

Women for Change Initiative: Implications for National Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

Women for change initiative programme were initiated during Jonathan administration aimed at raising the standard Nigerian women to eliminate discrimination and eradicate poverty. This initiative review and revise laws considered inimical to the welfare of women, such as tax laws, land use act of 1976, marriage laws, inheritance act, electoral act; issues of high mortality rate and child right act. Women are naturally endowed with sterling leadership qualities as resilient family and society builders. Over the years, few women have been entrusted with managerial role but they have proved their worth to perform above board. It is no longer news that women are relegated as reproductive machines and home makers. Little did we know that training women is as good as training a nation because they are viable instrument to achieve national development. The struggle to change the perspectives of men about society through their lens to destroy male biased images on gender and sexism. The paper argues that the problem of gender disparity in Nigeria compound the capacity problem required in enhancing the accommodation male and female. Gender equality in Nigeria has been time barred due to multi-dimensional factors. Using descriptive approach there are some daunting challenges to achieve this laudable objective in discourse of this paper. This will be actualized when women empowerment is addressed with pragmatic approach to enhance national development.

Keywords: Women, National Development, Gender, prostitute, slavery

Introduction

Women are perceived to be properties and this have enmeshed in people's mind, In Nigeria, women marginalization in national development and other spheres of life generate a healthy debate. They are exploited, underprivileged, worst abused and most relegated in the society. They comprised vast majority of the population but are treated as minority group in the societal order, denied access to power in public arena weak and submissive in nature (Anumudu, 2006, Idowu, 1987, Afonja, 2007).

In the words of Harry (1998) women are indoctrinated by tradition but are prevented from assuming the status of being liberty. The traditional role of women within their allotted life space accounts their political orientation and institutional sexism crippled them and socio-economic position assigned to them different from men has become an enduring stigma for women. The infant and adult stigma takes place in traditional societies where women are stigmatized and defined in wifhood and motherhood roles to the preclusion of vocational and political responsibilities. The kitchen bond, child bearing socialization process begins early in life of women and this frees men from domestic chores and allocates them outdoor responsibilities (Welch, 1980, Stacy 1981).

The issue of women is vital in socio-political development and this attracted women for change initiative as propounded by Dame Patience Jonathan to improve the plight of women in Nigerian society. Since first Republic women are hardly appointed in the federal executive committee of political parties except women wings of the party with peripheral roles in party decision making. The level of women engagement in politics has been marginal or tokenistic. It is on this premise that the compelling need arises for women participation in politics becomes a sine-qua-non to gender equality (Ujo, 2004, Folasade in Ogunba 2002). Despite the establishment of women vanguards like National Council for Women Societies (NCWS) and women in Nigeria (WIN), the response of women in politics is tepid and non-aggressive for instance in 2011 few political positions were allotted them in government like Sarah Jubril, Dora Akunyili, Iyabo Obasanjo and few others made feeble shots in the presidency. Women have not taken political steps to control power that involve two sexes in Nigeria.

It should be noted that there is need to ensure egalitarian distribution of power and political control. Political party and democracy cannot be achieved without women at the fore front, most Nigerians have failed to achieve desired socio-economic development and wallow in poverty due to the exclusion of women in decision making (Igube 2003, Ezekwesili, 2005). Women are resource whose capacities, ideas and contributions have the potential to improve

the quality and outcomes of public life but representation is an agent of change. The decisions that affect the future have been made without the input on half of its people; the national problems cannot be resolved without the involvement of women to take cognizance of their needs. It is against this backdrop that this paper addresses the input of women for change initiative and its implication to national development in Nigeria.

Women in Pre-colonial Times

The sharing of power, wealth, influence, employment between men and women has never been closer to equality. The role played by women in all facets of human endeavour has been quite noticeable.) grouped the role of women as mother, producer outside the home, producer inside the home, wife, kinswoman, community member and individual woman. Traditionally, the role of women was confined to child-bearing, domestic work and wife.) argues that women are imprisoned indoors by tradition, restricted in areas like agriculture and “domestic work (Oppong, 1980, Olutayo 2006). In agricultural sector, Nigerian women have worked side by side with men in agriculture with some marked division of labour between them. Men perform the tedious tasks such as felling trees, gathering and burning of bush and making ridges while women were involved in planting food crops, harvesting, transportation, processing and selling farm product (Oyekanmi, 1986 and Adekanye, 1990). In Nigeria for instance, Hausa women did not work in fields while Kanuri women both helped in harvesting and were responsible for all household food processing.

