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However, it seems most science students do not offer religious studies because of the emphasis on science combination. Some schools do not offer any of the religious studies or offer only one perhaps because of the religious inclination of the administrators or lack of personnel.

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STRATEGIES FOR THE POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN NIGERIA 1999 AND BEYOND

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Introduction

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. 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. In the African continent and other developing countries, however, only a small percentage of women is actively involved in both politics and in the decision-making processes. Actually, women participation in politics in the developing world is concentrated mainly in the lower echelons of public administration, political parties and trade unions. Only very few women occupy top decision making positions.

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 discriminations in the overall societal setting. Arguably, the issue of gender is a major factor contributing to women subordinated position in social, economic and political endeavours. The natural physiological and biological differences between the sexes as well as religious beliefs have greatly hindered the effective participation of women in politics. In order to eradicate and eliminate all forms of discriminations against women therefore, the United Nations, national governments, non-governmental organizations, members of the

academia, sympathetic groups and individuals worldwide have come up with various progressive strategies to emancipate women in the field of politics and other areas of human activities in the contemporary time.

Political Empowerment of Women: A Conceptual Analysis

Several studies have been carried out on the struggle for the political empowerment of women across the globe. Empowerment implies making available opportunities which would enable women not only to make their own decisions about their life chances but also enable them to gain access into the decision making capacity of their various countries (Collier, 1974:1-5).

Empowerment issues in recent times are focused on the aspirations of women and some men for equal treatment and fairness to all, regardless of their sexual make-up. It is set against the background of varied efforts worldwide to achieve political and economic rights for women. While it takes separate forms in different cultures under different religions and traditions and various stages of economic development, it however carries throughout the world the common message that sex need not be a barrier to either freedom or opportunity (Zollinger & Smock, 1977:1).

One important aspect of empowerment is reflected in the shift from "emancipatory politics" to "life politics" (Giddens, 1991:216). Emancipatory politics in this context refers to those traditional questions of justice, participation and equality. Life politics on the other hand relates to questions of how human beings should live, that is, questions which had attracted the attention of women rights activists and which are now being explored on both political and global levels. The issue of life politics in our view is underscored by the need to achieve personal growth (by the individual woman) and self-actualization. These processes (of growth and actualization) form the framework on which women's political empowerment is built.

Empowerment also involves the efforts by national governments to change policies regarding certain issues that are of major concern to

women. These issues in our view include issues as inheritance of property, access to education and economic resources. Empowerment also means ensuring equality between men and women on a plethora of levels such as the domestic, community, state, national, and international levels. Equality from this perspective implies that women be liberated from the subordinated position imposed on them by the patriarchal society.

The concept of patriarchy, one must stress, is necessary for the understanding of women empowerment process. Patriarchal practices and opinions play a major role in limiting the roles of women to the home-front both over the past centuries and in contemporary times. Under patriarchy, the relationship of male supremacy is located in the socio-cultural significance of familial relations as an organising principle of societies (Gaminikov, 1985: 30). Specifically, the practice of patriarchy ensures that all female in the society (wives, their female offsprings and servants, etc.) are under the familial authority of the male (father or master). What distinguishes the position of all those who came under the authority of the "pater-familial" was the relationship of dependency under which they live (Gaminikov, 1985:3).

Another important feature of the patriarchal system and the subordination of women is that the superiority of the men is reinforced by and is reflected in the establishment of various political institutions and societal norms and values. Under this kind of arrangement, women lacked the opportunity to develop the same sort of work identity which men gained through the formalized system of public and political recognition of their work status. Consequently, the strong identification of women as familial dependents largely ensured their continued subordination (Gaminikov, 1985:32).

Essentially, empowerment involves women's total participation and full integration in a nation's political process. It entails giving equal rights to women and men. It implies the active participation of women as voters, elected representatives, lobbyists, trade unionists and public officials in the various branches of government and other vital sectors of the national economy.

The emphasis on empowerment, one can argue, stems from the exclusion of women from certain economic and political activities. This situation was made possible because of their roles as wives and mothers. 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, 1977:3). The phenomenon of women subordinated role can be attributed to such 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 also contribute significantly to the suppression of women's ability to fully realize their political potentials.

