

**The Concept of First Lady  
and Politics in Nigeria**



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# The Concept of First Lady and Politics in Nigeria

Kunle Ajayi



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# Dedication

To my mother, Juliana





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# Acronyms

AD	Alliance for Democracy
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ANPP	All Nigerian People's Party
AU	African Union
BLP	Better Life (for Rural Women) Programme
CA	Constituent Assembly
CBAN	Community-based Advocacy Network
CCT	Child Care Trust
CDC	Constitution Drafting Committee
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
COWAD	Committee on Women and Development
COWAN	Country Women Association of Nigeria
DWA	Division for the Advancement of Women
EPI	Expanded Programme on Immunization
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationists
FEAP	Family Economic Advancement Programme
FME	Federal Ministry of Education
FOS	Federal Office of Statistics
FRN	Federal Republic of Nigeria
FSP	Family Support Programme
HND	Higher national Diploma
IDD	Iodine Deficiency Disorder
INSTRANW	International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women
IPSA	International Political Science Association
JAMB	Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board
NAFDAC	National Agency for Food and Drugs Administration Control
NAPEP	National Poverty Eradication Programme
NAWL	National Association of Women Lawyers

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NAWOJ	National Association of Women Journalists
NCWS	National Council of Women's Societies
NDE	National Directorate of Employment
NESG	Nigerian Economic Summit Group
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NPC	National Population Commission
NPSA	Nigerian Political Science Association
NSO	National Security Organisation
NTA	Nigerian Television Authority
OND	Ordinary National Diploma
ORT	Oral Re-hydration Therapy
PDP	Peoples Democratic Party
PTA	Parent Teachers Association
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SMC	Supreme Military Council
SSCE	Senior Secondary School Certificate
STDs	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNPP	United Nigeria People's Party
VVF	Vasico Vaginal Fistula
WIN	Women in Nigeria
WORDOC	Women Research and Documentation Centre
WOTCLEF	Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation
WRAPA	Women Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative

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## Preface

The First Lady's office has had a revolutionary transformation in Nigerian politics since Babangida's military presidency. Successive first ladies, particularly Maryam Babangida, Maryam Abacha and Stella Obasanjo, have jettisoned the traditional inactiveness hitherto associated with the office to play a vanguard role in feminist advocacies. These first ladies have utilized their offices and pet projects as gender-mainstreaming platforms to negotiate the corridor of power for women. The impetus for this study was propelled by the need to evaluate the value of the phenomena of the transformed First Lady's office and the gap-closing interventionist programmes geared towards mitigating women's marginalization and their oppression in politics in Nigeria.

In spite of the first ladies' efforts, sexism remains a major characteristic of the Nigerian government and politics. The study, through a countrywide probabilistic field survey, has discovered that the gender mainstreaming and feminine empowerment potentials and capabilities of the first ladies have been weakened by two similar and complementary forces. One is the inordinate ambition of the first ladies' husbands to remain in power. The second is that as long as their husbands remain in power, they too will continue to enjoy the admirable power, influence, fame and pecuniary gains accruing from the First Lady's office.

The study equally brings to the fore the fact that rationalizations for female marginality in politics transcend the traditional stereotype biases against women. Women also need to contend with intra-gender, same-sex marginality, implying women's marginalization by women. Common-gender, same-sex biases and discrimination, therefore, manifest the self-endangering nature of Nigerian women, and indeed, the paradox of gender inclusion and gender justice in Nigeria's politics.



# Chapter One

## Situating Women's Marginality in Nigeria

Women's marginality has become a global agenda in the last two decades, to the extent that the United Nations declared a Decade for Women and held conferences to discuss women and sexism. Gender asymmetry in political, social and economic opportunities has also provoked a series of gender studies and theories for analytical explanations. Women and gender equality advocacies have consistently been agitating for the expansion of women's frontiers of social and political relevance. Gender inequality has a universal application, as it is not limited to the developing world alone. The difference is in relation to the degree of relegation. And women, like all other minority and marginalized groups who feel cheated, are desperately seeking equality in ways through reverse gender discrimination (Kolawole 1992:15). Women have particularly advocated gender equality or at least the limiting of discrimination against women in politics. However, the irony of the degree of women's participation in politics is that women themselves are not agreed on the extent of their right to participate. For instance, when Governor Dukakis, as the Democratic Party's candidate in the 1992 United States' presidential election, proposed a female Vice-presidential candidate as a means of appealing for female support and their votes, he was met with stiff opposition, especially from women (ibid).

Until recently, post-colonial Nigeria had no tradition of involving women in governance. There were gender disparities in political office holding, as women were virtually left out of the mainstream of development policies. Besides, wives of chief executives were hitherto passive observers of the unfolding political process. For instance, the wife of Tafawa Balewa, the First Republic's Prime Minister (1960-1966), was virtually unknown as there was no report of her public appearance. Likewise, the wives of President Shehu Shagari (1979-1983), General Olusegun Obasanjo (Head of State, 1976-1979), and General Muhammadu Buhari (Head of State, 1983-1985) were not known to have performed any official or ceremonial duties as first ladies.

## Women Profile and Marginality

Gender analysis of national and global populations shows that women constitute more than half of these populations (Egunjobi 2005:8). The 1991 census figures put Nigeria's population at 88.5 million people. Women accounted for 43.96 million or 49.6 per cent of the figures, while men were 44.54 million or 50.4 per cent (Egunjobi 2005:35). Analysis of the figures equally revealed that the population of women in some states was higher than that of men. For instance, there were more women in Abia, Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Benue, Delta, Enugu, Kebbi, Ogun, Osun and Sokoto States. Numbers of men and women were nearly at par in Cross River, Edo, Jigawa, Katstina and Oyo States. In all, according to the 1991 census, the population of men was higher than that of women by only 574,561 or 0.8 per cent.

Since the 1991 census, women in Nigeria have consistently maintained almost equal numbers with men. In the 1999 estimates, for instance, women made up 49.9 per cent of the 111.21 million population of the country (NESG 2000:73). Analysis by sex of the figures also shows that females over fifteen years of age constitute 22 million or 50 per cent of the overall women population, while women were responsible for over 70 per cent of the production of the nation's food supply (Ojuolape 2000:6), having constituted 52 per cent of the agricultural labour force (Political Bureau 1987:752). Ordinarily, a gender-balanced population is expected to be accompanied by a correspondingly gender-blind relationship with equitable outcomes. This has not been the case in Nigeria. Women have been victims of gender asymmetry in all sectors of the polity.

In the area of education, over 61 per cent of the female population is illiterate. The proportion of women enrolling at all levels of schooling is currently below 50 per cent. At primary and secondary school levels, females account for 44 per cent and 43 per cent of enrolments respectively, while they have 27 per cent of places in universities and 40 per cent in polytechnics and colleges of education (Ojuolape op cit: 7).

Besides an imbalance in school enrolment, men also dominate in specific courses and programmes in tertiary institutions. In the nation's polytechnics, for instance, males dominate courses such as accountancy, architecture, banking and finance, statistics, metallurgical technology, marketing and estate management. In accounting, out of the 10,801 students admitted in the 1993/94 session for the Ordinary National Diploma (OND) programme, only 3,543 were women, which represented 32.8 per cent of the total. Similarly, out of the 99 students admitted for the Higher National Diploma (HND), six were women, also representing 6.5



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per cent of the total intake. Overall, according to the National Board for Technical Education, women accounted for 23,499 and 8,275 of the 69,156 and 27,004 admission placements for the OND and HND programmes respectively throughout the country in the 1993/94 session (FOS 1996:181). Gender education statistics brings out three significant revelations. First, the figures imply that women's enrolment is lower than that of men at all levels. The second is that admission to the various programmes and courses in tertiary institutions is discriminatory and contemptuous of women and therefore skewed in favour of the male gender. The third is that the dominating influence of men in science and engineering-based courses and the preponderance of women in some non-science/technology oriented courses such as biology and zoology, which are regarded as less mentally tasking, merely smacks of gender stereotyping in terms of the educational opportunities and role responsibilities for women.

In the agricultural sector, despite the fact that women account for over 70 per cent of production, they are denied access to resources available in the agricultural sector such as credit facilities, farm inputs and implements. Only 20 per cent of these resources are made accessible to women (Ojuolape 2001:4). In the industrial sector, the food processing industry employs about 6 per cent of the nation's organized private sector. Only 11 per cent of those employed in the sub-sector are women (FOS 1994:210), a statistics that continues to decrease as a result of advancement in food processing technology in the country. However, the employment picture is gloomier for women on overall aggregates for the industrial sector. This is in the sense that, of the total of 27,746 industrial workers in the country, women account for 3,857 or 13.9 per cent while the rest are men (ibid:210-212). Women do not fare better in the formal sector. Only 18 per cent of the sector's workers are women who are mainly concentrated in the lower levels of the service such as clerical and secretarial staff. Available statistics show that men dominate the top management positions of public establishments, including corporations, directorates, parastatals and universities. Of the 1,009 top management seats in seventeen identified institutions in the country, including universities, ministries, commissions, public corporations and parastatals, women account for 105 or 10.4 per cent while the rest are men (Ebigbola and Renne 2000:161-162).

Similarly, women's marginality is visible in academic employment in the universities. Ironically, according to statistics, sexism in the education sector is not only related to a low share of school enrolment. Academic positions in universities have become the exclusive preserve of men. Of the 12,912 positions ranging from assistant lecturers and junior research fellows to professors, 11,381 were held by men while women held just 1,531 (FME 1996:199; Ebigbola and

Renne *ibid*:158-160). Going by institutional analysis, sexism in academic staff appointment is worse in some universities. For instance, in universities in Zaria, Kano, Sokoto, Owerri, Yola, Minna, Abia, Ogbomosho, Enugu and Lagos (Lagos State University), women account for zero per cent of the professorial and associate professorship positions (*ibid*). This gender gap in the academic staff constitution of the universities cannot but have serious implications for gender education policies. Professors are automatic members of the Senate of universities which is the highest academic policy-making body, including deciding academic requirements and quotas for admission, among other things. It implies therefore that since women are not represented in this critical body, there is the tendency that women's considerations in admission policies may not be well advanced in the decision-making forum and therefore, decision outcomes are predictably male-gendered. Nevertheless, gender bias in employment in the education sector is not limited to universities. At the secondary school level, women suffer the same plight. The percentage of women teachers in the sub-sector has consistently been about half of the population of male teachers. Specifically, according to the Federal Office of Statistics, in 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993 and 1994, female teachers were respectively 46,074; 44,936; 49,427; 52,363 and 54,949 while men accounted for 95,303; 86,535; 98,103; 99,359 and 97,647 for the corresponding years (Adedokun 2000:156).

The health sector also has gender biases. Nigerian women's health is poor. Maternal mortality is high with a fatality ratio of 800 to 1,500 mothers dying for every 100,000 births. Overall, the lifetime risk of Nigerian women during pregnancy and childbirth complications is about 1 in 200 (Ojuolape 2001:4). That is, at least 50 cases of fatality can be recorded per 1,000 women undergoing labour. In addition to ante-natal and post-natal fatalities, Nigerian women have been victims of unsafe abortions arising from unwanted pregnancies. They are also victims of sexual violence including rapes as well as reported and unreported cases of sexual harassment and abuse. The outcome of all this is, therefore, that Nigerian women are exposed to risks on all fronts. In the military sector, women's marginality is also pronounced. The military is supposed to be a symbol of national unity and therefore should not be an institution characterized by sexism. Although Nigerian women are enlisted in the military, the combatant arm of the armed forces has been the exclusive preserve of men, that is, the arm is exclusive of women (Political Bureau *op cit*:152). In general, the top hierarchy of the Armed Forces has been firmly dominated by men. This situation has therefore ensured the reduction of the active participation of women in the nation's decision-making centres, particularly under military regimes, which ruled the nation for about three decades. There were no women representatives in the varied military juntas'

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ruling councils, which were the regimes' highest decision-making organs. This was despite the fact that there was a female General in the army. The situation in the police and other para-military forces is no better for women. There has never been a female Inspector-General of Police, just as women have also been denied the leadership of other armed forces.