A study of women in the country revealed that 40 % of rural women regarded farming as their major occupation in modern times (Adekanye, 1990, Lewis 1981). Commenting on their role in the society they are productive force in the Nigerian economy, though they may not be statistically identified as part of the economic active population, they will take work wherever they find it and combine it with domestic work. At family extreme, women dominate cultural activities aimed at visibility of motherhood like domestic needs such as food, care, socialization, education of children. In public fore, they dominate market place, buying and selling, sustenance of their families and in times of communal conflict, they take a positive position to bring justice (Afonja, 2006).

The comparison between women and fruit-bearing tress lies at the root of certain aspects of indigenous social and ethical philosophy. As one cannot in the interest of human beings joke with the survival of fruit-bearing trees, one could not joke with the fate of women. Women have been programmed by God and Nature as child bearers, loving and caring, food providers, reformers and managers of human affairs. Women as child-bearers are responsible for the

continued existence of the society, many socio-cultural values like loyalty and obedience to her husband become the role of women in Nigeria. In the pre-colonial, no woman is seen as a poor mother irrespective of her marital status (Mba, 1992, Oyewunmi, 2002). In food production, they carry out ritual purification, fixed a date for the planting of women's crops such as cocoyam, vegetable, cassava and protect their crops from theft and damage. Women feed their families not only during the planting season but throughout the rest of the year (Udegbe, 1998). Women are born to be scrupulous and hardworking, that is why they are called home builders and since they have these qualities to build; women should be given a space to develop the nation. Acholonu (2002) argues that womanhood is multi-dimensional concept that involves dynamics of ordering, re-ordering, creating structures and building in co-operation with Mother Nature at all levels of human life.

There is no development, nation or environmental without the full participation of women at the grassroots. These covers activities like trading, domestic service, construction work, sewing, hair dressing as well as involvement in crafts and cottage industries weaving, soap making and pottery (Ojo, 1997). Female participation in federal and state civil service over the years shows the contribution of women in development of Nigeria since pre-colonial times. By and large, Nigerian women who have the opportunity to be involved in formal sector have performed well in their professions both in the public and private sectors (Ojo, 1985). The services of Prof. Mrs Dora Akunyili, Oby Ezekwesili, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Mrs Virgy Etiaba, Patricia Olubumi Ette, Farida Waziri, Mrs Okpeke, Senator Grace Bent Jackson, Barr. Aishatu. Tukur, Hon.Hanatu.S.Kadala and others have creditably represented women in Nigerian politics. Think of women political activists like Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Hajia Gambo Sawaba, Mrs. Margret Ekpo, Mrs Iyabo Obasanjo made remarkable landmark in politics during the pre-colonial, colonial days and recent times.

Women have helped prepare women for positions in government at the local and national level. Despite their role to increase women visibility, they are under-funded and the technical capacity to maximize their impact remains to be developed. When it comes to top party decision making and candidacy, male chauvinism prevails everywhere (FOS 1995).

Women in associations to address issues create self-help groups and cooperatives to assist the less privileged, their communities, themselves or simply to meet the everyday needs of providing for their families there are over one thousand of these groups in each community. The less privileged, orphaned children were brought under their care and protection. Women join microfinance credit programmes to address the needs of their families and implement

socio-economic initiatives at the community level. Creating awareness on gender issues is one of the tools of promoting greater participation of women in decision-making organs and other political programmes. It appears that political support for women empowerment strategies that exist today emerge from two key factors.