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).

These factors one must stress are not mutually exclusive nor are they all inclusive yet, they represent attempts to turn inherent disadvantages into concrete and achievable goals.

The Road to Political Empowerment

The United Nations Organisation (UNO) had over the past two and a half decades set the pace for and made several contributions toward achieving the political empowerment of women around the world. Some of the major achievements (The UN, 1991:58-59) recorded in this realm are:

1. The convention on the political rights of women (1966), which urges national governments to put women's political rights on equal footing with the men and equal opportunity to serve in public life.
2. The convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (1970) with over one hundred ratifications worldwide. The convention urges governments to ensure that women have the opportunity to hold public offices; to participate in the formulation and implementation of policies; and to represent their governments at the international level.
3. The UN declaration of a Decade for Women (1975-1986). This declaration and the various activities undertaken during this period played very important roles in sensitizing the world to the problems encountered by women in politics. The various UN sponsored seminars,

publications and conferences particularly the 1995 Beijing Conference among others, created the beginning of a life-long dialogue between women in the developed and developing countries. The dialogue in particular, heightened the appreciation of the close linkage between gender issues and development.

4. The Nairobi forward looking strategies for the advancement of women, adopted in 1985. This document laid emphasis on the under representation of women at both national and international levels. It therefore suggested that efforts be intensified to overcome prejudices, stereotype thinking, obstacles to women joining the diplomatic services and denial of career prospects.

The Path Towards Political Empowerment of Women in Nigeria

In Nigeria, the path toward the political empowerment of women can be attributed to several factors prominent among which are the roles played by women leaders during the pre-colonial period, the struggle for political independence and the emergence of various organisations such as women and cultural groups, formation of political parties and the involvement of women in political activities, etc.

In pre-colonial Nigeria, few women leaders played prominent roles in governance and administration. For instance, in the Northern part of Nigeria, the ancient city of Zaria was founded in the first half of the sixteenth century by Queen Bakwa Turuku whose daughter Queen Amina later succeeded after her death. Queen Amina was a very powerful and great warrior. In the South Western part of Nigeria, women like Moremi of Ife, Emotan of Benin and Omu Okwei of Ossomari (in the present-day Delta state), also played prominent roles

in politics and governance in their respective kingdoms (Adamolekun and Baba, 1993:367-8).

During the period, colonial period particularly, as the struggle for political independence gained prominence in Nigeria, fewer women were actually involved in the political process. Although women were alienated politically, yet women such as Mrs. Olufunmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Chief Mrs. Margaret Ekpo and Mrs. Janet Mokuolu were among the few privileged ones that participated actively in the political process. Majority of the womenfolk however, were used as mobilisation officers for grassroot support. Within the same period, particularly between the years 1960 and 1965, there emerged a large and varied network of women organizations whose aim was to increase the awareness and representation of women in the public sphere. Organizations such as the National Council of Women Societies (NCWS), Women in Nigeria (WIN); the Lioness Club, the Federation of Islamic Women; the Girls Guide and a host of other benevolent organizations "provided a new social space in which women could manoeuvre for power within the community" (Monsen, 1993:111-3). These organizations were also committed to improving the lot of the Nigerian women; educating them on their various rights and bringing about an awareness among them particularly in respect of their functions in society and how much they can initiate and influence public policies.

The political importance of these groups was evident in their role as a factor in pulling women (about two per cent) out of the traditional domestic sphere into the public and political realm. Significantly, the groups extended the scope of women's activities in national development through:

The benefits of education by establishing secondary schools and awarding scholarships. They encouraged girls to study and later graduate to enter into commerce and public sector work. Within a few decades, a number of educated women were thus potentially ready to emerge on the political scene (Monsen, 1993:113-115).

Succeeding administrations in Nigeria also contributed to the emancipation of women in the country. During the First Republic (1960–66), the number of women who participated actively in national politics did not reveal any significant shift in spite of political enlightenment, awareness and education of women in the country. The almost total marginalization of women in the political process was what prompted women like Mrs. Wuraola Esan, Hajiya Gambo Sawaba, Malama Ndanusa and a few others to commit their time and energy toward the political empowerment of women in Nigeria.

