Gender, Culture and Development in Africa

Edited By

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Chapter 44

WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN NIGERIA AND SOUTH AFRICA: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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Introduction

Governance cuts across all spheres of representation and decision-making, from the community to national levels. Women's political issues have been more pronounced due to the fact that there has been an awakened consciousness that women worldwide can attain a greater level of political participation than never before. The solitary female voices encountered in political circles in Africa are insufficient to effect the changes that are so important to women. Women's numerical strength is needed at the political realm in order to make legislative laws or influence political decisions relating to women

When women are represented in critical numbers in parliaments, as well as at the grassroots level, their perspectives and interests will be taken into account and their concerns given higher priority (Agbalajobi, 2010). Greater political participation will enable women to make a meaningful impact on equality, and to sustain the effort for the empowerment and representation of women (Agishi, 2002). It is stated clearly that if women occupy some of the political positions occupied by men, the standard of practice of political virtues will rise. That is, increase in women's participation in politics will reduce the level of corruption displayed in governance (Bucknor-Akerele, 2002).

Only 22.8 per cent of all national parliamentarians were women as of June 2016, a slow increase from 11.3 per cent in 1995. As of September 2016, 10 women were serving as Head of States and 9 were serving as Head of Government. Rwanda had the highest number of women parliamentarians worldwide and in Africa. Women won about 63.8 per cent of seats in the lower house. Globally, there are 38 States in which women account for less than 10 per cent of parliamentarians in single or lower houses, as of June 2016, including 4 chambers with no women at all (Ighobor, 2015).

About 22 countries have achieved a critical mass of 30% or higher women representation in their national parliaments, mainly as a result of constitutional quotas written into law and requiring that a certain percentage of political positions be occupied by women. Of that number, six are African countries: Burundi, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda (Murray & Nijzink, 2002). These countries succeeded because they recognized the importance of equity between women and men in decision-making and they instituted changes in their electoral and parliamentary processes.

South Africa leapt from 17th to 9th place, behind Rwanda and Sweden, in the global ranking (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2017). That country experienced an 11% increase in women's political representation after the 2013 elections, from 34% to 45% (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2017). Prior to democratic elections held there in 1994, there were only 2.7% of women in the South African Parliament; the figure increased to 27% following the elections and has been growing ever since (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2006). The gains in women's political participation in South Africa did not happen overnight; therefore the crux of this paper is to find out what facilitated such increase.

The South African development in political structures and processes as related to women's participation shows that a lot has been put in place to aid women's inclusion in politics. From contemporary perspective in Nigeria, it would appear that women had never been powerful in the realm of Nigerian politics. Though women enjoyed high political authority in Southern Nigerian, this was not a general phenomenon; men had always been dominant in the political structure with women complementing them.

Women's activities were usually subordinate and complementary to the existing male dominated structures in Nigeria. Even where women were deeply involved at the highest levels of decision making in a society, their involvement was never on an equal basis but rather complementary. Successive governments have initiated some women-friendly programs but appreciable impact has not been made. It is in light of this that this paper examines the place of women in politics in South Africa to find out the gap Nigeria has not filled as regards women's political participation.

This paper discusses institutional changes which can enhance women's participation in politics in Nigeria as employed by the South African government, groups and organisations. Therefore, this paper comes from the perspective of looking at the Nigerian state which is still behind in terms of representation of women in politics and spell out the challenges from the South Africa state view.

Women's Political Participation in Nigeria

Women's political participation in Nigeria dates back to as far back as the 15th and 16th century. Nigeria's political history is abounding with the exploits of Queen Amina of Zaria in the 16th century. She engaged in wars and conquered the whole of Hausa land and led her armies to drive out invaders from Zaria. In Benin, Wuli Emotan who lived in the second half of the 15th century was so powerful, intelligent and highly diplomatic that she was able to restore Oba Ogun to the throne by successfully staging a palace coup (Aina, 2004).Queen Obuma Achibong of Duke town in Calabar (1854-1864), wielded so much power she disallowed her adversaries from dethroning her.

In Igbo land, Omu Nwagbako was so powerful and influential that when the Christian missionaries came, she influenced almost all the women to go to church (Nzegwu, 2000). And she was also the one who signed the treaty between the Queen of England and Onitsha in 1884 when it was to be taken over by the British. Princess Inikpi in the 16th century allowed herself to be buried alive in order to save her people from being taken captive by the Jukuns during the Jukun-Igala war. Moremi of Ile-Ife also among others have contributed immeasurably to the progress of their society and left a footprint on the sand of history (Luka, 2011).

