President, Country Women Association of Nigeria (COWAN) on 6/2/2008, Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria

go to women, youth e.t.c. It is a political arithmetic to get the attention of more people into your own party but it has never become a law. For this Affirmative Action to become a law there ought to have been a bill either from the NGOs, government or the National Assembly itself. There is no time the women NGO's or any other body in Nigeria come together to address this issue of Affirmative Action like in Namibia, Tanzania, South Africa etc where women have proposed bills and got them enacted into law in their own interest which they give a big push in the legislature, rather it is the women legislators that are scrambling to better the lot of women economically and health wise by sponsoring bills... the position women occupied in the Obasanjo government was based on his own personal arithmetic<sup>18</sup>.

Moreso, and in line with the above, Mrs. Grace Akpabio, Chief Women Development Officer and head women Organization Division, Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development, Abuja opined that;

democracy has afforded the ministry the opportunity of sensitization meetings with the special assistance to the president on MDGs on gender based violence directed at the law enforcement agents, the Judiciary, gender mainstreaming workshops, advocacy visits to all the government in the 36 states and the FCT during which the organization pleaded with the governments and opinion leaders to give the women a chance and give them their support as well as appealing to the private sector to make fund available to female candidates for elective offices<sup>19</sup>.

Furthermore, in agreement with the above assertions, Princess Iyabo Oyegbemileke of the NCWS believes that democracy has really endeared women to governance. In her words:

We now have women ministers, commissioners, and permanent secretaries. In Ondo state for the first time, there are 7 women

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<sup>18</sup> Personal interview with Alhaji Umar Faruk; the secretary to the Senate Committee on Women Affairs at the National Assembly complex Abuja on 14/2/2007

<sup>19</sup> Personal interviews with Mrs Grace Akpabio; Chief Women Development Officer and head women organization division, Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development, Abuja on 14/2/2007

permanent secretaries, this is unprecedented in the history of the state even in the Local Government we now have women supervisors/councilors and others who are aspiring to be chairmen of local government even the chairman of the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) is a woman. The good reports from these women are indicative of their ability to aspire to greater heights and challenge both in appointive and elective positions<sup>20</sup>.

On her part, Dr. (Mrs.) Lydia Umar, the Executive Director of Gender Action Trust (GAT) Kaduna, went down memory lane to unravel the capability of democracy to engender more women participation in governance and politics. She is of the opinion that an enduring democracy will enlarge the scope as well as the space for more women participation. In her words;

An evaluation of the performance of women after the pre-1999 primaries elections in Kaduna state revealed that women were virtually absent from the table and the problem lay with the uncertainty surrounding the unfolding democracy. People (men and women) were not sure that democracy would take place, they showed apathy to politics and since these people were not very enthusiastic about politics; they were not really enthusiastic about coming out to contest the elections and so women were literally missing from the scene. The only aspect that women played here was that of being voters as well as campaigners basically by 1999. But by the time we went through the first 4 years, it was evident that democracy had come to stay so people now developed more interest, thus women like the men, began to nurse the ambition to stand elections, so 2003 witnessed more participation of women than in 1999 though with a lot of challenges<sup>21</sup>.

In addition, Mrs. Umar (ibid) maintained that:

After 2003, we had some few women that were able to make it at all levels except for the governorship, vice presidency and presidency levels. Thus, in 2003 women participation has improved basically from being just voters and campaigners to being contestants now and that led to us having women who had

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<sup>20</sup> Personal interview with Princess Iyabo Oyegbemileke Akinagbe of the NCWS on 22/4/ 2007

<sup>21</sup> Personal interview with Dr (Mrs) Lydia Umar, the Executive Director of Gender Action Trust (GAT) Kaduna on 18/12/2007

contested but lost elections. Comparatively issue like the performance of women was looked into and it was found out that women performed still poorly because the statistics is there to show.

Also affirming the capability of democracy for improved women political participation, Barrister (Mrs.) Joy Ezeilo, the Executive Director and Founder of Women Aid Collective (WACOL) Enugu, reasoned that;

Democracy has increased significantly the process of governance both nationally and internationally; nationally it has provided space for women participation at all levels as well as in activism and internationally democracy has opened the door for Nigerian women to participate and gain from the international community by way of attending seminars and conferences that borders on women generally. However, women representation in governance is largely marginal, nationally it is still under 10 percent<sup>22</sup>.

Similarly, Mrs. Umar (op.cit) maintained that;

Democracy offers an opportunity because if democracy is about equal participation by all, so you will ask the question. Where are the women? If only the men are running our democracy, it means that we are operating half democracy because full democracy must carry along men and women and the ultimate is the promotion of gender equality.

Responding to question on what to be done to enhance more women participation in politics, Mrs. Ogunleye (ibid) made the following suggestions:

Women must take themselves more serious, elite women must form great alliance with the rural women, with leadership skills, strategies and some in-born characters for political mobilization, there should be a fund set up at every state of the federation purposely to help women politicians. Women were key to the past, must be core to the present and be celebrated conduits and conscience to the future. Their pauperization must stop, as pauperization of women can have no place in sane society or in civilized world. Hence, there should be promotion of gender –

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with Barrister (Mrs) Joy Ezeilo, the Executive Director and Founder of Women Aid Collective (WACOL) Enugu June 24, 2007

compliant and women friendly democratic practice at all levels of governance<sup>23</sup>.

In addition and with regard to her organization, Country Women Association of Nigeria, (COWAN), Mrs. Ogunleye (ibid) maintained that:

COWAN full involvement in democracy and governance is guided by its strong belief and full commitment to a true holistic empowerment for women, and rural women in particular. These are; economic empowerment using micro-credit as a key, social empowerment using safe motherhood and good health as a key and political empowerment using initiatives based on favourable application of African culture of caring, sharing, saving, communal living and trust<sup>24</sup>.

As a corollary of the above, Mrs. Akpabio (op.cit) opined that democracy, gender equality, and development are correlates. In her words;

During the last census, Nigeria women constituted almost 50% of the population and if you look at it, it is almost 49.6% and if the 49.6% is left out of development what happens to such a nation. There is a slogan we have; educate a woman and you educate the nation, if you have a literate mother you know what you gain... she will be in a position to bring up the children with the right values but when one does not have education, it incapacitates one so much and this is why I personally believe in the promotion of gender equality with a passion ... I believe we have to get to a Nigeria where the men understand that women are equal partner in development, that any right thinking woman would know that it is not a case of overthrowing the men ...but if we all come to the understanding that the two gender should be given equal opportunities in the society, it will make us have a better society on the long run and it will even lift up our economy<sup>25</sup>.

From the above, it has been clearly shown that democracy has the tendency of engendering more participation of women in governance and enhancing development. However, findings revealed that women are only marginally represented in governance. In 2007 (as in previous year 1999 & 2003),

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<sup>23</sup> Personal interview with Mrs Bisi Ogunleye President, Country Women Association of Nigeria (COWAN) on 6/2/2008, Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria

<sup>24</sup> ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Akpabio op.cit.

there has been some significant improvement in the quality of women that have now come on board. In the Senate, House of Representatives and the Federal Cabinet, the quality of women politicians has drastically improved but numerically women are still not anything close to men even at the solicited 30% women are still not close to men (Umar op.cit). In addition to the findings in the literature, the field survey further reveals the following factors as contributory to the low participation of women in politics.

According to Mrs. Umar (op cit.):

Women found that they lack the kind of support that they needed both from men and women to be able to stand elections but more from men because they discovered that a lot of the parties were actually men dominated and because the parties were supreme and have the last say as to who represent them in the elections ... the political parties to all intent and purposes are still heavily dominated by men and in this wise political parties are discussed with reference to the executive council, the leadership of the parties at best some of them will give one position to a woman whom they called women leader, ... and you can imagine what kind of voice she would need to be able to make it when she is the only one among so many men.

Secondly,

Women found that Nigerian politics was heavily dependent on money; finances... you need money to contest elections; for logistics, for campaigning, for posters e.t.c ... but there is an added angle in the Nigerian politics and that is the fact that the voters began to demand for money and since women are comparatively poor, their electoral chances are slim. The waiver secured for women aspirants in party nomination fees was found out to be the bait in denying women electoral chance/ party nomination where there is keen competition between the two genders. Even now the few women who have been able to scale through you will discover that either they have some godfathers that provided the money and so on and so forth.

Thirdly,

Women found that the process of campaigning for elections in Nigeria was pruding with a lot of violence, which is usually scary

to women. Some of the women that could have stood the elections and probably won were scarred away<sup>26</sup>.

The fourth reason advanced for low participation of women in politics is their low level of education. Education takes care of gender education, children, and social needs, adult and non-formal education, and the issue of language. According to Mrs. Abudulahi (ibid.);

There is no specific policy for gender education but the policy currently being used is the normal National Policy on Education that carries everybody along but due to the wide-gap between the boys and the girls with regard to education the federal government felt there is the need to have a specific policy on gender education and the promo for this was approved in December 2006. The Federal government through the programme targets enrolment, retention, and completion to the girls... the programme itself is being gender responsive and sensitive. Moreover, in other parts of Nigeria, there is the problem of boy's dropout, it concerns gender, and they drop out for trading. Examples include some states in the South East like Anambra and Imo states this is equally being looked into<sup>27</sup>.

Similarly, Joy Ezeilo (op.cit) was of the opinion that the comparatively low level of women education affects their participation in politics. According to her;

Female access to education in Nigeria remains lower than male access as is clearly demonstrated in the statistics. The primary school enrolment statistics for 2005 show that 55.9% of enrolments were boys and only 44.1% were girls. In secondary schools, the breakdown is boys 55.45% and girls 44.55%. At the level of tertiary institutions only 39.70% of graduates from universities are females and the percentage of females polytechnic graduates is lower still at 37.54%. The school drop out rate also remains consistently higher for females than male. Literacy rate for adult men is 74.6% while for adult women, it is

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<sup>26</sup> Mrs Umar op cit.

<sup>27</sup> Personal interview with Mrs. Abudulahi, Director; Adult Education, Federal Ministry of Education, Abuja on 7/2/2007

56.8%. Secondary school completion rate for girls is 44%, while that of boys is 75%<sup>28</sup>.

Another problem identified is poverty. Mrs. Akpabio (op.cit) maintained that one of the fundamental problems confronting the FMWA is the paucity of fund which women political aspirants do solicited and which in most cases is not readily available. Contributing to the issue of women and poverty, Mrs. Umar (op.cit) observed as follows:

The first goal of the MDGs is poverty eradication and poverty is seen to have a female face because many women are very poor. So government economic policies targeting the MDGs goal one (1) will actually target the women because talking about poverty reduction entails looking at the group that is extremely poor – the women. Since government is committed to MDGs and is talking about being one of the 20 top economies in the year 2020, we can only hope that they would target right group of people by making it possible for women to have access to economic empowerment strategies like soft loan, micro and macro level financing for women<sup>29</sup>.

Corroborating the menace of poverty among women, Barrister Ezeillo (op.cit) averred that;

Gender inequalities play a key role in the persistent poverty levels of women in Nigeria Statistics show that the incidence of poverty using the rate of US \$ 1 per day increased from 28.1 percent in 1980 to 46.3 percent in 1985 and declined to 42.7 percent in 1992 but increased again to 65.6 percent in 1996. The incidence increased to 69.2 percent in 1997. The 2004 report by the National Planning Commission indicates that poverty has decreased to 54.4 percent. Nigeria fares very poorly in all development indices. The average annual percentage growth of GDP in Nigeria from 1990-2000 was 2.4%. Poverty in Nigeria is in the midst of plenty. Although there has been steady economic growth in the last few years, the benefits have not been evenly distributed amongst men and women<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> Interview with Barrister (Mrs) Joy Ezeilo, op cit

<sup>29</sup> Mrs. Umar op.cit

<sup>30</sup> Ezeillo op.cit

Furthermore, women political participation is hampered by lack of a clear legal framework in accordance with the object and purpose of Articles 4, 7 and 8 of CEDAW (Ezeillo *op.cit*). Mrs. Umar (*op.cit*) opined that;

The state has a big role to play, by state here we mean government, if government is not paying lip service by signing CEDAW they should take concrete steps and one of the steps would be in domesticating CEDAW. ... the state would do women a lot of good if she can domesticate CEDAW because once it is domesticated, women will now have a policy platform on which they can claim that women can be given that affirmative provision in participation in politics<sup>31</sup>.

Having discussed the primary causes of low participation of Nigerian women in politics, attempt is now made to seek respondent responses towards enhancing their (women) participation. The suggestions for enhancing women participation in politics are hereby discussed.