Between 1975 and 1979 during the Obasanjo's military regime (particularly at the initial stage of the administration), the regime through its subsequent actions consciously marginalized women in its decision making process. In the Constitution Drafting Committee established by the regime in 1975, no single woman was included among the 50 "wise men". This move was highly criticized by majority of Nigerians particularly the media. An editorial in one of the dailies during the period under review, vehemently criticized the move when it commented that:

It is rather odd that not one woman was found qualified to represent the female population on the panel. In a country where about 50 per cent of the population are female and part of this is made up of lawyers, educationists, sociologists, administrators and scientists, the omission of our women folk is an error that is not too late to put right (J. Akande, *Daily Times* October 7, 1975).

However, as restitution for its earlier marginalized policy, General Obasanjo (the then military Head of State after the death of Murtala) in 1976, "seemingly improved the representation of women in the civil services and in government" (Akande; *Guardian* July 12, 1999). The legal backing to this policy was contained in Decree no. 189 of 1976 which included local Government Electoral Regulations under which women in all parts of Nigeria were allowed to vote and be voted for,

provided they paid appropriate taxes. The decree was adopted in each state of the federation.

Over the years however, the role played by women in politics has altered only a little from what it was in the early seventies and eighties. Men still have a firm grip over the routine running of political parties at both the federal, state and local levels. Even trade unions which could have provided a springboard for women's involvement in politics also remain exclusively under the preserve of the menfolk. However, in spite of the gloomy picture of women's participation in politics, substantial evidence also shows a progressive involvement of women in political organizations.

It was during the second Republic (1979 – 83), that Nigeria started witnessing a large presence of women in its national politics and decision-making processes. This period marked a new era of change and women dynamism in the annals of Nigeria political history. The point must however be made that even there was a shift from political in-activism to marginal participation, involvement and awakening, yet, the changes engendered by women political activism were not radical or sweeping in character, but are nonetheless significant for Nigeria's political and economic development.

Some of the women who impacted on the polity in the period 1979 –1983 include Janet Akinrinade, Sinmi Johnson, Ebun Oyagbola (Ministers), Franca Afegbua (Senator), Oyinbo Odinamadu (Political Leader), Titi Ajanaku (Chairman, Abeokuta North Local Government Unity Party of Nigeria –UPN), Hajiya Gambo Sawaba (National Deputy President of the Great Nigeria Peoples Party – GNPP), Kande Balarabe, Abiola Babatope and Justine Eze (Members of the Federal House of Representatives), Sinata Ojikutu (Deputy Governor Lagos State), and few others. The increase in the number of women politicians indicated that the society is finally waking up to the reality that women are gradually empowering themselves politically (and economically), and can no longer be relegated to the background when their male counterparts are determining decisions about their life-chances.

In 1995, when the regime of General Babangida lifted the ban on party politics after a military interregnum of nine years (1984–1995), very few women participated in high-level politics. Of all the presidential aspirants (almost about 12 to 15 of them), only one of them was a woman, that is, Mrs. Sarah Jubril. Other women who participated in politics did so at the grassroots. These women were tasked with the responsibility of mobilizing other women particularly the market traders and the rural dwellers to come out as voters. Specifically, the number of women in party politics as revealed in a survey by the Federal Office of Statistics indicated that:

Only 4.11 per cent of women occupied top executive positions in the defunct National Republican Convention (NRC) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP), while men occupied the remaining 95.89 per cent. (1995 Federal of Statistics Survey. *Guardian* July 9, 1999:15).

Part of the reasons for the low participation of women in party positions as revealed by our field research include such factors as high level of conflict, mudslinging and blood letting politics (assassinations), male domineering attitude and the rigours demanded by party activities, serious politicking and the use of money power to gain access to influential party positions, spending extra hours (late into the night) for party meetings and other activities which often conflict with the societal perception of a "responsible" woman's character, etc.

In the new political dispensation however, there are now more women political activists at the ward and state levels; on party committees and as paid staff of party secretariats. In particular, since the inception of a new democratic governance, the Obasanjo administration (1999 till date), women's membership of political parties, the election and the appointment of women to political positions at all levels (as subsequent paragraphs will show), has increased dramatically.

