

# FEMINISM, POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND GENDER INEQUALITY IN AFRICA; A COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT OF NIGERIA AND RWANDA

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**Abstract:** *This paper examines the women participation in politics and the challenges women facing in their effort to bridge the gap and minimize the wide gender disparity in politics, and why Rwanda women participation in politics is better up than Nigeria. However, has been known for low participation of women in both elective and appointive positions. As a result, the past and present government and non-governmental organization has made several efforts to increase the level of participation of women in politics in line with the declaration made at the 4<sup>th</sup> world conference women Beijing advocated 30% Affirmative action. However, the Nigeria National gender policy also locally recommended 35% affirmative action instead of the Beijing conference 30% affirmative action. Though unfortunately, in Nigeria participation of women in politics is low despite several efforts invested to improve the level of women participation in politics compare to Rwanda where women won 48% seats of the lower house of parliament beyond what the 4<sup>th</sup> world Beijing conference on women advocated. This paper observed that religious and cultural barriers, stigmatization of women, low level of education, political violence among others are the factors serve as barriers for women full scale participation in Nigeria politics. This paper recommended that political parties must play a significant role to ensure that certain elective positions should be allocated for women and visa-vis there is need to have legislation backing on the issue of allocating elective position for women. Mass grass-root campaign mobilization are highly needed to create awareness on the significant of women participation in politics and representation.*

**Keywords:** *Feminism, participation, Gender, equality, comparative, Assessment.*

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## Introduction

The small central African country of Rwanda is perhaps best known for the 1994 genocide that killed nearly a tenth of its population. More recently, however, Rwanda has also become known for another — this time a propitious — statistic. In October 2003, just nine and a half years after the genocide, women won 48.8% of seats in its lower house of parliament, placing Rwanda first among all nations in terms of women's political representation. Theoreticians and practitioners have long argued that women's ability to make an impact in male- dominated institutions will be limited until they are represented in numbers large enough to have a collective voice, until they reach a "critical mass." Based on political theory and investigation, most activists have settled on 30% as the minimum necessary for critical mass. Under international standards, both men and women should have equal rights and opportunities to everything worldwide, most especially to participate fully in all aspects and at all levels of political processes. Globally, women constitute over half of the world's population and contribute in vital ways to societal development generally. In most societies, women assume some key roles, which are: mother, producer, home-manager, and community organizer, socio- cultural and political activists. Of these many roles mentioned, the last has been engendered by women movement. In line with global trend, Nigerian women constitute nearly half of the population of the country. But

despite the major roles they play with their population, women roles in the society are yet to be given recognition. This is due to some cultural stereotypes, abuse of religion, traditional practices and patriarchal societal structures.

### **Aim of the Study**

This paper seeks a critical review of the importance of data in monitoring women participation in politics in Nigeria vis-a-vis the affirmative declaration. Also examine factors militating against women participation in politics vis-a-vis the socio-religious and economic limitation place upon them, despite the raising advocacy platform to ensure greater inclusion of women in politics.

### **Body of the Study**

Politically, in the pre-colonial era, Nigerian women were an integral part of the political set up of their communities. For instance, in pre-colonial Bomu, women played active roles in the administration of the state, complementing the roles played by male counterparts. Also, Women also played a very significant role in the political history of ancient Zaria. The modern city of Zaria was founded in the first half of the 16th century by a woman called Queen Bakwa Turuku. She had a daughter called Amina who later succeeded her as Queen. Queen Amina was a great and powerful warrior. She built a high wall around Zaria in order to protect the city from invasion and extended the boundaries of her territory beyond and she made Zaria prominent Commercial Centre. The story was not different in ancient Yoruba land, where Oba ruled with the assistance of a number of women referred to as female traditional chiefs. They consisted of eight titled ladies of the highest rank. The significant role played by prominent women such as Moremat of Ife, Emotan of Benin and Omu Okwei of Ossomari, cannot be ignored. Moremi and Emotan were great amazons who displayed wonderful bravery and strength in the politics of Ife and Benin respectively, while Omu Okwei dominated the commercial scene of Ossomari in present day Delta State.