In the first instance, it is suggested that; women should ensure that they impact significantly on their people before coming out for elective positions or politics though Nigerian politics is that of money but if a woman has impacted so much on her villages, on her community, on her society and those people voted for her but have her election upturned, it will get to a stage where people get up and make trouble if the person they voted for is rigged out<sup>32</sup>.

On her own, Mrs. Umar (*op.cit*) was of the opinion that women participation in politics can be enhanced by the following factors.

First, the state has a big role to play, by state here we mean government, and government... should domesticate CEDAW. Secondly, government should recognize the disadvantage position of women by implanting the affirmative action and make some provisions for women on a temporary basis with the same spirit of federal character and the quota system. Thirdly, the playing ground must be made level first for everybody. In the fourth place, the electoral body – INEC in their worth should provide room for women to feel free to be able to also access all the positions that have been made available for women ... husband, parents etc should be encouraged to give support to the

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<sup>31</sup> Mrs. Umar *op.cit*

<sup>32</sup> Akpabio *op.cit*

women. In addition, women should avail themselves of the opportunity offered by the on-going electoral reforms by organizing themselves and come up with a position in form of memorandum to be considered. Finally, attitudinal change is needed ... with a lot of enlightenment both on the side of the women and men something can be achieved ... but mainly what can be done to reduce the gender gap is to empower the women both intellectually and economically, it's not likely that an empowered woman would suffer the kind of discrimination that an unempowered woman would suffer, so empowerment is one major step to take which would help to increase their power to relate and also the power relations which is also patriarchal would be reduced<sup>33</sup>.

Commenting on the above, ambassardor Bamidele Olumilua opined that:

Good education, showcasing women's performance in public offices, as well as societal reorientation on the need for men to support women politicians and making the political terrain less violent by adhering strictly to democratic ethos as well as the possession of professional skills; a woman medical doctor for instance can not be debarred from practicing her profession under any guise, are capable of facilitating more political participation of women<sup>34</sup>

In the same vain, Hon. Saudatu Sani emphasized effective campaign strategy as a catalyst for the electoral victory of women. She decided to embark on house-to-house campaigns and meeting people on the streets. "If you meet people in their houses, they will respect you more because you have accorded them respect, so we went from house to house", said Saudatu Sani. In addition, her campaign included the strategy of involving her children. According to her,

I came up with a new campaign strategy, which even my campaign committee members acknowledged that they have never seen anything like that. I had three children during the campaigns; two males and one female and I took them everywhere I went to campaign. First, to avoid what other politicians are doing by causing trouble during campaign, which

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<sup>33</sup> Mrs. Umar op.cit

<sup>34</sup> Personal interview with Ambassador Bamidele Olumilua, former governor of the old Ondo state, on 4/4/2008 at his residence in Ikere-Ekiti

sometimes leads to loss of lives. If I know my children are part of my campaign, I would not cause any trouble; secondly, this will make my children know how other people suffered to bring me to the position, so they will treat them well even after the election<sup>35</sup>.

According to Senator Chris Anyanwu, the main support needed by women is finance. Women do not have the financial muscle to compete with men so the type of support expected from NGOs is finance. In the absence of this, you can invest by doing some of the campaign materials directly like flyers, and other forms of advertisement. NGOs can invest by doing some of the campaign materials directly like flyers, advertisement, and organizing publicity for the candidate.

The main thing is finance and women do not have the financial muscle to compete with men. Women do not get those big contracts to be able to keep huge savings that they can fallback on. Money is a major thing; also, publicity is a major thing. Name recognition, familiarity with the candidate is very important and what does it take, it takes money again to do publicity. We have heard a lot about NGOs, but none of them was willing to come across and put down money in those ways<sup>36</sup>.

Senator Chris Anyanwu's advice to female aspirants is for them to be bold and courageous. Politics is not rocket science. But it is also not for the lily – livered either. They should be humble and positive. They should not try to emulate the worst tendencies of the male politicians; they should emulate their best and apply the special gifts of women, which are to be more empathic to the constituents. They should find some good men who will mentor them, as men understand the art better because they have been at it longer. She opined that:

Women who want to go into politics should really persevere; they should be bold and courageous. They should not allow all the talk about violence to scare them off. They should have mentors, go to places where other politicians tell their stories, it will offer them a good place to familiarize themselves with these

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<sup>35</sup> Election HERstories, political Experiences of Women in Nigeria. Eds. Mangvwat, J., Ibeanu, O., & Mahdi, S. 2009. Unired Kingdom. DFID. Pg. 208

<sup>36</sup> Election HERstories, political Experiences of Women in Nigeria. Eds. Mangvwat, J., Ibeanu, O., & Mahdi, S. 2009. United Kingdom. DFID. Pg. 147-148

experiences and prepare them psychologically for it. You have to be hawk eyed. If you keep quiet because you are a woman, you will not succeed. You have to be bold and speak out when and if there is need to. At the last exercise, I had virtually run out of money but I got a little help. I bought nice white envelopes and I made sure that at least everybody who is coming will get an envelope with some amount in it and I gave it to them, at least N1000, and I gave it to them as transport money. I told them that the money is for transport, I am not going to buy them to vote for me, but I think that the difference is clear. If you want money and if your objective is to get money, maybe you will receive the man's money but you can take this N1000 for transport and I will work for you, and if you have faith in what I am saying, take the money, go and vote and you will get your reward in the service I will give you. In the end, I won. It was, as close to a transparent exercise as you would have it in our milieu. I was not handed the mandate on a platter of gold. Nothing was conceded me because of gender<sup>37</sup>.

On the issue of violence during and after the campaign, she stated that there will always be violence or threat of violence but when you know the type of environment that you are operating in, you have to be wise. She had her own security people who went around with her and because of that, the opposition knew they would not succeed in intimidating her.

My opponents tried to pull all that stuff but nobody has monopoly to violence. It is a show of power. Get your own policemen, and if they know that you surround yourself with strong men, anybody using violence will see that you will match force with force. You have your own strong men and police men; you don't walk alone and expose yourself to danger. In contemporary politics and engagement, martyrdom is not just the way to go, so you have to prepare yourself, make sure that you are well protected and make sure that you have people that can at least stem any plans that they may have<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> Election HERstories, political Experiences of Women in Nigeria. Eds. Mangyvat, J., Ibeanu, O., & Mahdi, S. 2009. United Kingdom. DFID. Pg.43

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. Pg. 144

(c) **The Nature of Nigerian politics and women political participation.**

Respondents were unanimous in condemning politics as played in Nigeria. To most of the respondents, Nigerian politics is still largely dominated by men. According to Senator Anisulowo:

Like the Nigerian state, Nigerian politics is highly patriarchal with men still dominating the important and key spheres of governance. The pecuniary gain and personalization of governance seem to have heightened undue competition for political offices<sup>39</sup>. She equally maintained that some powerful men do harass women sexually as a precondition for their (men) support for women. Senator Anisulowo attributed her failure to get nomination to the Senate under the platform of the People Democratic Party (PDP) for the second time to this unhealthy development from men<sup>40</sup>. ( Sunday Sun, March 4,2007.pg. 10)

Corroborating the above, Mrs. Umar (op.cit) maintained that:

the Nigerian politics is so unique in the sense that even women who think that they have something to offer are expected to have godfathers who will support them, it is not easy for a woman as she is very vulnerable, and if she allows herself to be taken so far then anybody can take advantage of her<sup>41</sup>.

In the words of Mrs. Bisi Ogunleye (op. cit.):

Nigerian democracy is the government of men, by the men and for the men as against the general perception of democracy as government of the people, by the people and for the people. This is completely different from the traditional democracy that emphasizes communal efforts at national building. In Yoruba land for example, there is a saying that: "*ki obinrin pa ejo, ki okunrin pa ejo, ki ejo mati lo ni*" (Literally interpreted to mean that whoever kills a snake between a man and a woman does not matter but rather what matters is for the snake to be killed). The prevailing democracy rather than encouraging complementarity of roles emphasizes male dominance. Democracy in Nigeria is

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<sup>39</sup> Interview with Senator (Mrs) Iyabo Anisulowo Feb. 2007

<sup>40</sup> Senator (Mrs) Iyabo Anisulowo reacting to the reason while she lost the People Democratic Party (PDP) nomination form for the second time. Sunday Sun, March 4,2007.pg. 10

<sup>41</sup> Mrs. Umar op.cit

mainly for men and not for women due largely to the absence of democratic ethos within the various political parties and not until the parties cease to be male dominated will they begin to encourage and enhance women participation<sup>42</sup>.

**(d) Culture, Religion, and Women Political Participation**

According to Mrs. Akiyode – Afolabi (op.cit); the issue of gender inequality is structural in the sense that it is endemic in all the structures of the society. It is equally seen as a class issues, women are in the majority of the low ladder people. In her words;

There is the feminization of poverty and it is structural. In employment often, a woman is made to leave her job for her husband in case of rationalization and a pregnant woman too is often not given employment. It is even more structural for a nursing mother whose workload is increased without being valued. Therefore, gender inequality is endemic in our societal structure and must be dealt with in an integrated manner<sup>43</sup>.

Responding to the question on the effects of culture on Nigerian women participation in politics, Hajia Bala Usman (ibid) reasoned thus:

Culture is an asset in Nigeria capable of fetching revenue for the country. This is reflective in the various cultural practices competition the country has won from many international fora. The problem with our culture is digression, the moment the society digresses from our traditional culture then it ceases to be an asset and becomes an instrument of crime, marginalization, and backwardness. Nigerians traditionally are known for the culture of hardworking, honesty, transparency, dedication and loyalty however when we digress it becomes counterproductive. Today the people and the youth do not know our culture. A female child impregnated in the past would feel ashamed for her conduct in the same way a male child who impregnated an opposite sex would feel ashamed. Nowadays the practice has become the harbinger of single motherhood that has not promoted healthy and developmental home. However, there is

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<sup>42</sup> Personal interview with Mrs. Bisi Ogunleye, Op. Cit.

<sup>43</sup> Mrs Akiyode – Afolabi op.cit

this age-long belief in male supremacy and preferential treatment for male child, which I see as ungodly, increment in education for both sexes (male and female) has occasioned perceptive changes in this regard. Now men and women are competing in some fields of endeavours that were traditionally reserved for men. Gradually and with equal opportunity to education, this dividing line between the sexes would fade out; we have to start from somewhere<sup>44</sup>.

In her responses to the question of what constitute the greatest challenge to women political participation in Nigeria, Hajia Ramatu Bola Usman (mni), and national president of the National Council for Women Societies (NCWS) opined thus:

The climax of the challenges to women political participation in Nigeria is the damning support women give to themselves during elections. More so, there is no good and level playing ground for women political participation in Nigeria. For example, political meetings usually take place at very odd time especially for nursing mothers and usually at night during which women are susceptible to various vices. In addition, women do not have access for competition with men financially. Finally, traditional religious beliefs do not give room for women participation in politics but rather confined the women to domestic responsibilities like cooking and caring for the children<sup>45</sup>.

On the role of religion on the political involvement of women, Senator Anyanwu believes that religion is no longer a barrier. Many Muslim women are entering politics and they are being highly encouraged and supported by their men. The Christians from the South East are seeing a wonderful turn around. She had the support of the traditional and religious leaders in her state. According to her,

Our religion has never been the problem. This issue has been the paucity of opportunities for our men, which brought about a certain attitude that left little psychological room for the emergence of the women. Now, the past performance of the few women that slipped through has brought about a realization that society has been losing by not tapping into the huge capacities of its women. Now, they are giving more women an opportunity to serve. This time around, the South East, which was the slowest of the dominant groups to send a woman to Senate, has the

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<sup>44</sup> Personal interview with Hajia Bala Usman Op. Cit.

<sup>45</sup> Personal interview with Hajia Bala Usman Op. Cit.

largest number of women in the chamber. We are proud of this growing liberalism. However, we are also aware that it is an attitude that has not fully taken hold. How well women do in the future will depend on the performance of those of us currently serving<sup>46</sup>.

**(e) The future of women political participation in Nigeria**

Respondents offered useful suggestions for improving and increasing women participation in politics. Some of the suggestions are as discussed below. To Mrs. Umar (op.cit);

the future for us (women) is still a bit bleak in the sense that unless government take deliberate steps to actually correct a lot of anomalies women would continue to struggle and the difference we (women) would be making would be very minimal as it has been in past years, women put in so much but the difference is very little that is seen<sup>47</sup>.

The above assertion by Mrs. Umar further reinforces the need for the state/government to facilitate more women participation in the process of governance with a committed spirit and serious political will.