With regard to history and literature, women have been denied a rightful place (Zezeza 1999:81-111; Amadiume 1987). History documents the past and present, and provides insight into the future. It is concerned with all dimensions of human activities: political, social, economic, cultural, traditional, technological and scientific. History is therefore concerned with the reality of human existence, but it is skewed, since it leaves out the role of women in society. As Zezeza (ibid:82) observes, the authors of African history texts are predominantly male and sexist, in so far as their texts play down the important roles that women have played in all aspects of African history. He argues further that in more extreme cases women are not even mentioned at all, or if they are, they are discussed in stereotypical reproductive roles as wives and mothers. According to him, general and regional African history texts such as *A History of Africa* (Tidy and Leeming 1981); *Southern Africa Since 1800* (Denoon and Nyeko 1972); and *A History of the Mahgreb* (Abun-Nasr 1975) either failed to document the roles of women or have very little to say about them.

Literature, in its own case, is an important means of understanding and interpreting aspects of society such as politics, religion, social conflicts, class struggle, relationships between men and women, and the human condition (Ezeigbo 2004:175). Literature is about the perception and creation of realism. It at times phantoms imagery and attempts to present imagery as reality. Hence, literature, in the opinion of Fischer, 'is born of reality and acts back upon reality' (ibid). In the contention of Ezeigbo (ibid), there is nowhere gender issues are more graphically represented than in literature. The same can also be asserted about history. Representation of the Nigerian reality, both in terms of history and literature has been for a long time, until lately, from the perspective of male publicists and authors. Works on the two disciplines are gendered to the extent that women are given stereotyped roles and their characters portrayed in a negative manner. As Ezeigbo observed, Nigerian writers such as Ekwensi, Soyinka and Achebe mirrored women's roles in their literary works as unwholesome. Specifically, Ezeigbo accuses Ekwensi of sexism in his *Jagua Nana* (1961). Ekwensi presents the heroine of the work, Jagua Nana, as a prostitute. In the same manner, Soyinka presents Simi in *The Interpreters* (1965) as a courtesan and *femme fatale*, a woman whose lovers were often trailed by despair and calamities. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Arrow of God* (1964),

and Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine* (1966) all have stereotypical portrayals of Nigerian women. Largely, the male-authored works have portrayed Nigerian women as bad characters, and therefore did not elevate them to a position that qualified them for a worthy place in Nigerian history.

Existing literature has not adequately manifested the role and relevance of women in the nation's socio-economic and political struggles and development. The role of such women as Moremi of Ife and the *Erelus* (women in charge of a palace shrine called *Iledi*), *Oloris* (the King's wives; also called *Eyesorun* or *Eyelori*), *Ayabas* (wives of princes who support *Oloris* in the palace), *Iyalodes* (women in charge of cultural functions involving the King in particular and the town in general), *Yeye Oba* (the King's mother), *Iyalojas* (heads of market women) in prominent Yoruba traditional communities, including Oyo, Ife, Ede and other Yoruba towns and the role of Madam Amina in the Hausa-Fulani emirate were all denied adequate documentation for acknowledgement despite the fact that these women played significant roles in the political administration of their towns and in the management of intra- and inter-community conflicts.

Gender insensitivity and marginalization are also very pronounced in the economic sector. The economic situation of the Nigerian women is pathetic. Women constitute 70 per cent of the poor (NTA 2004), while female unemployment in the rural areas is 10 per cent compared to 7 per cent for men. In the urban areas, male and female unemployment is respectively 6.3 per cent and 3.5 per cent (Sokenu 2004:32). Women are very vulnerable to harsh economic situations for several reasons. First, their low level of education essentially determines how far they can go and in what sector of the economy they can operate. The high level of illiteracy among them precludes their entry into the formal sector of the economy (Oyekanmi 2004:52). The majority of the Nigerian working women are therefore in the informal sector of the labour market/economy, which constitutes such activities as trading, dyeing, hawking, crafts and other small-scale home industry and services. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), women constitute about 70 per cent of the labour force in the informal sector in Nigeria (Dauda 2004:81). This observation cannot be considered an exaggeration. This is because, while men accounted for 1,172,164 (67%) of the total workforce of 1,750,638 in the professional/technical and related works sector, women could only boast of 578,474 or 33 per cent. The statistics is more woeful in the senior administrative/managerial and related works sector. While men recorded 78 per cent of the workforce, women had just 22 per cent. However, women achieve their best results in the sales (trading) sector, where women have a share of 65 per cent while men have 35 per cent (Yesufu 2000:156).

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Even, besides their lack of formal education, the need for childcare denies most Nigerian women the opportunity for white-collar jobs in the formal sector. Some of the educated few are even disallowed by their spouses to work at all, thereby confining them to being full-time housewives, which consequently make them to be completely economically dependent on their husbands who may at the end of the day fail to satisfy their material needs. Oyekanmi (op cit 52) observes that economic progress for women in the informal sector is limited by constraints such as low capital investment, low profit margins and, invariably, low incomes. In a way, the Nigerian economic sector has not provided a gender-neutral situation for equal gender economic empowerment. Instead, the situation has marginalized women and thereby promoted their pauperization.

The religious sphere of the Nigerian polity also provides the paradox of gender equality. Nigeria is believed to be the most religious nation in the world (Ekundayo 2004:8). Ordinarily, every gender should be equal before God. The two prominent religions in the country, Christianity and Islam, worship God. The two religions, in practice, profess gender bias and inequality in their conducts. In both religions, women at any point in time constitute at least 70 per cent of the congregation. Yet, in the Anglican Communion, for instance, women have not been ordained as reverends, and by implication, no woman bishop has been ordained in the Anglican fold. The situation in the Catholic Church is no better. Despite the fact that women are ordained by the Catholic as Sisters, none of them can lead church services or conduct Holy Communion. They are, therefore, not only denied the right to marital life, but also denied relevance in the church administration. Islam promotes greater biases and prejudices against women in Nigeria. Female Muslims are permanently confined to the background in the mosque. They are not supposed to be heard. In many cases, particularly in northern Nigeria, Muslim women are kept in *purdah*, a practice which precludes such women from exposing themselves physically, and thereby put them under what can be called 'religious house arrest'. Such women are therefore denied rights of movement and association. This is in addition to the fact that Muslim women are denied leadership rights in the mosques as they cannot become the imam of any mosque. The overall implication of the background status of women in the religious sector is that the religions are not gender-neutral, as they promote religious violence on the women and embrace sexist exclusion and discrimination.

Lastly is the area of politics. There is no other sector in Nigeria where women are more marginalized and discriminated against than in politics. Politics provides the arena where policy-making on all issues, including social and economic policies, is decided. Policy-makers have intrinsic interests which may

pertain to individuals or groups but which are projected as national policies or national interests. The implication is that the individuals or elite who constitute the policy-making forum can always project the interests of whomever or whichever interest groups they represent.

The marginalization of Nigerian women in politics and policy-making is traced to the colonial administration, which seemed to have had a penchant for gender inequality through deliberate colonial policies which were at no time gender-inclusive. Available records have shown that there were no women representations in the colonial political institutions in the country, which included the Native Authorities, colonial legislatures and the executive. The Native Authority system, which was predominantly organised around traditional rulers, certainly implied that women had no role to play in the system.

Despite the lack of gender consciousness in colonial policies, which thereby provided a historical legacy for gender discrimination in the country, women were not worn down as they played significant roles in the anti-colonial nationalist activities. For instance, the Aba Women Riot of 1939 was meant to resist colonial taxation, while other women like Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti participated in conferences geared towards achieving independence for the country. Political activists such as Mrs Gambo Sawaba, Mrs Folake Solanke, Mrs Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, and Mrs Adekogbe mobilized other women in the struggle for independence. Yet, at the attainment of independence, women were marginalized and deprived of the proceeds of independence, in terms of any meaningful participation in the political administration of, and policy-making for, the country. The independence regime failed to jettison the gendered legacy inherited from the colonial administrators.

However, beyond the immediate independence era, the post-independence period has not fared well for the Nigerian women. Successive regimes have deliberately engaged in the politics of gender exclusion and political sexism. The representation of women, who constitute about 50 per cent of the population, in elective positions and by implication in power, has discriminatorily ranged between zero and four per cent. Elective positions have become the exclusive preserve of Nigerian men. Consequently, the nation has never produced either a female president or prime minister (First Republic), senate president, speaker of the House of Representatives, or state governor since independence under both military and civilian regimes. Women have also not been treated well in appointed positions. Nigerian women have only been given token appointments in the ministries at both federal and state levels. For instance, out of the 49 federal ministers in 1999, only 6 (12.2%) were women. This implies that women were minimally included in governance and that women are therefore

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being under-utilized in politics and decision-making processes. Besides being denied elective and appointed positions, women are also being deprived of opportunities to stand for election because of the problem of indigeneity. Most married women with elective political inclinations have no citizenship. In Nigeria, elections are done on the basis of state of origin. Women politicians who marry men from a different state suffer double deprivation in that they are often asked to go back to their states of birth. Politicians in their states of birth will in turn request these women to go back and contest in their husbands' states. The issues of indigeneity and citizenship merely compound the problems of the Nigerian women who, because of these two additional limitations, not only suffer marginality but are also subjected to class exclusion.

Lastly is the problem of gendered laws that women have to contend with. Many of the existing statutes are not women-friendly and therefore do not promote equal opportunities and rights for both sexes. For instance, *Sharia* law is discriminatory against women under Islamic law in some states of northern Nigeria; some women were sentenced to death by stoning for adultery (WRAPA 2002:19), while the men who jointly committed the offence with the women were set free. These kinds of judgment, therefore, cause *Sharia* law to be perceived as a questionable legal process, which does not create room for equal gender justice. The Land Use Decree of 1978 is another obnoxious law which violates gender justice. The Decree guarantees men access to land and how it can be managed and disposed of, while women are denied rights of possession of, and decision-making on, family land. Women only have access to the land through cultivation but cannot decide whether to sell the land or not. Also, unlike men, they cannot use the land as collateral to acquire a bank loan.

Of a much greater concern are the gender gaps in the 1999 constitution. First, it is worthy to note that the history of successive constitutions in Nigeria (both in terms of engineering and content) has been a history of exclusion, discrimination and imposition (OSIWA 2003:56). The validity of this assertion extends right from the colonial era to date. Women were never involved by the colonial administrators in the making of colonial constitutions pioneered by Governor Clifford in 1922. The women's plight was not limited to exclusion from participation in constitution making; they were also denied popular participation in the colonial election process as they were not allowed to vote. The 1999 constitution maintained this tradition of women's marginality. The Abdusalami Abubarkar regime's 26-member Provision Ruling Council, which promulgated the draft constitution into law, did not have a woman representative. It is therefore not a surprise that the constitution was written in gendered language. For instance, a critical observation indicates that the word 'he' appears about 235 times

in the constitution. The overall implication is that the instrument is gender biased. Another festering omission in the statute book is the issue of citizenship/indigenous rights. Sections 25 and 26 of the constitution clarify who is a Nigerian and how Nigerian citizenship can be acquired through either birth or registration. Section 26 (a) further provides that 'any woman who is or has been married to a citizen of Nigeria' is a citizen (FRN 1999). The problem is that the constitution has failed to make similar provisions for foreigners who have married Nigerian women. The danger of this omission is that it has continued to cause untold hardships for the stability of many marriages (ibid). Likewise, as explained earlier, women who married into different states have been left in a confused conundrum, as the constitution does not categorically pin down their citizenship's right to either of the two states that such women have affiliation by birth and marriage. Male politicians have capitalized on this lapse to deny women politicians of their rights and opportunities.

