



EMPOWERING WOMEN FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

BY

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Abstract

The triumvirate factors of National security, good governance and development are in separable concepts for peace and progress of any nation. The goal of any democracy is to attain the aforementioned factors and sustain them. The simple definition of democracy is the government of the people, by the people and for the people. This underscores the importance of the people, irrespective of their gender as the social oxygen of the political process. Regrettably, in the present domain of a sexist world, women participation in national security, good governance, social and economic development have been acutely curtailed by male chauvinism fostered by the patriarchal system in many parts of the world. In many advanced nations, women were, until recently disenfranchised from the political process. This was the case in the suffragette of the 17th and 18th centuries. In the United States of America, until the Susan Anthony amendment of 1949, women were not allowed to vote. The story is far more pathetic in less developed and poorer countries of the world. The need for paradigm shift in women involvement in national security good governance and development in developing economy such as Nigeria is the kernel of this paper. This paper therefore examined the role of women in the political process. Attempts were made to critically examine and engage factors militating against women participation in national security, good governance and development. The method is historical and descriptive in nature. The way forward in this social logjam is proffered.

KEY WORDS: Security good governance, development and women participation.

INTRODUCTION

The participation of women in the affairs of a nation is of growing concern in the society. Nigeria has a rich history of women who participated in active politics, during the pre-colonial era. History recorded the exploits of great women who fought hard for women's rights and dignity. For example, Queen Amina of Zaria, who led armies to drive out invaders from Zaria, and Moremi of Ile-Ife,

whose sacrifice for her people was of great benefits to many. Others include Margaret Ekpo, a civil rights activist and Funmilayo Ransome Kuti who led the Egba women, on a protest against taxation. Also, Aba women riot of 1929, and Iyalode Tinubu of Lagos, who encouraged the economic activities of women during her life time, and a lot of other women who at one time or the other contributed immensely to the growth and development of the

country. The legacies these women left behind are at the risk of extinction as majority of Nigerian women are offered minimal participation in the democratic process. The positions offered to them are not commensurate with the proportion of women, in terms of population.

In the country, female participation is far from what obtains in the western world. Some consensus have it that Nigerian security is in the hand of those who possess the wherewithal to take it by force and, that means those that can march violence with violence. This belief that men possess the superiority, strength, competitiveness that can make them excel in political endeavour is a myth as women are considered passive to engage in the do or die politics of the nation conversely. The legacies of these women are at the risk of extinction if majority of Nigerian women are disadvantaged to minimally participate in national security and good governance. The current level of women involvement in national security, and good governance is not commensurate with the proportion of women in the country. This archaic belief is also constructed by societal norms and values which through socialization defined gender roles according to biological differences. Women's perception of participation in governance as a dirty game and orgy of has further alienated them from governance.

Women have always participated in productive labour and their numerical strength in the labour market has been on the increase, but their presence and impact has been very insignificant in governance. Olusola (1998) cited by Fapounda (2008) opined that women by their sheer psychological, physiological and intellectual make up perform more than mere complementary roles in the production process. The low appearance of women in national security, good governance and development emanates from gender stereotype and wrongly

defined sex roles. Religious institution does not help the matter as some religious practice do not support effective participation of women in the society. For example, the Christian religion, compel women to be submissive to her husband in all areas: Ephesians Chapter 5, verses 22-23. Equally, the Islamic doctrine support that women should be submissive to their husbands in all area of endeavor. Also in the traditional setting, women are not supposed to be heard in the public. This is to say that in religious institution, women are responsible to the men. This has also limited the manifestation of women in activities in the social environment.

Recently, women begin to play increasing roles in the development of the society, as a result of technological change and dynamic nature of the environment. In social studies education. the contemporary issues in social studies education like gender equity, women empowerment and the likes have brought awareness to the importance of women in the society. We have women as Senators, Deputy Governors, Vice – Chancellors, Chairperson of Local Governments and other important leadership positions.

Role of Women in National Peace and Security

Women play important roles in national security, good governance and development. According to Fapounda (2008), the importance of women's participation in conflict resolution, peace building and conflict settlement is tie fulcrum of President Obama's National Security strategy, and USA recognizes that countries are more peaceful and prosperous when women are accorded equal rights and opportunity. When those rights and opportunities are denied, countries often lag behind. Also, women and girls often disproportionately bear the burden of crises and conflict. In many developed countries especially in the United States of America, the Government support the accelerated

implementation of four security council resolutions on women, the resolution support that women need to be included at the negotiating table and to participate in peace building efforts. For clarity the United Nations resolution are as stated below, as cited by <http://womenpeacesecurity.org>.