### **Colonial Period**

Colonialism affected Nigerian women adversely as they were denied the franchise. It was also only in the 1950s that women in Southern Nigeria were given the franchise. Three women were appointed into the House of Chiefs, namely Chief (Mrs) Olufunmilayo Ransomekuti (appointed into the Western Nigeria House of Chiefs); Chiefs (Mrs) Margaret Ekpo and Janet Mokelu (both appointed into the Eastern Nigeria House of Chiefs). The women's wings of political parties possessed very little functional relevance, (Kolawale et al, 2013).

### **The Post-Colonial Period**

During this period, Nigerian women began to play very active roles. In 1960, Mrs. Wuraola Esan from Western Nigeria became the first female member of the Federal Parliament. In 1961, Chief (Mrs) Margaret Ekpo contested and won the election, becoming a member of the Eastern Nigeria House of Assembly till 1966, Mrs. Janet N. Mokelu and Miss Ekpo A. Young also contested elections and won, they became members of the Eastern House of Assembly. In northern Nigeria, however, women were still denied the franchise even after independence until 1979 that is, the return of civilian government. As a result of this denial prominent female politicians like Hajia Gambo Sawaba in the North could not vote and be voted for.

Second Republic (1979-1983), saw a little more participation of women in politics. A few Nigerian women won elections into the House of Representatives in the national level and also few women won elections into the State Houses of Assembly respectively. However, during the same period, only two women were appointed Federal Ministers. They were Chief (Mrs) Janet Akinrinade and Mrs Adenike Egun Oyagbola, Minister for Internal Affairs and Minister for National Planning respectively. Mrs. Francesca Yetunde Emmanuel was the only female Permanent Secretary (first in the Federal Ministry of Establishment and later Federal Ministry of Health). A number of women were appointed Commissioners in the states also.

In 1983, Ms Franca Afegbua became the only woman to be elected into the Senate. Also, very few women contested and won elections into the Local Government Councils during this period.

### **Return of Military Rule in December 1983**

With the advent of Buhari led military rule, the first formal quota system was introduced by the Federal Government as regards the appointment of women into governance. He directed that at least one female must be appointed as a member of the Executive Council in every state. All the states complied with this directive; some states even had two or three female members.

In the early 1990s, two women were appointed Deputy Governors. These were Alhaja Latifat Okunu of Lagos State and Mrs. Pamela Sadauki of Kaduna State. There was, however, no female minister, as well as no female member of the defunct Supreme Military Council or the later Armed Forces Ruling Council.

### **Third Republic**

The 1990 transition elections into local governments heralding the Third Republic saw few women emerge as councilors and only one woman emerged as Chairperson of a Local Government Council in the Western part of the country. During the gubernatorial elections, no female governor emerged in any of the states. Only two female Deputy Governors emerged, namely: Alhaja Sinatu Ojikutu of Lagos State and Mrs. Cecilia Ekpenyong of Cross River State.

In the Senatorial election held in 1992, Mrs. Kofo Bucknor Akerele was the only woman who won a seat in the Senate. Very few women won election into the House of Representatives. One of these few was Chief (Mrs) Florence Ita Giwa who won in the Calabar Constituency.

President Babangida's Transitional Council appointed two women in January 1993, namely Mrs. Emily Aiklmhokuede and Mrs. Laraba Dagash. In the Interim National Government of Chief Ernest Shonekan, two female ministers Hi appointed into the cabinet. General Abacha administration also had a number of female ministers at various times in his cabinet, including Chief (Mrs) Onikepo Akande and Ambassador Judith Attah. During the military regime of General Abdulsalami Abubakar (June 9, 1998 - May 29, 1999), there were two women in the Federal Executive Council: Chief (Mrs) Onikepo Akande (Minister for Commerce) and Dr. Laraba Gambo Abdullahi (Minister of Women Affairs), (Kolawale et al, 2013).