The overall observation arising from the above analyses is that women's marginality in Nigeria is not restricted to any particular sphere of society, as discrimination cuts across the social, cultural, religious, economic, administrative, educational and political spectra.

### **Gender Power Relations**

The framework within which gender is defined is different from sex. Sex denotes biologically and in-born determined differences between men and women on the basis of reproductive organs. Man is referred to as male because he has a male sex organ, while the woman takes on the female title because she has a female sex organ. On the other hand, gender is a social relation that is not congenially determined in the same way as sex. Gender describes the socio-economic and cultural values, ideas and beliefs which a society attaches to biological differences between men and women (Munguti *et al* 2002:18). Gender is the societal and traditional role construction from the sexes. In the views of Agomo (2004: 92), gender is not in-born but imposed by society. In addition, she further submits that it is learned and nurtured as part of the socialization process. In essence, gender is a societal expectation of the sexes' role reproduced and transmitted over time through a process of socialization. The different conceptualizations of gender and sex therefore imply that they cannot be interchangeably used as has been erroneously done in some quarters. The definition of gender has been accepted as not natural, but of having societal origin. Gender-biased discrimination is therefore considered as a product of social role differentiation.



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Gender balance advocates and women feminists have advanced some theories upon which gender inequality and marginalization are grounded in different societies. The theories also manifest the forces and factors which act as the determinants of sexism and gender power relations in varied societies. Such theoretical justifications are usually hinged on such deterministic grounds as biology and physiology, culture, tradition, materials and modernization. The meeting point of these theoretical analyses is the fact that women are victims of what Young (2006:5-14) called 'the five faces of oppression', which he listed as exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence. Besides these feminist theses however, some other factors have been identified as additional determining criteria of gender power relations in Nigeria. First, the Political Bureau (1987:152-53), a body set up by the Federal Military Government of President Ibrahim Babangida in 1986 to engineer a new political future for the country and thereby establish a viable and enduring people-oriented political system devoid of perennial disruptions, noted in its final report that women constitute an oppressed group in the country. It acknowledged that women were largely excluded from public affairs management and the industrial sector.

Gender bias in the industrial sector is justified on the assumption that women lack the necessary skills to take up such remunerative employment available in the sector (ibid). Consequently, women are consigned to such career professions as teaching, nursing, trading and rural farming, which are mainly considered as women's jobs. Other factors that have been advanced as militating against the active participation of women in public affairs include poverty, the expensive nature of Nigerian politics, low political culture and poor political socialization, woman's personality and psychological factors, non-female friendly political environment and the lack of political godfathers.

Lack of economic power is a major obstacle to active and significant participation by women in politics and governance. As enunciated earlier, Nigerian women are very poor. In fact, they constitute more than 70 per cent of the poor people in Nigeria. The high figure merely reflects the high level of unemployment among women in the country. Unemployment among females out-numbers that of males in both urban and rural areas. In the urban areas, as pointed out earlier, it is 10 per cent to males' 7 per cent and 6.3 per cent to 3 per cent respectively in the rural areas.

Poverty implies that women have no economic power to pursue political power. The expensive nature of Nigerian politics makes economic power mandatory to be able to attain electoral success. The name of the political game is money. Besides the huge sum of money required for political campaigns including providing posters, billboards, handbills, vests and caps, the electorate

needs to be bribed with either cash or consumable items such as rice, salt, sugar and fuel (petrol, diesel and kerosene). Contestants also have to pay nomination fees to their parties. For instance, each presidential candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP) in the 2003 election was made to pay a sum of N10 million (about US\$78,000) and N5 million (about US\$39,000) respectively (Nwankwo 2002:104). The United Nigeria People's Party (UNPP) also levied its presidential, gubernatorial and senatorial candidates N3m (about US\$23,400), N1 million (about US\$7,800) and N250,000 (about US\$1950) respectively (Oladipo 2002:12). Electoral politics is considered as a kind of economic or political commerce in which votes must be exchanged for money. In many cases, the electorates usually decide to sell their votes because after the elections, politicians no longer reckon with them; so, they will be neglected and electoral promises will become mere campaign utterances.

The unnecessary prolongation of electoral transitions also contributes to the expensive nature of politics in the country. This is because the longer the transitional period, the more expenses for politicians as they need to continuously organise political rallies and campaign for electoral support until the election has been held. For instance, the Babangida regime's transitional programme lasted eight years, 1985-1993; and at the end of the day, it ended in disaster as the result of the final election of the programme was annulled. Thus, the termination of the regime itself was followed by a spate of political instability and crisis. The succeeding Abacha regime started a new political transition programme all over again, implying that all the money spent on political campaigns and arrangements for the elections had been wasted. In a similar vein, the race for the 2007 elections actually started almost as soon as the 2003 elections had been concluded. Not many women are financially empowered to engage in such long-drawn political contests. As a female member of the House of Representatives, Iquo Inayang Minimah (2003:45) observes, electoral politics is not a venture you can get involved in with somebody else's money. She believes that most men do not support their wives in politics because of this fact. However, it could be added that they may not want to invest in politics because of the uncertain character of the nation's politics, whereby the military can abruptly terminate any activities. It is therefore reasonable to submit that more women will become more involved in politics when they are economically empowered.

The weak financial position of women is compounded by their lack of access to mentors and godfathers. Political mentors and godfathers are those who help to support, promote, give inside information, nominate and cover-up the shortcomings of aspirants to high positions (Achunine 2004:19). Godfathers are the political 'tin gods' for a political contestant otherwise seen as the godson of

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the former. The godson becomes sacred and untouchable as long as the iron pillar, the godfather, is beside the contestant. The godfather endorses and blesses the godson, and invariably ensures the political victory of the godson at all costs. In Nigeria as elsewhere in the world, as Achunine (ibid) observes, clansmen, political and religious groups, powerful social catalysts, old student bodies as well as business magnates sponsor qualified people to positions of importance and authority. For instance, Governor Chris Ngige of Anambra State had Chief Chris Uba, a young billionaire as his godfather, while the former governor of Oyo State, Alhaji Rashidi Ladoja, claimed political victory in the 2003 elections on the crest of his political godfather, Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu. The effect of having a sponsoring godfather and mentor is so intimidating that Harrigan had to submit that 'if one is able to find a mentor, one's chance of winning the game of corporate politics is multiplied by one hundred fold' (ibid, 19-20). The aspirants have to do the bidding of the godfathers while in office, and since such sponsorships are investments, the aspirants have to pay this back by way of awarding unlimited contracts to the mentors and appointing the latter's candidates to political offices. With this high price, most women who believe they cannot meet the conditions, more often, for reasons of self-dignity, either lose out or withdraw from electoral politics. Those women who could afford to weather the storm are stigmatized and called dirty names such as 'shameless flirts' and 'dissenting daughters'.

The perception of women's personality by men is another problem working against women's aspiration for political leadership and positive involvement in policy-making. Woman's personality is negatively perceived by most men and even many women alike. Most women in top management positions are perceived as very tough, uncompromising and therefore, regarded as 'iron ladies' who are not easily persuaded or convinced on issues. They do not compromise on the issue of discipline. Many male chauvinists cannot tolerate tough women, and consequently, such men can also not take them as wives or allow them to assume leadership positions above them. In essence, women who are assertive and have traits that are considered 'male' are not liked in society. In such circumstances, the agitation for gender equality and justice become a non-issue. In this type of situation, such gender-biased men cannot vote women into political offices. The non-female-friendly character of party competition is another bane of the extent to which women can go in participatory politics. The political terrain is dirty, murky and insecure. Mudslinging and blackmail characterize competitive politics in Nigeria. Besides, political meetings often extend into the dead of night. Most women cannot stay till that long, partly because of domestic responsibilities. This means that such women will be excluded from many fo-

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rooms at which critical decisions are taken, including issues like nominations or appointments to particular positions. Those women that can afford to stay for meetings until the early hours of the morning are stigmatized as matrimonially irresponsible and morally corrupt. The reality is that only single women and divorcees can participate in such late-night meetings. Yet, the Nigerian culture has no respect for either single women or divorcees.

Also important is the issue of security in the political environment. Besides insecurity arising from attending late-night political meetings, political contestants are exposed to the danger of being assassinated or being bathed with acid by political opponents in the same party or rival parties. Politicians largely see competitive politics as a do-or-die game, in which they must win at all costs, even at the expense of their opponents, and in which the end justifies the means. The insecure environment, therefore, is scary and intimidating to most women who would otherwise have taken active part in politics. The rough and uneven political playing field invariably presents to women a forum of unequal opportunities with men in politics.

### **Gender Mainstreaming Interventions**

The age-long plight suffered by women in terms of stereotyped biases, discriminatory policies and suppression by the masculine gender has recently been brought to national and international focus through gender advocacies and gender-mainstreaming interventions. Gender advocacies have championed the formation of women's organizations such as the National Council of Women's Societies (NCWS), International Federation of Women Lawyers, National Association of Women Lawyers (NAWL), National Association for Women Engineers, Forum for African Women Educationists (FAWE), Women in Nigeria (WIN), National Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ) and National Association of Women Accountants, to mention a few. All these are gender non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The associations are in some way engaged in gender awareness campaigns through conferences, seminars, workshops, meetings with relevant groups such as parliamentary committees on women affairs, and publications in journals, magazines and newspapers.

Feminist advocates have also influenced discourses in the conferences of relevant professional associations to include the creation of special sessions for feminine issues. For instance, the June 2004 Annual Conference of Political Science Association (NPSA) held in Abuja had a round table on 'Women in Politics' and one panel session devoted to the sub-theme titled 'Civil Society Organisations, Gender and Electoral Process'. A similar opportunity was created

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at the 19th General Conference of the 2003 International Political Science Association (IPSA) held in Durban, South Africa. Five sessions were held on women at the conference.

Gender discourses have, however, gone beyond being seen as a national issue to become a global concern. Globally, the United Nations (UN) has been playing a key role in the advancement of women. Concretely, the UN has set up some key committees, commissions and funds to promote women's rights and their political and economic empowerment. These bodies include:

1. The Commission on the Status of Women: This comprises 45 member-states tasked with the responsibility of examining women's progress towards equality throughout the world. It is also saddled with making recommendations on promoting women's rights in political, economic, social and educational fields (UN 2000: 234).
2. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: The Committee is supported by the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW). The Committee was established in 1979 by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) with 166 state parties as signatories. The Convention guarantees women's equality before the law and specifies measures to eliminate discrimination against women with respect to political and public life, nationality, education, employment, health, marriage and the family (ibid, 220). The Committee is the body assigned by the UN to monitor the implementation of these measures and consider reports from state parties.
3. The Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women: This exists within CEDAW. The Special Adviser plays a cardinal role in promoting widespread attention to women's issues and applying a gender perspective in the work of the United Nations (ibid, 179).
4. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM): The Fund provides voluntary financial support and technical assistance to innovative programmes promoting women's human rights, their economic and political empowerment and gender equality. It strengthens women economic entrepreneurs and producers (ibid). It works to ensure gender equality and feminine participation in all levels of development planning and implementation.