Equally, Nigeria's past speaks of prominent women leaders like Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Margaret Ekpo and Hajia Gambo Sawaba who championed various causes of women emancipation (Asaju and Adagba, 2013:60). More so, Nigeria speaks of women such as Wuraola Esan that got appointed to the Senate of 36 members, while no woman was elected to the 312-member House of Representatives and federal cabinet. Women such as Margaret Ekpo, Mrs. Mary Nzimiro, who were elected members of the National Executive Council (NEC) in 1957, participated actively during parties' primaries and campaigns. (Nwankwo, 1996:17).

Since the emergence of indigenous political leadership in 1960 till 1999, Nigerian women have remained almost invisible in the party system (Ngara & Ayabam, 2013). Women have been greatly under-represented in party membership as well as in policymaking organs. In the 1999 general elections, women participation in politics and decision making witnessed an improvement over previous experience, but generally the scorecard remained very poor (Akiyode-Afolabi & Arogundade 2003).

The 1999 general elections produced only 181 position won by women out of the 11, 881 available positions throughout the country (Ako-Nai, 2003), three (4.6%) women out of 109 senators elected into the Senate, while 12 (3.6%) women were elected into the House of Representatives of 360 seats, that is, 6.3% women representation in the National parliament (Ajayi, 2007:139). While there were 36 gubernatorial seats, no female featured. Nigeria had only one female deputy Governor – Chief Kofoworola Akerele-Bucknor, deputy governor of Lagos State (1999 -2003), and of the 990 seats available for the State Houses of Assembly in the country only 12 (1.21%) women were elected (Adu, 2008:27).

At the local level, out of the 774 local government chairpersons across the nation, only 9 were women and out of the 8,700 councilors only 143were women (Babatunde, 2003; Anifowose, 2004:210). Simbine (2003) attributed the low participation of women to be related to the source of establishment of political parties that led to the

Fourth Republic, which featured no woman prominently in the party process. The table below reflects data for women representation for the fourth republic from 2003-2015.

Table 44.1- Women Representation in the 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015 Nigerian Elections

Office	2003		2007		2011		2015	
	Seat Available	Women	Seat Available	Women	Seat Available	Women	Seat Available	Women
President	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Senate	109	4	109	9	109	7	109	8
House of Reps	360	21	360	25	360	19	360	20
Governor	36	0	36	0	36	0	36	0
State House of Assembly	990	24	990	57	990	68	990	-
L.G.A Chairperson	774	15	774	27	740	-	740	-

Source: Eyeh (2010) (2012); Irabor (2012) and Okoronkwo-Chukwu (2013); US Department of State (2016).

The British Council (2012) report indicates that Nigeria currently stands at 118 position out of 192 countries in terms of gender parity thereby being far behind African countries like South Africa (43%) and Rwanda (65%). Nigeria still falls short of the desired result of giving females access to opportunities to advance politically (Babatunde, 2003; The Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition Shadow Report, 2008; Adu, 2008, p. 27) argues that the low number of women in public administration, will not only ominously influence the course of public policies, their peculiar needs and interests might not also be satisfactorily projected as they have few advocates in policy institutions (Agishi, 2014).

Women's Status in South African Politics

The South African political history dates back to when men and women struggled against the system of discrimination, Apartheid, relentlessly. From the early 1950s, the Women's League of the African National Congress (ANC) took part in campaigns such as transport and education boycotts (Kgasi, 2004). Being a victimized group at the racial and gender level, the Women's League and the multi-racialFederation of South African Women got united and put up a strong struggle when the government tried to extend pass laws to women. However, the Apartheid machinery was determined about maintaining its control.

The 1960's and 1970's, also saw increasing substantial organized resistance to Apartheid by women. During the 1980's, women came together to form organizations

such as the Cape-based United Women's Organization and the Natal Organization of Women. These organizations worked alongside the male-dominated unions and community organizations. Women filled important governance roles within the mixed-sex organizations. The '80s witnessed the growth of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) which worked with and for poor women and men (Budlender, Goldman, Samuels, Pigou &Valji, 1999).

In the late 1980s, the Rural Women's Movement became one of the first ambassadors of the special interests and problems of rural women. In South Africa, as in other places, women forced their way into political crusading against male struggle on the basis of concrete femininity needs (Albertyn, Cathi, Beth, Shireen, Likhapha & Sheila, 1999). Women activists played a surprisingly important role in the negotiations, in the elections, and in designing the new state. The South African experience with integrating women into decision-making bodies has been exceptional also because Africa politics is by and large still seen as a prerogative of men (Lowe-Morna, 2004).