In a similar vein, Barrister Akiyode-Afolabi (op.cit) opined that the future is bright with a serious government which is more gender sensitive though the fall of Hon. Patricia Etteh from the exalted position of the Speaker of the House of Representatives seemed spirit dampening (Umar op.cit) and slight set – back for women, yet it is hoped that a democratized Nigeria would accord women greater and higher opportunity in governance.

In the words of Hajia Ramatu Bala Usman, the National Chairperson of the National Council of Women Society;

Though democracy has impacted positively on the aspiration of women for more participation in politics, women are daily confronted with daunting tripartite problems, which are structural; using your position to trample on the rights of women,

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<sup>46</sup> Election HERstories, political Experiences of Women in Nigeria. Eds. Mangvwat, J., Ibeanu, O., & Mahdi, S. 2009. United Kingdom. DFID. Pg.141.

<sup>47</sup> Mrs. Umar op.cit

physical; violently assaulting women and psychological; instilling fear in them. These problems hampered effective participation of women in societal issues. In addition, the turnover of the legislators that is their frequent replacement, inadequate education and information especially of the grassroots women about their rights, the prevalence of gender bias men, poverty and lack of education especially among the Northern women are contributory factors to the low status women occupied in governance. More so, violence against women in terms of rape, child marriage, circumcision, and tribal mark has not abated significantly. Issue of stigmatization makes the collation of data on women somehow difficult<sup>48</sup>.

As a way out of the present damning situation of women in governance, Hajia Usman suggested that law should be made and implemented in favour of women. She called on women to shun money mongers in politics and be supportive of one another (ibid).

As a panacea to the present low political participation of Nigerian women in politics, Mrs. Akinnagbe offered the following suggestions:

Government should promote economic development, there should be judicious utilization of state resources which must include promotion of employment for the youths (male and female), financial empowerment of women, improvement of all the infrastructural facilities in the country and availability of free health to the women who are the mothers of the nation<sup>49</sup>.

In addition and as a prelude to overcoming the present low participation of women in politics, Hajia Usman (ibid) offered the following suggestions:

Women must invest their asset in the youth and community development activities. This they can do by giving the youth scholarship in schools and getting them good jobs as well as participating in community works and mentoring the youths to leadership. Doing the above is capable of endearing the women

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<sup>48</sup> Interview granted by Hajia Ramatu Bala Usman, the national chairperson of the National Council of Women Society to the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) monitored on NTA news 30/11/2010

<sup>49</sup> Personal interview with Princess Iyabo Oyegbemileke Akinnagbe of the NCWS on 22/4/ 2007

to the community people who constitute the electorate who may in turn compensate the women by supporting their (women) political ambition. Women constitute majority of voters and are vital agents for change, there is need to empower them by the powers-that-be (state). The state/government can do this by domesticating CEDAW and other relevant documents to women and implementing affirmative action pertaining to them<sup>50</sup>.

Furthermore, Ruby T. Benjamin believes that adoption of affirmative action by all the political parties in the country is capable of enhancing more participation of women in politics though she lamented that her party; the People Democratic Party (PDP) does not have an affirmative action program. According to her:

PDP does not have an affirmative action programme. It is one of those things I think the party should come to grips with and lead the way for other parties and institutions to follow. The party should consider amending its internal rules to deliberately set aside a certain minimum number of seats in the party hierarchy and in the legislature both State and national for women. This idea is not unknown in the history of humanity. Belgium has this engrained in its constitution. For every male in a given position, you back him with a woman. For instance, if the Governor is a male, he is backed with a female deputy. This way, women are groomed for high political responsibility over time. What I advocate at this point in our history given also the internal dissonance or pain such new idea might cause many, is that we begin in little steps by insisting that a certain small percentage like 30% of positions for each area be filled by quality women... the women to be nominated must be competitive so as not to lose the seats to other parties. Some may argue that this is unconstitutional but I argue that the constitution we have was written by men for a dictatorship constituted solely by men<sup>51</sup>.

In addition, Saudatu Sani believes that community development and administrative effectiveness are capable of engendering women participation in politics

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<sup>50</sup> Personal interview with Hajia Bala Usman Op. Cit

<sup>51</sup> Election HERstories, political Experiences of Women in Nigeria. Eds. Mangyvat, J., Ibeanu, O., & Mahdi, S. 2009. United Kingdom. DFID. Pg.140.

following her appointment as Caretaker Chairperson in Kaduna state, Hon. Sani focused on two things: water and education. On water, according to Hon. Sani:

The first thing I did when in Lere was to address the water problem of that area. I could remember when I was young; we used to go to the pond to fetch water. I enjoyed that very much because we were raised in the city, but when I grew up, I realized that this is not something that one would take as a pleasure. That is why, when I came in, the first thing that came to my mind was the issue of water, since I had the authority to do that as a Care Taker Chair, I have to do something to ease their suffering<sup>52</sup>.

Some women might say it is the money that matters but the issue is how you interact with your community that matters. The era of godfatherism has passed. Garba B. M emphatically stated:

I do not have one; I do not intend to have one. Nigerians are becoming more alert politically and nobody wants to be twisted. A lot of people were skeptical about our democracy, but we have seen in recent times how the judiciary comes alive, giving people their rightful position. Everybody is now saying that democracy has come to stay. In the past it was left in the hands of drop out, but now professionals are coming up to contest elections<sup>53</sup>.

Honourable B. M. Garba strongly believes that women are marginalized, although Nigeria is signatory to many international protocols guaranteeing the rights of women. She believes that women marginalization is reflected at all levels, including the National Assembly. To her, 30% affirmative action is necessary to engender participation of women in politics. In her words;

Thank God for the constitutional amendments, I think apart from electoral review, some proportion should be reserved for women on proportional representation. When we came in 1999, we were just twelve, 2003 we were about twenty-three, 2007 we were twenty-five. At least there is a kind of increment, but out of 360, we should at least be given 100. We even suggested that in each Senatorial District women should be given at least one member,

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<sup>52</sup> Election HERstories, political Experiences of Women in Nigeria. Eds. Mangvwat, J., Ibeanu, O., & Mahdi, S. 2009. United Kingdom. DFID. Pg.141.

<sup>53</sup> Election HERstories, political Experiences of Women in Nigeria. Eds. Mangvwat, J., Ibeanu, O., & Mahdi, S. 2009. United Kingdom. DFID. Pg.80

which means three women in each state. Three in thirty-six states are 108. If you do that, you have 30% affirmative action but if you do not do that and insist on proportional representation that many would not even agree. It does not matter, it could be rotational, for instance, if Binta from Michika served two terms as a member let us bring another woman from another local government to come and take over<sup>54</sup>.

Whilst, there have been some efforts by the Obasanjo's government especially since 2003 to increase women's representation in governance; Women's representation and participation in appointive and elective posts have improved slightly but equal representation of men and women remains a tall order in Nigeria. Statistics reveals a very low and disproportionate representation of women in governance. This situation falls way below the recommended 30% of the Beijing Platform for action. In addition, although the adoption of democratic rule in 1999 provided an opportunity for women's political participation, the reality is that the position of women eight years later has only slightly improved. In the period starting from the 2003 democratic rule, only 13.4% of the Cabinet members were women and there were no female governors, only 1.6% of women were councilors, 1.2% were local government chairpersons, 2.8% were senators and 3.3% were female representatives at the House of Representatives. In addition, only 9 out of 774 local government chairpersons were women and there were 143 female councilors out of 8,810. At the National Assembly, 3 out of 109 senators were women and there were only 12 female members of the House of Representatives out of 360 members. At the National Political Reform Conference set up by the Obasanjo Government in 2005, there were 31 female out of 420 delegates, there were 4 female ambassadors out of 57. Lack of internal party democracy has created a conducive atmosphere for discrimination against women based ostensibly on cultural and patriarchal perceptions of inequality, roles, and potential between women and men. More so, weak compliance with democratic ethos has encouraged corruption and violence against women within the political parties. It is therefore imperative that equal participation of women in politics is effected in the Nigerian political system in compliance with the

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<sup>54</sup> Election HERstories, political Experiences of Women in Nigeria. Eds. Mangvwat, J., Ibeanu, O., & Mahdi, S. 2009. United Kingdom. DFID. Pg.79

covenants contained in the various International treaties such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, CEDAW, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights, the Millennium Development Goals and Optimal Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the rights of women in Africa.

#### 5.4.0 Presentation of survey data, Analysis and Interpretation of Data

##### 5.4.1 The Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents

In this section, attempts were made to discuss the personal data of the respondents. These attributes provide useful information on the composition of the studied population. The attributes include the sex, age, education, occupation, and marital status. The data on these characteristics are presented in table 5.4.1 below:

*Table 5.4.1: The Distribution of the respondents showing their individual characteristics.*

		MALE (149)		FEMALE (397)	
		No.	%	No.	%
I	Age (year)				
A	18-35 years	59	39.60	110	27.70
B	36-50 years	85	57.04	215	54.16
C	51-60 years	5	3.36	72	18.14
	Mean Age	37		64	
II	Marital status				
A	Single	30	20.13	83	20.91
B	Married	79	53.02	209	52.64
C	Separated/Divorced/ Widowed	40	26.85	105	26.45
III	Educational Attainment				
A	Primary school	-	-	-	-
B	Secondary school	22	14.77	94	23.68
C	NCE/ND/HND	52	34.89	165	41.56
D	University degrees(s)	60	40.27	117	29.47
E	Others	15	10.07	21	5.29

**Source:** Fieldwork conducted in 2007

Table 5.4.1 shows that the respondents were dominated by women (females), since out of 546 respondents they were 397 or 73% while there were only 149 or 27%

men (males). The poor participation of men was due to their uncooperative and indifferent attitude during the course of administering the questionnaire, as they were averred to anything gender/gender parity. More so, most of the men were observed to be gender bias as they frowned at any discussion on women political participation or gender equality. This once again reinforces the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian state. It was the belief of most men that women have no business in politics but rather should be pre-occupied with domestic duties. It is equally important to note that there were more female respondents because they did not nurse such fear as their male counterparts.

The study reveals that all the respondents (male and female) (between the age brackets of 18-60 years) can still participate actively in politics, as they are located within the legal age of franchise in Nigeria, the least being 18 years.

In Nigeria, as in most countries of the world, marriage is a universal practice. A lot of importance is therefore attached to it as it bestows prestige and is an indication of maturity and being responsible. Consequently, people contract marriage and remain in it in spite of the difficulties experienced therein. As stated by Oyekanmi (2000:105), marriages in Nigeria are fairly stable.

The table reveals that 53% of the male respondents are married as against 20% that are single or not married and 27% that falls into the category of separated / divorced. The female category equally reveals that 53% are married, 21% are still single or unmarried while 26% are separated/divorced.

Education is viewed as the pillar of development. According to Emile Durkheim, education provides the individual with the specific skills required for future occupation (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000) as it forms the basis of status differentiation in all societies. In addition, education is seen as fundamental to the quest for gender equality and active women political participation. To this end, respondents were requested to indicate their literacy levels. The study reveals that all the respondents (male and female) have one form of education or the other. A reasonable number claim to possess qualifications tagged others' – 15.36%. These include professional qualifications ranging from Accounting Technician Scheme (ATS), to Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN). Others are qualifications from the Nigerian Institute of Management

(NIM), Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria (IPM), and Institute of Marketing of Nigeria (IMN).

As already noted that education is a symbol of status in all societies, it becomes imperative that some level of educational attainment is necessary for active political participation in politics. Although the Nigerian Constitution puts the minimum education requirements for all political positions at the possession of WASC/GCE O' level which most respondents possess. It was found out that for them to be actively involved in politics women need tertiary education as it is observed that education at this level liberates the mind and frees the possessor from the shackles of fear and trepidation in politics. To this end, study reveals that 85% of men have tertiary education while 76% of women possess these qualifications. This has effects for female political participation in terms of "power prestige and good salary".

#### **5.4.2 Women's Political Participation under the Obasanjo Presidency**

Having discussed the bio-data of the respondents; attempt is now made to ascertain the level or extent of women political participation under the Obasanjo presidency. To this end, questions were asked inquiring into this participation.

**Table 5.4.2: Respondents response to question on the level of women political participation under the Obasanjo presidency**

	MALE (149)		FEMALE (397)	
	No.	%	No.	%
Political participation				
Encouraging	130	87.2	200	50.4
Discouraging	12	8.1	197	49.6
Don't know	07	4.7	-	-

**Source:** Fieldwork conducted in 2007

Table 5.4.2 reveals that in the male category, 87.2% of the respondents claimed that women political participation under the Obasanjo presidency was encouraging while an abysmal 8.1% would rather see it as discouraging. In addition, a negligible 4.7% of them stood neutral. This shows that men are repulsive towards women's participation in politics this is because the proportion of women participation that men are seen as encouraging is still highly negligible. In the female category, 50.4% of the respondents

maintained that women participation was encouraging as against 49.6% of them who noted that their level of participation was discouraging. This shows that almost half of the women respondents have refused to be complacent but rather seek for more participation in governance/politics. This is a clear indication of patriarchy symbolizing the insensitiveness as well as the complacency of the men to the plight of women and their political participation. A female respondent noted that:

Though president Obasanjo appears to be women friendly, the number of our representation (women) in his government is still very low and pale to insignificance compared to that of men. It is still very much a male government.

