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## Greater Women Participation in Decision-Making and Governance of Ogun State, Nigeria: A Bottom-Up Approach

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### **Abstract:**

*The representation of women at the highest levels of public decision making and governance has been a major issue for decades now. However, in spite of efforts of the United Nations to ensure greater involvement of women through recommendation of gender quota of 30% for women, there is a high level of marginalization of women in decision making and governance roles in most countries of the world. Nigeria, Africa's most populated country falls among countries that continue to experience the under representation of women. The few women who have been either elected or appointed to key decision making and governance positions, in Ogun State have excelled beyond their male counterparts. The paper argues that given the success of the few women that have been involved in the past, the marginalization of women cannot be excused. This is especially so, given that smaller countries such as Rwanda, Burundi, and Mozambique have gone beyond the 30% quota and are targeting 50% representation of women. The study a desk research, relied entirely on secondary data, and adopting the liberal feminist theory as its theoretical construct argued that all impediments to greater women involvement in decision making and governance roles must be removed. There is need for all stakeholders to collaborate to ensure that effective strategies are implemented from the community, ward, local and state levels to ensure that the highly qualified and competent women are elected and appointed to decision making and governance positions for the good of the society.*

**Keywords:** Bottom-up approach, Decision making, Governance, Women Participation

### **1. Introduction**

The level of participation of women in the politics, decision making and governance has been a major issue in the both national and international discourse from the late 20<sup>th</sup> century to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Women arguably make – up about half of the world's population if not a little above half of the world's population. Several conferences, congresses, conventions and summits have been held at national and supra-national levels, towards ensuring equitable representation of women in governance and decision making at various levels.

The low level of women participation in decision making and governance is not a Nigerian problem, it is indeed a global problem. In the Middle East, women participation in politics is very low with the average level of women political participation at 6.5%, which is far below the world average of about 15%. The Arab world is ranked by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as the second lowest region in the world on the Gender Empowerment Measure (Pierson, nd). Pande & Ford (2011) write that in spite of significant advances in education and political participation, women remain underrepresented in leadership positions in politics and business across the globe.

Several scholars have identified the factors that hinder women active participation in politics, decision making and governance to include gender roles, which restrict women to the home-front to attend to domestic chores and child rearing (Ademiluyi & Adedamola, 2010), patriarchal nature of most societies (Eisenstein, 1984), male domination of major political parties (Bari, 2005 in Ademiluyi & Adedamola, 2010), cultural factors, violence, thuggery and intimidation, nature of political party formation, high election costs, inadequacy of willing and educated women (Arowolo & Aluko, 2010), and wrong socialization of women (Burns, Scholtzman, & Verba, 2001).

Agbalajobi (2010) goes further to recognize that the low level of women active participation in politics, governance and decision making can be attributed to the fact that most African societies are patriarchal in nature. They celebrate men as being unique, stronger and custodians of public good, while women on the other hand are misrepresented as being feeble and weak (the weaker sex syndrome). The implication is that there is a false assumption that women need protection and as such should be confined in private life with little public visibility (idea that women should be seen and not heard).

In Nigeria, during the ill-fated third republic, and the transition to the fourth republic, few women were elected to serve as local government chair persons across the country, in spite of the fact that hundreds of them contested the elections. Interestingly it was only Benue state that had two female local government chairperson elected at the same time. Table 1 below, shows the women elected as chairpersons in the local government elections that were conducted by the federal electoral bodies in 1987, 1990 and 1998 before the creation of the various state electoral bodies to conduct charged with the responsibility of conducting local government elections.