In addition, the UN also established a Convention on Discrimination (1958), which calls on member states to institute policies which promote equality of opportunity and treatment, and to eliminate discrimination in the work place on grounds of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, extraction or social origin,

The UN, in its efforts to promote women's advancement, also dedicated the establishment of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) exclusively to women. The Institute was founded in 1976 with the unique mandate of promoting and undertaking policy research and training programmes at the international level to contribute to the development of women, and creating worldwide networks for the attainment of gender equality (ibid,180).

The UN had equally organized world conferences on women. Notable among them were the conferences held in 1975 (Mexico City), 1980 (Copenhagen), 1985 (Nairobi), and 1995 (Beijing). The conferences were geared towards promoting the advancement of women around the world, and promoting international awareness about the plights of women. The 1995 Beijing Conference, the fourth of its kind, was attended by representatives from 189 governments. The conference adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, aimed at removing obstacles to women's participation in all spheres of public and private life. The platform identifies 12 critical areas of concern. These are:

- The persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women;
- Unequal access to, and inadequate, educational opportunities;
- Inequalities in health states, and inadequate and unequal access to health-care services;
- Violence against women;
- The effects of conflict on women;
- Inequality in women's participation in the definition of economic structures and policies and in the production process itself;
- Inequality in the sharing of power and decision-making;
- Insufficient mechanisms to promote the advancement of women;

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- Lack of awareness of, and commitment to, international and nationally-recognized women's human rights;
- Insufficient mobilization of mass media to promote women's contribution to society;
- Lack of adequate recognition and support for women's contribution to managing natural resources and safeguarding the environment;
- The girl child.

The global attention for enhanced women's role and participation in all spheres of national life indicates that women across nationalities have been subjected to sexist deprivation, oppression, marginalization and exclusion.

In summary, the marginalization of Nigerian women in virtually all spheres of life has its foundation in the colonial era, a development which has been invariably consolidated by post-colonial regimes. Attempts to reverse gender biases have encouraged local mainstream interventions through the formation of women's associations meant to champion the cause of women, not only in politics, but across all sectors and professions. The active use of the First Lady's office as an advocacy tool for gender mainstreaming and gender justice is a recent phenomenon, and this study aims at assessing its interventionist potency.





## Chapter Two

### First Ladies and Gender Gap-closing Programmes

#### The Concept and Dynamics of First Ladies

Women have been agitating for gender equality, and are apparently succeeding at expanding the frontiers of their social and political relevance. However, this has a universal application. As earlier submitted, the relegation of women to the background is not confined to the developing world alone. The difference is only in relation to the degree of relegation. Also women, like other minority groups who feel cheated, are desperately seeking equality in many ways through reverse discrimination (Kolawole 1992:15).

Women's desire for reverse discrimination and equality with men has led to many reforms. For instance, in the United States of America, statements that in the past used 'man' and which invariably reflected gender bias have been modernized to be gender-neutral or gender-inclusive. It sounds like modern English just as we have Modern Mathematics. The word 'chairman' and 'mankind' have therefore become anachronistic. Instead, it is now often the case to hear of common gender phraseologies such as 'chairperson' and 'humankind' so as to be modern and less gender discriminatory.

Politics has been another very crucial area where women are seeking gender equality or at least the limiting of discrimination against women. However, Kolawole (ibid) argues that the odds are still so loaded against women that only a few countries can boast of having women political heads. The critical question therefore remains: will the next American or Nigerian president be a woman? Women, nevertheless, have been utilizing the election of their husbands to political positions to project, beyond the closet, their innate political acumen. The election of their husbands confers on them the status of First Lady.

What is a First Lady? First Lady refers to the woman who is foremost in position, rank and importance among other women. The person so designated has precedence over her female counterparts. She is *primus inter pares*. More

specifically, according to Simpson and Weiner (1989:959), the First Lady is the most important lady and particularly the wife of a President or Head of State. The office of the First Lady, in the opinion of Kolawole (op cit: 15), has recently globally become a means of negotiating the corridors of power by women. However, according to him, the irony of the degree of women participating in politics is that women themselves are not agreed on the extent of their right to participate. To support his assertion, he cites for example that when Governor Dukakis, as the Democratic Presidential candidate in the United States in 1992, attempted to have a female vice-presidential candidate as a means of appealing to the female voters, the attempt was met with rebuff, especially by women (ibid).

Until recently, Nigeria had no tradition of involving first ladies and women generally in the political process. Women were usually not incorporated into the mainstream of development policies. Besides, wives of Chief Executives were hitherto passive observers of the unfolding political process. Prior to the Babangida regime, the position of the First Lady had been conservative in government and politics. Hitherto, occupants had been restricted to purely traditional roles, including for instance, visiting hospitals and children's homes during national day celebrations and at Christmas and New Year festivals. The pioneer indigenous First Lady, Azikiwe's wife, Flora, and later Victoria Gowon were very active ceremonial first ladies during their husbands' tenures.

Suffice it to say that, as observed earlier, the wives of Obasanjo and Buhari were virtually unknown as they never appeared in public with their husbands. However, the entry of Mrs Maryam Babangida in 1985 to the nation's State House brought a new dimension to the status of the office. The conservative, non-active nature of the previous political heads' wives was discarded, and she elevated the office to a position of national prominence and recognition only just short of constitutional acknowledgement. Maryam Abacha automatically continued in this role when the military seized power in November 1993. However, in a move to surpass Mrs Babangida's achievements, Mrs Abacha extended the political influence of the office of the First Lady beyond the Nigerian shores to galvanize other African first ladies to attend the 'African first ladies Peace Mission Summit' in May 1997 in Abuja, Nigeria. Thus, the position now accorded to Nigerian first ladies, through the actions of the two Maryams, matches that of the United States of America. In essence, the popularity which the concept of First Lady has had since the Babangida regime is a phenomenal development.

## Gender Mainstreaming by First Ladies

It has been acknowledged that women's marginality and subjugation have been sustained over the years by successive regimes, both military and civilian. Representation of the female gender, which accounts for about 50 per cent of the population, was less than 4 per cent. The 1979 Constitution, which constituted the legal foundation for the Second Republic, entitled women to all the fundamental human rights. During the Republic, a few women were appointed as Commissioners and Ministers. These appointed positions granted to some women were seen by feminists as mere tokenism that should be rejected. Female elites in the country, therefore, agreed that women could not achieve full and adequate representation in government unless they fought for it (Political Bureau 1987:153).

Female agitators for women's emancipation from male subjugation and liberation from socio-economic penury and political marginalization have converged under different women's movements. The National Council for Women's Societies (NCWS) set the pace in 1959. Its aims were to promote women's welfare and progress, especially in education, and to ensure that women were given every opportunity to play an important part in social and community affairs (Mba 1987:189). The impact of the Council was never felt beyond the urban centres. Women in Nigeria (WIN) emerged in 1982 as a concerned women group founded by women academics from the Ivory Towers. It sees itself as the voice for the oppressed masses of women. It reiterates that women suffer from the exploitative and oppressive character of Nigerian society (WIN 1985:8). As a way out, it believes the position of women can be improved through transformation of the social system. The most remarkable achievement of WIN is in its consciousness-raising about the plight of women in Nigeria. Other women's associations include Women Lawyers, Committee on Women and Development (COWAD), and Women Journalists, all advocating women's liberation.

Three major observations can be gathered from these women movements. One, membership is limited to educated female elites in the cities. Two, the impact of their advocacies has not been felt in rural areas. Three, the founders of the movements are usually of little political influence that cannot effect any significant change through intended governmental policies. Consequently, because of these identified weaknesses, the movements have failed in their intended aims of pursuing feminine emancipation and seeking active participation in political affairs for women. The emerging active participation of first ladies in feminism is, therefore, an attempt to complement the efforts of the above-mentioned women's movements, which had not made significant achievements

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in terms of gender mainstreaming. The following section analyses the gender mainstreaming efforts of the first ladies.

### **The Better Life Programme of Maryam Babangida**

It is within the framework of omissions and failed approaches by women's movements that Maryam Babangida, First Lady, 1985-1993, set up her pet project: Better Life for Rural Women Programme (BLP), largely as a mainstreaming and gender-gap closing strategy to re-position Nigerian women socio-economically and politically. The first impetus which inspired Mrs Babangida to launch the programme on September 14, 1987 was the fact that women who constitute over 50 per cent of the rural population bear the brunt of the difficult life in rural areas (*Newswatch* 1987:27). This was coupled with the observation that rural women have not had the government support they deserved in terms of fair representation or even in the provision of the wherewithal for enhancing their social and economic activities (National Concord 1987:11).

The programme therefore had the following as its aims:

1. Enhancing and stimulating rural women in particular, and the rural populace in general, to improve their standard of living and their environment;
2. Cultivating the spirit of self-development in rural women through the promotion of rural education, business and recreation;
3. Creating greater awareness among the populace about the plight of women.

The objectives of BLP are further designed to:

1. Raise the social consciousness of women about their rights, as well as their social, political and economic responsibilities;
2. Bring women together and closer for better understanding and resolution of their problems through collective action;
3. Mobilize women for concrete activities towards achieving specific objectives, including seeking leadership roles in all spheres of national life;

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4. Stimulate and motivate women in rural areas towards achieving a better and higher standard of living as well as to inform the general populace of the plight of the rural women;
5. Educate women on simple hygiene, family planning and on the importance of childcare;
6. Enlighten women in rural areas on opportunities and facilities available to them at their local government areas;
7. Improve and enrich family life; and
8. Encourage and institutionalize re-creation (*African Guardian* 1990:19-24).

The aims and objectives of the programme were broad in scope and the target was unmistakably rural women. Its *modus operandi* was also broad. The First Lady, Mrs Babangida, was the National Chairperson. The wives of State Governors were Chairpersons at the state level, while wives of local government chairmen throughout the federation were chairs at the grassroot level of government. Each constituency also had a co-ordinator.

Perhaps, the most novel gain of the BLP was the creation of societal awareness about the plight of the grassroots women. In this regard, symposia, seminars, public rallies, lectures, etc., all meant to draw the attention of government, agencies and the general public to the problems of rural women, were held at various levels. The material productivity of women was assisted by the formation of women's co-operatives and associations to provide better access to the utilization of production resources and credit facilities. Cottage and small-scale industries such as *gari* processing, soap making, weaving and dyeing, dress making and fashion designing, baking, etc., were established across the country, which were meant to improve the income-generating capabilities of rural women. Female farming productivity was also boosted with the supply of fertilizer to all the units in the Better Life Programme (Faseke 1990:154).

In the field of educational development, at least one day-care centre was established in most local government areas for the education of children. Admission was open to all children and was free. A vocational school was also founded in each local government area for school drop-outs and women adults who had not had the opportunity of going to school. Students of the school were taught vocations such as dyeing, weaving, motherhood skills and childcare, home economics and fashion design. The adult education aspect of the BLP

taught adults how to read and write. Other areas of achievement included primary health care, social welfare, cultivation of agricultural plantations and financial grants and credits to rural women to boost their economic activities.

In spite of these modest accomplishments, the programme suffered some drawbacks. Empirical evidence contradicts BLP's claim of improving rural women's standard of living. It is beyond debate that their living conditions have depreciated in the face of the government's Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and hyper-inflation, the effects of which even high income earners across sexes are not immune to, not to mention the rural poor. Besides, social welfare amenities such as pipe-borne water, electricity, basic health care, recreation facilities and accessible roads are either non-existent or grossly in short supply. In summary, critical field evaluation revealed that the BLP failed in genuinely liberating the rural women significantly from the shackles of age-long deprivation, marginalization, neglect and abject poverty.

