




Chapter 1

Introduction: Rationale and Context of Women's Representation in Governance

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Introduction

Gender equality is important for inclusive and sustainable development. Despite this recognition, limited progress has been made in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in Nigeria in line with the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2015). The Gender Development Index (GDI) declined from 0.881 in 2019 to 0.863 in 2021, reflecting a worsening situation of gender equality in Nigeria. The Human Development Index (HDI) of Nigerian men (0.574) is also significantly higher than that of women (0.495). Men have higher gross national income per capita (\$5,800) than women (\$3,759); higher average years of schooling (8.2 years versus 6.1 years); and average labour force participation rate (64% versus 49%). Furthermore, women constitute over 60% of the 83 million poor Nigerians, according to the National Bureau of Statistics' (NBS) Poverty and Inequality in Nigeria Report 2019 (NBS, 2019). The huge gap in the development outcomes for men and women in Nigeria shows the prevalence of high gender inequality and is a challenge to the attainment of poverty reduction and the SDGs.

The poor development outcomes of women relative to that of men is partly attributable to a number of factors, including low participation of women in politics and governance. Although women account for 49.47% of the Nigerian population, they are under-represented in governance at the national, state and local levels. Despite the extant legal framework that recommends 35% affirmative action of women's participation and concerted efforts made by government agencies, non-governmental organisations



(NGOs), civil society organisations (CSOs), women's groups, donor agencies and international partners towards ensuring increased participation and representation of women in politics and governance, available data reveals that women's representation in governance since the advent of democratic rule in 1999 is less than 7% on average. The outcomes of the 2023 General Elections, where less than 5% of female candidates won their elections, further accentuate the declining performance of women in governance in Nigeria, which could undermine the concerns and interests of women in public policy and decision-making, undercut women's empowerment, and ultimately deter inclusive political, socio-economic and human development.

Against this background, the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS), in line with its mandate to foster intellectual discussions and engagements on issues related to democratic development in Nigeria, and with the support of the leadership of the National Assembly, organised the International Women in Governance Conference themed "Women Representation in Governance in Nigeria: Issues, Challenges and Way Forward". The conference provided a platform for experts, government officials, policymakers and other relevant stakeholders to critically discuss, analyse and interrogate the challenges facing women's political representation in governance and provided evidence-based policy interventions.

The Conference was held at the NAF (Nigerian Armed Forces) Conference Centre, Kado, Abuja, Federal Capital City, Nigeria between 23 and 24 August 2023. Notable dignitaries at the event include the President of the Senate and Chairman of the NILDS Governing Council, Distinguished Senator Godswill Akpabio, CON (Commander of the Order of the Niger); and Deputy President of the Senate, Distinguished Senator Barau Jibrin. Also present was the Speaker of the House of Representatives and Alternate Chairman of the NILDS Governing Council, Rt. Hon. Tajudeen Abbas who was represented by Hon. Adewunmi Oriyomi Onanuga. Others included Hon. Minister of Women Affairs, Barr. Uju Ohaneye, and Hon. Minister for State, Labour and Employment, Hon. Nkiruka Onyejiocha. Also in attendance were female parliamentarians from Uganda, South Africa and Kenya, the former First Lady of Ekiti State, Mrs Bisi Fayemi, and Programme Manager, Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC), Ms Nkiru Uzodi, Hon. Beni Lar, Senator Biodun Olujimi, Senator Norah Daadut; and the Royal Father of the day, His Royal Highness, the Emir of Keffi, Dr Shehu Chindo Yamusa III.

The conference's call for papers attracted over 250 abstracts, of which 157 were selected for the submission of full papers. After a thorough review by experts and professors from well-recognised universities in the country, a total of 107 papers met the deadline for submission, of which 65 were

accepted, representing a 61% acceptance rate. Of the papers submitted, male-authored submissions accounted for 55%, while female-authored papers had a proportion of 45%. The gender distribution of the accepted papers showed that male-authored papers accounted for a proportion of 52%, while female-led papers had a proportion of 48%.