S/N	States	Local Govts	Names	Religion	Political Parties	Date
1.	Ogun	Abeokuta South	Mrs. Titi Ajanaku	Christian	Zero party	1987
2.	Katsina	Malumfashi	Hajiya Magajiya Garba Adamu	Muslim	Zero party	1987
3.	Benue	Ushogo	Chief Mrs Kazie Agundu	Christian	SDP	1990
4.	Benue	Oju	Mrs. Eba Ogah	Christian	SDP	1990
5.	Ogun	Abeokuta South	Mrs. Titi Ajanaku	Christian	SDP	1990
6.	Katsina	Bakori	Mrs. Mariya Abdulahi	Muslim	SDP	1990
7.	Plateau	Bokkos	Rachael M. Adanchin	Christian	PDP	1998
8.	Anambra	Ogbaru	Mrs Calista Nwachukwu	Christian	AD	1998
9.	Imo	Ehime-Mbano	Mrs Amaka Agbiogwu	Christian	PDP	1998
10.	Osun	Ejigbo	Rukayat Y.	Muslim	PDP	1998
11.	FCT	Municipal	Esther J. Audu	Christian	PDP	1998
12.	Katsina	Mani	Hajiya Yaya Mani	Muslim	PDP	1998
13.	Gombe	Kaltungo	Hajiya Bibiye Sadica	Muslim	PDP	1998
14.	Benue	Gboko	Lydia I Nyor	Christian	PDP	1998

Table 1: Statistics of Women elected Chairpersons in Federally conducted Local Government Elections 1987 – 1999.

Source: Olasupo (2011). *Women, State and Religion*, p. 44.

The creation of state electoral management bodies, and further supposedly entrenchment or deepening of democracy in the country, has not translated to the election of more women as local government chairpersons across the country.

In spite of the overwhelming under-representation of women in key decision making positions and governance of various nations, some women have succeeded in overcoming the odds by attaining key positions in their various countries, such as Africa's first female President, Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (Liberia); Baroness Margaret Thatcher (first Prime Minister of Britain), Indira Ghandi (first female prime minister of India) Prime Minister Bachelet of Chile, Hon. Dame Jennifer Smith, who was Bermuda's first elected female Premier, Rt (Hon) Patricia Ette (first female Speaker of Nigeria's House of Representatives), in Ogun State we had Hon (Mrs Titi Oseni (first Speaker female Speaker of Ogun State House of Assembly, then we have had several Female Deputy Governors. In many countries of the world, such as United States of America, Britain, Mozambique, South Africa, the Gambia, Germany, as well as Nigeria, amongst others, women are assuming leadership roles including in arenas and key ministries that were regarded as exclusive preserve for men, such as the Foreign Affairs Ministry, Finance Ministry as well as Defence.

However, the success of these few female gladiators that have either been elected or appointed to key decision and governance positions in Nigeria, has not translated to increased number of women involvement in decision making and governance in Nigeria. In Ogun state, the focus of our study, most decisionmaking and governance positions in the state are held by men, even with women who have superior qualification and higher level of competence being available for such appointments.

Ogun State is one of the thirty six states in Nigeria. The state is located in the South-West geopolitical zone of the country. It was created on February 3, 1976 by the Murtala/Obasanjo military regime out of the former Western region. The total landmass of the state is 16, 409.26 square kilometres. The state is bounded to the West by the Republic of Benin, East by Ondo state, North by Oyo state and South by Lagos state. (Onakomaiya, Odugbemi, Oyesiku, & Ademiluyi, (eds.) 2000; Daniel 2003). The population of Ogun state, according to the 2006 national population census is put at three million, seven hundred and fifty one thousand, one hundred and forty (3, 751, 140) (National Population Census NPC, 2006).

There is a need to go beyond the pockets of female representation at national and state level by creating the enabling environment of a larger number of women to participate in decision making and governance at various levels. This is pertinent given the large population of women in our societies. As Olasupo (2011) rightly stated, it is "imperative that women are given equal opportunities like their male counterparts to assume leadership positions in Nigeria either through elections or appointments". The reality is that Nigeria's democracy cannot be said to be consolidated with the continual marginalization of women in decision making and governance roles.