Active participation of women in politics is seen as an element in their empowerment. Thus, effort was made to know whether our respondents believe in women empowerment through more women active participation in politics.

**Table 5.4.3: The Distribution of Respondents on whether they believe in more women active participation in politics**

	MALE (149)		FEMALE (397)	
	No.	%	No.	%
Women empowerment				
Yes	24	16.1	357	90
No	125	83.9	40	10

**Source:** Fieldwork conducted in 2007

Table 5.4.3 shows that, an overwhelming population of men 83.9% of men respondents did not believe in more women participation in politics as against 16.1% who subscribed to the idea. Also in the female category 90% supported more women participation in politics while only negligible 10% kicked against such participation. Thus, it is evident from table 5.4.3 that the quest for more active participation of women in politics is still largely lopsided with most men still not subscribing to the notion while at the same time, majority of women respondents believed in more active participation for women in governance. This calls for value reorientation and education of the two sexes towards realizing the goal of gender equality and more political participation for women as it is doubtful if the goal is realizable without the two sexes (male and female) imbibing the spirit and letter of gender equality.

The key informant interview group however provided more insight into these responses. According to some of the male participants, the privileged status of the Nigerian male is justified because men are more burdened in terms of their socio-cultural responsibilities as breadwinners and heads of households to their families.

As a corollary to the above question, another question on the highest level a woman can attain in politics and governance was posed.

**Table 5.4.4: The distribution of the respondents on the highest position a woman can attain in politics and governance**

Highest position	Male (149)		Female (397)	
	No.	%	No.	%
President / governor	-	-	290	73.05
Vice president /governor	24	16.11	55	13.85
Senate	9	6.04	32	8.06
House of Representatives	10	6.71	20	5.04
House of Assembly	18	12.08	-	-
Local Government Chairman	07	4.70	-	-
Councilor	06	4.03	-	-
Don't know	75	50.33	-	-

**Source:** Fieldwork conducted in 2007

From the table above, it is still glaring that most men (50.33%) respondents are still gender bias as they seemed not to have known any position women ought to be occupying in the body polity, while the remaining 49.77% supported women occupying positions as vice president / Governor – 16.11% Senate – 6.04%, House of Representatives – 6.71%, House of Assembly – 12.08%, Local government chairman – 4.70% and Councilor – 4.03%. From the female category, it is interesting to note that majority of the women respondents supported the idea of women occupying the number one position in Nigeria- president. Analysis from the findings revealed that 73.05% of the female respondents supported women occupying the position of the presidency, 13.85% supported a lower position of the vice president and deputy governor while 8.06% limited women political aspiration to senate and yet more another 5.04% want women to end up their political career at the House of Representatives. Thus, it is glaring

from the findings that opinions and beliefs of men and women with regard to participation in politics are at variance.

However, it is observed that if the desire of women expressed here is translated to reality, Nigeria would have been at the verge of gender equality but in reality, the reverse is the case.

When this issue came up during key informant interview, it was approached more in terms of women's political participation, the issues generated a more intuitive and lively discussion. Some of the women acknowledge that they would participate more in politics, but the dire economic condition of the country, rising inflation, thuggery, political assassinations and threats of being killed are some of the reasons for their discouragement.

These are hard times, the average women are daily confronted with plethora of problems. Surviving which means putting food on the table, high prices, low wages, no light, no water, no fuel, no good medical care, the schools are shabby, it is an ongoing nightmare... so politics is the least of our troubles.

Other women affirmed that the domination of the political machinery by the military for about 30 years has provided no incentive for an active political role for women. A number of factors were also blamed for the low participation of women in politics. These include the lack of a distinctive voting block for women, lack of campaign financing for women candidates, difficulties in persuading men dominated political party leadership to field women candidates, lack of support for women candidates, lack of cohesion among women, the assumption that politics is outside of a woman's role etc. On the whole, the women agreed that their active participation in politics would help in solving their problems. They are very hopeful for a more conducive political environment and they all vowed to do more.

It is therefore pertinent to establish the synergy between democracy and women participation politics. Table 5.5 gives us the picture of the findings.

**Table 5.4.5 the distribution of respondents on whether or not democracy can lead to more women participation in politics**

	Male (149)		Female (397)	
	No.	%	No.	%
Democracy and women political participation				
Yes	130	87.25	389	98
No	10	6.71	-	-
No response	09	6.04	08	2.0

**Source:** Fieldwork conducted in 2007

Table 5.4.5 shows that most male respondents, 87.25%, believe that democracy can lead to more women participation in politics, only 6.71% said no while the remaining 6.04% preferred to be neutral. That some men, regardless of their number, failed to see the link between democracy and political participation further reinforced the gender bias in the polity as these die-hard men still hold strongly to the notion of women having no business in politics. In addition, majority of the female respondents 98% believe that democracy has enhanced their participation in politics. A female respondent opined thus:

That women are able to meet, discuss and strategize towards active participation in governance uninhibited as well as the proliferation of women NGOs that network on women issues is a plus to democracy.

Only an insignificant 2% of the female respondents declined to comment. It can be said that democracy by its very essence subsists based on citizen's participation and this participation does not exclude women.

Women's position in our society is that of subordination and this has been couched on traditions, superstitions and the conservative belief system. Nigeria being a patriarchal state still has unfriendly cultural norms and values for women. This affects aspiration and acceptance to leadership positions. This societal disposition has rubbed off on women participation in national politics, which is viewed as a microcosm of the large social structures as revealed by this study. It is apparent that the Nigerian state is not favourably disposed to women occupying key political positions.

Thus, attempt was made to ascertain the reactions of the respondents as to what can be done to enhance more women participation in governance. This is revealed in table 5.6 as follows:

**Table 5.4.6: Distribution of Respondents on what can be done to enhance more women participation in governance**

Participation in governance	Male (149)		Female (397)	
	No.	%	No.	%
Legislation	09	6.04	205	51.64
Education for both sexes	42	28.19	97	24.43
Perseverance	95	63.76	51	12.85
All of the above	03	2.01	44	11.08

**Source:** Fieldwork conducted in 2007

From table 5.4.6 above, it is revealed that both the male and female respondents supported the idea of enhancing more women participation in politics. However, analysis from the table revealed that most male respondents subscribed to the notion of perseverance as a means towards enhancing women political participation. Thus 63.76% of the male respondents do not want quick and immediate enhancement of the status of women, 28.19% respondents upheld the need for education of both sexes in achieving more women participation in politics while 6.04% want legislation in accelerating the pace for women participation. More so, a total percentage of 2.01 opined that legislation, education, and perseverance are all needed to enhance women political participation.

On the female side, majority of the female respondents want legislation towards enhancing their status as 51.64% supported the idea of legislation, 24.43% and 12.85% of the female respondents supported education and perseverance respectively, while 11.08% were of the opinion that legislation, education and perseverance are needed to improve their status.

The analysis clearly shows that both the male and female respondents want the status of women enhanced through their active participation in politics. However, approaches to achieving this differ between the sexes.

Given the societal perception of women politicians, it becomes expedient to ascertain the societal perception of women politicians. Subsequently, a question was asked about the perception of women politicians by the society.

**Table 5.4.7: Distribution of Respondents on the society perception of women politicians**

Societal / Perception	Male (149)		Female (397)	
	No.	%	No.	%
Encouraging	31	20.8	73	18.3
Discouraging	73	49.00	210	52.90
Lukewarm	30	20.13	59	14.9
Don't know	15	0.07	55	13.9

**Source:** Fieldwork conducted in 2007

Table 5.4.7 shows, that most of our Respondents 51.8%, believed that societal perception of women politicians is very discouraging while only 19.04% saw the societal perception of women politicians as very encouraging. This corroborates the assertion that the Nigerian society is still very largely patriarchal, Udegbe (1998), Okome (2000), Erinoshio (2005) etc.

The above findings call for value reorientation and civil education of the populace towards engendering a gender sensitive society.

Having established the nature of the Nigerian society and her attitude towards gender equity and active participation of women in politics, the next effort is directed to ascertaining spouse support for politics/ political participation. Question was asked inquiring into the support level of respondents spouses with regard to political participation.

**Table 5.4.8: The distribution of Respondents on whether their spouses support political participation**

Support	Male (149)		Female (397)	
	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	98	65.8	50	12.6
No	41	27.5	262	66
Not applicable	10	6.7	85	21.4

**Source:** Fieldwork conducted in 2007

Table 5.4.8 clearly reveals that in the male category, 65.8% of the respondents claimed their spouses support them to participate in politics while 27.5% disclosed that

their spouses did not support their participation. This shows that men are repulsive towards women's participation in politics. In the female category 12.6% of the respondents said that their spouses support their involvement in politics as against 66% of them who noted that their spouses did not support them. This is nothing but a clear indication of the prevalence of patriarchy whereby while men are supreme, women are subject to the rule and command of men. A female respondent commenting on male apathy towards spouses' political participation remarked that:

My husband does not like my political activities. He says politics is violence – prone. Even when I tell him that I am not there to fight, he insists that politics is not for responsible women especially as they meet in hotels and most often nocturnally.

About 18% of the respondents, 6.7% and 21.4% for male and female categories respectively, did not fit into the variable as they are single or 'separated/divorced'/widowed'.

Since the above patriarchal disposition hinges largely on cultural practice in our society, attempt was made to seek respondents' views on whether or not cultural influence on women political participation can be mitigated. Table 5.4.9 below shows the analysis of the sampled respondents as follows:

**Table 5.4.9: The distribution of Respondents, on whether or not cultural influence on women political participation, can be mitigated.**

Cultural influence	Male (149)		Female (397)	
	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	20	13.4	298	75
No	115	77.2	32	8
Don't know	14	9.4	67	17

**Source:** Fieldwork conducted in 2007

As can be seen from table 5.4.9, most men/male respondents, 77.2% have a flair for the prevailing culture of male dominance and would want it sustained while most women/female respondents, 75% want a reversal of the existing culture to suit their aims and aspirations of gender parity in the society. The aggregate percentage of those who believe in mitigating the cultural impact on women as a percentage of total respondents is

58% while those who want the existing culture subsisted is 27% and those who are indifferent stood at 15%. Thus from the finding it is glaringly clear that the influence of culture on women political participation can be reduced in this wise, the recurring issue in the findings is that education (formal) is a tool/weapon that can be employed in that direction.

**Table 5.5.0: Distribution of respondents on the possibility of women combining household responsibilities with active participation in politics**

Household responsibilities	Male (149)		Female (397)	
	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	91	61	358	90
No	58	39	39	10

**Source:** Fieldwork conducted in 2007

Having established the fact that cultural influence on women political participation can be mitigated, the next step was to establish the veracity or otherwise of the finding by subjecting the cultural belief of women's offices being in the home to a test as shown above.

From the above table 5.5.0, it is obvious that combining household chores with politics may after all not be problematic for the women as most of them, 90% were of the opinion that household responsibilities do not in anyway affect their participation or otherwise in politics. It is interesting to note here that finding from men/male respondents corroborates that of the women. Most male respondents 61% believed that women could participate actively in politics without jeopardizing their household responsibilities. As the table readily shows, about 82% of the total respondents are of the opinion that women participation in politics will not be affected by their domestic responsibilities.

Thus, the analysis so far has helped in establishing the following facts: democracy has widened the scope for women participation in Nigerian politics, the level of awareness for political participation among Nigerian women has also increased, the Nigerian state has not taken fundamental step towards enhancing active women participation in politics, legislation is needed for women to be able to function effectively in politics and governance generally, the policy environment is dominated by men hence

there is the need to re-orientate them towards eschewing thuggery and violence so as to create a level playing ground for all (men and women) in politics.

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## CHAPTER SIX

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 Summary

This study has analyzed women political participation in Nigeria Vis-a- Vis the opportunities offered by the Nigerian state and democratic governance. The analysis has focused on women political participation and their roles in governance. The research was informed by the fact that nation states' quest to develop rapidly has entailed a maximum utilization of their human resources. Human resource is a factor of production and doubles as the 'user' of the other resources – materials and capital in the production process. All over the world, the human elements constitute the human capital, which is made up of both male and female.