The Structure of the book

This book is a compendium on women in Governance in Nigeria. It encompasses 37 chapters, which are structured into eight different parts: Conceptualisation and Theoretical Context; Party Politics, Electoral Systems and Their Influence on Women's Representation in Governance; Policies and Legal Framework for the Representation of Women in Governance; Disabilities, Political Exclusion and Women's Representation in Governance; Access to Education, Health, Technology and Women's Representation in Governance; and Conflict, Development, Climate Change and Women's Representation in Governance. This was aimed at providing possible linkages or interconnections amongst the broad issues relating to women's representation in the political space in Nigeria and Africa. It is important to note that the highlights of the chapters presented in the introduction chapter are based on chronological order as they appear in the book and not in the order of relevance to give a summary of the chapter presentations in the book.

Part 1: Conceptualisation and theoretical context

The first part of the book provides an overview and critically historicises the representation of Nigerian women in governance under three major historical phases, namely: pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. These historical phases reveal changes and continuity in women's representation in governance. Raji and Adeniyi carefully pointed out the role of the persistence of traditional gender norms and socio-cultural practices in various aspects of Nigerian society, which manifests in expectations related to household responsibilities, family decision-making, and the division of labour between men and women. Adesote focuses on the nature and dynamics of women's representation in democratic governance since the commencement of the Nigerian Fourth Republic in 1999. According to him, despite the level of this development, Nigerian women had continued to remain under-represented at all levels of democratic governance since 1999, especially with reference to the United Nations Economic and Social Council Resolution of 1990 which recommends 30% minimum proportion of women in leadership positions in governance (UN, 1990).

In Chapter six, Akpan brings to light that women are the invisible hands that swing the pendulum of the political clock in Nigeria, through rallies, voting, sensitisation, and campaigns during elections. Though women's involvement in these activities precede election voting day, the norms and practices of society do not recognise their fundamental preliminary roles in making elections successful. Rather, they face setbacks when it comes to electing women to leadership positions, especially with the current trend of women's representation in governance, which falls below 5% on average.

The last two chapters focus on the Barriers to Women's Representation in Governance in Nigeria. Okedele (2020) discovered an intrinsic method used by the political parties to manage their political activities, which are not women-friendly but are also a limiting factor to women's participation in governance. From another angle, Okungbowa and Ogbemor, using the Hegemonic Masculinity Theory as a theoretical guide, explain the relegation of women holding high political and/or appointive positions and responsibilities as a misperception of cultural, religious and gender issues. Accordingly, the lack of success in enacting a law by the 8th and 9th assemblies on Gender Equal Opportunity Bill is because the process has been thwarted by the male dominated parliament (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2021).

Arguably, women in Nigeria have the potential and are capable of meeting citizens' expectations and delivering better governance dividends but are denied such opportunities by several limiting factors highlighted in this section. Male dominance of the political space, religion and cultural practices; inadequate funding and lack of economic empowerment are highlighted as major barriers to women's involvement in the decision-making process in Nigeria. Particularly, the nature and design of laws emasculate women from accessing opportunities in politics, as seen by the lack of advocacy-support from their male counterparts, which resulted in the refusal of the consideration of the Gender Equality Bill for implementation by lawmakers.

Part 2: Party politics, electoral systems and their influence on women's representation in governance

This part focuses on the experiences of women in politics and the implications for democracy in a developing economy like Nigeria. It navigates around the issues, challenges and opportunities of political parties, intra-party democracy, social media and political participation, and the influence of the electoral system on women's representation in elections and highlights recommendations for gender mainstreaming in Nigeria. Exploring the role of political parties and women's participation, Sulaiman and Dass discovered

that despite the role of political parties as engine rooms that produce leaders and promote citizens' participation in politics, plus the recent measures of slashing the cost of obtaining party nomination forms, the representation of women in positions of decision-making remains low.

Further emphasis on the constraints to women's representation in governance in Nigeria, highlights the exorbitant costs required to run for elective offices in order to advance to political leadership positions, which makes it almost impossible for women to fully participate in politics because of the lack of access to funds. Sometimes, being nominated by a political party requires the payment of huge amounts of money to obtain the nomination form. Some of the political parties make nomination forms free for women. However, they still have to pay for expression of interest forms and have to run expensive campaigns whose cost does not respect gender boundaries. In some cases, one is expected to campaign, hire campaign staff, pay for campaign materials, and so on. Given the gender income inequality in the country, most female politicians do not have the resources to meet these challenges.