Women and Politics in the Post Military Era: 1999 to 2002

In correcting the imbalance noted in the preceding paragraphs, successive governments in the country have tried to increase the level of women's participation in the nation's political life. The period of military rule (1966–1979) and 1983–1999 recorded an appreciable increase in the inclusion of women into mainstream political activities. These efforts were geared toward accommodating the women folk within the Nigeria polity through constitutional reforms, institutional re-alignment and conscious governmental policies. Some of the landmark-attempts made are examined hereunder:

- i. During the Buhari/Idiagbon regime that lasted between 1983 and 1985, the government directed state governors to appoint at least one female commissioner into their various state executive councils.
- ii. The establishment of the Mass Mobilization for Social and Economic Recovery Agency (MAMSER) 1985–1995, tasked with the responsibility of politically educating the citizenry. Women in particular were encouraged to partake in politics through organizing and attending workshops, seminars, publications etc.
- iii. The establishment of a national commission for women by Decree 30 of 1989. The functions of this commission in respect of political empowerment include among others: stipulating actions to improve women's civil, political, cultural and social rights; organizing workshops toward totally eliminating all forms of discrimination against womanhood.

The new political dispensation (1999–2003) in the country (as earlier on stated) is witnessing an upsurge of women who are actively involved in politics. At the inception of the Obasanjo administration on May 29, 1999, a couple of women were appointed into political offices. Though this action indicated an upward trend in women's involvement in the country's political process, the fact however remains that there is no significant increase in the number of women who contested for both elective posts and those who were appointed into decision making positions.

A cursory look at the country's political terrain shows that there is only one female deputy governor (Mrs. Kofoworola Louisa Akerele Bucknor of Lagos State) among thirty-six (36) governors nation-wide. There are also only three female senators (that is, Stella Omu, Florence Ita-Giwa and Khairat AbdulRazaq-Gwadabe) in a senate of 109 members. In the Federal House of Representatives of 360 members only 12 are female. Out of the 38 heads of the legislative house, only one, Mrs. Margaret Ishen of the Benue State of House of Assembly was a woman (she resigned some few months back). Of the almost 2312 local government party chairmen in the country, there is only one female (Mrs Esther Nakhere Amadasun). She is the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) chairperson of Ovia South West Council of Edo State. More importantly, out of 70 political (ministerial) appointees, less than 10 of them are women. Some of the women holding such posts include Hajia Aishat Ismail – the Minister of Women Affairs, Mrs Dupe Adelaja – Minister of Solid Minerals, Mrs Pauleen Tallen – Minister of State Power and Mines, Dr. Mrs Kema Chikwe – Minister of Aviation, Dr. Aminat Ndalolo – Minister of State for Health, Boma Brimilow-Jack (Culture and Tourism Minister), Mrs. Titi Ajanaku – Special Adviser to the President on Political Matters, Dr. Catherine Acholonu – Senior Presidential Adviser on Special Duties.

In addition, out of more than 200 appointments into federal parastatals and government agencies, only a handful of women benefited from this largesse. Some of the women are: Dr. Dora

Akinyuli – Director General NAFDAC, Dr. Ndididi Okereke-Onyeuike – Director General Nigeria Stock Exchange, Prof. Joy Ugwu – Director General Nigeria Institute of International Affairs and Dr. Laraba Gambo-Abdullahi – The Vice Chancellor University of Abuja. Other women who are actively involved in politics include Remi Adiukwu, Joy Emordi, Salome Audu, Maria Shokenu, and some few others. One may also state that the administration has tried in encouraging the various state governments to appoint a few number of women as commissioners and advisers at both the state and local government levels.

In spite of these various efforts by government, criticisms on the insignificant number of women in active politics abound in the country. In fact, individual women, human rights groups and other non-governmental organisations have criticized the Obasanjo administration for the inability to actualise the "mandatory" 30 per cent allocation of political posts to women in the country. This shortfall is also indicative of the administration's non-compliance with the Beijing Affirmative Action which stipulates that "30 per cent of all appointive positions be reserved for women" (UN Beijing Conference, 1995).