### **The Family Support Programme of Mrs Maryam Abacha**

The Family Support Programme (FSP) of Mrs Maryam Abacha, Nigeria's First Lady, 1993-1998, took off in 1994 as her own way of pleading women's cause and out of concern for the improvement of Nigerian families' quality of life. She advocated the promotion and protection of family values as the key to solving societal problems (*Sunday Sketch* 1994:3). Concretely, the main goal of the FSP was to promote a better quality of life for all members of the family. Also, it was to promote practices which strengthen stability and reduce conflict and divorce. In addition, it was to enlighten and support women who wanted to start their own businesses through improved access to credit facilities for commercial and other ventures. Women, according to the programme, could also start small-scale business such as farming, fishing, palm oil processing and rearing of live-stock (Binuyo 1995:6).

The FSP, in attaining its aims, had a wide range of line-up projects bordering on health, agricultural and vocational activities. In the area of health, in collaboration with the federal government, the United Nations, donor organisations and international agencies, the FSP was to assist health schemes such as the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI), Oral Re-hydration Therapy (ORT), Control of Diarrhoea Diseases, River Blindness Control, Guinea Worm Control, Maternal Child Care, as well as community-based Primary Health Care through the implementation of the nationwide Bamako Initiative (*Sunday Sketch* 1995:6). The FSP also planned to assist the government in supplying clean and safe drinking water to every community. Its Food and Nutrition Programme was

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meant to promote nutrition education and the development of a nutrition policy as well as enhancing the eradication of Iodine Deficiency Disorder (IDD). Also, the FSP's health programme included the support for the treatment of Vascular Vaginal Fistula (VVF) disease, drug abuse, abortion, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), other Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs), and mental illnesses. It also aimed at extensive mobilization for greater awareness against harmful cultural practices such as female circumcision, child pregnancy, and the formation of health clubs.

The FSP, in the field of education, was to address all issues relating to education through Parents-Teachers Associations (PTAs), community-based guidance and counselling and the establishment of literacy and vocational centres. The programme was to ensure, in the agricultural sector, adequate food production for the citizenry through the establishment of agro-processing and packaging industries, livestock production, homestead fish production, and vegetable production as well as the establishment of a baby food industry through the use of locally-sourced raw materials. Also, disabled people and the destitute would receive the attention of the FSP (ibid). Overall, FSP was designed to act as a catalyst for the achievement of a more fulfilling and meaningful existence for all Nigerians; providing men, women, children, the underprivileged, widows and orphans with both the opportunity and means to survive despite the persisting socio-economic complexities and turmoil of present-day Nigeria. The operating organisational chart was similar to the BLP, with Maryam Abacha as the National Chairperson and wives of administrators and local government chairmen as coordinators at state and local government levels. However, the operational effectiveness lags behind the BLP, as the FSP did not make any significant impact on any of its targets beyond government-sponsored propaganda on officially-owned mass media.

### **Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative of Fati Abubakar**

General Abdulsalam Abubakar succeeded General Sani Abacha as President in June 1998. Justice Fati Abubakar, as First Lady, was more interested in her job as a high court judge. However, in keeping with the First Lady tradition, at the twilight of her husband's tenure in office, she founded the Woman Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) in 1999. This non-governmental organisation provided her with an advocacy opportunity to articulate and propagate women's concerns relating to the advancement and protection of their rights.

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The services of WRAPA included:

1. Education, enlightenment and advocacy on women rights;
2. Legal aid and counselling to women on civil rights, inheritance, assault, rape, divorce/separation, custody of children and legal instruments;
3. Free vocational skills training to increase women's income and self-reliance;
4. Free reconciliation and social counselling for families;
5. Free adult literacy and civic education for women (WRAPA 2003:28).

In general, the promotion of social justice and mobilization, empowerment and sensitization of women about their plights form the core objectives of WRAPA. The emphasis on social justice, judicial and legislative advocacy is understandable as the founder, Mrs Abubakar, is a high court judge. This is a position that has given her a privileged knowledge of women's plights in terms of seeking justice. WRAPA was more of a non-governmental organisation (NGO) than a programme that can be compared to either BLP or FSP. WRAPA, as a First Lady's agenda, was very short-lived as the regime handed over power to a democratic administration, soon after it was founded, in 1999.

### **The Child Care Trust of Stella Obasanjo**

When President Olusegun Obasanjo assumed power in May 1999, he indicated that the office of the First Lady would cease to exist (Orji 2003:23; Obi 2004:48). This threat did not materialize, as the First Lady, Stella Obasanjo, like the previous first ladies, established a pet project named Child Care Trust (CCT). The Trust is a non-profit NGO founded on 9th May 2000. CCT particularly targets challenged children and women with disabilities. It has as its motto 'Sowing the Seeds of Hope' and it specifically aims to provide quality health care and other social services for children and women in Nigeria (Child Care Trust 2000:1). The broad objectives of the Trust include:

1. Supporting existing institutions through human and organisation capacity-building and providing training, counselling services and information on the prevention and management of disabilities for parents;



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2. As a centre for learning and development, providing an enabling environment for training of sector practitioners (stakeholders) at the CCT's computer centre;
3. Providing medical, social and mental development services for all children, especially the handicapped;
4. Maintaining a data bank, which will serve as an information resource on handicaps and also providing materials for social researchers into problems associated with disabled children in the country;
5. Conducting research in all areas of disability and its management and serving as a networking centre and clearing house for information on early childhood issues, policies, programmes and organisations, and as a lead agency for an early childhood education strategy;
6. Providing academic and vocational skills that will empower the handicapped for a sustainable livelihood;
7. Championing the development of regulatory guidelines for comprehensive special education programmes for use by related institutions in Nigeria;
8. Encouraging governments to integrate early childhood and family education programmes in their long-term social economic planning (ibid, 2).

It is very clear from these objectives that the units of analysis of CCT do not cover all children, but only the physically disabled and handicapped. Women also do not occupy a frontline concern in the Trust's agenda; only women and families with disabilities and special needs have a place in its services. The founder of the CCT, Stella Obasanjo, however, died in December 2005; but it seems the programme will not die with her as a board of management has been appointed for the Trust while her only son, Muyiwa Obasanjo, has been appointed as its chairman. President Obasanjo and his son have promised to sustain the ideals of the Trust as a mark of respect for Stella (Orebe 2006:10).

A cursory analysis of first ladies in the country's government and politics draws certain conclusions. One, first ladies have had a new image since the Babangida regime when Maryam Babangida revolutionised the office by transforming its role beyond the hitherto traditional ceremonial functions to a more active and visible public role. Succeeding first ladies, except Margaret

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Shonekan, moved beyond overseeing the home of the respective presidents. Two, each First Lady has always desired to have a trademark by way of instituting a pet project which has a welfare orientation geared towards promoting the interests of women and/or children. The instituted programmes too have manifested a remarkable character in that the exit of their founders from office implies equally the demise of the programmes, as they do not outlive the regime under which they were founded. Probably the only exception is Stella Obasanjo's CCT, which President Obasanjo and Stella's son have promised to keep going. This intention could have arisen because the president is still in power. The point being made here therefore is that the first ladies become politically irrelevant as soon as their husbands are out of government and their programmes then become moribund. This development brings to the fore the problem of the first ladies' commitment to the stated objectives of their programmes beyond their official status. Feminist advocacies through the instrumentality of the First Lady have therefore been weakened by lack of sustained commitment by the succeeding first ladies since Maryam Babangida 'revolutionalized' the office. The programmes are devoid of concrete affirmative actions aimed at promoting the equality of gender access to socio-economic and political opportunities, which can make them genuinely serve as gender-gap closing platforms of action.

## Chapter Three

### What has Changed for Women?

What has changed for women since the first ladies' gender mainstreaming and interventionist advocacies? This chapter examines, across regimes, the utilitarian value of the First Lady's office as an official institutional framework, promoting the 'new generation' of women's interests. How far have the first ladies used their programmes and the rare opportunities they have had to facilitate then gendering of the nation's political space and thereby reduce women's gender exclusion in politics and decision-making processes? In achieving this evaluative goal, the time frame in terms of regime scope will not be limited to the 2003 elections and the gender power relations since then, but it will span through the First Republic to other administrations predating the incumbent President Obasanjo's regime. The essence of this evaluation over a period of time is to set a concrete basis for judging the progress made over the years by women advocacies, but especially since the First Lady's office was 'revolutionized' by Maryam Babangida in terms of status, focus, orientation and role in governance and politics.

#### The First Republic: What Gains for Women?

Women enjoyed the opportunity of playing very active political and administrative roles in the pre-colonial era as exemplified by the *Iyalodes*, *Iyalojas*, *Ayabas*, *Oloris*, *Iyalojas* and others in Yorubaland in the same way as other women in other traditional communities in pre-colonial Nigeria. It was however observed that imperial rule truncated the continued active role of women, a development which was sustained and consolidated by the immediate independence and post-independence regimes. Notwithstanding the retardation of women's active role in colonial governance, some notable Nigerian women such as

Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Gambo Sawaba, Margaret Ekpo, and the Aba, Lagos and Abeokuta women played significant nationalist and anti-colonial roles that in part eventually culminated in the withdrawal of imperial control and the granting of independence in 1960.

In the First Republic, 1960-1966, women's marginality was virtually sustained as there was only one (2.8%) woman senator in the 36-seat Senate (Ukeje 1998:179) and no female member in the 312-seat House of Representatives. There were also no female federal ministers. At the regional level, there were a total number of two female members in the four regional Houses of Assembly (Ojuolape 2001:5). At the federal level, there were also no regional female ministers. The low involvement of women in governance in the Republic not only sustained the historical legacy of political prejudice against women by the colonial regimes, it also negated the spirit of political independence. The nationalist agitations for independence and democracy were essentially to confer economic and political empowerment on all Nigerians, and inevitably to guarantee them basic social rights and access to national resources including political and establishment positions. However, women were denied equal access to the accrued rights and benefits/dividends of independence and were almost totally excluded from government in the first post-colonial regime.

The First Republic was ousted by the military coup of January 1966, with General Aguiyi Ironsi assuming national leadership as Head of State. All the democratic institutions, except the Judiciary, were consequently abolished. The Ironsi regime was in turn toppled in a counter-coup that brought General Yakubu Gowon to power in July 1966. Suffice to say, there are no records of any significant improvements in the level of involvement of women in governance in the First Republic by the Ironsi administration. The Gowon regime, 1966-1975, maintained the exclusion of females from the federal cabinet but, at the regional level, at least one woman was appointed to the regional cabinets. The first woman commissioner was Floral Nwapa, appointed in 1970 as a member of the East Central State cabinet. Other women, who were later appointed as state commissioners, were Dorothy Miller (North Eastern State), Folake Solanke (Western State) and Kofoworola Pratt (Lagos State) (Oguonu 2000:4). The regime's Supreme Military Council (SMC), the highest legislative and decision-making organ for Gowon's regime, was absolutely gendered, as all members were overwhelmingly male military officers.