Given the highly successful nature of women in such roles, there is urgent need to multiply such positive effects in the society through mechanisms and strategies that would facilitate effective participation of women in decision making and governance at the local and sub-national levels. This paper therefore examined the different strategies that would ensure the greater women participation in decision a making and governance in a sustainable way, through a bottom – up approach, commencing from the ward to the Local government and then the state levels. The paper is subdivided into eight sections, introduction, idea of affirmative action on gender, theoretical framework, methodology, women political participation in Ogun State, Why is it important to have women in decision-making and governance positions? Strategies for effective women participation in decision making and governance and conclusion

## 2. The Idea of Affirmative Action on Gender

The equal participation of women and men in public and political life was one of the cornerstones of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979 and came into force in 1981 (Falch, 2010). In 1990, the United Nations Economic and Social Council, in response to agitations and proposals by civil society organizations, set a target of 30% female representation in decision-making bodies by 1995. In spite of the non-attainment of the target, the 1995 United Nations Beijing Conference on Women went a step further, by calling on governments across the globe to provide the policy framework to ensure that there is equal representation of women at all decision-making levels in national and international institutions. This was adopted by the United Nations in 2000, and ratified by most countries of the world (Ajayi & Nwogwugwu, 2013).

Many countries have responded to the challenge of women under representation in decision making and governance at the policy levels by introducing gender quotas in politics and increasingly, many have expressed an interest in requiring gender quotas for corporate boards of major business corporations (Pande & Ford, 2011). Application of the affirmative action policy on reservation of 30% of representative positions as well as policy making positions to women, as proposed by the United Nations in 2000, seem to be bearing fruit in some countries that have implemented it.

Norway is a spectacular example of the success following adoption of the gender policy by all the major political parties. The successful implementation of the gender quota policy has resulted in the surpassing of the quota across several levels of decision making and governance in the country. In Norway, 40% of the members of Parliament are women, 45% of the Executive of Government; 33% in the Council of local municipalities and 40% of the regional councils. Among African countries that have adopted and implemented the policy, impressive results of women participation at the parliamentary levels as well as major policy making positions has been recorded. They include, Rwanda (49% women parliamentarians), South Africa (over 30%), Mozambique (28.4%), while Namibia boasts of 43% of local government seats being occupied by women. (Powley, 2005; Kethusegile-Juru, nd).

There are more women in South Africa, Rwanda and Uganda who are involved in gladiatorial level of politics and public decision making than in many developed democracies. This significant achievement owes to explicit affirmative action in political institutions and processes to favour women participation. Rwanda women now top the world rankings of women in national parliaments, with 49% of representation compared to a world average of 15.1 percent. With this development, Rwanda now overtake long-time leader, Sweden, where women constitute 45% of parliamentarians. Also, 7 of the top 25 countries of women in parliament are from Africa. There are more countries like South Africa, Uganda, Seychelles and Mozambique, which have long surpassed the 30 per cent minimum threshold in decision-making for women recommended in the Beijing Platform of Action, in 1995 (Orosanye-Salami, 2005).

## 3. Theoretical Framework

The study adopts liberal feminism as its theoretical construct. The liberal feminist theory, whose major proponents include Friedan (1974), Rossi (1970), and Wollstonecraft (1792/1795) developed out of liberal political philosophy, and argues that women can change laws and politics and achieve gender equality through mainstream legal and political avenues (Sarikakis, Rush, Grubb-Swetnam, and Lane, 2008). The theory has its roots in the writings of, among others, Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), and Harriet Taylor Mill (1807-1858).

The theory advocates equal individual rights and liberties for both women and men, downplaying sexual differences. It is the most widely accepted social and political philosophy among feminists scholars. Liberal feminists defend the equal rationality of the sexes and emphasize the importance of structuring social, familial, and sexual roles in ways that promote women's autonomous self-fulfillment. Proponents of Liberal feminists' theory propose that in any given society, especially a democratic one, there should of respect for all citizens, which would guarantee the protection of equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men. They do not advocate sweeping revolutionary changes to the status quo, but rather reform of the system to ensure that equal opportunities are given to all citizens without regard to their gender.