The marginalization of women in Nigerian politics also extended beyond national politics into state and local levels. As stated earlier in the study, only one woman – (the deputy Governor of Lagos State Mrs. Akerele-Buknor) was appointed to the executive level in all the states of federation. Even then, Akerele-Buknor has had to contend with problems which one may argue border on marginalization. The Deputy governor, for instance, has been confronted with series of incidents of isolation and marginalization from the governor because of her assertiveness and strong-willed nature. The experience of Akerele-Buknor which is an embodiment of what the average Nigerian woman has to undergo in empowering herself politically, socially and economically is reflected in a report by a prominent daily which stated that since inauguration, Akerele-Buknor has been:

Going about her business in her own little way. Her office desolate and not known to many visitors except civil servants who are used to every corner of the seat of government (*The Guardian* July 12, 1999:9).

The almost total state of oblivion Mrs. Akerele-Buknor found herself is engendered by Governor Bola Tinubu's reassignment of Mrs. Buknor's responsibilities to other ministries in the state. Typically, therefore, the situation on ground in Lagos State reveals that:

By the assignment of ministerial responsibilities in the Lagos State official gazette, No. 18 volume 32 dated July 1, 1999, no responsibility was attached to the office of the deputy governor except that she was to carry out what may be assigned to her by the governor (*Guardian* July 12, 1999:9).

Obviously, the above picture shows that Mrs. Bucknor-Akerele has been made more or less redundant in office. Aside from the "subtle and diplomatic marginalization of women", particular states (regarded as progressive and liberal) in the federation did not even appoint a single woman into their executive council. Ogun and Enugu states are typical examples in this regard. In order to correct the lopsided arrangement, women in Enugu state for instance, under the auspices of the Enugu Women Coalition Movement had to go to court to challenge "the non-inclusion of women in the cabinet of Governor Chimaroke Nnamani" (*Guardian* Friday July, 9. 1999:15) The women, according to their spokesperson, Mrs Joy Ezeilo, who is also the coordinator of the group – Women in Nigeria (WIN) in the state argued that the exclusion of women in the state cabinet was manifestly unjust, undemocratic and amounted to discrimination against women. In a swift reaction to meet the women's demand, the governor quickly forwarded the name of Mrs Faustina Iyiegbu to the House of Assembly for consideration (*This Day* June 26, 1999:36).

In Ogun State also, none out of the nine commissioners originally appointed was a woman. (*Nigerian Tribune*, Monday, June 5, 1999: 6). Even in Cross River State, out of the 9 commissioners and 5 special advisers appointed to serve on the state executive council, only one woman – Mrs Nella Ewa, was appointed to serve as a commissioner that is, as the Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice. (*This Day*, July 22, 1999:35).

In addition to their exclusion in the decision making process at the state level, the few elected women state legislators have also had to contend with relegation and marginalization from their male counterparts. A classical example will suffice here:

In Lagos State, a female member out of the three women in the State House of Assembly expressed the fear of being side-lined by other male members of the house. Honourable Ramota Oseni criticized the non-appointment of any of the three female legislators as chairperson of any of the various standing committees in the house. Pathetically, the house even went further to appoint a man as the head of the Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation Committee, a move observed by many as defying logic, good reasoning and which is thus absurd (*This Day* July 7, 1999:26).

Other obstacles aside from gender imbalance and discriminatory political appointments that women had to contend with in the country's present political dispensation is the invocation of policy of state of origin and the principle of federal character. Women who marry outside their states of origin stand disadvantaged whether in their states of origin or in their new states. One relevant example was what happened in Bauchi State in 1999. The Bauchi-State House of Assembly rejected the only female nominee on the appointment list for the post of a commissioner. The predominantly male legislature reasoned that:

Hajiya Jamaila Sakuwa, a medical doctor and a director of finance and administration at the Federal Character Commission though married to a man from Bauchi State, hails from Kogi State (*This Day* June 24, 1999: 25).

Accordingly, Hajiya Sakuwa did not scale through the screening test because "there were other capable and patriotic citizens (men) of the state who could occupy the post" (*This Day* June 24, 1999:25).