In addition, the quest for development has, in most cases, now premised on the practices of the ideals of democracy and representative government. This is premised on the belief that:

The mere participation of women in the political life of a country is an important step in its democratic life. It offers equal opportunity practically and not only theoretically. It leads to a new perspective and a diversity of contributions to policy – making and to priorities of development, and it gives the female population a role in deciding the future of their country and the rights and opportunities for their gender (Sachet2005).

In the same vein, Hillary Rodham Clinton (1997) emphasized that:

There cannot be true democracy unless women's voices are heard. There cannot be true democracy unless women are given the opportunity to take responsibility for their own lives; there cannot be true democracy unless all citizens are able to participate fully in the issues of their country.

Doubtlessly, Nigeria is currently undergoing a process of democratic transition. Thus far, the main highlights of this transition have been the inauguration of civilian rule in 1999 and the contentious conduct of general elections in 2003 and 2007 that have achieved the successful replacement of one civilian government by another. The successful commencement of the second term of the Fourth Republic gives the impression that despite its manifold inadequacies; the journey to democratic consolidation is well and truly on. However, for the process to be complete, the country

needs to improve on the quality of leadership, especially by quality women participation and representation in key institutions of governance. It is noted that political power is skewed in favour of men and this becomes more problematic because the nature and urgency of the challenge have not been sufficiently understood and grasped to enable efforts to be properly channeled towards addressing it. The problem is particularly poignant when it is recognized that pre-colonial societies have recorded remarkable achievements of women in public life. The problem of political leadership and participation by women thus remains a critical challenge of the democratization process in Nigeria.

For instance, the positions of the presidency and his vice are still largely occupied by men now (2007). In the Senate, 8 out of 109 members are women, constituting 7.33%, in the House of Representatives 23 out of 360 members are women, an insignificant 6.38%, 6 Deputy Governors out of 36 members resulting in 16.6% and the state Houses of Assembly have 52 women out of 990 members totaling 5.25% (Field Research 2007).

The consequence of the above analysis is that women still participate in governance on tokenism. If democratization is viewed from the global perspective as “a process by which the people are included in the political process as active rather than vicarious participants or mere artifact of propaganda debates” (Obi, 1991:17), then much needed to be done to empower the women. More worrisome is the undiluted fact that in cases where more women have been co-opted into government /leadership positions, it has not automatically translated into a greater political influence for them. Most of these women are not really feminists but are rather in politics for self-satisfaction and enrichment rather than pursuing the goal of women empowerment. In majority of cases, women are normally elected or appointed for some leadership positions that are in fact performed by men. In essence, women have leadership positions without political visibility, weight, or influence. This brings into fore the Dahlerup’s (1988) pioneering study of the utility of the critical mass theory to women and politics. This study rejects *critical mass* in favour of *critical acts*, which she defined as initiatives that change the position of the minority and lead to further changes in their situation. Underscoring the importance of numbers, Dahlerup posited that change could also come through the qualitative actions of a few women in politics. In the same vein, the case of

post conflict societies like Rwanda and Mozambique with 49% and 31% women representation respectively in their national parliaments were cited as examples to underscore the limitations of the critical mass argument (Powley, 2005). In Rwanda, for instance, in spite of the achievements recorded by women in parliament since 1996, challenges still include the fact that Rwanda remains largely underdeveloped and according to Powley (2005: 161), “the great majority of Rwandan women are disadvantaged vis-à-vis men with regards to education, legal rights, health, and access to resources”. Goering (2006) was more succinct in highlighting that 75% of Rwanda’s poor are women, and that domestic violence, although declining, remains a major problem. Thus, the few women in political offices in Nigeria today are capable of heralding gender parity between the two sexes (male and female) if they remain focused and committed to the cause.

It is within the purview of the findings that strict adherence to the issue of women active political participation is required to put women in their right footing as far as development is concerned. More so, development thrives in a democratic environment that is devoid of rancour and crises and such development is people centered. It is opined that all forms of gender discrimination are totally abhorred by democracy. Real and worthwhile development can only take place when women are fully involved. Primarily, it is the responsibility of the state to create an enabling environment for women political participation and gender equality generally. Creating an enabling environment will be hollow and meaningless if it is not expressed in concrete policies, programmes and resources.

In the words of Al Gore (2001:2) (former American vice president);

There would not be much wars, corruption, crime, and chaos and there would be marked improvements in education, health care, and general social welfare if women are sufficiently empowered both economically and socially.

Gore went further to say that:

Men of quality are not threatened by the emancipation of women; he blamed world leaders for determining development only in monetary terms rather than the development of people.

Thus, active and significant participation of women at the upper echelon of politics is pivotal to the development agenda across the globe.

On the historical experience in Nigeria, it was observed that although pre-colonial Nigeria was a largely patriarchal society, women were able to make their mark in politics as shown in the history of such figures as Queen Amina, Moremi of Ife, Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, Gabo Sawaba, Margaret Ekpo, Madam Tinubu e.t.c. Colonialism served to deepen the problem of women exclusion by the relative absence of women in colonial state structures that were inherited at independence. While women struggles were part of the independence struggles, the post-colonial state structure was never reformed to address the question of women disadvantage in political leadership. The question has however come to the fore from the 1980s and 1990s when women organizations proliferated and which also witnessed the popularization of women related issues globally.

Currently, the significance of women participation for democratization and development cannot be overstressed. Women issues have to be main-streamed into politics. This entails adopting a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic, and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. Achieving this goal requires legislation. However, the study observed that while democracy has activated the political space for more and active participation of women culminating in the inclusion of an increased number of women in governance both in appointive and elective positions, their representation remains low hovering far below that of men. This, among others, is largely due to the prevailing culture of patriarchy, cultural and traditional beliefs in the supremacy of men, harmful religious practices, exploitative economic reforms, societal perception of women politicians, discriminatory religious practices, undemocratized political space and lack of political will on the part of the Nigerian state to propagate and prosecute an inclusive policy of women political participation. Thus, rather than pursuing gender equality and women active political participation on its merit, the Obasanjo government based such pursuit on its own "political arithmetic" at the expense of social development and women at large.

The study also revealed that women are poorly represented in political parties. Women in political parties scarcely occupy decision-making positions, even though they

are involved in mobilizing and campaigning for political parties. This is because male characteristics are emphasized in the criteria for eligibility as candidates for such positions and partly because many women organizations are not politically oriented. They focus on welfares and social issues rather than political power (CSSRD, 2003). Besides, the electoral processes and institutions are dominated by men, such that electoral rules and their enforcement process fail to consider women issues and concerns and as such detract women franchise.

Certain socio-economic factors were identified as crucial barriers to women participation in politics some of these include the higher number of women relative to men with low literacy level, the higher level of poverty among women, and the socialization processes in several cultures that emphasize subordinate roles for women etc.

## **6.2 Conclusion**

Thus far, this study has revealed that patriarchal structures are still very much entrenched in the Nigerian state resulting in low political participation for women. The low level of women's participation at all tiers of government (federal, state and local) shows not only the resilience of patriarchy attitudes, but also the limited impact to date of efforts to promote gender equality in Nigeria. That initiatives by NGOs, international agencies and government institutions have not yet brought about a significant cultural shift in attitudes underpin a nexus of mutually reinforcing obstacles to women's political participation. With low levels of education, skills, economic resources and self-esteem, women are in a poor position to assert themselves in the political arena and challenge the cultural biases. Hence, the multiple forms of exclusion and disadvantage tend to reinforce each other. The situation of poverty is a further constraint, making it difficult for Nigerian women to break out of this vicious circle.

As a corollary to the limited education of women, they are concentrated in jobs with low opportunity and low mobility; they therefore have very few prospects for advancement hence their staggering representation in politics.

Although there is still a paucity of women in politics, their interest in this area is increasing. Today women's interests are more consciously represented in almost every sphere of public affairs. This is to the effect that; the participation of women in politics has helped in overcoming most of the challenges of the past. Men are now more willing to cede political ground to women. The People Democratic Party (PDP); the ruling party in Nigeria, has promised to give 35% of all Ministerial and Ambassadorial positions to Nigerian women if its presidential candidate Dr. Goodluck Jonathan is elected as president<sup>1</sup>. Specifically, on the occasion of the grand-finale of PDP Presidential Campaign, on Saturday 26 March 2011 at Abuja maintained that: "to the women, I promised more involvement in governance and more challenging jobs; I also assure you of your 35% in appointive offices" (Jonathan, 2011:52). More women are now contesting and winning as well as losing elective positions in the executive and legislative arms of government. More women are occupying top-most positions on boards and management of big business organizations; women are now more able to influence policies that are more gender friendly. Women have more say now in determining issues affecting them. In all, women are making more contribution to the political, economic, and social development of Nigeria now than in the past. They have thus, become a political resource within the national political resources whose political influence cannot be ignored within the body polity.

The impact of women involvement will have positive consequences for the development of the nation. Through increased political participation, women will be able to develop skills and resources that are likely to be used first in the development of their local communities. The quality of life at this level is a decisive indicator of the extent to which the goals of national development has been achieved.

It is opined that the criteria for evaluating the development of a nation includes the extent to which the various social groups within the country attained their group objective, as well as, the assessment of the efficiency of the production system to satisfy the basic needs of the population, such as food, clothing and housing (Furtado, 1977:635-638). The point to be emphasized is that until or unless women are active participants in

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<sup>1</sup> Item of news monitored on NTA Network News on Thursday 17/2/2011 by 9.00pm

the political process, their group interests will be neglected. These interests may include equal education and employment opportunities, equal fringe benefits, equity in borrowing, credit aid in the procurement of property and legal protection against forced marriages and family violence. Such issues will not receive proper or adequate treatment by local, state, or federal institutions without the felt presence of female within the political process. After all, the interest of the excluded is always in danger of being overlooked and when looked at, is seen with very different eyes from those of the persons whom it directly concerns (Mill, 1962:35).

With equal opportunities as men, women are capable of doing more. Women's increased participation in public life will bring about positive changes. In addition, if Nigeria is to move away from "the business as usual" syndrome, it will need to encourage women to participate more in the running of public affairs. As character molders of future leaders, women are the conscience of every society and cannot be undermined (Ityavyar, 2007:12).

Therefore, barriers must be dismantled, more women encouraged, and supported by political parties and powers-that-be for elective and appointive positions in government. This can be enhanced through legislation or reservation as the case may be. Though women constitute an insignificant part of the National Assembly in terms of representation, there is need for aggregated data to act as a catalyst for active women participation in politics. In addition and in spite of all the odds against women's quest for greater participation in politics, democracy has enlarged the political space for women participation in politics though this has not transformed into meaningful participation. Thus, rather than enhancing women political participation, the Nigerian state has only widely encouraged political patronage and opportunism in the appointment of few women, rather than electing them, into political offices resulting in censored participation through the activities of the male dominated political parties and other institutions of the state. Doubtlessly, this has occasioned restricted participation and put the women at the mercy of their appointers (men) rather than the electorate. Nonetheless, the practice has the potency of liberating the women from the cocoon of poverty while catapulting them into the limelight of active political participation. This is in the form of turning the existing 'femocracy' to active and real participation in governance. Nigerian women are

beginning to utilize their ‘femocratic’ advantage into ‘gendercracy’; they are beginning to transform to real participants in the political field by leveraging on the hitherto ‘femocracy’. Women now contest for elections and see relevance in democratic process rather than relying mainly on the opportunistic advantage of having connected to a man. Specifically, Professor Dora Akunyili has indicated her intention to run for Senate in Anambra state, Remi Tinubu is equally running for Senate in Lagos, while Pauline Tallen and Jumoke Akinjide are contesting for Governor in Plateau state and Senate in Oyo state respectively. How far they can go in this bid remains a challenge for future research.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

Democracy thrives based on equity and fairness to all and its essence is the development of the human race and the society. Sustainable socio – economic development is a product of efficient and effective utilization of the existing resources most especially the human element, which is made up of both male, and female. To this end, attempt at making progress within a nation – state and its components must be cognizant of the level of women in relation to men (or male in relation to female) i.e. gender equity and fairness. This is a catalyst for improving the quality of life for the population and for promoting growth and development. This study has clearly revealed that women are willing to contribute towards the development of the country especially in the area of politics. However, it is suggestive that the Nigerian women would greatly help the cause of their full participation in governance if they endeavour to consolidate their gains at every stage of their struggle for equality. This they can achieve by making the most of every opportunity they have either in appointive or elective positions by performing well and impacting meaningfully on the lives of the electorate. This is capable of endearing women to the electorate and further serve as participatory impetus for women.