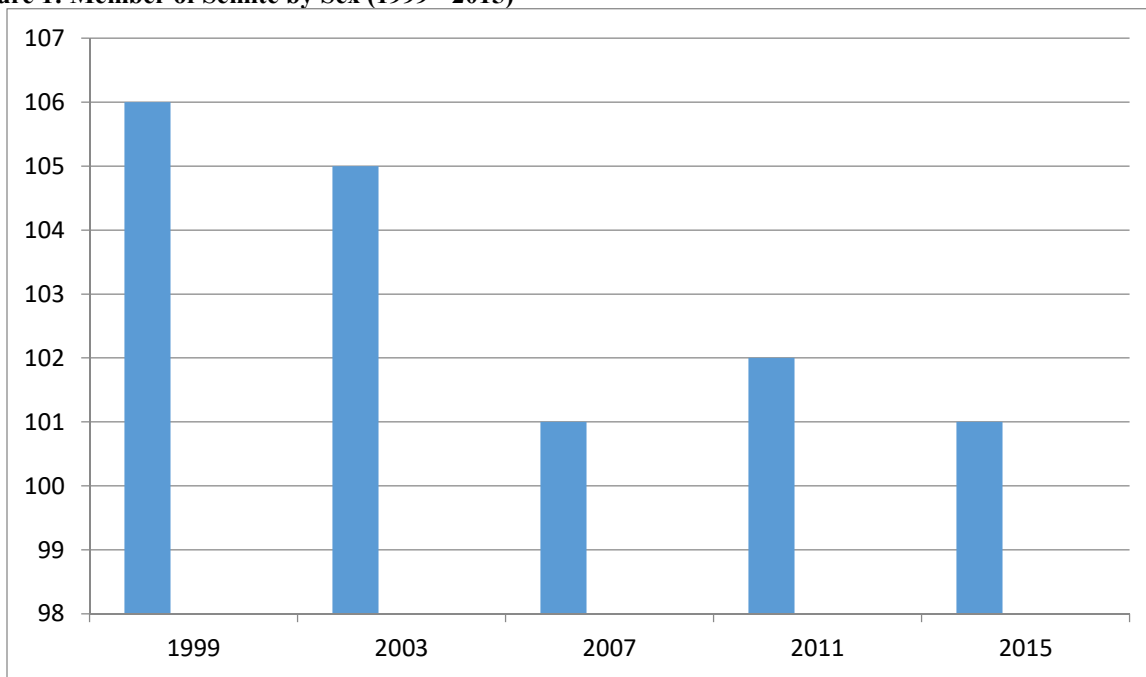
**Re-Introduction of Democracy (The Fourth Republic)**

The return of democracy in May 29, 1999 gave hope for a new dawn in the struggle for more participation of women in Nigeria politics. Democracy is about fair representation of all interest groups in the society and the low representation of women is a violation of the principle of democracy. Despite all efforts put in place, we are yet to meet the 30% and 35% affirmation as contained in Beijing platform for action and National Gender Policy respectively. There have been five administrations between 1999 and 2015. President Obasanjo occupied the office of president between 1999 and 2007, President Umaru Musa Yaradua (2007-2010), President Goodluck Jonathan (2010-2011; 2011-2015) and President Muhammadu Buhari (at present). The position of vice president in Nigeria followed the same trend as that of the president. Four males have dominated the seat since the return of democracy in 1999.

**The Senate and House of Representative**

Since the return of democracy in 1999, the Senate has been dominated by males. In 1999 there were only 3 women out of the 109 members representing 2.8 per cent of the members of the Senate. In 2007 the number increased to 8 (7.3 per cent). However, there was a decrease from 8 women members in 2007 to 7 in 2011 which is 6.4 percent and 8 (7.3 percent) in 2015. See the Figure 1 and 2 and Table 2 below.