About 39 women households and communities and took to agriculture and household roles previously been undertaken by men. Secondly, women came in large numbers to challenge the colonial masters during the colonial administration and other bad legislation (UNDP Report, 2006). It is important to adopt an approach of gender sensitization that establishes the link between development, good governance, equity and link it up with culture. This will create a sense of ownership and demonstrate women involvement in politics to men in rural areas (UN, 1997). Women have enlarged their advocacy efforts beyond local, national and regional boundaries to the international forums. There is no time in history women organized themselves in such forceful non-governmental pressure groups and networks in the 20th century.

National Development

National development refers to a sustainable growth and development of a nation to a desirable one. National development is people oriented and its success is evaluated on the impact to improve the lot of the masses (FGN, 1980). Wood hall (1985) defined national development as the improvement of a country's productive capacity through changes in social attitude, values and behaviour and finally, changes toward social and political equality and eradication of poverty. Onabanjo and M,Bayo (2009), states that national development is human oriented, that is individually in collectiveness and not individual. Elugbe (1994) view national development as the growth of the nation in terms of unity, education, economic well-being and mass participation in government. National development entails the provision of all the necessary materials that will guarantee man in every society to make a living.

Todaro and Smith (2003) identified the objectives of national development as increase in availability of basic life sustaining goods such as food, shelter health and protection. The levels of living like high incomes, employment, better education and greater attention to cultural and human values. The expansion of economic and social choices available to individuals and nation by freeing them from servitude and dependence, forces of ignorance and human misery. Okpata (2004) agrees that national development is the cornerstone of every economic growth for sustainable development, this may mean "growth, change or planned growth of a nation" Abah (2000) states that development exists in a tri-dimensional concept,

development has consumatory dimension connotes increase in the quantity of usable items available to man in the society. This increases the quantity and quality of usable items available to man in a nation. National development is a multi-dimensional process involving the organization and re-orientation of the entire socio-economic system, an improvement of income and output, radical changes in institutional, social and administrative structures as well as popular attitudes, customs and beliefs, such as physical (societal), a state of mind (psychological) and transformation of institution. This argues that development is a state of the mind or an issue bordering on the society; it is paramount to note that development is anchored on financial resources.

Cultural Bias against Women

The history of women serves the ironies in Nigeria, though women comprise majority of the population, they are treated like minority group assigned a definitive place in the social order, denied access to careers and power in the public arena, and viewed as dependent, weak and submissive by nature (Luther, 1987). Despite the massive social science literature that has accumulated around the term “culture”, notably within the last few decades, it requires little more than assuming that culture is a set of attitudes, rarely static and often unconscious, many of them historically conditioned.

These can be local, ethnic or national and global with regard to gender and class concerns. They shape people’s sense of identity and the ways in which they behave as individual or in groups. Human behaviour is largely directed and determined by culture, which is learned recipe of society. According to Eghigato (2002), norms, values and roles are culturally determined and socially transmitted through modes of communication like age-grade system, apprenticeship and system. Harallembos and Heald (2002) observe that sexual division of labour hinges on belief and value system. This presupposes that gender roles are normal, natural and proper.

Cultural bias played predominant role in determining gender roles in Nigeria during the pre-colonial periods and early days of colonialism. Nwaogwugwu (1979) remarked that women played important role in domestic activities, trading and agriculture in Southern Nigeria apart from child-bearing, but, in the Northern Nigeria, women are confined indoors as a result of religious pudah. In the traditional society, women grow with the belief and understanding that their place in society is limited to being agencies of procreation, nursing young and the well-being of their husband. Women are discriminated against in areas of leadership. Women were generally regarded as second class citizens (Eze, 1999). Oakley (1974) comes down on the side

of culture as the determinant of gender roles. She argues that not only division of labour by sex not universal, there is no reason why it should be. Bettelheim (1969) asserts that gender roles are not inevitable, that particular tasks are not universally assigned to one sex or the other. It is significant to note that where particular tasks are assigned as men's roles; they carry higher prestige than in societies where they are assigned to women. The belief that the place of women is in the home and that their main pre-occupation lies in ensuring the continuity of the human race through child bearing still holds true of the present day rural Nigeria. There is a bond of patriarchal dominance over women in Nigerian societies. In traditional