The Gowon regime was succeeded by the Murtala/Obasanjo administration, 1975-1979. The most notable achievement for women under this regime was the liberalization of the electoral process, which for the first time, in 1976

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through the Local Government Edict No.189, granted Nigerian women nationwide universal adult suffrage. Hitherto, women in the northern part of the country were not allowed to vote due to religious gender bias. Besides this development, the administration did not pay much attention to adequate inclusion and representation of women in government. The regime did not include any woman either in the federal cabinet or the regime's Supreme Military Council, and boards of the parastatals and commissions. The regime's transition to civil rule institutions was also gendered. For instance, there were no women in the 50 'wise men' appointed as members of the Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC), and out of the 250 members of the Constituent Assembly (CA), there were only five (2%) female members. The CDC and CA, established respectively in 1977 and 1978, were both saddled with the responsibility of providing a new constitution for the country. Women suffered sexual discrimination in the two bodies for lack of adequate female representation. Indeed, inadequate women representation, as observed by Oguonu (ibid), partly explains the absence of provision for women in the draft constitution. This omission led the five women members of the CA to protest on the floor of the Assembly at the sex discrimination in the proposed constitution. The protests were favourably considered by the CA and eventually it came out with a final constitution, which outlawed gender discrimination. At the state and local administrative levels, opportunities for access to political power by women were no better. In the 1976 local government elections, six women were elected as councillors in the entire northern states while Anambra State produced eight (ibid).

The Murtala/Obasanjo administration transferred power to an elected civilian administration in October 1979. The new civilian administration in the Second Republic was under President Shehu Shagari. Essentially, the Murtala/Obasanjo regime had laid the foundation for gender injustice in the new Republic because of the low involvement of women in critical political transition decisions. Both the president and vice-president were men. Of the four women that contested Senate seats in 1979, three were defeated by their male counterparts. The result is that the Second Republic's Senate had only one (1.8%) female member out of 57 while the House of Representatives had 11 (2.5%) females out of 445 members. Despite being a non-military rule, the Shagari regime could only produce two female ministers, one of whom was Mrs Egun Oyagbola. The president, vice-president, Senate president, speaker of the House of Representatives, all state governors and deputy governors and speakers of the state's Houses of Assembly were all men. The pronounced exclusion of women from President Shagari's government was unexpected, being a democratic administration.

The Shagari regime was overthrown in December 1983 by General Buhari. The Buhari/Idiagbon administration (1983-1984) also manifested sexism as there was no single woman in the regime's cabinet, the Supreme Military Council or the top echelon of its security institutions such as the National Security Organization (NSO), the Police and the Armed Forces. It was only in the civil service that three women were appointed as permanent secretaries, albeit on merit. The Buhari/Idiagbon regime was succeeded by the Babangida regime, 1985-1993. Much seems to have been expected from this regime because it was the regime's First Lady, Maryam Babangida, who brought glamour and radical changes to the First Lady's office in terms of its roles in the nation's administration and politics. Mrs Babangida significantly utilized the office to introduce the public to the plight of women and she also used the platform to mobilize Nigerian women socio-economically and politically. In terms of what dividends accrued to women from the First Lady's and other movements' advocacies, the Political Bureau, a body set up by the regime to chart a new and viable political future for the country, had two women members out of 19. The Bureau recommended that 5% of the legislative seats be allocated to women in all the three tiers of government (Political Bureau *op cit*:154). Under the regime, there were neither female ministers nor female members of the Armed Forces Ruling Council. In the Constituent Assembly, the body which engineered a new constitution, the regime appointed 5 (3.3%) women members out of a total membership of 150. The transitional Senate under the regime elected in 1992 had only one (1.1%) female senator (Mrs Kofo Bucknor Akerele) out of 91 while there were 12 (1.9%) women in the 638-seat House of Representatives. In 1991, of the eight women among the 91 presidential aspirants, none succeeded, and in 1993, there was only one female presidential aspirant. The two candidates that contested the annulled 1993 presidential election were men. Party primaries, which were largely dominated by men, were not often in favour of women. The leadership of the two houses of the National Assembly was men.

At the state level, there were no female governors, deputy governors, speakers or deputy speakers. Of the 1,172 members for the entire 30 Houses of Assembly in the country, 27 (2.3%) were women, and actually, 14 (46.7%) of the houses did not elect a single woman as member (Ojuolape *op cit*: 6). Also, at the grassroots level, of the 591 chairpersons elected in 1990, only 3 (0.5%) were women, while only 206 (15.9%) women were elected as councillors out of the 1,297 elected nation-wide in the same election. Nevertheless, Maryam Babangida was able to use her position as First Lady to influence her husband, President Babangida, to establish the National Commission for Women in April, 1990. Apart from

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directing state governors to establish similar commissions, the regime also made a policy of appointing one woman commissioner in each state's cabinet. In addition to the marginal gains for women in politics and governance under the regime, the administration also took some positive steps in the direction of gender justice in non-political sectors. For instance, the regime made it a matter of policy that women would also be appointed into strategic policy-making positions of corporate bodies as chief executives and heads of ministerial divisions in government. It was under the regime's new thinking that Professor Grace Alele-Williams was appointed the first female vice-chancellor of the University of Benin in 1988. She was indeed the first woman to hold such an executive leadership position in Nigeria's ivory towers. The state directorship of the National Youth Service Corps was also conceded to women by the regime. Women also had a sizeable share of the directorship of other federal government ministerial positions such as National Population Commission (NPC), Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), National Directorate of Employment (NDE). The regime has also appointed three female permanent secretaries.

The Interim National Government headed by Ernest Shonekan succeeded Ibrahim Babangida after he stepped down from government, arising from his regime's annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election. Besides a woman serving as a Secretary (Minister), there were no other appreciable gains to women under the regime. The regime however lasted only three months before it was toppled by the military. General Sani Abacha succeeded Shonekan as Head of State. The regime's First Lady, Maryam Abacha, played a very vibrant role similar to Maryam Babangida. In fact, the regime can be regarded as having the same thinking as the Babangida regime in respect of gender policies. The regime upgraded the National Commission for Women, established by the Babangida regime, to a full-fledged ministry named Ministry of Women Affairs in March 1995. The regime mandated all the military governors to establish a similar ministry at the state level two years later, March 1997. However, the summary of the regime's performance in relation to gender issues is that beyond establishing the Ministry of Women Affairs, it made an insignificant impact on promoting gender consciousness and justice. It appointed 3 (7.9%) women as ministers in a 38-member cabinet. It maintained a policy of appointing a woman commissioner at the state level. A few women were also appointed as local government chairpersons. In a paradoxical move, the First Lady, Maryam Abacha, established another programme, the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), which shifted attention from the purely female-orientated goals of her initial

pet programme, Family Support Programme, to families. And consequently, her advocacy became focused on the traditional roles of women.

The General Abdulsalam Abubakar regime, which succeeded the Abacha administration, was no better than the latter in redressing the gender imbalance in governance and politics. The regime appointed only three women as members of a thirty-one member Federal Executive Council. Though, in addition to having been short-lived, as pointed out earlier, the regime's First Lady, Fatima Abubakar, did not show much interest in any pro-women issue until the twilight of the administration. General Abubakar handed over to a democratically-elected government headed by President Olusegun Obasanjo in May 1999. Prior to the hand-over by Abubakar, women's participation in the transition to civil rule programmes was adjudged to be very low, compared to men. More males were observed to have participated in the transition programmes since 1996 (Simbine 2003:151). Despite recording a lower participation than men, it was however observed that more women took part in the transition processes than in the past (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs 1999: 21; Oluwole 2001:14-15). Nevertheless, their performance in terms of actually winning contested posts remained poor.

In the elections, the presidency and vice-presidency were won by men. No woman secured her party's ticket to contest the election. In the election to the National Assembly for 109 seats in the Senate, out of the 5 women who contested, only 2 (1.8%) won seats. In the 360-seat House of Representatives (HOR), 29 women contested but only 13 (3.6%) won their seats. The Senate President and Speakers of two Houses of Assembly respectively were men. This was despite the high rate of turn-over of the leadership of the houses between 1999 and 2003 as a result of incessant impeachment. At the state level, all the 36 governors were men. The six women that contested as governorship candidates lost in their respective states. There was only one female deputy-governor who was later forced out of the government of Lagos State by way of resignation. In the Houses of Assembly, of the available 990 seats, 39 women contested with 12 (1.2%) of them emerging as winners. The speakers of the Houses were all men. Of the 774 chairmanship seats contested at the local government level, 46 women contested and 9 (1.2%) emerged victorious. Similarly, in the council elections, of the 8,800 seats, 510 women contested and only 143 (1.6%) won (see Table 1 for detailed analysis).



**Table 1: Gender Performance in the 1998-1999 Elections**

Elective post	No. of male winners	% of male winners	No. of female winners	% of female winners	Total winners
President	1	100	0	0.0	1
Vice-president	1	100	0	0.0	1
Senators	107	98.2	2	1.8	109
HOR	347	96.4	13	3.6	360
Governors	36	100	0	0.0	36
Deputy governors	35	97.3	1	2.7	36
Local government chairmen	765	98.8	9	1.2	774
Councillors	8,657	98.4	143	1.6	8,800
Houses of Assembly	978	98.8	12	1.2	990

*Source:* Compiled by the author from elections results released by the Independent National Electoral Commission.

Female representation in the boards of Federal parastatals and commissions, and the top level of the civil service deserves analysis. The Obasanjo regime appointed only 3 substantive female ministers and 3 female Ministers of State (deputy ministers) to make a total of 6 (12.2%) while men had 43. None of the female ministers were put in charge of key ministries such as Defence, Petroleum Resources, Finance and Mines and Power. There was also one (6.7%) appointed as a Special Adviser out of 15. Seven females were appointed as chairpersons of boards out of 130, implying 5 per cent of the total number. Out of the 833 members of the boards, 86 (10.3%) were women. In pursuance of the nation's foreign policy, the new civilian regime recalled all the nation's Ambassadors and High Commissioners and appointed 102 new ones, out of which nine (8.8%) were female (Simbine op cit:150). At the political party level, none of the chairmen of the three parties that contested the 1998-1999 elections was a woman. From these analyses, it is observed that the first four years, 1999-2003, of the Fourth Republic under President Obasanjo showed little concern for gender justice at all levels of governance. This was so because women were subjected to a series of gender-biases right from the transitional processes and during the actual elections that installed the political operators of the regime. Women also experienced sexual violence in the post-election periods in the Republic. A few instances of this gender-discrimination will be of value here.

One: During the 1999 governorship primaries in Ondo State, Mrs Mobolaji Osomo contested under the Alliance for Democracy's (AD) ticket for the gubernatorial election. Osomo polled 11,653 votes to defeat her two male co-aspirants who had 2,765 and 896 votes respectively. Notwithstanding the wide margin of

victory, AD went ahead to present Adebayo Adefarati, who came second in the contest as its governorship candidate in the actual election (Ekenem 2004:14). Two: Mrs Grace Aguwamba had a similar experience in the 2003 local government chairmanship primaries in Kaduna State. She contested in the primaries under the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in the Kawo Local Government Area of the State. She was eventually rigged out of the contest after been subjected to intimidation and harassment by rival male aspirants' supporters (ibid). She openly alleged that her opponents took advantage of her feminine gender to torment her and her supporters, thereby forcing them to abandon the primaries midway (ibid). Three: The experience of Hajia Laatu Danladi was no different either. She aspired to membership of the House of Representatives to represent Zangon/Kataf Federal Constituency in Kaduna State. Her party, PDP, surprisingly substituted her name with a male candidate three days before the actual election in 1999.