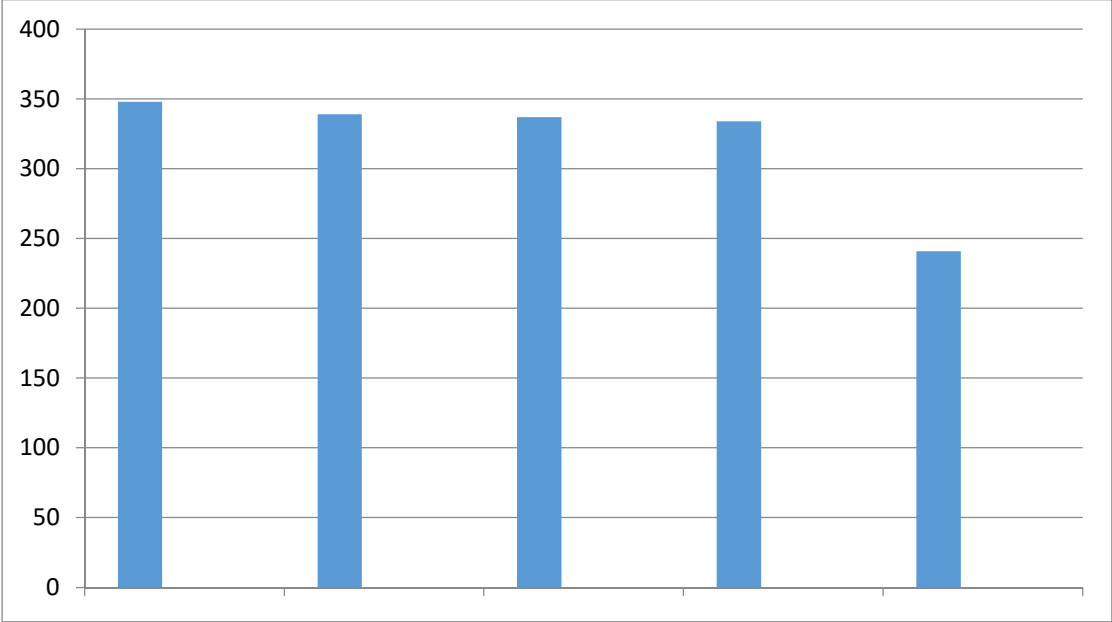
**Figure 1: Member of Semite by Sex (1999 - 2015)**



**Member of House of Representative**

In 1999, the number of women in the House of representative was 12 out of 360 members which was about 3.3 per cent but increased to 21 (5.8 per cent) in 2003 It was 26 (7.2 per cent) in 2011, in 2015 the number of women in the House of representative decrease to 19 (5.3 per cent) out of 360 members. See figure 2 and table 2 below. For other elective positions see table 2.

**Figure 2: Member of House of Representatives by sex (1999 - 2015)**



**Table 2: Elective Position (1999 - 2015)**

Office	1999		2003		2007		2011		2015	
	Seat available	Women	Seat available	Women	Seat available	Women	Seat available	Women	Seat available	Women
President	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Vice	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Senate	109	3(2.8)	109	4(3.7)	109	8(7.3)	109	7(6.4)	1	0
House	360	12(3.3)	360	21(5.8)	360	23(6.4)	360	26(7.2)	109	8(6)
Government	36	0	36	0	36	0	36	0	36	0
Deputy	36	1(2.8)	36	2(5.5)	36	6(16.7)	36	3(8.3)	36	4
State House	990	12(1.2)	990	38(3.8)	990	52(5.3)	990	62(6.3)		
SHA	829	18(2.2)	881	32(3.6)	887	52(5.9)	887			
L.G.A	710	9(1.2)	774	15(1.9)	740	27(3.6)	740			
Councilors	8,810	143(0.02)	6368	267(42)	6368	235(3.7)	6368			

Source: Hundred Years of Nigerian Woman, Nigeria Centenary Country Report on Women, December, 2013.  
Men without Women: An analysis of the 2015 General Election in Nigeria by Nse Etim Akpan

### **CHALLENGES AFFECTING WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS IN NIGERIA**

The challenges facing women are enormous, however, researchers have shown that the under listed are likely responsible for the huge marginalization of Nigerian women in politics.