In Nigeria, a married woman with her property is believed to be owned by her husband. Basden (1969) stated that in southern Nigeria, a woman is the property of her husband and had little or no say in the home. Under customary law in Igbo society and most societies in Nigeria, women have partial rights in respect to land. They are allowed to have access or custody of land when permitted by their husbands for farming or they hold such land on trust for their male children because they have no right to inherit or land ownership. Spencer (1979) observes that men make over 80% of the decisions in Nigerian society. Women according to the author are so downtrodden under the law that a woman is not permitted to bail a suspect arrested and detained by the police. Ogunyemi (1996) pointed out that culture has been used to justify the subordinate position of women in the household.

In the author's observation, even in elite houses with educated wives, women's presence at social gatherings is either non-existence or very restricted. In addition, women headed households sometimes, are not seriously considered in Nigeria's development plans a factor which discriminates against women as regards property ownership. These perceptions are closely connected to a traditional understanding of space as private and public, women generally being relegated to the former, even to the exclusion of the latter. These notions are remarkably persistent and lie at the very heart of most of the difficulties women face not only in entering politics, but in achieving credibility and impact within the political sphere. In Kaduna State for example, investigations into illegal land expropriation in 2002 noted that women's farms were confiscated by local chiefs wishing to sell to urban-based speculators and would-be commercial farmers (Wikipedia, 2002) and family.

In the family law, the husband is the legal head of a household and in case of disagreement over parental authority; the father's will prevails. Women are perceived to be properties and thus have been thoroughly enmeshed in the people's mind, such that even the women despise themselves. An example could be cited right from the womb, where a woman through a

scanning system finds out that her forthcoming baby is a girl, she rejects the baby even before she put to bed this reveals that women most of the time reject themselves. In most homes, the girl-child is hardly sent to school, with the excuse that she is another person's property and seen as a wasteful investment. In Nigeria, a woman is defined as someone's daughter, wife mother or widow, single women constitute a large category in the cities because of divorce rate. Single adult women are available sexual partners try for some independence and as easy victims of economic exploitation (Anumud, 2006, Ame, 2002).

Women for Change and Development

Women, have in one way or the other affected the world politics Margaret Thatcher of England, Indira Ghandi of India, Hilary Clinton of America, Condolise Rice, US Secretary General and many more. In Nigeria women are not left in the feminist struggles, as the memory of Aba women riot against massive tax payment still lingers (Fafunwa, 1974). The impact of Margaret Ekpo of Calabar, Chief Mrs. Funmilayo Anikulpo kuti , Prof. Allele Williams of University of Benin, Chief (Mrs) Bola Kuforiji Olubi of United Bank of Africa (UBA), Mrs. Maryam Babangida who championed Better Life for Rural Women, Prof. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, who helped in reviving the ailing economy of Nigeria and spearheaded the fight that led to the cancellation of Nigeria's debt in Paris club; Prof. Dora Akunyili of NAFDAC championed war against fake drugs in Nigeria, ensured importation, sale and use of genuine drugs in our markets, chemist, hospitals to the general public. The influence of late Stella Obasanjo encouraged women inclusion in the cabinet of President Obasanjo, Turai Yar'Adua equally played her part in women emancipation, Dame Patience Jonathan came up with Women for Change Initiative to co-opt 35% women in politics come 2011 general election.

Women for change initiative raise the standard of an average Nigeria woman to eliminate discrimination and eradicate poverty in the land. The revision of laws is inimical to the welfare and peaceful existence of women like tax laws, land use act 1976, marriage laws, Inheritance act, electoral act; high mortality rate and domesticate child right act passed by national assembly (Ugwu, 2010).The creation of national commission for women and ministerial port folio for women affair is an avenue to promote women related issues to enhance national development by statutory body. Women are the engine driving the economy of Nigeria nation and key to sustainable development. They constitute an arm of the labour force, they are dynamic, industrious and resourceful (Agbola, 1990, Ekong 2006).

Major Challenges and Weaknesses

Nigeria women have made significant effort to promote gender equality and integration into the development process, but there are some issues posing as challenges are:

Poverty among women-headed households: As breadwinners of single parent families (Mostly widows), many of them support multigenerational or extended families. The general increase in the size of the average family increases the burden of care.