There is also the issue of disparity in women's representation across the six regions in Nigeria. Gana revealed that the Southern states far outperformed the Northern states in terms of representation and suggested the need for policies that critically address the underlying causes of disparity and encourage focused initiatives to boost equitable chances for women to participate in politics. Sakariyau also explains the factors impeding women's representation while emphasising the disparity in women's representation at the different levels of government. Though gender mainstreaming remains a global phenomenon, it has been effective amongst sovereign states in becoming more conscious of policy inclusiveness. Thus, the issue of gender affirmative should no longer be a theoretical paradigm but a reality that must be upheld with adequate legislation in Nigeria.

In Chapter thirteen, Hungbo provides evidence that established low participation and low visibility as major characteristics of female users of social media in public life in South West Nigeria. Low participation or visibility can be attributed to factors both within and outside the control of the womenfolk, which falls within the larger society where the women operate. Therefore, digital stress experiences, online harassment and other anti-social media behaviour could reinforce male dominance of the public space and could inhibit women in the political space.

The final chapter in part two brings to the fore the need to review the electoral system within political parties to be more gender-sensitive and to provide equal access to leadership positions. It is well understood that

political parties provide the framework for organised political engagement and participation under the laws of our country. They open the political space to competitive democracy and serve as a platform for a power contest. Political parties also help to entrench diversity in the polity in such a manner that all manner of social categories, including, especially, disadvantaged groups, are given a voice in politics. Therefore, when political parties nominate women as representatives in elections, it opens up opportunities for women to be elected to office. Conversely, when they fail to bring up women during nominations, the women are automatically cut off. For instance, it remains a truism that most of the leadership positions in the major political parties are dominated by men, and the only position reserved for women is mostly that of the Women Leader. These are some of the issues that must be discussed and considered in the review of their electoral system to ensure that leadership positions are open to all, including women.

Part 3: Policies and legal framework for women's representation in governance

A gender mainstreaming policy framework is a document that outlines the gender-sensitive perspective of all government activities and programmes, which helps government make better policy decisions. Although the Nigerian government has signed various relevant international instruments, treaties and conventions that emphasise the need for member nations to ensure equality for all, men and women, studies have shown that most policy documents in Nigeria are gender-neutral. For example, Ihugba examined the effects of language used in laws and policy documents on women's representation and participation in governance. A detailed analysis of the Constitution and other policy documents shows that Nigerian laws and policies are replete with gender-excluding, subordinating, and subjugating languages against the female gender (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). According to him, the impact of language is recognised by the gender-neutral language practice being promoted in legislative drafting. However, the international instruments did not factor in the nuanced cultural bias in Nigerian languages and its impact on the laws and policy documents. Thus, the language used in laws and policy documents should be deliberate and circumspect to ensure that they do not project traditional excluding concepts skewed against women. Policy documents should go beyond gender-neutrality and be reengineered to promote gender equality by emphasising capacity rather than socially constrained and socially constructed roles.

The role played by religious laws is discussed by Amoloye-Adebayo in Chapter 16. The chapter interrogates the relationship between Islamic Law and women's political representation in Nigeria and found that Islam was not

against women's participation in public spaces but rather the socio-cultural norms and the patriarchal system in Nigeria hindered women's participation in politics. Changing the current situation of poor women's representation would require efforts by the legislature to make provision in the Electoral Act (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2022) that includes a gender quota which stipulates the number and/or percentage of women to be included in a candidate's list; or the number of seats to be allocated to women in a legislature, change cultural norms through media campaigns, empowerment programmes and education for women on political participation. Sulyman also examined the effectiveness of affirmative action policies in promoting girls' education in Kwara State, Nigeria. He presents peculiar issues of female children in vulnerable communities in accessing education, which was caused by the cultural, religious and perceptive views of some parents. He argued that though international and regional convention benchmarks stipulate education for all, and a multitude of programmes and projects to ensure access to quality primary and secondary schooling for all children to improve girl children's education, the implementation had a major source of concern. According to him, religion and culture did not constitute bottlenecks to accessing education, but the non-availability of secondary and higher schools in vulnerable communities, lack of information and early child marriage are major issues that must be considered.