1. **Patriarchy:** It refers to a society ruled and dominated by men over women, which in turn has given rise to women being looked upon as mere household wives and non-partisans in decision making process in households not to talk of coming out to vie for political positions.
2. **Stigmatization:** following the way politics in Nigeria is played, it is being perceived that it is for individuals that have no regards for human right and are quick at compromising their virtue for indecent gains. Therefore, women aspirants who ventured into politics are looked upon as shameless and promiscuous.
3. **Low level of education:** The low participation of women in education is also part of the shortcomings. The National Adult Literacy Survey, 2010 published by National Bureau of Statistics revealed that the adult literacy rate in English in Nigeria is 50.6 per cent while literacy in any other language is 63.7 per cent (female adult age 15 and above). This explains why most women are least qualified for political offices due to low educational attainment. This is also an effect of colonialism, where men were more favoured than women.
4. **Meeting Schedules:** The time scheduled for caucus meetings to strategize and map out political plans either for the pre or post- election periods are odd and is not conducive for responsible and family women. The slated time are often time which women are expected to take care of their children and family. This method of schedules is viewed as an attempt to side-lining women from engaging in political process.
5. **Financing:** Competing for political positions in Nigerian requires huge financial backup. Most Nigerian women who seek these positions could not afford meeting the financial obligations therein, despite the wavers giving to women aspirants by some of the political parties. And so, they could do little or nothing to outweigh their male counterparts.
6. **Political Violence:** Nigerian elections have always been characterized by one form of violence or another since the return of democracy. Female aspirants of various political parties cannot withstand political violence; therefore, women participation in politics is drastically reduced.
7. **Religious and Cultural barriers:** Both Christianity and Islam do not accord women much role in public life, and same is obtainable in most cultural values, where women are seen culturally as quite submissive and image of virtue. However, they are not to be seen in public domain. And so it is a challenge to women participation in politics, more so, women found in the corridor of politics are not often religious in practice.

Rwanda has become known throughout the world for its high percentage of women in parliament. Women parliamentarians are among a pioneer generation, challenging traditional gender roles, taking on new responsibility, embracing high profile positions, and advocating for their rights. Like pioneers in other fields, their contributions and

achievements are met with heightened scrutiny. For example, an opinion editorial published in the local English-language newspaper on the two year anniversary of the new parliament singled out women for criticism: "Ever since 2003 when the combined houses of Parliament were sworn in, no new legislation that improved the well-being of women in this country has been passed, despite the large female voting block."<sup>38</sup> The author, while admittedly "castigating the ladies" makes no mention of the fact that male members of parliament still a slim majority had not introduced legislation in the same two-year period. Nor did he acknowledge that the women parliamentarians were in the process of drafting a law to combat gender-based violence, or that one of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians' stated objectives is to engender legislation in all sectors, and that they have include protections for women within other laws.

Women parliamentarians hold themselves to a high standard as well. One parliamentarian interviewed for this study was critical of her own approach to children's welfare. "We believe that when women's lives are improved, so are the lives of children ... There are a lot of programs and debates going on for women's issues, but not [specifically] for children ... I don't think we have done enough for children ... we [should] also have some special programs and advocacy for children."

Some of this criticism external and internal is warranted and reflects the desire to have a larger impact on society, but it masks the fact that women's participation in Rwanda's parliament is nascent and that legislation is only the first step in a long process that requires commitment from all branches of government and all sectors of society. Senator Wellars' analysis of the situation makes it clear that though it may be too early to fully measure the impact of women parliamentarians on the broader society, they have already had a dramatic impact on the institution of parliament itself and on its agenda. He explains, "The diversity [having both men and women in parliament] adds value to the quality of the process. I wish you could attend our Plenary Sessions, you would find women are out-performing men. We are there just speaking about our ideas, but women are fighting and sticking to their points . women are very determined and it is really an added value.

#### **Women Parliamentarians and Policy Outcomes Related to Children Legislation and policy priorities**

The primary function of any legislative body is to draft, introduce, and pass legislation. The Parliament of Rwanda's capacity to do this, however, is limited. The vast majority of bills are initiated by Rwanda's executive branch and move from the Cabinet to the Parliament. An early analysis of Parliament asserted that the body was forced into a "largely reactive mode" in the first six-month period after the 2003 elections and the constituting of the new, bicameral body. This reactionary behavior, however, has continued beyond that initial period. As one parliamentarian interviewed for this paper explained, "For the past two years, we were busy with all these laws [from the executive] just falling on our heads ... we were in reaction mode, we were not proactive ... The critics are right, so far there has only been one law initiated in the lower chamber [of Parliament] ... We are always dealing with laws that are popping in from the executive.