The deliberate and non-compliance by government with constitutional provisions on criteria for appointments also have significant impact on women's inability to break through the barriers imposed on women's political empowerment. Specifically, the content of section 14 (4) of the 1999 constitution is instructive in our analysis. The constitution's provision under the section states that:

The composition of a state, a local government council or any of the agencies shall be carried out in such manner as to recognize the "diversity" of the people within its area of authority and to promote a sense of belonging and loyalty among all the states of the Federation.

The diversity so clearly stated in the above provision seems to us not to include the diversity of sex and gender. One could therefore suggest that this omission accounts greatly for the acts of marginalization of women from the decision making process by the government.

Strategies for Politically Empowering the Nigerian Women in the Year 2000 and Beyond

In the preceding paragraphs, the study showed that even though women have made few in-roads in the nation's political process, yet one might state that they still have more roles to play in the emerging order of the country's nascent democracy. Women in Nigeria just like

their counterparts around the world deserve better treatment than what they already have.

Having a large proportion of women in national politics can be achieved not only through political education and re-orientation nor sheer guts and will power, but also through deliberate and conscious policy by government. Adherence to constitutional provisions on criteria for appointments will go a long way in ameliorating the suffering meted out to women in politics, the economic sector and labour force, in education and all other spheres of human activities. Specifically, the following in our view are strategies that could be adopted for the total empowerment of women not only in Nigeria, but also around the world. In order to achieve the empowerment of women politically, as well as removing all barriers obstructing their effective participation in national politics, the following are therefore recommended:

Government and political parties should intensify efforts to stimulate and ensure equality of participation of women at all levels of government. At the local level, strategies to ensure the integration of women in political participation should be programmatic, bear a close relationship to issues of concern to women in the locality and should take into account the suitability of the proposed measures to local needs and values.

Government, labour organizations and the public service should encourage women by designating particular positions on committees at the ward, state and federal levels to women. Party and Union secretaries across the country should also be encouraged to recruit women as secretaries, liaison officers, public relation officers, accountants, legal advisers, political consultants and co-ordinators, etc (UN, 1985:24-25).

There should be major political re-enlightenment and massive re-orientation of women about the images and expectant roles of women in the Nigerian society. Women groups (non-governmental agencies and the academia) should embark on social education of women. This education should be directed toward changing the minds and behaviour of women about societal and culturally held assumptions as well as the

whole set of attitudes about women's functions, roles, characteristics and expectations. This reorientation would be a kind of a psychologising process in which emphasis is placed on the need for women to take more "responsible" and "active political" steps away from the home. Essentially, women should be educated on how to work and form their own opinions and beliefs—based on the personal political needs (Taylor, 1991:74). This would enable them live a potentially fuller and more differentiated life.

There should be organization of workshops, seminars, round tables, etc (by government at the three tiers and private initiatives that is, both the organised private sector and non-governmental organisations) which should be wide-ranging and far-reaching. The point here is to radicalise these fora. For instance, when organizing workshops (on various issues affecting women both nationally and globally) at the state level, women should be invited from all parts of the federation (including women from the university, non-governmental organisations and other social groups). Membership from each segment could be pegged at two or three representatives each depending on the resources allocated/ available to facilitators of the workshop.

The method of the workshops should be interactive. Participants should be encouraged to share their experiences and ask questions from the facilitators, video clip of women's speeches across the world should also be introduced. More importantly, there should be a debate session where issues such as "Why a woman should be president of Nigeria" should be debated. Both the participants and facilitators alike should examine the implications of the issues. In particular, the workshops should be covered extensively by both the electronic and the print media. Organizers should canvass widely for the coverage and sponsorship should be sought from most of the companies operating in the country.

In furtherance of the orientation strategy, the National Orientation Agency (NOA), in conjunction with the women affairs ministry in all the states and local governments of the federation should also publish

texts and organize public debates on topics like: "Terrain of Politics in Nigeria"; "The Role of Money in Politics"; "Women and Politics in Nigeria", etc. At these fora, issues such as acts of immorality and thuggery, the role of ethnicity and nepotism, the prevalence of corruption and its impact on Nigeria's political economy; the high incidence of political violence, urban violence and the proliferation of arms, and other salient topics on devilish and criminal behaviours prevalent in Nigerian politics should be thoroughly discussed.