Whatever additional gains the women seek to make largely depend on what they make of today’s opportunities. Women should therefore:

- ❖ Work very hard to consolidate today’s gains;
- ❖ The women in governance should be diligent and careful to avoid being taunted (the travails of the erstwhile speaker of the House of Representatives – Olubunmi

- Etteh, should serve as a pointer that the man may not yet be too trusting to surrender leadership to women).
- ❖ Nigerian women occupying political leadership positions should exhibit strong character of honesty, uprightness, fairness, and accountability inherent in women.
  - ❖ Nigerian women now participating in governance should be conscious that their conduct might enhance or jeopardize the chances of others' participation.
  - ❖ Women should build a mutual trust among themselves. Women in leadership positions should inspire others to develop their potentials in political life.
  - ❖ Women need to build a support network for their fellow women by establishing cooperative societies/saving scheme at the level of political party towards assisting needy women in politics.
  - ❖ Above all, Nigerian women should strive to carry not only women but also men along in the discharge of public responsibilities.

Women's oppression is structural, institutionalized, unconscious, and deeply embedded in the socio-cultural process. Addressing such a problem needs comprehensive, multi-sectoral and dynamic strategy. The time for concrete action is now. As part of my recommendations, aggressive education of the girl-child and implementation of the affirmative action are suggested.

“Educate a woman, you educate a nation”, the principle of affirmative action, on the other hand, is a temporary measure that is recommended internationally by the United Nations, CEDAW, etc and even by the Nigerian constitution under the Federal Character principle whose definition omits recognition of sex differences and gender influences. There exists in Nigeria a pool of well – qualified women that will ensure a credible and merit base implementation of affirmative action. The enforcement of the Universal Basic Education programme should be thorough to ensure that the girl-child is captured. Education curriculum should be designed to motivate women to participate in the political processes at every level in the school system, voluntary organization and in state structures. Unless women participate equally in governance Nigeria will continue to go round the vicious circle. There must be at least 30% of women represented in every public office whether by appointment or by election through the establishment of women constituencies that does not preclude women contesting other positions outside the

affirmative action constituencies. Nigerian women should therefore stand to the test of time, be assertive, committed, and eschew selfishness to take their rightful position in the political arena for sustainable national development. The effectiveness of women in government also depends on the extent to which Affirmative Action is a recognized political instrument in their society. Affirmative Action has been defined as government initiated advocacy for the special rights of women, characterized by the conscious and systematic readjustment of the labour force through government policy. This is done through a programme of planned action that combines legislation, social policy services, close monitoring through an agency of government (Lovenduski, 1986:253). At the same time, the more women there are in key decision – making positions of society, the greater are the chances of effective adoption and implementation of affirmative action measures (Okwuosa, 1996:118). Thus, according to Okwuosa (Ibid), three major determining factors, which promote affirmative action, are highlighted below:

- (i) a high level of commitment to the principles of affirmative action on the part of government and its incumbents, and its acceptability to the public;
- (ii) the presence of extensive legal instruments for its implementation; and
- (iii) an effective network of feminist organizations which can perform the functions of monitoring, intervention, debate and communication.

Moreover, political parties should be made to adopt specific gender sensitive quotas in their presentation of candidates for elective positions. In this wise, there should be monitoring pressure groups to ensure institutional reforms.

In addition to the above, women in government need certain safety nets from the society in order to maximize their position. Thus, there is the need for effective articulation of women's agenda within the wider society, which can serve as a ready work tool for these women in government. According to Omoruyi (1992), a Nigerian women's agenda would include those political issues, which impinge directly on the daily lives and activities of women as a categorical gender group.

Omoruyi (Ibid) went further to cite some examples which include rural poverty and illiteracy, peasant technology and productivity, food prices, infant and primary health care, rural water services, sexist traditional practices, discriminatory taxation and

employment policies, family laws etc. These are some areas of concern in politics, which are relevant to the daily interest of women either in a domestic or public capacity.

If a women's agenda is to serve as a ready reference point for women in government, it should be properly articulated by all activist women's organizations that exist in civil society. It should also be an important working document of those agencies of government – based advocacy in the country such as the National Commission for Women. The few women who succeed in capturing elective positions cannot work towards the promotion of women's rights without being armed with relevant data and information on the many issues that confront them in the legislature and elsewhere. A well-articulated agenda of feminist issues would not only enhance their efficacy, it would provide the necessary mechanism in government and women groups in civil society.

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## INTERVIEWS

1. Dr. (Mrs) Lydia Umar, founder and Executive Director Gender Awareness Trust (GAT) Kaduna (08033146543)
2. Barrister (Mrs) Akiyode-Afolabi Abiola, founder and Executive Director, Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre, Ikeja, Lagos
3. Ambassador Bamidele Olumilua, former governor of the old Ondo state, on 4/4/2008 at his residence in Ikere-Ekiti
4. Mrs Grace Akpabio, Chief Women Development Officer and head Women Organization, Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development, Abuja
5. Alhaji Umar Faruk, the Secretary to the Senate Committee on Women Affairs
6. Honourable (Hadjia) Saudatu Sani, House Committee Chairman on Women Affairs
7. Barrister (Mrs) Joy Ezeilo (OON), founder and Executive Director, Women Aid Collective (WACOL), Enugu
8. Hajia Ramatu Bala Usman, National Chairperson, National Council of Women Society

9. Mrs Hildatu Umar Abdulahi, Deputy Director, Special Education, Federal Ministry of Education, Abuja
10. Senator Iyabo Anisulowo, National Assembly, Abuja
11. Mr Ojo, Director of Statistics, National Assembly, Abuja
12. Hajia Gom, National Centre for Women Development, Abuja
13. Mrs Kennis, Women Affairs Committee, Abuja
14. Senator U. K. Umar, member Senate Committee on Women Affairs
15. Mrs Olatunji, Director Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development, Abuja
16. Professor (Mrs) Jadesola Akande, Ibadan (08053421846)
17. Mr Alebiaro, National Centre for Women Development, Abuja
18. Mrs Bose Anifowose, Country Women Association of Nigeria, Ilorin, Kwara State
19. Professor Layi Erinosh, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye
20. Dr C. T. Oluwadare, Dept. of Sociology, University of Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria
21. Princess Iyabo Oyegbemileke, National Council for Women Society
22. Chief (Mrs) Bisi Ogunleye (O.F.R.), founder and Executive Director, Country Women Association of Nigeria, (COWAN), Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria
23. Dr. (Mrs) Pat Duru, Dept. of Geography and Environmental Management, Imo state university, Owerri
24. Barrister (Mrs) Martina Mamman, Women Aid Collective (WACOL), Abuja
25. Dr. (Mrs) Munonye Jane, Department of Agricultural Economics, Imo state university, Owerri
26. Mrs. Jancinta V. Magang, State President, National Council for Women Society, Adamawa
27. Mrs. Aisha, Office of the Minister, Federal Ministry of Education, Abuja
28. Mrs Alice Eyong, Women in Nigeria, Calabar, Cross River State

## APPENDIX A

### DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, FACULTY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN, NIGERIA.

**TOPIC:** STATE, WOMEN AND DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA, 1999-2007

#### QUESTIONNAIRE ON WOMEN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION UNDER THE OBASANJO PRESIDENCY

Dear Sir/Ma,

Please this questionnaire is meant to elicit responses with the aim of generating primary data/information on the above named topic. The purpose of which is to ascertain the level of women political participation under the present democratic government. Please you are required to respond to the following questions (as applicable) the way you understand them. There are no wrong or right answers and your responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Thank you.

#### INSTRUCTION

Please tick ( ) and/or fill in the appropriate responses where required.

#### QUESTIONS

##### SECTION A

1. **Sex:** (a) Male [ ] (b) Female [ ]
2. **Age Group:** (a) 18-35 years [ ] (b) 36-50 years [ ]  
(c) 51 years and above [ ]
3. **Level of education:** (a) Primary school [ ]  
(b) Secondary school [ ] (c) NCE/ND/HND [ ]  
(d) University degree(s) [ ] (e) others [ ]
4. **Occupation:**.....
5. **Marital status:** (a) Single [ ] (b) married [ ]  
(c) Separated/Divorced/Widowed [ ]
6. **Religion:** Christianity [ ] Islam [ ]  
Traditional [ ] Others [ ]

**SECTION B:** General Questions on the State, Democracy and Women Political participation and Democracy in Nigeria

1. What do you understand about politics and political participation?  
.....  
.....
2. How would you describe the level of women political participation under the Obasanjo presidency? Please give reasons for your answer.  
.....  
.....
3. Do you occupy any elective or appointive position?  
Yes [ ] No [ ]
4. If your response to question 3 is “Yes”, what position do you occupy?  
.....
5. Do you believe in women empowerment through more women active participation in Politics? Yes [ ] No [ ]
6. What is the highest position you think a woman can attain in politics and governance? Please give reasons.  
i.....  
ii.....
7. Do you think women have been marginalized in Nigerian politics?  
Yes [ ] No [ ]
8. If your answer to question 7 is ‘yes’, in what areas have women been marginalized? Please Specify.....  
.....
9. What do you see as the implication of the continued exclusion of women from the political scene and governance?  
.....
10. Do you think democracy can lead to more women participation in politics?  
Yes [ ] No [ ]  
Please give reason(s) for your answer here.  
i.....  
ii.....
11. Have there been deliberate state policy/policies towards women empowerment?  
Yes [ ] No [ ]

12. What are the policies?.....
13. If your answer to question 11 is “Yes”, were women parts of the policy formulation?  
 Yes [ ] No [ ]
14. If your answer to question 13 is “Yes” in what areas?  
 i.....  
 ii.....
15. Has the Nigerian state impacted on women political participation? Yes [ ] No [ ]  
 Please specify  
 i.....  
 ii.....
16. Is the Nigerian state committed to implementing international conventions and agreements on women? Yes [ ] No [ ]
17. If your answer to question 16 is “Yes”, which and how?.....  
 .....
18. What do you think can be done to enhance more women participation in governance?  
 .....  
 .....
19. Have the various economic policies of government encouraged women political participation? Yes [ ] No [ ] Please, give reason for your answer.....
20. What do you think can be done to empower women economically?.....  
 .....
21. Has there been any deliberate governmental effort towards gender equity to eliminate the gap in access to education between the sexes? Please specify.....
22. Do you believe in the implementation of 30% affirmative action policy by all political parties for active and full women political participation?.....  
 .....
23. Has the National Assembly taken any serious legal step to ensuring women political participation? Yes [ ] No [ ]

24. If your answer to question 23 above is “Yes”, what are they?.....  
.....

25. Do you see the Civil Society as contributory towards ensuring gender equity in Nigeria?  
Yes [ ] No [ ]

26. If your answer to question 25 is “Yes”, in what capacity has the civil society impacted on women political participation?

i.....

ii.....

27. What is the role of your organization towards ensuring more women participation in politics?

i.....

ii.....

**SECTION C: Socio-cultural questions.**

1. What is the society perception of women politicians?

Encouraging [ ] Discouraging [ ]

Lukewarm [ ] don't know [ ]

2. Would you allow your spouse to participate actively in politics?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

3. Do you think religion is a barrier to women political participation? Yes [ ] No [ ]

4. Does your culture encourage women participation in politics? Yes [ ] No [ ]

5. Give reason(s) for your answer above.....  
.....

6. Do you think cultural influence on women political participation can ever be mitigated?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

7. How? Give reasons for your answer in question 6:  
.....  
.....

8. Is it possible for women to combine household responsibilities with active political participation? Yes [ ] No [ ]

9. Give reason (s) for your answer in question 8:  
.....  
.....

10. Has the Nigerian patriarchal structure impacted on women political participation?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

11. Give reason(s) for your answer above.....

12. What do you think is needed to elect more women to public office in Nigeria?

(a) Legislation [ ] (b) Education for both sexes [ ] (c) Perseverance [ ]

(d) All of the above [ ]

13. How important do you think international women's movement has been to women's participation in politics in Nigeria?.....