The limitations of Parliament can be explained by the dominance of the executive branch in Rwanda, restrictions on the real powers of the Parliament, and especially, limited resources. In 2003, the Parliament's budget amounted to only 0.762% of the total operating budget of the Government of Rwanda.<sup>43</sup> Members of Rwanda's lower house, the Chamber of Deputies, which has the Constitutional mandate to initiate legislation, do not have expertise in drafting legislation and do not have individual staff members assigned to them.

Given these limitations, and the fact that only one piece of legislation has been initiated by the new Parliament since its inception in 2003, the Forum of Women Parliamentarians' is poised to make a major contribution to the strength of parliament as a whole with the introduction of a bill on gender-based violence. The draft law defines gender-based violence, and addresses crimes committed during the genocide as well as the current situation. It identifies various types of gender-based violence perpetrated against women and children and in rare cases, men. It specifically highlights polygamy as a cause of violence and for the first time under Rwandan law, it will provide a legal definition of the rape of an adult woman and proscribe punishment. The draft is based on extensive research in Rwanda, consultation with grassroots women about the type of violence they and their children face, and draws on statutes from other African countries. At the time of writing, it had yet to be introduced in parliament, but is set to be discussed in 2006.

When introduced, the draft law will be a contribution not only in terms of protecting women and children from gender-based violence, but also a strong example of bill initiation behavior. As a representative of the international community explained, Parliament needs to increase its capacity to introduce legislation if it wants to be more than "a rubber

stamp," and introduction of the gender-based violence legislation "by female parliamentarians would be a good model for parliament.

Two other pieces of legislation which date from the transitional, or pre-2003 parliament deserve attention here, both in terms of their impact on children and because of women parliamentarians' roles in shaping them.

A significant legislative achievement was the 1999 Law on Matrimonial Regimes, Liberalities, and Successions, commonly referred to as the law on succession or the law on inheritance.<sup>4</sup> This law established, for the first time, women's right to inherit land. Patricie Hajabakiga, currently Minister of State in the Ministry of Lands, Human Resettlement, and Environmental Protection, was a member of parliament in 1999 during the debate on inheritance. She describes the efforts of women parliamentarians this way:

We had a long, long sensitization campaign ... this was a very big debate. We were asking [male parliamentarians], 'Ok, fine, you think only men can inherit, not girls. But as a man, you have a mother who might lose the property from your father because [your uncles] will take everything away from your mother. Would you like that?' Then we said, 'you are a man ... you have children, you have a daughter who owns property with her husband. Would you like to see that daughter of yours, [if] her husband dies, everything is taken away.' When you personalize things, they tend to understand. When [the issues] remain just in the abstract, women and men become two distinct people, but the moment you personalize it, they do understand.

The success of women parliamentarians working in close concert with the Women's Ministry and women's civil society organizations in advocating for women's right to inherit cannot be understated. Particularly in light of the genocide, which destroyed and scattered families, women's right to inherit land was critical — not just as a matter of women's rights, but because it had a direct impact on issues such as food production and security, the environment, settlement patterns, and the livelihoods of families and children left behind.

A second piece of legislation from the transitional period that women played a significant role in advancing is the 2001 Law on Rights and Protection of the Child Against Violence. This law defines a child as anyone under the age of 18 and lays out both the rights and responsibilities of children. It criminalizes murder, rape, the use of children for "dehumanizing acts," exploitation, neglect and abandonment, and forced or premature (before the age of 21) marriage. Women parliamentarians are acutely aware that these advances in legislation have not immediately translated into gains for average Rwandans (see below for a discussion on the challenges of implementation), and their consultations with constituents have also revealed gaps in the law that they intend to address. Among the policy priorities<sup>48</sup> frequently mentioned by women parliamentarians with regard to children and families are:

- ❖ discriminatory elements in the law on nationality that affect children born of Rwandan mothers and foreign fathers;
- ❖ a decree that says when a child below eighteen years of age is the victim of an accident, he or she is not compensated by the insurance companies as an adult victim of the same kind of accident would be;
- ❖ the inability of the law to recognize "illegitimate" children born of non- formal unions;
- ❖ and the need for enforcement of laws against men who frequent prostitutes, not just the women who are prostitutes;
- ❖ the problem of polygamy, because the children of "second wives" struggle psychologically and economically, are often neglected, and are unable to inherit property, which precludes productive employment and economic security; and
- ❖ an ongoing problem with hospitals that hold new mothers and their babies "hostage," refusing to release them if they are unable to pay for the treatment. The Forum of Women Parliamentarians individual women parliamentarians have pushed these issues to the forefront, introduced them into debate in the Parliament, and is formulating plans to address these issues (and others). Given the desperate needs of children in Rwanda, and despite their best efforts, women parliamentarians bemoan the delays and a lack of progress to date.

### **Legislation versus implementation**

The long-term measure of the effectiveness of women parliamentarians' impact on children and family policy will be improvement in the lives of ordinary Rwandans. This report, while highlighting the successful interventions of women parliamentarians, does not posit that their presence has yet transformed the society. Persistent poverty and a low literacy rate, traditional cultural attitudes about the position of women, and ignorance about the rights of children, among other challenges, prevent the implementation of even that legislation that the women parliamentarians champion.

There is an enormous gap between legislation and implementation in Rwanda. Though the inheritance law was passed nearly seven years ago, for example, many rural Rwandan women have not been able to access their rights. An estimated 60% of Rwandan women enter into non-formal partnerships and, without a legal marriage, have no claim on their husband's land for themselves or their children. Even among those that are married, some don't know what they are entitled to, others are blocked by male relatives or prevailing cultural norms, and still others do not have the resources to pursue their rights in court or with the local authorities.

Practitioners feel the gap between legislation and implementation acutely. The director of an orphanage in Rwanda's capital city conceded that there were some laws that "women parliamentarians played a big role in adopting. Like the law protecting children and women, the inheritance law and others." But he expressed a need for more contact with elected representatives. "We want to work with [parliamentarians] closely. We would like them [women parliamentarians] to be mothers to all Rwandan children while initiating laws and voting on laws. We would like to be meeting them now and then, we are the ones working with children and I believe we can be helpful to them in the responsibility as member of parliaments. It is unfair when they decide on policies without consultations with practitioners. Last year we had a short visit of some members of parliament, we would like to see more visits from them."

The director of a center for street children echoed the concerns of the orphanage director.

"Since we have a good number of women in parliament, I can't really state that children's lives improved; of course there are some new laws that protect children were adopted but in the field we haven't seen anything tangible. We have to make a clear difference between having a law and putting it in action. Laws are there, but still people to abide by them."<sup>51</sup> In addition to challenges with implementation, there are basic challenges with communication and information. For example, when interviewed, the director of this center for street children did not know that the Parliament had established an Ad Hoc Committee to address the problem of street children (discussed below) despite the fact that he works on this issue daily.

Neither the gap between policy and practice nor the gaps in communication between parliamentarians and grassroots practitioners are solely the responsibility of women parliamentarians. But women parliamentarians feel this discrepancy acutely and, in the eyes of many, are increasingly under pressure to account for it.

### **Executive Oversight and Control of National Policy**

Some observers of Rwanda have labeled President Paul Kagame's government authoritarian, while others claim that though the executive is overly strong, Rwanda can be classified as a nascent or developing democracy. Regardless of one's perspective on this question, there is no doubt that the legislative branch is significantly weaker than the executive. This makes parliament's constitutional responsibility to oversee the executive and control national policy a challenging, if not risky, duty. On two occasions in the last year, however, the parliament has aggressively questioned national policy with regard to women and children, and women parliamentarians have led the questioning of government officials in both instances.

In 2005, Christine Nyatanyi, the State Minister in the Ministry of Local Government was called to the Parliament to explain national policy regarding the problem of street children. "During the debate on the issue of street children, women were more participatory [than men] in giving their views, [and making clear] that they were not satisfied with the current policy or strategies to solve the problem of street children." Because of their dissatisfaction with current policy and the status of the problem, the Parliament voted to form an Ad Hoc Committee to investigate the living conditions of these children. The formation of such an Ad Hoc Committee is the parliament's strongest rebuke. The committee conducts investigation, develops a report and delivers it to a plenary session of Parliament at which the relevant Cabinet Minister's presence is required. At the time of writing, the committee is traveling throughout the country, looking into the challenges that face street children, and developing recommendations.