During the 1990's, women from across the South African political spectrum, came together to form the Women's National Coalition (WNC). The Coalition drew up the Women's Charter of Effective Equality. This Charter was based on the demands of women at the grassroots as well as within women's organizations. Its aim was to ensure that women's issues were addressed in the drawing up of the Constitution of post-apartheid South Africa (Lodge, Tom, Denis & David, 2002).

From 1994, a number of significant developments set the pace towards building a non-racial and non-sexist democracy. The first phase of democratic government witnessed groundwork for gender mainstreaming (Cock, 1997). This included the change of policies and programs by public institutions, commitments made by government as well as new legislation, a review of existing legislation, and the allocation of resources for mainstreaming gender (Pigou & Valji, 1999). NGOs were involved, amongst other things, in carrying out gender studies and publications relating to violence against women, the development of gender and development training programs, and input to country reports on global obligations (Lowe-Morna, 2004).

According to Msimang (2001), the conciliation for a democratic South Africa led to the initiation of key areas of government responsibility, in respect to ensuring that every South African citizen, male and female, enjoyed their human rights as spelt out in the Bill of Rights. Developments were particularly significant for women in general as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was approved without reservations (Murray &Nijzink, 2002).

The South African government established the national gender machinery, and introduced legislation to address social, economic and political inequalities between the men and women. South Africa created and developed a number of bodies which addressed gender issues. In South Africa, the National Gender Machinery includes structures in government, the legislature, parliament and statutory bodies of which the Commission on Gender Equality is one(Fick, Meintjes & Simons, 2002)..

The principles of South Africa's National Gender Machinery include fundamental equal opportunity of women's rights as found in the Women's Charter for Effective Equality, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Declaration on

Gender and Development, the Africa Platform for Action (adopted before the Beijing Conference), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action (WSSD - World Summit on Social Development) (Lowe-Morna, 2004).

South Africa also created a friendly environment to women by promulgating laws that are gender sensitive: Employment Equity Act, Basic Condition of Employment Act, Domestic Violence Act, Maintenance Act, Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, Recognition of Customary Marriage Act, etc. South Africa is also one of the few countries where union membership is currently growing (Msimang, 2001). Growth was especially strong in the public sector, where half of all workers are women.

A result of the principles of the gender machinery is: Commission on Gender Equality (CGE) an independent, statutory body established in terms of the Commission on Gender Equality Act no. 39 of 1996(Murray & Nijzink, 2002). The Gender Commission is tasked with monitoring and evaluating government and the private sector; public education and information; making recommendations about laws, policies and programmers to government; resolving disputes through mediation and conciliation; investigating inequality and commissioning research(Electoral Institute for Southern Africa, 2011).

South Africa does not have a separate ministry for women's affairs as in many countries. Instead, South Africa hopes that by having gender units in all government departments, gender issues will be addressed in their policies and programs. Since 1994 and to date, almost all national departments have gender units that are often described as Gender Focal Points (Kgasi, 2004). The gender policy aimed at assisting in eradicating sexist or gender discriminatory policies in the workplace, has provided a framework for the implementation of positive measures to advance women in order to achieve fair play between men and women.

South Africa has seen a rise in the number of women holding political office since 1994. After the 2014 general elections, women occupied 43% of Cabinet posts, and 46% of Deputy Minister Positions, and 41% of parliamentary seats (Electoral Institute for Southern Africa, 2009).Issues such as sexual harassment and affirmative action, among others, are being addressed as there are more women well represented in the arm of policy making.

A Comparative Exploration of Women's Participation in Nigeria and South Africa – Issues and Challenges

This paper is concerned with the process that constituted and enabled South Africa's exceptional development in terms of women participation. It lies in a number of connected factors, such as the fact that the majority of women who entered parliament on an ANC ticket came from a long history of political struggle against the apartheid system. In contrast to Nigeria, women's organisations were central to the struggle for

democracy in South Africa. This gave them a mandate and leverage to impress their needs on the politicians negotiating the transition. In consequence, they have had more direct ownership over the new democratic institutions and are in a stronger position in political society. Women in South Africa have made a substantial contribution as an organised group to popular struggle against apartheid since at least the turn of the century.

South Africa has also a phenomenal number and diversity of women's associations, reflecting a rich African tradition of women's organising which makes it the only region in the world with the most extensive female solidarity networks, with most structured around the self-help survival 'politics of everyday life' (Kgasi, 2004).No other constituency had achieved such recognition during the negotiation process, and no single women's organisation had been able to achieve this kind of legitimacy for women's issues on its own (Lowe-Morna, 2004).