14. How would you describe relations between women members of parliament (MPs) and men parliamentarians?.....

15. How would you describe relations between women MPs and women's organization in Nigeria?

16. Does it make a difference having women in parliament?.....

17. What sort of obstacles or challenges have you faced in your role as a parliamentarian?

18. What are your main goal as a member of parliament?.....

19. How would you describe the women's movement in Nigeria today?.....

APPENDIX B

WOMEN ELECTED IN THE 2007 NATIONAL ELECTIONS



**List of Elected Women**

	<b>NAME</b>	<b>STATE</b>	<b>POSITION</b>	<b>ZONE</b>	<b>PARTY</b>
1	Dame Virgy N Etiaba	Anambra	Deputy Governor	South East	APGA
2	Lady Ada Okwuonu	Imo	Deputy Governor	South East	PPA
3	Sarah Bisi Sosan	Lagos	Deputy Governor	South West	AC
4	Salmot Makanjuola Badru	Ogun	Deputy Governor	South West	PDP
5	Erelu Olusola Obada	Osun	Deputy Governor	South West	PDP
6	Mrs. Pauline Tallen	Plateau	Deputy Governor	North Central	PDP
1	Mrs Nkechi Nwogu	Abia	Senate	South East	PDP
2	Grace Folashade-Bent	Adamawa	Senate	North East	PDP
3	Eme Ufot Ekaette	Akwa-Ibom	Senate	South South	PDP
4	Joy Emodi	Anambra	Senate	South East	PDP
5	Chris Anyanwu	Imo	Senate	South East	PDP
6	Gbemisola Saraki	Kwara	Senate	North Central	PDP
7	Hon. Patricia Akwashiki	Nassarawa	Senate	North Central	ANPP
8	Hajiya Zainab Kure	Niger	Senate	Central	PDP
9	Iyabo Bello-Obasanjo	Ogun	Senate	South West	PDP
1	Nnenna Elendu Ukeje	Abia	House of Reps	South East	PDP
2	Nkiru Onyejiocha	Abia	House of Reps	South East	PDP
3	Binta Masi Garba	Adamawa	House of Reps	North East	PDP
4	Dr Uche Lilian Ekwunife	Anambra	House of Reps	South East	PDP
5	Lynda Chuba-Ikpeazu	Anambra	House of Reps	South East	PDP

				North	
6	C.Demnege Alaaga	Benue	House of Reps	Central	PDP
7	Doris Uboh	Delta	House of Reps	South South	PDP
8	Hon. Mercy Almona Isei	Delta	House of Reps	South South	PDP
9	Elizabeth Ogbaga	Ebonyi	House of Reps	South East	PDP
10	Fatima Raji-Rasaki	Ekiti	House of Reps	South West	PDP
11	Titilayo Akindahunsi	Ekiti	House of Reps	South West	PDP
12	Florence Akinwale	Ekiti	House of Reps	South West	PDP
13	Princess Peace Nnaji	Enugu	House of Reps	South East	PDP
14	Mrs. Juliet Akano	Imo	House of Reps	South East	PDP
15	Saudatu Sani	Kaduna	House of Reps	North West	PDP
16	Halima Hassan Tukur	Kebbi	House of Reps	North West	PDP
				North	
17	Nimota Suleiman	Kwara	House of Reps	Central	PDP
				North	
18	Hon. Memunat Adaji	Kwara	House of Reps	Central	PDP
19	Abike Dabiri	Lagos	House of Reps	South West	AC
20	Jumoke Okoya-Thomas	Lagos	House of Reps	South West	AC
21	Hon. Patricia Etteh	Osun	House of Reps	South West	PDP
22	Mulikat Akande Adeola	Oyo	House of Reps	South West	PDP
23	Folake Olunloyo-Oshinowo	Oyo	House of Reps	South West	PDP
				North	
24	Beni Lar	Plateau	House of Reps	Central	PDP
				North	
25	Mrs. Martha Bodunrin	Plateau	House of Reps	Central	PDP
26	Betty Okagua-Apiafi	Rivers	House of Reps	South South	PDP
27	Khadija Abba Ibrahim	Yobe	House of Reps	North East	ANPP
1	Blessing Azuru	Abia	House of Ass.	South East	PPA
2	Grace Uche	Abia	House of Ass.	South East	PPA
		Akwa-			
3	Alice Ekpenyong	Ibom	House of Ass.	South South	PDP
		Akwa-			
4	Ekaette Ebong Okon	Ibom	House of Ass	South South	PDP
5	Bridget C Chukwuka	Anambra	House of Ass.	South East	PDP
6	Chinwe Clare Nwaebili	Anambra	House of Ass.	South East	PDP
7	Lillian Okosi	Anambra	House of Ass.	South East	PDP
8	Njideka Ezeigwe	Anambra	House of Ass.	South East	PDP
9	Nkiru Ugochukwu	Anambra	House of Ass	South East	PDP
10	Rifkatu Samson	Bauchi	House of Ass.	North	PDP

11	Ruby Benjamin	Bayelsa	House of Ass.	Central South South North	PDP
12	Hembadoon Amena Mercy	Benue Cross	House of Ass.	Central	PDP
13	Mrs. Pauline Ekuri	River Cross	House of Ass.	South South	PDP
14	Mrs. Uduak Akiba Ebo Hon. Beatrice Omawunmi	River	House of Ass	South South	PDP
15	Udoh	Delta	House of Ass.	South South	PDP
16	Irene Imilar	Delta	House of Ass.	South South	PDP
17	Joan Onyemaechi Bielonwu	Delta	House of Ass.	South South	A
18	Princess Patience Ajudua	Delta	House of Ass	South South	A
19	Helen Nwobasi	Ebonyi	House of Ass.	South East	PDP
20	Dorathy Obasi	Ebonyi	House of Ass.	South East	PDP
21	Elizabeth Ativie	Edo	House of Ass.	South South	PDP
22	Elizabeth Ezeugwu	Enugu	House of Ass	South East	PDP
23	Mrs. Chika Eneh	Enugu	House of Ass.	South East	PDP
24	Mrs. Edith Nnamani	Enugu	House of Ass.	South East	PDP
25	Princess Eugenia Ogbu	Enugu	House of Ass.	South East	PDP
26	Theresa Egbo Rosemary Ismaila	Enugu	House of Ass.	South East	PDP
27	Mairnngu	Gombe	House of Ass	North East	PDP
28	Hajiya Zainab Alman	Gombe	House of Ass.	North East	PDP
29	Nwaneri Oyibo Norah	Imo	House of Ass.	South East	PDP
30	Ukachi Amaechi	Imo	House of Ass.	South East	PDP
31	Amina Dalhatu	Kaduna	House of Ass.	North West	PDP
32	Esther Abba	Kaduna	House of Ass	North West North	PDP
33	Cecilia Bose Ore	Kwara	House of Ass.	Central North	PDP
34	Raliat Aremu Adifa	Kwara	House of Ass.	Central North	PDP
35	Ramatu Adesina Abaya	Kwara	House of Ass.	Central	PDP
36	Ajoke Adeniyi-Adegeye	Lagos	House of Ass.	South West	AC
37	Akande, Lola Fibisola	Lagos	House of Ass.	South West	AC
38	Badmus Olujobi Bola	Lagos	House of Ass.	South West	AC
39	Mrs Funmi Smith-Tejuosho	Lagos	House of Ass.	South West	AC
40	Olatunji Edet Omowunmi	Lagos	House of Ass	South West	AC
41	Mary E Enwugulu	Nassarawa	House of Ass.	North	ANPP

42	Afinike Eunice Dauda	Niger	House of Ass.	Central North	ANPP
43	Comfort Yuda Adijat Motunrayo	Niger	House of Ass.	Central North	PDP
44	A.Oladapo	Ogun	House of Ass.	South West	PDP
45	Rt. Hon. Titi Oseni	Ogun	House of Ass	South West	PDP
46	Olubitan C. Asake Barr. Idiat Babalola	Ondo	House of Ass.	South West	PDP
47	Olaruwaju	Osun	House of Ass.	South West North	PDP
48	Dinah Lar	Plateau	House of Ass.	Central North	PDP
49	Joyce Ramdap	Plateau	House of Ass	Central	PDP
50	Felicia Taneh	Rivers	House of Ass.	South South	PDP
51	Golden Ngozi Chioma	Rivers	House of Ass.	South South	PDP
52	Iren Martins Inimgba	Rivers	House of Ass.	South South	PDP
53	Lady Maureen Tamuno	Rivers	House of Ass.	South South	PDP
54	Linda S. Stewart	Rivers	House of Ass	South South	PDP

**APPENDIX C**

**Table 3.1: Names of Female Members in the Nigerian National Assembly 1992 – 1993.**

<b>STATE</b>	<b>NAME</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>
Lagos	Senator Kofo Bucknor-Akerele	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>1</b>

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

<b>STATE</b>	<b>NAME</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>
Akwa-Ibom	Hon. Christine Akpan	1
Anambra	Hon. Ifeoma Chinwuba	1
Benue	Hon. (Mrs) Rebecca Apedzam	
	Hon. (Miss) Ada Mark	2
Borno	Hon. (Hajiya) Rabi Allamin	1
Cross River	Hon. (Mrs) Florance I. Ita-Giwa	1
Edo	Hon. (Mrs) O.E. Giwa-Osagie	1
Katsina	Hon. Mariya Abdullahi	1
Niger	Hon. (Mrs) Hajara L. Usman	1
Ogun	Hon.(Mrs) O.O. Abiola	1
Osun	Hon. (Hajiya) Bola Sarumi	1
Plateau	Hon. (Hajiya) Amina M. Aliyu	1
Rivers	Hon. Dr. Bolare Ketebu-Nwokeafor	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>

**Source: Nigerian Women in Politics (1986 – 1993: 124)**

## APPENDIX D

>>> VERSION FRANÇAISE



### Women in National Parliaments

*Situation as of 31 January 2011*

The data in the table below has been compiled by the Inter-Parliamentary Union on the basis of information provided by National Parliaments by 31 January 2011. **188 countries** are classified by **descending order of the percentage of women in the lower or single House**. Comparative data on the world and regional averages as well as data concerning the two regional parliamentary assemblies elected by direct suffrage can be found on separate pages. You can use the PARLINE database to view detailed results of parliamentary elections by country.

WORLD  
AND REGIONAL  
AVERAGES

REGIONAL  
PARLIAMENTARY  
ASSEMBLIES

*New: You can now consult our archive of statistical data on the percentage of women in national parliaments.*

#### WORLD CLASSIFICATION

Rank	Country	Lower or single House				Upper House or Senate			
		Elections	Seats*	Women	% W	Elections	Seats*	Women	% W
1	Rwanda	9 2008	80	45	56.3%	10 2003	26	9	34.6%
2	Sweden	9 2010	349	157	45.0%	---	---	---	---
3	South Africa <sup>1</sup>	4 2009	400	178	44.5%	4 2009	54	16	29.6%
4	Cuba	1 2008	614	265	43.2%	---	---	---	---
5	Iceland	4 2009	63	27	42.9%	---	---	---	---
6	Netherlands	6 2010	150	61	40.7%	5 2007	75	26	34.7%
7	Finland	3 2007	200	80	40.0%	---	---	---	---
8	Norway	9 2009	169	67	39.6%	---	---	---	---
9	Belgium	6 2010	150	59	39.3%	6 2010	71	26	36.6%
10	Mozambique	10 2009	250	98	39.2%	---	---	---	---
11	Angola	9 2008	220	85	38.6%	---	---	---	---
"	Costa Rica	2 2010	57	22	38.6%	---	---	---	---

12	Argentina	6 2009	257	99	38.5%	6 2009	71	25	35.2%
13	Denmark	11 2007	179	68	38.0%	---	---	---	---
14	Spain	3 2008	350	128	36.6%	3 2008	263	81	30.8%
15	United Republic of Tanzania	10 2010	350	126	36.0%	---	---	---	---
16	Andorra	4 2009	28	10	35.7%	---	---	---	---
17	New Zealand	11 2008	122	41	33.6%	---	---	---	---
18	Nepal	4 2008	594	197	33.2%	---	---	---	---
19	Germany	9 2009	622	204	32.8%	N.A.	69	15	21.7%
20	The F.Y.R. of Macedonia	6 2008	120	39	32.5%	---	---	---	---
21	Ecuador	4 2009	124	40	32.3%	---	---	---	---
22	Burundi	7 2010	106	34	32.1%	7 2010	41	19	46.3%
23	Belarus	9 2008	110	35	31.8%	7 2008	58	19	32.8%
24	Uganda	2 2006	326	102	31.3%	---	---	---	---
25	Guyana	8 2006	70	21	30.0%	---	---	---	---
26	Timor-Leste	6 2007	65	19	29.2%	---	---	---	---
27	Switzerland	10 2007	200	58	29.0%	10 2007	46	10	21.7%
28	Trinidad and Tobago	5 2010	42	12	28.6%	6 2010	31	8	25.8%
29	Austria	9 2008	183	51	27.9%	N.A.	61	18	29.5%
30	Ethiopia	5 2010	547	152	27.8%	5 2010	135	22	16.3%
31	Afghanistan	9 2010	249	69	27.7%	2 2010	102	28	27.5%
32	Tunisia	10 2009	214	59	27.6%	8 2008	112	17	15.2%
33	Peru	4 2006	120	33	27.5%	---	---	---	---
34	Portugal	9 2009	230	63	27.4%	---	---	---	---
35	Mexico	7 2009	500	131	26.2%	7 2006	128	29	22.7%
36	Monaco	2 2008	23	6	26.1%	---	---	---	---
37	Viet Nam	5 2007	493	127	25.8%	---	---	---	---
38	Sudan	4 2010	446	114	25.6%	5 2010	46	5	10.9%
39	Bolivia	12 2009	130	33	25.4%	12 2009	36	17	47.2%
40	Iraq	3 2010	325	82	25.2%	---	---	---	---
"	Lao People's Democratic	4 2006	115	29	25.2%	---	---	---	---