In February 2006, the Minister of Gender and Family Promotion in the Office of the Prime Minister, Valerie Nyirahabineza, was called before the Senate and Chamber of Deputies to provide an explanation of government policy with regard to a host of issues. Women parliamentarians, in particular, pressed her on maternal and infant mortality rates, and "the ongoing problem of keeping women and their newborns in hospitals if the women fail to pay for the treatment."<sup>54</sup> A UN official who has closely followed parliamentarians' activism in terms of government oversight claims that "the most vocal [parliamentary] critics of Ministers and government plans e.g. the proposed public sector reforms, scrutiny of the budget, [and] publicizing the lack of sanction of government officials noted in the ombudsman's report, etc. are women.



Women parliamentarians see a clear advocacy role for themselves within their own government and feel a responsibility to hold the executive accountable on issues of importance to women and children. Recently, for example, the Forum of Women Parliamentarians intervened on the situation of Rwandans expelled from Tanzania who have recently returned to eastern Rwanda. Representatives of the FFRP traveled to the region, met with representatives of the displaced persons, investigated the living conditions of women and children, provided some humanitarian support, and are planning an advocacy strategy. They intend to raise the issues of gender-based violence, the separation of Rwandan wives from their Tanzanian husbands and children, and the disruption of education and health services for children, with the Rwandan government, the United Nations, and international organizations. Ongoing discussions between Rwanda and Tanzania are sensitive, and the international community disputes the categorization of these people as "refugees." The women parliamentarians are working, however, to ensure that in the negotiations about the status and living conditions of these people, the needs and rights of women and children are not forgotten.

### **Conclusion**

Women Participation in Nigerian politics is a topic of importance. Politically, women have been relegated to the background, despite the tremendous effort put forward by government and nongovernmental organizations following the declaration made at the fourth World Conference on women in Beijing, which advocated 30% affirmative action and National Gender Policy (NGP) recommendation of 35% affirmative action for a more inclusive representation of women both in elective and appointive positions. It is worthy to note that Nigerian women are still being marginalized due to the style of leadership inherent in the country.

This report has highlighted women parliamentarians' achievements for children and families in terms of legislation, budgeting, and government oversight, while recognizing that parliament is a weak institution that as yet has limited reach. Rwanda's parliamentary elections were held in October 2003; women parliamentarians have only been represented in large numbers for two and a half years. Moreover, the new bicameral legislature has only been operational for that same period. Given their short tenure and the institution's youth, it is difficult to yet thoroughly assess the impact of women parliamentarians on policy outcomes or to systematically evaluate their effectiveness.

Rwanda', and they are conceiving of themselves and their agencies in the world differently. Increased female political participation in Rwanda represents a paradox in the short term: as their participation has increased, women's ability to influence policy making has decreased. In the long term, however, increased female representation in government could prepare the path for their meaningful participation in a genuine democracy because of a transformation in political subjectivity.

### **Recommendations**

Following the trends and happenings around the political environment in Nigeria, it is becoming clearer that women may never achieve the mandated 30% affirmation as enshrined in the Beijing plan of action except the following recommendations are adhered to:

1. Political parties should create a support network for prospective aspirant by pairing them with established women politicians who will be playing key role as mentors and provide capacity building for young or aspiring female politicians as to enhance and develop them ahead of subsequent elections.
2. Building mass Coalition of women support and advocacy group using NGOs and Grassroots women associations to coordinate support and advocacy for fellow women aspirants.
3. To create enabling environment that allows women to engage meaningfully in decision making process in a sustainable and effective way that is free from violence and harassments of any kind.
4. Establishment of legal funds to assist women politicians to challenge electoral malpractices of any form at all levels of political processes.
5. Introducing quota system at all levels of government and Identifying and engaging relevant stakeholders such as Independent National Electoral Commission and political parties to ensure strict adherence to it.

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