The theory has gained high level of acceptability by scholars as a result of the fact that it as a result of its roots, it accommodates some distinct views that fit comfortably within the framework of political liberalism. Quite unlike some other radical feminist theories such as Marist feminism, it does not fundamentally challenge capitalism or heterosexuality. I equally does not recommend separatism, rather it advocates collaboration to ensure a just society that caters for the interests of all citizens both men and women. Instead, holds that the full range of freedoms in a liberal democratic society should be granted to women, such that any laws or practices that deny women equal rights should be abolished.

In our present context, those factors that hinder women participation in gladiatorial levels of politics, decision making and governance should be removed or abandoned. The socio-cultural practices that need modification should be modified and all processes and platforms that obstruct women participation in decision making and governance should be abolished, as everyone should have their rights protected and guaranteed. The creation of a just society that assures the rights of all gender, female and male as advocated by the proponents of the theory would require the active collaboration of both men and women to attain, as a society cannot be just when one part of that society is marginalized, alienated and disenfranchised.

There is need for greater cooperation by all stakeholders especially the women that control the major political parties in the country, starting from the grassroots level to ensure that at all decision making and governance roles, women are given equal opportunity to thrive like their male counterpart. All primordial sentiment must be discountenances, while impediments such as the high cost of contesting elections must be removed through enabling legislation to ensure that there are no hidden obstacles to women involvement in decision making and governance roles.

#### 4. Methodology

The study is a desk research which utilizes qualitative data. It relies entirely on secondary data, derived from scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles, relevant books, government publications, as well as materials downloaded from the internet. The data were content analyzed according to the themes relevant to the discourse. There was integration of historical approach in the analyses of data on the subject matter to highlight briefly the trend of marginalization of women in the Nigerian political space in the aborted third republic, the transition to the fourth republic as well as during the fourth republic itself.

#### 5. Women Political Participation in Ogun State

In spite of their numerical strength and the improved level of education women in the state have attained, Abosede (2011) writes that women still suffer from sex discrimination and rarely break through the so called “glass ceiling” separating them from top-level managerial political positions. Abosede 2011 (cites Akiyode-Afolabi, 2003 & Momodu, 2003) as having identified the factors militating against women participation in politics, decision making and governance in Ogun state and Nigeria in general to include the following: Gender and cultural patterns; Ideology; Pre-determined social roles assigned to women and men; Male-dominance and control; Women’s lack of confidence to run for elections; Godfatherism; Money Politics/Pay off syndrome; the way women are portrayed in the mass media; Women’s perception of politics as a dirty game; lack of funds and resources; effects of violence against women; Illiteracy; Limited access to education; Dual burden of domestic task and professional obligations; ignorance; lack of confidence in other women; and lack of access to information.

In Ogun State, one of the most educationally advantaged states in Nigeria, and a large part of the female population well educated, and high fliers in various professions, making magnificent contributions to national development, there was one female member in the legislative Assembly from 1979 – September 1983. This improved marginally to two female members from October 1983 – December 1983. Table 2 below shows female members of the Ogun State House of Assembly (1979 – 2011) (Abosede, 2011).

S/N	Period	Constituency	Female Member	No of Female Legislator	No of Male Legislator	% of Female Legislator
1.	Second Republic First Legislative session 1979 – 1983	Ijebu North East Oja Odan/Eggua/Ijoun Abeokuta V	Funmi Awojinrin	01	36	2.70
	Victoria Akinyemi Felicia Sobande		02	34	5.55	
2.	Third Republic Jan 1993 – September 1993	Abeokuta North II	Felicia Sobande	01	29	3.33
3.	Fourth Republic First Legislative session 1999 – 2003	No Female Rep.	No Female Rep.	-	26	-
	Second Legislative session, 2003 – 2007	Abeokuta South II	Titi Oseni	01	25	3.85
	Third Legislative session 2007 – 2011	Abeokuta South II & Ifo II	Titi Oseni & M. A. Adeleye-Oladapo	02	24	7.69

Table 2: Female Members of the Ogun State House of Assembly (1979 – 2011)

Source: Ogun State Government (2010). Political Office Holders in Ogun State, cited in Abosede, (2011: 29).