From the political structure of South Africa as regards women's political participation in politics, this paper argues that the challenges of women in Nigeria that cannot be overly accepted as justification for failure to achieve success in political participation as South Africa has faced most of these challenges and they have been able to overcome them. Some of the challenges are persistent gender stereotypes, conflict between family and work demands, patriarchy and the lack of an enabling political environment, inadequate funding to support female candidates, the absence of special measures/quotas, low literacy levels, the lack of job security in politics, the absence of female role models, lack of training for political participation and lack of resources.

Lack of political will has been advanced as a challenge to womens' participation in Nigeria. This is illustrated with reference to when the Yar'Adua administration came into office with the promise to give 30 percent of political appointment to women (less than the 35 percent in the National Gender Policy). But an assessment conducted by ActionAid after one year indicated that women appointment was only 11 percent.

Lack of internal democracy in most of the political parties, patriarchy, godfatherism, male dominated party executives, political violence, lawlessness and corruption are also given as reasons for failure of women to achieve significant political participation. If South Africa as a state between 1994 and now can achieve high level of political participation, then all the challenges posed in the Nigeria state that are gender oriented can definitely be overcome by looking at how the other African countries got there.

Recommendations

Given South Africa's history, the key to the success of South African women is often interpreted as being based in the unique history of the ANC's and United Democratic Front's (UDF) mass women's movement. Therefore, based on the analysis of the South Africa development in relation to women's participation in politics, the following recommendations are made for the purpose of this study;

Electoral and political reforms- Markedly, electoral reform and introduction of quotas into political party structures has brought about the rise of women's representation in many Commonwealth countries. Studies have shown that party-list

proportional representation and mixed member proportionality (a combination of party list and simple majority electoral models) have advanced the representation of women in decision-making in Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, New Zealand, South Africa, and in a number of Caribbean countries.

Quotas used in politics- Over 70 countries globally have adopted alternative forms of quotas, which have advanced the participation of women in decision-making. Voluntary quotas have effectively mainstreamed women in South Africa adopted by the ruling party the African National Congress. Tanzania was the first African country to introduce quotas in its constitution, now emulated in many other African countries. South Africa's 2012 National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender now guarantees equitable representation of women at all levels of decision-making across all political parties and sectors.

Capacity building for women- Affirmative action for women representation at all decision making levels remains a challenge, seen as positive action for women at the detriment of men. Thus awareness creation and training activities are being used to sensitise societies to the need to vote for women across many African countries, including Botswana, Lesotho and Nigeria. Australia, Canada and Trinidad and Tobago have succeeded in strengthening the representation of women in local governance without introducing affirmative action policies; through civil society capacity building efforts for women interested in local governance.

Financial Resources- Many women are limited by financial resources which further inhibit their effective participation in politics. A dedicated fund should be set aside through state or party mandates to support women's advocacy and political campaigns. Women entrepreneurs can also serve as donors to support women's electoral campaigns.

Target accomplished women to join politics- Government and civil society groups can target accomplished, competent and qualified women leaders and groom them for political leadership. These women have established families with reduced family responsibilities, wide experience, loyal constituency and are financially stable. These women can also be mentored by other women in political authority. Appointing women leaders into positions of authority has proved effective in many Commonwealth countries.

Involving male champions- Practically it is important to partner with men who have long-standing control of power, and sensitise them to understand gender equity, equality and mainstreaming. In this way, male champions can serve as agents for change for the inclusion and effective participation of women at all levels and across all sectors including the home. Henderson (2003) suggested that government should collaborate with key stakeholders to prepare a sub-program on women and gender advancement which would serve as guideline to the government, Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs), civil society and donor communities in advancing women's issues.

Conclusion

This chapter brings to the table the limitations hindering Nigerian women by looking

beyond culture, religion, support etc. and other challenges as found in extant literatures It also compares Nigeria with South Africa, a country within her continent, that has undergone turbulent political transition in 1990s which should have been an excuse for non-participation of women but has recorded significant success with regards to women's political participation.

States do not achieve autonomy from socially entrenched gender relations merely by including more women in government, although greater numbers of women in policy-making fora is definitely a critical step to changing the culture, concerns, and capacities of government. Thus it is not whether government is liberal, democratic or not which affects women's capacity to participate in politics and influence decision-making, but the degree to which it promotes and implements policies on social equality, and the degree of legitimacy enjoyed by feminist social movements and politicians.

This does imply a significant degree of political liberty for women to politicise their needs, special measures to get women into politics, and economic policies compensating for their reproductive burden. The latter implies some version of a welfare state, and serious limits are put on gender-sensitive economic policies by the prevailing environment of economic austerity.

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