In Chapter 18, Abdulkadir Salaudeen argues that even though the Nigerian Government have established the National Gender Policy (NGP) to allot 35% to women in all appointments in consonance with international treaties, women are still being marginalised from occupying leadership positions because of cultural beliefs. He pointed out that constitutional barriers make it difficult for the domestication and implementation of affirmative actions. It is, therefore, imperative that constitutional reforms are carried out to recognise and facilitate the implementation of affirmative actions in Nigeria.

In Chapter 19, Ganiat Mobolaji Olatokun and Mariam Abdulaheem-Mustapha examine the prominence of Liberal Feminist Theory (LFT) in Nigeria and Rwanda. They argue that Liberal feminism stood for equal access to 'everything' and the need for recognition of LFT in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN) (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999), just as it has been recognised in the Constitution of Rwanda. The authors link the functionality of Liberal feminism in Rwanda to gender sensitivity in the Constitution, and the gender institutions where there is a 30% minimum women's representation; 24 seats are reserved for women in parliament, and proposes the same to be replicated or adopted by the Nigerian government to drive gender equality.

Part 4: Disabilities, political exclusion and women's representation in governance

This part focuses mainly on the socio-economic and political exclusion of women living with disabilities (WLDs). It further interrogates the educational displacement of WLDs, the societal perception and the implications for policy in Nigeria. This part delves into issues and challenges, and the gaps in the implementation of established laws that hinder persons living with disabilities (PwDs) from full participation and representation. Aluko and Osakuni bring to the fore the provisions from the Constitution that discourage discrimination (Section 42), as well as Sections 12, 54 and 84 of the Electoral Act that provide for equal opportunity for all persons to become registered and to vote. Despite the provisions, ample evidence, and reality show that women living with disabilities are largely marginalised. Though political parties open up the political space to competitive democracy and serve as a platform for a power contest, entrench diversity in the polity in such a manner that all manner of social categories, including, especially, disadvantaged groups, are given a voice in politics, Osakuni highlights that most of the political parties failed to make provisions for PwDs in their constitutions, which had further weakened participation.

Exploring the aspect of education and WLDs' visibility in governance, Bayero-Jimoh notes that women are mostly invisible in the political space because of a lack of proper educational training and experience. Ensuring girls' and WLDs' access to education helps them acquire life skills and competencies to be more active in politics and implementing such policies that promote and encourage the education of women, especially WLDs, enhances their visibility in governance. Iyoho contributes that the lack of access to basic things such as education and health further makes women more vulnerable to other challenges of life. Thus, gender equality throughout the education system in relation to access and content, teaching is a fundamental human right that should be adhered to by relevant stakeholders. The authors assert that the narrative of women living with disabilities in Nigeria needs to be carefully addressed by specifically addressing all forms of discrimination to effectively increase women's access to economic, technological, and political participation.

Part 5: Access to education, health and technology and women's representation in governance

The fifth part consists of five chapters which bring the dimension of women having access to education, health and technology to explain political representation. The chapters highlight the interconnectedness of safety,

security, and schoolgirls, specifically the strategies that could be implemented to ensure a safe and conducive teaching and learning environment for women. Focusing on the impact of the environment and women, Akani uses the Ecofeminist Philosophical Theory to explain the connection between women, environment and nature, reflecting on the series of abduction and sexual abuses of schoolgirls, particularly in Northern Nigeria. The essence of the study was to examine the application of ecofeminists in ensuring eradication of all forms of patriarchy and abuse of women, replacing them with an ethic of care, a morality based on women's caring and nurturing qualities especially in guaranteeing girl child safety within and outside the school environment. The importance of school safety to the girl child cannot be overemphasised as it helps to promote their academic excellence, emotional stability, progress and development. An unsafe school environment would breed abuse and oppression of girls through kidnap, rape and under-aged / forced marriages. Despite the Nigerian government's useful intentions in enacting various rules aimed at ensuring school safety and security, particularly in the North, there are still gaps in implementation. The heightened violence against school children and the environmental factors affecting learning in terms of location of the school, lack of accessible roads to schools continues to impede the girl child in access to education. The author recommends that the environment in which the schoolgirls learn should not be toxic; hence, the planning and implementation of policy on education at all levels should evolve as every child should be given the right education.