During the third Republic, from January 1992 – September 1993, the number of female members of the State House of Assembly dropped to one. In the first legislative session of the fourth republic, which lasted from May 1999 – May 2003, there was no female member of the House of Assembly, while the governor and deputy, were male. From 2003 – 2007 there was one female member of the House of Assembly (also elected the first female Speaker of the state House of Assembly), the deputy governor was female; while there were two female members from 2007 – 2011, as the female deputy governor served a second term in office.

#### 6. Why is It Important to Have Women in Decision-Making and Governance Positions?

The fact that women comprise about 50% of the population of the world, including Ogun State makes it necessary that women be involved in decision making and governance positions. Orosanye-Salami, (2005) writes that women’s participation in politics, governance and the decision making process can contribute in redefining policies, placing new items on the agenda which address women’s specific concerns, values, experiences, and provide new perspective on mainstream issues. The popular dictum states that “it is the person that wears the shoe that knows where it pinches”. Women are the ones who have the propensity to address issues concerning women and children, who, when combined together form the majority of the population. It is only when women are effectively involved in decision making and governance that those issues that affect them and children can be brought to the front burner. In their absence, their male counterparts may not regard such issues as priority areas of attention.

Democracy is usually defined in the words of Abraham Lincoln as government of the people, by the people and for the people. Representative democracy which Nigeria practices requires the active participation of majority of the citizens. Every society is made up male and female, so it would be an anomaly to ignore one gender, or do a selective inclusion of a few of one gender, and claim that the process is democratic. Such democracy is faulty, and needs massive re-engineering. Nigeria’s democracy cannot consolidate

without, equal representation of women, not just the 30% quota suggested by the United Nations in 2000. This is pertinent, given that other countries such as Rwanda, Norway, South Africa, are moving up to 50/50 proportional participation of both genders, and Nigeria cannot afford to be left behind given its strategic importance to the African continent.

Women who have been elected or appointed to key political offices have excelled beyond majority of their male counter parts that have occupied such positions at federal and state levels, examples would include Mrs. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Minister of Finance and coordinating minister of the Economy, and Dr Dora Akunyili Former Director-General of NAFDAC. Many others have left indelible marks across the country, as they served with honours. In addition women are generally believed to be accountable and transparent in their conduct of their affairs while in office, whereas their male counterparts are often enmeshed in various corruption scandals while in office. Do not brazenly engage in corrupt practices with impunity like their male counterparts. Even where some of them have been reported to have abused public office, the proportion remains insignificant given the high level of corruption by male public office holders in Nigeria.

Orosanye-Salami, (2005) writes that proper representation of women and the inclusion of their perspective into the decision-making and governance processes would lead to solutions to societal problems that are viable and satisfy a broader section of the society. The implication is that women need to be present in the decision-making and governance processes in large numbers to bring about the radical change in structures of power. In a democracy having a handful of women in such positions means that their input will voted down, and the desired change would not be actualized.

## 7. Strategies for Greater Women Participation in Decision Making and Governance in Ogun State

### 7.1. Adoption of Gender Quota

There is need for adoption of gender quota by all the political parties in Ogun State. This would ensure that particular number of seats would be reserved for women and they would not need to compete with men for them. All the political parties would be under obligation to field female candidates in the designated constituencies. It would only be women that would compete for the slots in those designated constituencies.