Besides discrimination experienced during primaries and before elections, women continued to be at the receiving end of gender-prejudice by men in power. Lagos State presents a good reference point. Mrs Kofoworola Akerele-Bucknor was elected in the state as the only female deputy governor in Nigeria between 1999 and 2002. She was eventually forced to resign the position. She consistently complained of marginalization, intimidation and harassment in office by the governor, Bola Tinubu. Throughout her tenure, the governor never handed over to her the authority to conduct the affairs of the state anytime he travelled outside the country. She also complained of redundancy in office, as assignments which ordinarily should have been given to her were given to her subordinate officials. She further complained of not having full security personnel attached to her as deputy governor, implying that she was denied adequate security. Lastly, she complained that she was locked out of the state's Executive Council's meetings on many occasions, thereby depriving her of participation in many crucial decisions that were taken. Mrs Margaret Icheen experienced a similar derogatory and discriminatory treatment as the Speaker of the Benue State House of Assembly, the first and to-date only female occupying that position at federal and state levels. She was appointed Speaker in 1999 but was forced to resign her position in 2002 on the grounds that her life was being threatened because she opposed the widespread corruption in the state by the executive arm of government. Before her resignation, she survived six impeachment attempts which were allegedly instigated by the state governor, George Akume, who was not comfortable with a woman as Speaker of the House (ibid).

Another general election was held in April/May 2003. The presidential election returned Obasanjo to power for a second four-year term as president.

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Before the actual elections, women featured prominently in the political campaigns and the primaries. Many women played the roles of political and electoral educators, mobilizers and political campaigners for their respective parties. Many women also acted as electoral officials on election days. It was also observed that women had an impressive turn-out at voting centres to cast their votes in all the elections across the country. In fact, post-election gender analysis of voters by the Independent National Election Commission shows that women voters recorded a 5 per cent increase in turnout in the 2003 elections compared to the 1999 elections (Omede 2004:63-77). In the actual election, more women secured the tickets of their parties to contest various positions. For instance, in the presidential election, three women, namely Antonia Ferreira Abayomi Jorge, Mojisola Adegunle Obasanjo and Sarah Jibril, stood as presidential candidates while three other women stood as vice-presidential candidates. The opportunity for more women to contest elective positions was made possible because of the expansion of the democratic space in terms of increase in the number of political parties, which rose from just three in 1999 to thirty in 2003.

In spite of the observed improvement in women's participation in the 2003 electoral processes, the outcome of the elections show that the nation is not yet prepared to concede the country's leadership position to women either at federal or state level. Of the three women who contested against twenty-seven men in the presidential election, none won. At the state level also, no woman was elected as governor in any of the 36 states. Only 2 (5.6%) of females won as deputy governors as against one in 1999. In the Senate, women produced 3 (2.8%) out of the 109 senators while in the 360-member House of Representatives, 19 (5.3%) women were elected as members indicating that they had a better performance than in 1999 when 13 females were elected. In the state's Houses of Assembly, women were four slots better than what they had in 1999 as 24 were elected as against 12 recorded in 1999. Concerning in-house politics in the National Assembly and the Houses of Assembly, the former sustained the *status quo ante* obtained in 1999 in that both the Senate President and Speaker of the House of Representatives remain men. In the latter, only two (5.6%) women were elected speakers out of the 36 speakers of Houses of Assembly. In fact, one of the two, Mrs Eucharia Azod of Anambra State, did not spend more than three months in the office before she was impeached by a unanimous vote of the Assembly (Onayoade 2003:9). On appointed posts, the Obasanjo's second term of presidency did not record any significant improvement over the 1999 records in its gender consciousness. Only 6 (14.3%) women were appointed as ministers while there were 36 male ministers. Of the six women ministers, only three were

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substantive ministers: namely Mrs Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (Finance Minister), Mrs Rita Akpan (Minister of Women and Youth Development) and Mrs Mobolaji Osomo (Minister of Housing and Urban Development). Mrs Osomo was however later sacked and replaced by a male minister. Mrs Okonjo Iweala was forced to resign her position as Nigeria's first Minister of Finance after she was re-deployed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, equally as the first woman to head the ministry. It was believed that she resigned in controversial circumstances that could not have been unrelated to her strong opposition to corruption in the government (Ayorinde 2006:47-49). There is a marginal increase in the number of female special advisers; 4 (26.7%) were women. However, there is only 1 (9.1%) female out of 11 senior special advisers to the president. Besides the 2003 elections, women have not also recorded any remarkable success in the April 2004 local government elections nation-wide. For instance, in Ekiti State, out of the sixteen local council chairpersons, none is a woman.

Generally, the above analyses show that women have not been able to make any significant in-road to the corridors of power and decision-making processes, despite the increase in the First Lady phenomenon. However, more women have been involved in political participation, but only at the levels of campaigns and voting. Women constitute 60 per cent of the nation's electoral strength and women's turn-out for voting actually improved by 5 per cent in the 2003 election over the 1999 records, yet women remain sideline actors when it comes to competitive elective positions. At no time since independence in 1960, or since the radical character assumed by the office of the First Lady and its use as a gender-mainstreaming strategy, have women been given opportunities to assume political leadership position in the country. Neither were women allowed to take up at least 30 per cent of elective posts as agreed to internationally, and which was made a campaign issue before the 2003 elections. If anything, women have been subjected to token appointments and made to play the role of second fiddle in the scheme of governance. In essence, women are only mainly being appointed into government rather than being largely elected into power. This is in accordance with the traditional stereotypes, which vilify women as background actors rather than providing frontline leadership.

## Chapter Four

### First Ladies in the Public Eye

#### Field Survey

As an evaluative measure, the study subjected the performance behaviour of the first ladies and their programmes to a public opinion test. To achieve this, a survey was carried out with the specific objectives of examining the basic problems of women and factors that facilitate gender inequality and women's vulnerability to political marginalization in Nigeria. The instrument also surveyed the public's view of a gender-equal society. At the same time, the survey interrogated and assessed female advocacy strategies of the first ladies as gender-gap alleviation measures in Nigeria (see Appendix).

#### Study Area Map and Sampling Procedure

The poll, which surveyed 360 people between December 2003 and June 2004, utilized cluster random sampling to group the target population into six geographical zones which correspond with the government's own geo-political system, namely:

1. North-East comprising: Kaduna, Bauchi, Borno, Yobe, Adamawa, Jigawa and Gombe States;
2. North-West comprising: Kano, Katsina Sokoto, Kebbi, and Zamfara States;
3. South-East comprising: Abia, Imo, Ebonyi, Enugu and Anambra States;
4. South-West comprising: Lagos, Ekiti, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Oyo States;
5. The Middle-Belt comprising: Plateau, Niger, Nasarawa, Benue, Kogi and Kwara States, and for the purpose of the survey, the Federal

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Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja which belongs to no zone, was grouped with this zone because of its location within it;

6. Southern Minorities which comprises Edo, Cross River, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Delta and Bayelsa States.

Based on the above regional clusters, simple random sampling technique was employed to pick three states from each clustered zone for the survey and from which 60 sampled respondents were equally simple randomly selected on the basis of 20 per sampled state. These sampled states included: Kaduna, Bauchi, Adamawa, Kano, Katsina, Zamfara, Ebonyi, Anambra and Abia. Others are Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Plateau, Benue, Nasarawa, Delta, Bayelsa and Edo States. The zoning arrangement was adopted to ensure the collection of opinions from across all geographical regions, and ethnic and religious cleavages in the country in order to secure a balanced response.

### **Sample Size**

There may be a tendency to see the sample size as small; but considering the subject matter, the character of the Nigerian nation and the low level of female exposure and participation in politics, the sample is very representative of the population.

### **Limitations to the Survey**

In an attempt to achieve a balanced opinion from the sampled zones with the diverse ethnic-religious cleavages, the researcher was on many occasions caught up in the ethno-religious violent conflicts involving armed ethnic militia groups and violent youth vanguards. These violent conflicts caused prolonged delays for several months in the administration and collection of survey questionnaires, and the conduct of individual and group supplementary interviews on the study. Critical actors and personalities on the issues at stake were busy, most of the time, with trouble-shooting in the areas of conflict.

### **Demographic and Socio-economic Characteristics of Respondents**

The study, which surveyed 360 people, received valid responses from 286 people with a valid response rate of 79.4 per cent. A total of 74 or 20.6 per cent of the surveyed questionnaires could not be retrieved from the respondents due, in

part, to the endemic violent ethno-religious conflicts in the surveyed areas. Analysis of the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the sampled respondents (Table 2) shows that under sex, 148 or 51.8 per cent of the respondents were males, while 138 or 48.2 per cent were females. These data imply that sampled men in the survey had a slight majority of 10 or 3.5 per cent of returned questionnaires. This result is essentially a close reflection of the gender ratio differentials in the national population figures whereby men and women accounted for 50.4 per cent and 49.6 per cent respectively. The implication for the study is that the survey was gender-blind and unbiased. Field reports on the survey show that female respondents were quicker in responding to the questionnaire survey than male participants. The speed and readiness of women to respond to the survey, compared to men, can be explained by the fact that many women are now very prepared to contribute to discussions that concern their welfare and progress in a male-dominated system with its attendant sexism.

The occupational analysis of the respondents (Q2) shows a non-isolated case. The sampled survey cuts across a wide strata of occupations and professions. Civil servants and private business women/men top the list with 53 or 18.5 per cent of the valid respondents each. They are closely followed by legal practitioners with 51 or 18 per cent of the responses. Human Rights activists recorded 32 or 11.2 per cent, while housewives and students each had 21 or 7.3 per cent of the returned questionnaires. Lastly, teachers and university lecturers, accountants, engineers, parliamentarians and farmers each accounted for 11 or 3.8 per cent of the valid returned survey questionnaires. The justification for this wide application of the survey across all walks of life was basically to evaluate the level of gender awareness and gender consciousness within the varied economic sectors in the system. Question 4, which required respondents to indicate the rank/posts that they held, was treated the same way as Question 2, that is, they virtually repeated their responses to Question 2.

On the highest level of educational attainment of the respondents (Q3), the data collected reveals that the lowest educational certificate possessed by the respondents was the Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSCE) while the highest was the Masters degree. The data analysis shows that holders of SSCE, Ordinary National Diploma (OND) and the professional Certificate of Association of Chartered Accountants (ACA) each had 11 or 3.8 per cent valid responses, while holders of Higher National Diploma (HND) had 21 or 7.3 per cent. Responses from 63 Masters degree holders were equivalent to 22 per cent of the returned questionnaires. First degree holders accounted for the largest number of respondents. They recorded 169 or 59.1 per cent of the questionnaires. The implication of this spread among respondents with these educational backgrounds

is that all the respondents were literate and therefore well informed about the gender problems covered by the survey. This characteristic of the surveyed population, according to field reports, contributed to their display of a high sense of comprehension and awareness of the issues raised.

**Table 2:** Demographic and Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Sample (Number, N = 286)

Item (Question: Q)	Frequency	Per centage
Q1: Sex:		
Male	148	51.8
Female	138	48.2
Q2: Occupation		
Civil Sevants	53	18.55
Students	21	7.35
Housewives	21	7.35
Teachers/University Lecturers	11	3.85
Private Business People	53	18.55
Accountants	11	3.85
Legal Practitioners	51	17.85
Engineers	11	3.85
Parliamentarians	11	3.85
Human Rights Activists	32	11.20
Farmers	11	3.85
Q3: Highest Education Attained		
SSCE/WASC/GCE	11	3.85
Ordinary Diploma (OND)	11	3.85
Higher Diploma (HND)	21	7.35
First Degree (B.Sc., B.A. etc)	169	59.15
Master Degree (M.Sc. MPA. MBA etc)	63	22.05
Others (ACA)	11	3.85
Q5: Age Rank		
13-17 Years	0	0.0
18 Years and Above	286	100

### Response Pattern to Specific Issues

In the questionnaire, Questions 6, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 17 and 21 dealt with specific issues on the gender marginality question. In these questions, respondents were presented with the options of Yes or No. However, only in question 12 did respondents have to choose between option (a) Male and (b) Female (see Appendix



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and Table 3), while Questions 7, 9, 11, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22 and 23 were follow-up and probing questions which were meant to elicit further explanations, and query their responses to the preceding questions.