Gender biased analysis: - There has been strong gender differences existing in politics and other related professions. Women have not duly been represented due to resistance by their men folk who feel that some executive or political posts like Presidency, Governorship and Senate President should exclusively be left for men remember the incidence in the lower house of the first female speaker of the house, Hon. Patricia Etteh, on the basis that she misappropriated the fund for the renovation of her apartment, Many male speakers before her, have done that previously during their regime without any opposition or eyebrow.

Below is the table showing women representation in elected or appointed position in Nigeria between 2007- 2010 and federal house.

Source; Federal Ministry of Women Affair and Social Development (2010)

Note

Of the 360 seats in the house of representative, men have 333 seats while the women have 27 seats; at the senate level, the total number is 109 seats which the men have 101 seat while women have only 8 seats' with the above data we can vividly ascertain the disparities. There are not differences in what we have on ground in other states.

Challenges Facing Nigerian Women in the 21st Century

The challenges that face women's political participation and democratic governance especially in the 21st century according to UNDP Report (2005) are as follows:

Governance and Poverty Reduction The extent through which democratic governance and process that leads to greater participation of the poor is assumed to improve their well-being. In participation of women in governance and poverty reduction, policy makers tend to emphasize participation as an aspect of accountability, rather than effectiveness and impact. It is unclear that the participation of the poor lead to the articulation of their interest in ways which influence institutional rules and practices to different decision about resource use that lead to poverty reduction in the material sense (UNDP, 2000).

In gender perspectives, the mainstream governance is limited to an examination of the need for more women in formal political life and strategies to achieve this, without consideration of the need for transforming the institutions of power. This weakness becomes particularly important

when focusing on the links between democratic governance and gendered causes and consequences of women's poverty (Goetz, 1995). According to the author, outside the family where the gendering roles and behaviour is explicit but often assumed to be 'natural', there is a tendency to assume that institutions are neutral with respect to gender and governance debates are no exception. Ashworth (1996) argues that familial norms and values are constantly drawn on in construction of the terms under which women and men enter and participate in public life and market place.

The public-private split institutionalized women's exclusion from the public sphere and is also drawn on to reinforce gendered relations in the public sphere. For example, women are confined to female tasks closely associated with their domestic roles, or more insidiously, subjected to sexual harassment and violence which both symbolically and literally threaten and contains women's identity as public actors. Kebeer (1996) opines that men's physical and historical dominance of the public sphere has meant that their needs and interests have become embedded in public institutions. In his opinion, men's physical monopoly of public space means that everyday work patterns come to be structured around men's needs and capabilities, resulting in a gendered structuring of time and space in organizations. He further stated that ideologies and disciplines are also important in creating cognitive and cultural contexts that favour male interest. Kebeer and Murthy (1996) argue that confining reform efforts to measure to increase female representation in public life will have limited impacts unless broader constraints on women's meaningful participation are addressed.

According to the authors, it is important to recognize the interlocking forms of institutional exclusion faced by women, this implies to rethink and extend the scope of the current governance debate and related interventions in order to increase gender accountability.

Gender Accountability The practical measures necessary to include women in discussions and activities are known though less often actually implemented and adequately resources. This relate to perceived male resistance and silencing, internalized oppression and difficulty of articulating women's interests within existing framework of public debate (Ekejiuba, 2002, Mayoux 2004). The sense of powerlessness and exclusion is not just a product of their gender subordination, but interlocking forms of exclusion linked to class. Improvement in women participation does not necessarily mean that they will be effective in articulating their gender interests in public space (Robinson, 1995).

Where women are present in small numbers, they may be marginalized and find it difficult to promote group interest. Women's immediate preoccupation reflect practical concerns that flow

from existing division of labour and power rather than strategic challenges to underlying power structures. It may take time before women articulate their gender interest effectively in the most strategic forums. Ojo (1997) argues that once individual women gain access to positions of power, the problem of their accountability to the grassroots or poor women whom they represent arises. There is danger that women in positions of power will be co-opted or allow their gender interests to be subsumed by class, caste or ethnic interest. This may be exacerbated by their newness to the club, thereby creating the feeling of beholden to other for their positions. There are real division between women; some women have more gain from preserving the status quo since their power rest on their standing in the hierarchy over other women.