The countries that have made appreciable progress in terms of improved women representation at national and regional/state levels, such as, Rwanda, South Africa, Norway and others, etc., can be attributed to the gender quotas. Some countries have had their national constitutions amended to make them gender sensitive and based on gender equality, thereby ensuring strict implementation of gender quota. In Norway as stated earlier, women comprise 40% of the members of Parliament; 45% of the Executive of Government; 33% in the Council of local municipalities and 40% of the regional councils (Powley, 2005; Kethusegile-Juru, nd).

Table 3 below shows countries that have supposed recommended 30% quota allocation of female representation at the national parliaments.

Women in national parliaments, 2006				
Country	% women	Last elections	Electoral system	If quota & type of quota
Rwanda	48.8	2003	List PR	Yes – constitutional commitment, legislation establishing 30% reserved seats (indirectly elected)
Sweden	45.3	2002	List PR	Yes – voluntary party quotas for candidates
Costa Rica	38.6	2006	List PR	Yes – legislated quota of 40% women candidates on party lists
Norway	37.9	2005	List PR	Yes – voluntary party quotas for candidates
Finland	37.5	2003	List PR	No
Denmark	36.9	2005	List PR	No – but did have at times in the past
Netherlands	36.7	2003	List PR	Yes – voluntary party quotas for candidates
Cuba	36.0	2003	Majority *	No
Spain	36.0	2004	List PR	Yes – voluntary party quotas for candidates
Argentina	35.0	2005	List PR	Yes – constitutional commitment; legislated quota of 30% women on party lists; political party quotas for candidates
Mozambique	34.8	2004	List PR	Yes – voluntary party quotas for candidates
Belgium	34.7	2003	List PR	Yes – legislated quota of 33% women on party lists
Austria	33.9	2002	List PR	Yes – voluntary party quotas for candidates
Iceland	33.3	2003	List PR	Yes – voluntary party quotas for candidates
South Africa	32.8	2004	List PR	Yes – voluntary party quotas for candidates
New Zealand	32.2	2005	Mixed M & PR	No
Germany	31.8	2005	Mixed M & PR	Yes – voluntary party quotas for candidates
Guyana	30.8	2001	List PR	Yes – constitutional requirement for 33% quota for women on electoral lists
Burundi	30.5	2005	List PR	Yes – constitutional commitment, legislated quota of 30% women on party lists
Tanzania	30.4	2005	FPTP	Yes – constitutional quota, election law quota regulation (special seats)

PR= proportional representation; Mixed M & PR = combination of member and proportional representation; FPTP = first past the post; \* in Cuba, the single nominated candidate must get the support of the majority of the electorate

Table 3: Countries that have exceeded the United Nations recommended 30% female representation in national parliaments as at 2006

Sources: IPU (2006). *Women in Politics: 60 years in retrospect*, IPU database on women in national parliaments; and IDEA International quota database

If gender quota can work in other African countries such as Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania and Mozambique, then it can also work in Nigeria and in Ogun State in particular. Women should engage in massive advocacy across the state insisting that all registered political parties should cede at the barest minimum, 30% of all electable offices from local government to the state to women. It should be clearly stated that any political party that fails to comply should not be voted for by women in the state.

### *7.2. Building Networks of Women Association Intra and Inter Local Government*

There is need for building of network of existing women associations at community, ward, local government and senatorial and state levels, with the focus on ensuring the success of women who are ready to run for public office. The large number of women associations, cultural, empowerment, market women, etc, could provide a powerful synergy if they work together to facilitate the success of their members who seek public office. Such associations would also serve as platform for advocacy in getting women to support female candidates at all levels. Such associations can raise funds required for their operations from companies operating in their areas, from other female public office holders, from various international and local non governmental agencies that are focused on women empowerment, from their traditional rulers, community leaders, their representatives at state, federal and senate, amongst others.