Hopefully, it is expected that participants of these workshops would benefit immensely from the knowledge about the nature and style of politics in Nigeria. Consequently, the mind-set about the categorization and embodiment of male roles, the desires represented by power generational dominance and gender distortions perpetuated by the society would have been greatly allayed if not totally reduced.

Another strategy that could be adopted in the country is for the government to empower the Women Affairs Ministry to make funds available to women aspirants or better still, non-governmental organizations (NGO's) and women achievers could pool their resources together and sponsor women seeking elective positions. Making funds available to women seeking elective offices is necessary in view of the substantial amount involved in playing politics. Majority of aspiring female politicians cannot muster the millions of "Naira" needed to buy campaign vehicles, print posters and paste them across the country, hire campaign teams, etc. Most male politicians on the other hand, are either retired public servants or high-ranking military officers who have embezzled public funds. Others are businessmen who are stupendously rich or being sponsored by one person or a group of individuals. The provision and availability of funds by these various groups should not be tied to any pre – conditions. The point should be made here that the benefits derivable from sponsorship or exemption of women from paying stipulated fees for elective offices would not only serve as a way of encouraging women's active participation in politics, but also would empower them in decision making and also enable them to make meaningful contributions to national development.

There is also the need to intensify societal, political and institutional frameworks which would be independent of men's political machinations. Prominent and effective women development units and commissions, tasked with the political empowerment of women should be encouraged. In particular, these institutions should be made independent and should be headed by women.

There should be an immediate organization of National Women Political Caucus (NWPC), where prominent women in all fields of human endeavour should be invited. The aim of NWPC (which would be trans-party) is to achieve the maximum representation of women and sympathetic men in local, state and federal elections. If formed, the NWPC would act as an umbrella for the politically involved women whatever their religion, professional background, state of origin, ideological orientation and persuasion.

Furthermore the NWPC should set as its main target plans to pressure major political parties to incorporate feminist views and select sympathetic male and female candidates. More importantly, the NWPC should make it a top priority to demand vigorously for the reallocation of traditional political power in society. Their demand should be based on the advocacy of sharing political office and policy making with the established political parties.

In addition, various women groups such as the National Council of Women Societies (NCWS), Women in Nigeria (WIN), Women in Academics, Federation of Women Lawyers, Federation of Islamic Women Organisation, Christian Women Associations, Women arm of various Professional Bodies and other Women-focused Non-Governmental Organisations, should embark on the rapid and serious training and education which would complement the workshops and seminars already mentioned in the paper. Training and education of women is very important because guaranteeing equal political rights for women is not only enough, but ensuring enabling conditions that make them a relevant part of the system is equally important. Thus, training and education could be achieved through a range of measures aimed at promoting and bringing out the creative activities of women.

One of the measures that could be adopted in this regard is the establishment of women's political institute in selected universities (created along six geopolitical zones in the country). The institute should be created at the instance of government with endowments from the organised private sector, private individuals and groups. Foreign private foundations and government institutions could also augment Funding and resources on capacity building. Part of the curriculum of the institutes should include:

- a) Re-educating women in civil studies, political and social work, diplomacy, communication etc.
- b) Re-directing women workers and traders on the rudiments of state administration, to show interest in their work and inspire them with confidence in their strength and abilities.
- c) Creating a lobby group from the NWPC so that they can pressurise the legislatures to promulgate laws on assigning women to probationary works in state and national legislative assemblies, the presidency, local government and political party secretariats etc. Through this act, it would be easier to involve women in state activity.

The probation workers should be made to understand the importance of their involvement in the scheme. To ensure commitment and compliance, attending lectures and seminars should be made compulsory. At the end of their tenure, they should be made to write reports on the system of governance, rules and procedures, ethics and conduct, and the like, in their respective areas of deployment. On the completion of their assignment, the interns should be allocated to various departments in the country where they would familiarize themselves with their new skills and then gradually learn to perform them. More importantly, the best overall students in academic and practical performance, progress report and interview should be given permanent appointments (this should have been arranged with the presidency to secure three vacancies yearly for participants of the

program). Other participants should be given strong recommendation letters that would enable them secure jobs with various organizations – both public and private. Securing a credible and viable employment will provide a springboard through which the woman will make necessary future political contacts.