As participation in and openness to public institutions increases, gender interests emerge alongside many other sides. So participation may lead to greater competition over resources and greater scope for men to organize women's efforts to promote their gender interests. It creates opportunities for building strategic alliance between different interest groups (Afonja, 2007). According to UNDP report (2004), accountability must be assessed in terms of impact, i.e. changes in actual outcomes that improve women's lives. Even where women are effective in articulating their gender interests, it does not always result in change. Certain areas of policy and decision making like finance and economics, where decisions on resources are central have been particularly resistant to incursion with a feminist agenda in part because of their technical nature. Women in their small numbers are sideline into women issues in the social sectors and may more comfortable in such positions (UNDP, 2004).

Unholy alliance and unruly practices may impede women efforts, both conspire with bureaucratic inertia and insufficient resources to conspire against women's impact (Goetz and Jenkins, 1998). Women working in state bureaucracies that promote gender interests find themselves in an ambivalent position working both within and against the state. Most public-private divide implicit in the state institutions in which meeting women's needs is construed as conflicting with the privacy of the home has proved a barrier to establish equitable practices. Liberal political democracy may create space for discussion of gender concerns; it does not ensure better representation of women on their interests (Ogunba, 2000).

Policy Disconnect The long history of women empowerment and political integration in the country is not in tandem with the current situation analysis with respect to all gender issues suffered by majority of women in Nigeria. All efforts through special legislation, state bye-laws and gender specific policies at all levels of government and by the civil society, though

noteworthy, have failed to deliver dividends of development to women. The continued manifestations highlighted at the sectoral level demand for adoption of a different and more pragmatic approach to the policy framework as compared to that of the National Policy on women (Muhammad, 2006).

Legal Framework System The establishment and popularization of human rights instruments and legal provisions which provide for equity as well as protection from abuse have drawn attention to the extent of gender-based discrimination. The recognition of violence against women has been a breakthrough and stimulated efforts to address gender violence in development programmes (Okomo, 2000). The UNDP report (1997) observed the weakness of state interventions in promoting gender equality is acknowledged in governance and attributed to the persistence of traditions undermine rules and regulations.

The failure of legislature to uphold gender interests at the local level does not outmoded cultural values. Religious, traditional and judicial authorities administer personal or customary law influence to political process locally and nationally such that constitutional provisions for gender equality can be undermined (Azikiwe, 1997). The failure of legal changes translates into meaningful change for women result to their poor capacity in the legal system. This result is lack of resources to access legal help, but from men dominance in judicial system and the social distant between women and legal systems, related to education and language.

According to Ciroma (2006), in Nigeria, women rights much more than men are ignored and infringed upon at different stages of their lives despite constitutional guarantees and Nigeria being a signatory to many international human rights instruments like CEDAW. The system of customary sharia operates contradictory evidence permit trivialization of women's legal status. The political process review laws, legislations and strengthening the institution to overhaul laws, jurisprudence, structures and procedures as a strategy for gender equality and women in politics.

Macro-economic Reform Women are hit by economic transition process mainly, because they lack access to education, capital, labour, entrepreneurial skills and equally control over the use of their valuable time. The percentage of women remains predominantly high among the core as public financial systems remain impervious to women concerns. The consideration in macro- economic policy of women is unpaid labour in economy has been deeply embedded form of gender bias in macro-economics (Elson, 1995). The gender bias combined with lack of technical skills among women in economic analysis has limited the impact of gender on macro-economic policy process. The effort made to assess the gender impacts of economic solution to

improve access with little consideration of the gender-specific barriers women face in market engagement. Lack of gender analysis in economic policy is failure to analyze the impacts on women for change in public expenditure as component of economic reform. The protection of social expenditure and re-allocation to basic services holds benefits for women. However, the report argues that it is unclear that these gains have been realized in the face of downward pressures on total budgets and collapse of free public service delivery in many states. Kiggundu (1998) notes the need to establish initiative to address issues of engaging women in economic policy, changing the rules through efforts to reform the budgetary process and ensure that actual resource allocation take account of women's interests.