Relating enrolment and completion rate amongst females in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) postgraduate programmes in universities in Nigeria, Isunueo, notes in Chapter 25 that the experience in Nigeria and other countries in Africa, females in both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, tend to be fully represented in school enrolment especially in disciplines such as Arts, Education, Management, and so on., but fewer students enrolled in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics courses. The study highlights some of the challenges associated with the females in postgraduate STEM programmes to include issues on the home front, such as lack of funds, no sponsorship, and so on. The author recommends programmes such as full sponsorship or grants for female students at the postgraduate level in STEM faculties, both the Federal and State governments, as well as deliberate mentorship programmes geared at supporting and encouraging females in postgraduate programmes in Nigerian universities.

Focusing on the viable sources of financing of healthcare services for women, Isa Olawale Solahudeen links the issue of poverty to access to healthcare services and women's participation in the political space. He

stated that cash *waqf* could be explored as a viable mechanism to empower women and provide them with sustainable access to healthcare in Ilorin-West, Kwara State through an effective legal framework sanctioning a cash *waqf* institution in the State. Explaining cash *waqf* as the act of dedicating a property for the benefit of those in need of the same, the author states that the cash *waqf* could be used as a viable means to provide healthcare services for vulnerable people in society. Therefore, other viable sources of financing may be considered and included in legislation to help improve access to financing for vulnerable groups.

Part 6: Conflict, development, climate change and women's empowerment in governance

In Chapter 28, Onu, Jokotola and Adewuyi examine the effect of women's representation and participation in effective climate change governance in Nigeria and contend that women are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change because of the lack of financial security, as they have had fewer opportunities to advance their education and careers, develop their skills, or enter the workforce. More so, women and children have become increasingly vulnerable to human trafficking, child marriages, and other forms of abuse, as well as sexual violence associated with climate change-induced conflicts. The vulnerability of women has also been because of the lack of access to health services, thereby making maternal and child health issues rampant because of climate change and natural disasters. They conclude that even though women are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change and play a central role in mitigating such effects, women are not actively involved in climate change decision-making at local and rural levels because of patriarchy, cultural biases, equalities and economic limitations. This narrative could have been addressed by specifically addressing all forms of gender inequality to effectively increase women's access to economic, technological and political participation.

Exploring the linkages and the implications of women's representation in climate change governance, Issa and Alabi examine the important roles that women in governance play in environmental sustainability in Nigeria. Their study expatiates on gender diversity in top management teams and the adoption of environmental sustainability policies to improve women's representation. Given the extant research that suggests that women are more inclined towards sustainability initiatives and disclosure strategies, there are increasing pressures from diverse stakeholders for women's representation in top positions. While the country is amongst the major environmental polluting nations worldwide and has been rated amongst the world's highest gas flaring nations, recent global debates on the role of

women in climate change proffer evidence to support the need to improve the capacity development for women engaged in the climate change space. In Chapter 30 Issa and Alabi analyse the impact of patriarchy on economic activities of women in Eastern Nigeria, as well as the male factor in women's development in the region. They explain that patriarchy is the manifestation and institutionalisation of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general and posit that patriarchy has been entrenched and the present generation and has been confronting it. Expatiating on the effects of patriarchal practices on development, the authors explain that if women have been seen as equal partners in the family, their developmental role would have reflected on society. This is because development can occur at the individual level, and it would have manifested and affected societal development.

Part 7: Women's representation in governance: Cross-country experience

In this part, women's representation in governance as perceived from the different parts of Africa is presented to enhance and strengthen the contributions of the book as a lead reader. Olatokun and Abdurraheem-Mustapha delve into Constitutional provision and Liberal Feminist Theory using lessons from Rwanda to support their findings. The chapter explores the domestication of the Liberal Feminist Theory and lessons for Nigeria to accomplish the set objectives and advance that the poor adoption of the Liberal Feminist Theory in the Nigerian Constitution accounts for low women's political participation and representation. Kajiru and Mziray provide lessons for Nigerians while analysing the legal and practical challenges in the realisation of transformative governance in Tanzania. Noting that though progress has been made in terms of education in Tanzania, this has not completely translated into active representation, thus the need to implement pertinent legal instruments and discard prejudices against women under the guise of culture. Given that the mere inclusion of the provisions that recognise women's representation in governance alone is not enough, there is a need to reform some laws and ensure transformation of the societal perspectives towards enhancing women's participation in governance in all spheres.

The concluding chapter focuses on policy recommendations in enhancing women's representation in governance in Nigeria.

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