There should be an internship programme too by both undergraduate and graduate students at the Women's Institute. The institute should ensure that five female graduates from the various universities across the federation be given placements. To achieve its aims, the institute should organize a three-month (leadership and decision-making) course for the interns. In particular, the course should be so designed as to consist of the following and wide ranging issues: history of mankind and women emancipation movements, the essence of the state, constitution drafting in Nigeria, Nigeria's social and political structure and the like. There should also be talks on family relations; relationship between the state and society, religion, economy, women, human psychology, etc.

Government at the three tiers should establish special offices in each state and local government headed preferably by a woman to monitor periodically and accelerate the process of equitable representation of women. Special activities should be undertaken to increase the recruitment, nomination and promotion of women especially to decision-making and policy-making positions. Most importantly, reports should be compiled periodically on the number of women in public service and on their levels of responsibility in their work areas.

A reorientation of the entire citizenry is imperative. The National Orientation Agency, the Ministry of Women Affairs and other non-governmental organisations should embark on awareness programmes to sensitise the people on the need for more women to take active part in politics. The people should be encouraged to adopt a more liberal and open attitude regarding the roles of women in the nation's decision-making process. In particular, government should adopt a conscious policy aimed at removing the obstacles (that is, legal-

institutional, societal, cultural, political) to the empowerment of women that are created by male stereotypes, perceptions of and attitudes towards women in general (U.N., 1985:19). Elimination of these obstacles will require in addition to legislation, education of the population at large through formal and informal channels, including the media non-governmental organizations, political party platforms and executive action.

In summary, awareness of women's political rights should be promoted through many channels including political education, trade unions, business organizations, seminars etc. Specifically, women should be encouraged and motivated, and should help each other to exercise their right to vote and to participate in the political process at all levels on equal terms with men. Women in leadership positions also have a special responsibility to assist in this respect.

Political parties and organizations like trade unions should make deliberate effort to increase and improve women's participation within their ranks. They should institute measures to activate women's participation. Government should also ensure institutional arrangements and procedures whereby the individual woman, as well as representatives of women's interest groups, including those from the most vulnerable, least privileged and most oppressed groups may participate actively in all aspects of the formulation, monitoring, review and appraisal of national and local policies, issues and activities.

Necessary resources should be made available in order that women may be able to participate in the political life of the country. This is imperative because women's active participation in all aspects of the political process is a pre-requisite of women's full exercise of equal rights as well as their further development, and of the national well-being (UN, 1975:54).

Other special efforts to achieve women's integration in the democratic processes of the nation should include:

- (a) The reaffirmation of, and wide publicity for, the official policy concerning the equal political participation of women.
- (b) The organization of studies to establish the levels of economic, social and political competence of the female compared to the population for recruitment, nomination and promotion.
- (c) The organisation of educational and Informational activities to enlighten the public at large on the indispensable role of women in the political process, and on the need to promote their greater political participation and leadership.
- (d) Making special efforts to encourage the increased participation of women and girls in rural community and youth development programmes and in political activities, and to facilitate their access to training.

Conclusion

In the foregoing analysis, an exposition has been made on the various attempts made by successive governments in Nigeria to incorporate women in the decision-making processes and politics in the country. Evidently, these efforts are not enough because, women are still at a disadvantaged position politically. Very few women still participate in politics. Leadership positions of the various political parties around the world (Nigeria included) remain the exclusive preserve of men. Consequently, the decision-making and implementing apparatus are still dominated by men.

For women to be politically active and alive to their societal responsibilities, this study has proposed certain strategies that could be helpful in this regard. Some of the strategies analysed in the study are

the reorientation of the masses, women's capacity building through education, leadership skills and decision-making process, establishments of some women institute, the formation of a trans-party woman caucus group, etc.

One may however stress that even though emphasis is placed on political education, yet, there are still certain cultural, social, economic and religious factors that constitute barriers to the full contribution of women in the nation's political life. The view of this study is that the situation must change and the best way to achieve the tilting of the scale is for the government, organised private sector and non-governmental agencies to ensure the total empowerment of women politically. Clearly, the strategies proposed herein would only be realistic and attainable through deliberate government policies, as well as the re-education, re-training and the re-orientation of the entire citizenry.

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