This type of network would expectedly serve as the platform for initiating economic empowerment programs, through skill acquisition programs, various business schemes that can empower the women as well as establishment of revolving loan scheme, in association with micro-credit and micro-finance banks within the various communities. Such empowerment would come in handy in ensuring the impediment of lack of adequate financial resources for women to prosecute elections is overcome. Such a network would also serve as a platform for leadership training programs for the women, to effectively prepare them for the challenges that lie ahead.

### *7.3. Building Partnership with Men Who are Supportive of Gender Equality*

There is need for various women groups, working for gender equity to seek to build healthy partnerships with men who are favorably disposed to their cause. Women will need to partner with men who appreciate the need for greater women inclusion in their crusade. There are several men who are favourably disposed to gender equality, and they would be of immense help in achieving the goal. Onubuogu (nd) writes that partnership with such men by the women advocacy groups would be necessary in pushing for greater inclusion of women, as it will facilitate the securing of the necessary attitudinal and change in mind-sets as well as procure support and access from men, who often hold the reins of power.

Such partnership would ensure that in some decision making arena, where there are no female members, the men who have bought into the women's program leading the campaign for greater women inclusion, would most likely encourage attitudinal change by the other male members of such committees.

### *7.4. Mentorship Programme for Young and Vibrant Ladies*

There is need for adoption and implementation of a mentorship programme of vibrant and enterprising young ladies by women occupying public office (administrators, appointed and elected political office holders). This would serve as an avenue for the acquisition of the needed critical leadership skills that are required to position them for decision making and governance roles by such young women.

Such mentorship programme would also include award of scholarship to the young women to acquire the needed education to serve the society in future in different capacities. A program of one-mentor-one, would go a long, in breeding a new generation of young ladies focused on making an impact in the transformation of the society. Some of these young women can be discovered from schools and high institutions and mentored, while others can be discovered from among graduates within the neighborhood and guided on the path that will help them choose to serve the society by running for public office after proper mentoring.

### *7.5. Achieving Community Buy – In*

There must be concerted, well planned and integrated efforts to achieve community – buy-in of the greater women participation agenda. Women especially those involved in advocacy for greater women participation in decision making and governance through women associations and civil society organizations must make effort to achieve community buy-in of their programmes. This can be achieved through winning the support of the Iyalodes' and Iya Ojas' as well as other male community leaders and traditional rulers. The Iyalode and Iya Oja are women leaders in the local communities who have tremendous capability and ability to mobilize women for causes they believe in.

The reality is that the male politicians rely on the endorsement of the Iyalode's and Iya Oja's to succeed in their quest for public office. The Iyalode's and Iya Oja's usually mobilize the women to vote for their preferred candidates. Where the advocates achieve the buy-in into their agenda by the women community leaders, it would be very easy to succeed in having greater women involvement at the local level.

The women community leaders are equally relied upon for nomination of individuals for appointments by various elected officials such as governors and chairpersons of local government. Getting their commitment to the greater women involvement agenda, would imply that when request for such nominations are made, they would nominate women, and increase the number of women who are appointed to decision making and governance roles. These women leaders would also be vital tools in achieving a programme of women strictly voting for female candidates when they run against male candidates, in cases where a party decides to sponsor a male candidate against a female candidate.

### *7.6. Enlightenment for Women to Support Female Candidates for Public Office*

There is need for well coordinated enlightenment programme for proper political education of female electorate starting from the ward level, on the need for women to vote for women candidates for public office, when they run against a man. This can be linked to the community buy-in agenda. Using the instrumentality of the women community leaders, it will be possible to get women to provide total support for women candidates at all levels.

Ones all women starting from the community, ward, local government and state levels, agree that on no account would they vote against one of their kind at elections it would be impossible for the man to defeat the women. Connected to this would be that, where a particular party fields a male candidate while other parties field female candidates the community leaders and the network of women groups would work together and agree on the particular female candidate for all the women to vote for while the other female candidates step down. This would ensure that the female votes are not divided and the single male candidate becomes victorious.