- Advocating to include issues of concern to women and their families in peace and reconstruction efforts.
- Meeting with women organizations, particularly in countries affected by conflict, to hear views and to raise their concerns with host government.
- Identifying and training key women leaders by arranging meetings, seminars, V conferences, and including women participation in USAID and other programmes.
- Encouraging governments to increase the number of female military and police personnel.
- Engaging non-traditional allies including religious leaders of all faith as partners.
- Working with governments of countries in conflict, as well as other humanitarian actors, so that they take special measures to protect women and girls from sexual violence.
- Collaborating with other donor countries on efforts to involve women in all phases of peace building. These efforts are directed to respecting women's rights, safe guarding them from sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflicts and recognizing the critical role of women in peace and security.

In line with the above resolution, women of all status and ages should be informed or equipped by the government to make these recommendations work in order to become effective and efficient in governance. Kudos to the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan who not only complies with the above recommendations. But continues to give our women

opportunities to participate in government and affairs of the nation, Olusola (1998).

Nevertheless, there is still room for more women participation in national security and development.

Reasons for low participation of women in national security, good governance and development

The result of the global attention on the need for greater participation by women in national security and good governance is slower due to gender prejudice, poor perception of women's role, lack of financial resources, and institutional insensitivity. These continue to impede women's access to and participation in democracy. Changes in how parliaments operate in developed world reflect the positive impact of the presence of women, such as an improvement in the language and behaviour in parliaments, a different prioritization of issues and policies, gender sensitivity in all aspects of governing, including budgeting and the introduction of new legislation and changes to existing laws. (Blanchfield, 2011)

Women involvement in decision making is giving significant political visibility to women's rights worldwide (UN. Women, 2015). Women also support other women and have been instrumental in placing women issue and concern on to the parliamentary agenda. Government has also eliminated all forms of violence against women. Other factors on gender improvement, according to Odane (2010) include; Natural status of women, Cultural practices; Barrier imposed on women where they are to conform and confuse themselves to male dominance and female observance. They are seen in the home incapable of making sound decisions; violence, thuggery, and intimidation other impediments preventing them patriarchal dominance in political parties, godfatherism, indigeneship, rigging, violence and thuggery, Nature

of political formation. This usually happen when meetings are arranged by male friends and business partners, inadequacy of willing and educated women, some women subject themselves to domestic activities, and the need to prevent broken home. High cost of election, Issue of indignity, violence and threat, funding, poverty, viewed from the perspective of these factors, women face massive resistance from participating in national security, governance and development.

Opportunities for effective women participation in National security, good governance and development

Women's participation in decision making positions can lead to more inclusive and representative governance. It can also bring new insight and approaches to national security, governance and development.

Olukeye (2025) opined that women participation in decision making process in any organization increases trust, promoting gender equality and improved outcomes such as economic growth and development, peacemaking and good governances.

Conclusion

The participation of women in national security, good governance and development according to Adebayo (2024) is crucial for teaching sustainable development, promoting peace and stability ad also ensuring effective decision making. Despite the problems ad barriers that women face their involvement in national development cannot be underestimated. To encourage and promote women's effective participation in national development and security, it is important to address the problems and gaps faced by the women and profer solutions to them. It is also essential to harness the full potential of women to contribute effectively to national security, good governance and development, the crush of which this paper seeks to address. It is argued that the exclusion or minimal women

participation in matters affecting the nation stunts development and induce poverty.

It is high time women are treated as agents of change in peace and security proce4ss, and not as agents of change in peace and security process, and not as victims who are vulnerable. As agent, women play important roles in ensuring peace and security in Nigeria and also play important roles as agents and actors in the peace building processes. They also play significant roles as mothers, educator, mediators, community leaders and peace activists.

Government should start treating women as agents of peace and security by providing fund and capacity building to women at the local, national and international levels in order to acquaint them with peace and security knowledge to fully participate in conflict mediation, prevention and management.

Recommendation

Esther (2019) listed some ways forward to promoting women's participation in peace and security as follows:

- i. Increase in rosters of qualified women to complement a number of capacity building measures for women leadership, mediation, negotiation and election observation to promoting and contributing to peace and security.
- ii. Government support for women's participation in peace and security involvement in all sectors of government levels.
- iii. There is need to provide funding and capacity building to women on peace and security issues at local, states and national level, in order to acquaint them with that will enable their fall participation in conflict prevention, peace management and reconciliation practices United Nations security.

To promote women effective participation in national security, good governance and development, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Provision of inclusive policies that will allow women have rights to participate effectively in nation building.
- ii. Increase representation to encourage women participation effectively in national development.
- iii. Government should address the gaps or barriers created by the society making sure that women are adequately represented in their own affairs.

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