	Republic								
41	Australia	8 2010	150	37	24.7%	8 2010	76	27	35.5%
42	Namibia	11 2009	78	19	24.4%	11 2010	26	7	26.9%
43	Lesotho	2 2007	120	29	24.2%	3 2007	33	6	18.2%
44	Liechtenstein	2 2009	25	6	24.0%	---	---	---	---
45	Croatia	11 2007	153	36	23.5%	---	---	---	---
"	Seychelles	5 2007	34	8	23.5%	---	---	---	---
46	Singapore	5 2006	94	22	23.4%	---	---	---	---
47	Kyrgyzstan	10 2010	120	28	23.3%	---	---	---	---
48	Estonia	3 2007	101	23	22.8%	---	---	---	---
49	Senegal	6 2007	150	34	22.7%	8 2007	100	40	40.0%
50	United Arab Emirates	12 2006	40	9	22.5%	---	---	---	---
51	Pakistan	2 2008	342	76	22.2%	3 2009	100	17	17.0%
52	Canada	10 2008	308	68	22.1%	N.A.	93	32	34.4%
"	Mauritania	11 2006	95	21	22.1%	11 2009	56	8	14.3%
"	Philippines	5 2010	280	62	22.1%	5 2010	23	3	13.0%
53	Czech Republic	5 2010	200	44	22.0%	10 2010	81	15	18.5%
"	Eritrea	2 1994	150	33	22.0%	---	---	---	---
"	United Kingdom	5 2010	650	143	22.0%	N.A.	733	147	20.1%
"	Uzbekistan	12 2009	150	33	22.0%	1 2010	100	15	15.0%
54	Serbia	5 2008	250	54	21.6%	---	---	---	---
55	China	3 2008	2987	637	21.3%	---	---	---	---
"	Italy	4 2008	630	134	21.3%	4 2008	321	59	18.4%
56	Cambodia	7 2008	123	26	21.1%	1 2006	61	9	14.8%
57	Bulgaria	7 2009	240	50	20.8%	---	---	---	---
"	Dominican Republic	5 2010	183	38	20.8%	5 2010	32	3	9.4%
"	Malawi	5 2009	192	40	20.8%	---	---	---	---
58	Nicaragua	11 2006	92	19	20.7%	---	---	---	---
59	Latvia	10 2010	100	20	20.0%	---	---	---	---
"	Luxembourg	6 2009	60	12	20.0%	---	---	---	---

"	Poland	10 2007	460	92	20.0%	10 2007	100	8	8.0%
60	Israel	2 2009	120	23	19.2%	---	---	---	---
61	Lithuania	10 2008	141	27	19.1%	---	---	---	---
62	El Salvador	1 2009	84	16	19.0%	---	---	---	---
"	Tajikistan	2 2010	63	12	19.0%	3 2010	34	5	14.7%
63	France	6 2007	577	109	18.9%	9 2008	343	75	21.9%
64	Mauritius	5 2010	69	13	18.8%	---	---	---	---
"	Republic of Moldova	11 2010	101	19	18.8%	---	---	---	---
65	Bangladesh	12 2008	345	64	18.6%	---	---	---	---
66	Sao Tome and Principe	8 2010	55	10	18.2%	---	---	---	---
67	Cape Verde	1 2006	72	13	18.1%	---	---	---	---
68	Honduras	11 2009	128	23	18.0%	---	---	---	---
"	Indonesia	4 2009	560	101	18.0%	---	---	---	---
69	Kazakhstan	8 2007	107	19	17.8%	10 2008	47	2	4.3%
70	Greece	10 2009	300	52	17.3%	---	---	---	---
71	Venezuela	9 2010	165	28	17.0%	---	---	---	---
72	Turkmenistan	12 2008	125	21	16.8%	---	---	---	---
"	United States of America <sup>2</sup>	11 2010	435	73	16.8%	11 2010	100	17	17.0%
73	Bosnia and Herzegovina	10 2010	42	7	16.7%	3 2007	15	2	13.3%
"	San Marino	11 2008	60	10	16.7%	---	---	---	---
74	Albania	6 2009	140	23	16.4%	---	---	---	---
75	Azerbaijan	11 2010	125	20	16.0%	---	---	---	---
76	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	3 2009	687	107	15.6%	---	---	---	---
77	Burkina Faso	5 2007	111	17	15.3%	---	---	---	---
"	Slovakia	6 2010	150	23	15.3%	---	---	---	---
78	Uruguay	10 2009	99	15	15.2%	10 2009	31	4	12.9%
79	Zimbabwe	3 2008	214	32	15.0%	3 2008	99	24	24.2%
80	Gabon	1 2009	116	17	14.7%	1 2009	102	18	17.6%
"	Republic of Korea	4 2008	299	44	14.7%	---	---	---	---

81	Slovenia	9 2008	90	13	14.4%	11 2007	40	1	2.5%
82	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	12 2010	21	3	14.3%	---	---	---	---
83	Chile	12 2009	120	17	14.2%	12 2009	38	5	13.2%
84	Russian Federation	12 2007	450	63	14.0%	N.A.	169	8	4.7%
"	Zambia	9 2006	157	22	14.0%	---	---	---	---
85	Cameroon	7 2007	180	25	13.9%	---	---	---	---
"	Ireland	5 2007	165	23	13.9%	7 2007	59	13	22.0%
86	Djibouti	2 2008	65	9	13.8%	---	---	---	---
87	Swaziland	9 2008	66	9	13.6%	10 2008	30	12	40.0%
88	Grenada	7 2008	15	2	13.3%	8 2008	13	4	30.8%
"	Jamaica	9 2007	60	8	13.3%	9 2007	21	5	23.8%
"	Thailand	12 2007	473	63	13.3%	3 2008	150	24	16.0%
89	Sierra Leone	8 2007	121	16	13.2%	---	---	---	---
90	Colombia	3 2010	166	21	12.7%	3 2010	102	16	15.7%
"	Egypt	11 2010	512	65	12.7%	6 2010	264	?	?
91	Cyprus	5 2006	56	7	12.5%	---	---	---	---
"	Dominica	12 2009	32	4	12.5%	---	---	---	---
"	Liberia	10 2005	64	8	12.5%	10 2005	30	5	16.7%
"	Madagascar	10 2010	256	32	12.5%	10 2010	90	10	11.1%
"	Paraguay	4 2008	80	10	12.5%	4 2008	45	7	15.6%
92	Syrian Arab Republic	4 2007	250	31	12.4%	---	---	---	---
93	Bahamas	5 2007	41	5	12.2%	5 2007	15	5	33.3%
94	Guatemala	9 2007	158	19	12.0%	---	---	---	---
95	Romania	11 2008	334	38	11.4%	11 2008	137	8	5.8%
96	Japan	8 2009	480	54	11.3%	7 2010	242	44	18.2%
97	Haiti	11 2010	18	2	11.1%	11 2010	30	?	?
"	Montenegro	3 2009	81	9	11.1%	---	---	---	---
"	Saint Lucia	12 2006	18	2	11.1%	1 2007	11	4	36.4%
"	Togo	10 2007	81	9	11.1%	---	---	---	---
98	Benin	3 2003	83	9	10.8%	---	---	---	---

"	India	4 2009	545	59	10.8%	3 2010	242	25	10.3%
"	Jordan	11 2010	120	13	10.8%	11 2010	60	9	15.0%
99	Antigua and Barbuda	3 2009	19	2	10.5%	4 2009	17	5	29.4%
"	Morocco	9 2007	325	34	10.5%	10 2009	270	6	2.2%
100	Mali	7 2007	147	15	10.2%	---	---	---	---
101	Barbados	1 2008	30	3	10.0%	2 2008	21	7	33.3%
"	Equatorial Guinea	5 2008	100	10	10.0%	---	---	---	---
"	Guinea-Bissau	11 2008	100	10	10.0%	---	---	---	---
102	Malaysia	3 2008	222	22	9.9%	N.A.	64	18	28.1%
103	Kenya	12 2007	224	22	9.8%	---	---	---	---
"	Suriname	5 2010	51	5	9.8%	---	---	---	---
104	Armenia	5 2007	131	12	9.2%	---	---	---	---
105	Hungary	4 2010	386	35	9.1%	---	---	---	---
"	Turkey	7 2007	549	50	9.1%	---	---	---	---
106	Cote d'Ivoire	12 2000	203	18	8.9%	---	---	---	---
107	Malta	3 2008	69	6	8.7%	---	---	---	---
108	Brazil	10 2010	513	44	8.6%	10 2010	81	13	16.0%
109	Bhutan	3 2008	47	4	8.5%	12 2007	25	6	24.0%
"	Panama	5 2009	71	6	8.5%	---	---	---	---
110	Democratic Republic of the Congo	7 2006	500	42	8.4%	1 2007	108	5	4.6%
111	Ghana	12 2008	230	19	8.3%	---	---	---	---
112	Samoa	3 2006	49	4	8.2%	---	---	---	---
113	Ukraine	9 2007	450	36	8.0%	---	---	---	---
114	Botswana	10 2009	63	5	7.9%	---	---	---	---
115	Algeria	5 2007	389	30	7.7%	12 2009	136	7	5.1%
"	Kuwait	5 2009	65	5	7.7%	---	---	---	---
"	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	3 2009	468	36	7.7%	---	---	---	---
116	Gambia	1 2002	53	4	7.5%	---	---	---	---
117	Congo	6 2007	137	10	7.3%	8 2008	70	9	12.9%

118	Nigeria	4 2007	358	25	7.0%	4 2007	109	9	8.3%
119	Somalia	8 2004	546	37	6.8%	---	---	---	---
120	Saint Kitts and Nevis	1 2010	15	1	6.7%	---	---	---	---
121	Georgia	5 2008	138	9	6.5%	---	---	---	---
"	Maldives	5 2009	77	5	6.5%	---	---	---	---
122	Sri Lanka	4 2010	225	12	5.3%	---	---	---	---
123	Chad	4 2002	155	8	5.2%	---	---	---	---
124	Kiribati	8 2007	46	2	4.3%	---	---	---	---
"	Myanmar	11 2010	326	14	4.3%	11 2010	168	6	3.6%
125	Mongolia	6 2008	76	3	3.9%	---	---	---	---
126	Vanuatu	9 2008	52	2	3.8%	---	---	---	---
127	Lebanon	6 2009	128	4	3.1%	---	---	---	---
128	Comoros	12 2009	33	1	3.0%	---	---	---	---
"	Marshall Islands	11 2007	33	1	3.0%	---	---	---	---
129	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	3 2008	290	8	2.8%	---	---	---	---
130	Bahrain	10 2010	40	1	2.5%	11 2010	40	11	27.5%
131	Papua New Guinea	6 2007	109	1	0.9%	---	---	---	---
132	Yemen	4 2003	301	1	0.3%	4 2001	111	2	1.8%
133	Belize	2 2008	32	0	0.0%	3 2008	13	5	38.5%
"	Micronesia (Federated States of)	3 2009	14	0	0.0%	---	---	---	---
"	Nauru	6 2010	18	0	0.0%	---	---	---	---
"	Oman	10 2007	84	0	0.0%	11 2007	72	14	19.4%
"	Palau	11 2008	16	0	0.0%	11 2008	13	2	15.4%
"	Qatar	7 2010	35	0	0.0%	---	---	---	---
"	Saudi Arabia	2 2009	150	0	0.0%	---	---	---	---
"	Solomon Islands	8 2010	50	0	0.0%	---	---	---	---
"	Tonga	11 2010	26	0	0.0%	---	---	---	---
"	Tuvalu	9 2010	15	0	0.0%	---	---	---	---
?	Central African Republic	1 2011	105	?	?	---	---	---	---

\* Figures correspond to the number of seats currently filled in Parliament

Guinea: The parliament was dissolved following the December 2008 coup

1 - South Africa: The figures on the distribution of seats in the Upper House do not include the 36 special rotating delegates appointed on an ad hoc basis, and all percentages given are therefore calculated on the basis of the 54 permanent seats.

2 - United States of America: The total refers to all voting members of the House.

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