Successful enlightenment of women support for female candidates would redress the imbalance against women. The unfortunate scenario presently is that at the various elections, majority of the voters are usually female, and where a male candidate contests against a female candidate, the women end up voting for the male candidate against the female candidate because of lack of political education. The well coordinated voter education programme targeting women and girls would ensure that the women know who to vote for and why they have to vote for fellow women as it is only women that would be in the best position to adequately issues that concern them.

### *7.7. Building Partnerships with Political Parties*

Women groups need to mobilize at the local level and form partnership with the Political parties. It can be noted that at the ward level most of the time, women form majority of the membership of the political parties. The numerical advantage of women must be put to use, to get the political parties from the Ward – Local government – State levels to deliberately develop a program for recruitment of female candidates to run for public office to meet the minimum of 30% quota, as the target should actually be 50% at all levels.

Such partnership would be a bottom-up one in that party positions at the ward level should be divided 50 – 50 between the men and the women, since the women have greater numerical strength. The same formula should apply at the local government and state level of the executive of the political parties. The idea of having men serve as executive of the political parties and one woman will then be elected as women's leader is archaic and chauvinistic. The position of women's leader should be abrogated by all the political parties while the party executive offices should be shared between men and women.

### *7.8. Develop Partnership with the Mass Media*

There is need for women and women advocacy groups to develop healthy working relationship with the mass media, this will ensure that the mass media publish and broadcast positive information concerning women politicians who are candidates for public office. Most of the time the media publish and broadcast patterned along primordial stereo-types on women which are negative to the aspirations of such female politicians. Such negative publicity turn the electorate against the qualified and competent female candidates and to a great extent frustrates the ambitions of such women.

The reality is that male politicians who seek public office usually invest a lot of resources on the mass media to achieve positive results. The women networks and advocacy groups need to build a healthy relationship with the mass media to also achieve positive results in favour of female politicians. Presently, a large section of the media prefer to use women as sex symbols in the marketing of various products, there is no dexterity in terms of advertisement of women candidates as fit and proper persons for decision making and governance roles. The new partnership that the women and the women advocacy groups would build with the mass media would bring about a new regime in which the mass media will develop messages that make female candidates for political offices attractive to the public/electorate.

### *7.9. Greater Advocacy for More Female Political Appointees at Local and State Levels*

There is need for women and women advocacy groups as well as civil society organizations that focus on women issues to intensify advocacy activities for more appointment of women decision making and governance positions at all levels of government. If there are fifteen commissioners at the state level, then the barest minimum should be that five of them must be women. If there are six political appointees at the local government level then at least two must be women.

It is wrong for women advocacy groups to use periods of total exclusion of women to applaud efforts at minimal inclusion of women. The era of appointing fifty two special assistants and special advisers and six of them would be female, and the women would be expected to celebrate must be seen as a thing of the past. The world has moved from such position and Nigeria must be move with the times.

## **8. Conclusion**

The involvement of women in decision making and governance in Nigeria remains at a very low level. There has not been any deliberate effort by the governments, federal, state and local to fulfil the 30% quota involvement of women recorded by the United Nations. Evidence from some African countries such as Rwanda, South Africa, Burundi and Mozambique shows that implementation of the gender affirmative policy has resulted in women participation exceeding the recommended 30%.

Nigeria in spite of the being the most populous nation in Africa, and by extension the most populated black nation in the in the world, seems not be making considerable head way in the area of involvement of women in decision making and governance roles. There is still high level of dependence on primordial stereo-types which has led to the continual marginalization of women even in states, like Ogun state where they form a majority of the population.

Allocation of a few positions to women in each succeeding governments, would not ensure the depending of Nigeria's democracy. It is only the implementation the gender affirmative policy and adoption and implementation of pro women strategies from the community, ward, local and state levels, that would bring about the desired equity or equality in the representation of both gender at all levels of government. It is only when such equality is achieved given the numerical strength of women that democracy can be deemed to be consolidating in Nigeria.

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