Public Sector Restructuring and Service Provision This includes providing policy and institutional framework for collecting and using public revenues, design policies and deliver services to empower women or give them voice (Amali, 2000). The reform of public service is encompasses a wider measures like downsizing and restructuring civil service, introducing new human resources policies and management systems in an efforts to reduce corruption. This explains why reform of public sector often involves introducing competition into service delivery and contracting out service provision to private providers, or service provision in partnership with non-governmental actors and this can improve the quality of service provision outreach to poor groups, this has disadvantages from accountability perspective.

National Machineries Goetz (2000) notes that the main instrument through which support for gender interests has been mobilized within government structures is national machineries for women. Most importantly, the place of gender in development planning suffer from history of marginalization and insecurity, under-resourcing, lack of technical capacity, over-reliance on donor funding and in some cases, lack of accountability to constituencies in civil society. According to political Bureau report, much has been established during periods of government restructuring made their claims on resources difficult to advance; there are serious questions about effectiveness. Byrne et al (1995) observe that the strategies is to institutionalize gender in state bureaucracies. Female folks are found in MDAs like finance, planning and agriculture in turn highlight lack of technical skills as well as the need for awareness of gender issues among technical staff in line ministries responsibility. It is unclear to what extent national machineries have prioritized the needs and interests of women.

Policy, Partnerships and Programme Reforms Women empowerment and political integration, existing policy environment across sectors and inter-sectoral cooperation priorities decry this commitment. The policy environment, structural arrangements and programme

content of line ministries need to be overhauled to respond for gender considerations. A system wide approach to gender mainstream shall be pursued by government. Consequently, engendering sector policies redefine partnership arrangements and redesign service delivery and other programmes shall be a priority for government and its partners. The ministry of women affairs and social development should be restructured to increased delivery mechanism through the establishment of gender equality and reposition the National Centre for Women Development (NCWD) (Ciroma, 2006).

Information, Communication and Value Re-orientation The resistance of women in the past has derived from weak understanding on the implications of gender mainstream for all social groups coupled with failure on part of gender actors and stakeholders to communicate effectively, the centre of gender equality and women involvement to achieve sustainable development. The policy will engender the value-orientation objective of government through the use of responsive means of communication (Mba, 1992).

Capacity building and Skill Development The dearth of gender expertise, inadequate human resources and insufficient skills plagued gender development sector and constrained women from maximizing their political involvement to the detriment on the overall development of the nation. Redressing sectoral gender imbalance demand to strengthen gender analytical capacities among wide spectrum of actors. Specific reforms can be driven by technocrats and professionals have been equipped with requisite skill to deliver on gender target and operate gender systems such as gender budgeting, gender management systems, gender auditing and performance evaluation (Amadiume, 1997) It is in this line of thinking that women's full political participation enhances change. This is where the need for engaging in the paper is consummated to evaluate why Nigerian women have continued to be under-represented and discrimination from either men or government to women political participation in Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Much has been done to sharpen people's awareness on gender inequalities yet our society is run by male-dominated institutions. The role of women in national development should reach a consensus based on these premises to ensure policies as follows:

- Women are agents of change: realizing their potentialities, and recognizing their role in policy making.
- Custom and tradition is the product of society and as such are subject to modification. The constitutional rights granted to women in texts and legislation should help to mitigate the

discriminatory effect of ingrained firmly established and hard to change cultural norms, which are often seen as the society's only reference points.

- The National Economy and Development are in the hands of both men and women. The way to consolidate women's place and role within the process of rural development is through promoting their abilities to recognize and to negotiate for a just profit.
- The history of every country, distant and recent, as well as current development projects demonstrates that women are ready to take their place in the forefront of effort to develop society. However, men must be genuine partners in this, convinced of the importance of women's participation in decisions concerning the work unit, the family and the community.

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