**Table 3: Questionnaire Survey: Response Pattern to Specific Issues (N = 286)**

Indicators (Questions:Q)	Response (No. &%)		
	Yes	No	+No Response
Q6: Do you subscribe to the Notion of equality between men and women?	127 44.4%	138 48.3%	21 7.3%
Q8: Do you agree with the belief that women are being marginalized in Nigerian politics?	159 55.6%	95 33.2%	32 11.2%
Q10: Do wome have a fair share of elective/political posts in the present democratic dispensation in Nigeria?	138 48.3%	138 48.3%	10 3.4%
Q12: In the May 2003 Presidential election, which gender did you vote for?	233 81.5% (M)	21 7.3% (F)	32 11.2%
Q13: Will you support a female as Governor of your State in the 2007 Election?	116 50.5%	138 48.3%	32 11.2%
Q14: Will you want a woman to emerge as the next President of Nigeria in 2007?	95 33.2%	170 59.4%	21 7.3%
Q17: Have the first ladies' Programmes improved the status of women in Nigeria?	96 33.6%	180 63%	10 3.4%
Q12: Do you believe that Nigerian men should give women more opportunities to assume elective posts in Nigerian Politics?	191 66.8%	85 29.7%	10 3.4%

M: Voted for male candidate

F: Voted for female candidate

### Subscribing to Equality between Men and Women

**Question 6** probes whether respondents subscribed to the notion of equality between men and women. Of the total of 286 valid respondents, 127 or 44.4 per cent answered in the affirmative, while 138 or 48.3 per cent which constitutes the majority were negative. **Question 7** probed the reasons for the varied answers by respondents. Very cogent in the reasons cited by the respondents who subscribed positively to gender equality is that men and women are equal before God. Added to this is the response that women and men have the same morphological characteristics. In essence, the respondents believe that both men

and women were created equally, and are therefore equal before God. The second supporting justification borders on the rule of law. The respondents believe that constitutionally and legally, both sexes are equal. They therefore believe that, for the sake of justice, all sexes should be treated as equal.

The majority 138 (48.3%) respondents who did not believe in sex equality presented contrary opinions. Ironically, the first justification for their stand was the religious factor. There was a consensus of opinion that gender equality is unbiblical and therefore un-Godly. They propounded that God has created women as mere helpers of men and that God has placed men in charge and women are subordinates. Besides religious injunctions, the respondents also believe that African culture makes the society a man's world, and therefore the culture makes women subordinates. Biological reasons were also given as promoting gender-biased discrimination against women. The respondents submitted that in-born endowments of the sexes differ and, therefore, they are naturally not equal. Ironically, 64.3 per cent of the 138 respondents who did not subscribe to gender equality were women.

### **Are Women Being Marginalized in Politics?**

**Question 8** asks respondents if they agreed with the belief that women are being marginalized. One hundred and fifty-nine or 55.6 per cent of valid responses agreed with the belief while 95 or 33.2 per cent did not. **Question 9** interrogates the respondents on their opposing stands. The 55.6 per cent majority who agreed that women were being marginalized justified their position by stating that women had neither been given the chance to rule the country nor had they been given the opportunity to govern the states. They, therefore, believed that depriving women of the chance to assume the leadership of the country and other key positions in Nigerian politics amounts to sex-based marginalization against women. Finally, they claimed that women had not been given adequate opportunities to actualize their leadership and administrative potentials. Respondents who did not believe that women are being marginalized reasoned that women have always been part of government. They rationalized this claim by pointing to the fact that in the present dispensation, there are many female ministers in the federal cabinet. The respondents advised that if women have the feeling that they are being marginalized and are desirous of more posts, they should come out to compete for political positions as politics is about competition. This group of respondent sat the same time put a rider in that African culture does not allow many men to permit their wives to participate in politics because of negative influences such as moral corruption. The moral question in politics, hence, presents a serious

constraint on the advocacy for increased and active participation of women in competitive politics.

### **Women and their Fair Share of Posts in the Present Democracy**

**Question 10** asks respondents whether women have a fair share of elective/ political posts in the present democratic dispensation in Nigeria at all levels of governance. There was an equal number of respondents who answered Yes and No. One hundred and thirty-eight or 48.3 per cent answered affirmatively while the same number said No. Ten or 3.4 per cent did not respond to the question.

**Question 11** requires the respondents to justify their positions on the issue. Respondents who agreed that women did not have a fair share of positions in the present government claimed that the number of women in government at all levels is very low. These respondents believed that women are under-represented, considering their percentage in the national population. It was finally submitted that higher positions such as vice-president, more ministerial positions and key posts at the other levels of government could still be entrusted to women. The respondents who answered No to this question were equal in number to those who answered Yes. They believed that women already have a fair share of positions in government. They claimed that women are only being over zealous, and therefore, asked the question that after having been appointed ministers, special advisers and elected as deputy governors and members of parliaments, what again do women want? They believed that the present regime has given more opportunities to women to occupy key political posts than ever before.

### **Gender Voted for in the May 2003 Presidential Election**

**Question 12** asked respondents which sex they voted for in the May 2003 presidential election, which featured men, three female presidential and three female vice-presidential candidates under different political party banners. Of the 286 valid responses, 233 or 81.5 per cent majority claimed they voted for male candidates in the election while 21 or 7.3 per cent voted for female candidates. A sex analysis of the two groups of respondents is interesting. Of the 233 who voted for male candidates, according to the survey, 54.5 per cent were women while men accounted for 45.5 per cent. Of the surveyed men, none voted for a female candidate, implying that the entire 7.3 per cent of the valid respondents who claimed they voted for women were 100 per cent women. Of the 32 or 11.9 per cent who did not respond to the question or claimed indifference to sexes, 40 per cent and 60 per cent were women and men respectively. Reasons for the

biased electoral behaviour against the female candidates were situated in the traditional gender stereotypes and biases, which are elaborated below (Question 15).

### **Supporting a Female as State Governor in the 2007 Election**

**Question 13** enquired if respondents would support a female as governor of their respective states in the 2007 election, 138 respondents or 48.3 per cent pledged support for a female candidate while 116 or 50.5 per cent said they would not support a female aspirant. Thirty-two or 11.2 per cent of the valid respondents either did not make a choice or said they were indifferent to whichever sex assumes the governorship.

### **A Woman President in 2007**

**Question 14** specifically asked if respondents would want a woman to emerge as the next president of Nigeria in the 2007 election. Ninety-five or 33.2 per cent of the 286 valid returns answered Yes to the question while 170 or 58.4 per cent of the respondents would not want such a development. The percentage that did not respond to the question was 7.3.

**Question 15** sought follow-up justification for responses to Questions 13 and 14. Respondents who affirmatively lent support to the election of a female governor and president in the 2007 elections gave two major reasons for their opinion. One, they believed that women are naturally very patient and caring, and therefore, that they would be able to provide better leadership for the country and motherly care for the masses. Two, the respondents also argued that a woman president will be able to provide solutions to the endemic political and ethno-religious violence that has characterized the nation's democracy since 1999. In all, the respondents envisaged good governance under a female political leadership, either as governor or president. On the other hand, respondents who would not support females for governorship and the presidency in the next elections put forward an avalanche of reasons to rationalize their position. They claimed that the nation on one hand and the presidency on the other are too big for a female president to handle. They believed that average women do not have the zeal, skill, mind, strength, experience and the courage that such a leadership position requires. They opined that women who have failed in managing even their homes cannot be entrusted with the tasks and rigours of the presidency. They doubted whether women would be able to contain the volatile and exuberance behaviour of parliamentarians at the federal and state levels. Besides

the reasons advanced above, the respondents were also of the position that the political system is too fragile and immature for a female leadership, and moreover, most Nigerian men are not prepared to be bossed about, and dictated to, by women. They finally resolved that maybe in the 'far future', women could be allowed the presidential leadership. These responses are typically sexist.

### **Assessment of Nigerian First Ladies' Programmes**

**Question 16** requested respondents to evaluate the first ladies' programmes, especially those of the three most popular first ladies: Maryam Babangida, Maryam Abacha and Stella Obasanjo. Majority of the respondents believed that the first ladies' programmes had no direct benefits for the political emancipation and aspirations of the Nigerian women, and therefore, were a waste of time, energy and resources. They claimed that the programmes were too elitist and urban-oriented, thereby deliberately excluding rural women and other common women in the cities. The conclusion of this group of respondents was that the only benefits of the programmes were the advantages of the office enjoyed by the first ladies themselves. In this regard, the respondents averred that the office and the programmes had only availed the first ladies the opportunity to keep themselves busy. They also believed that the office provided them with avenues to embezzle public funds, to acquire fame and to exhibit their latest clothes. In the more extreme, the respondents believed that the office of the First Lady and the programmes are sex-biased and promote 'gender war' and 'gender hatred'. Nonetheless, a minority group of the respondents identified some merits in the first ladies' programmes. According to them, first ladies have been able to articulate and project the problems of women and have helped to amplify the important role of women in society. The respondents admitted that the programmes had good intentions but were poorly executed.

### **Impact of First Ladies' Programmes on the Status and Conditions of Women**

**Questions 17 and 19** are similar. They enquired if the first ladies' programmes had improved the status of women in the country. Of the 286 valid responses, 96 or 33.6 per cent believed that the programmes had brought improvement to the Status of women while 180 or 63 per cent thought otherwise. **Question 18** elicited further information from the respondents on their respective opinions. The 96 respondents who believed that the programmes had brought improvement to the status of women argued that the programmes had given Nigerian women a breakthrough

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in politics which had made it possible for some women to attain some top positions, such as ministers and executive posts in certain parastatals, including the National Agency for Food and Drugs Administration Control (NAFDAC). This was headed by Dr (Mrs) Dora Akunyili who was adjudged by the respondents to be performing excellently. They were also of the belief that the first ladies had given Nigerian women a sense of hope, provided a basis for unity among women, and restored human dignity to women through fighting such ills as prostitution and women trafficking.

The other group of 180 respondents who believed that the first ladies' programmes did not improve the status of women argued that the first ladies were merely pursuing their own selfish goals and those of their husbands. They further believed that the programmes had not bestowed any lasting legacy and, consequently, were lacking in sustained impacts on the masses of women. Lastly, they submitted that the office of the First Lady is *ab initio* unconstitutional, illegal and therefore should be scrapped.

### **Enhancing Women's Active Participation in Decision-making and Political Leadership**

**Question 20** enquired into ways that Nigerian women could be encouraged into participating more actively in decision-making and political leadership. A two-pronged response was gathered on the issue. Eighty-eight or 30.8 per cent of the respondents, out of whom 26 and 62 were females and males respectively, did not see any need for the question. According to them, women should be discouraged from participating in politics and they should be satisfied with playing the role of second fiddle in society. They also believed that if women were allowed active political leadership roles, they would be more powerful and richer than their husbands, a development which has no traditional or cultural foundation in the African society. On the other hand, 192 (67.1%) of the respondents comprising 110 (57.3%) females and 82 (42.7%) males gave some useful suggestions on how women could perform active roles in decision-making and political leadership. They advised that many women should strive to acquire education first by paying attention to the education of female children, and second, by organizing and attending seminars, conferences, workshops and enlightenment campaigns that could give them the necessary exposure, experience and leadership skills. Four males and two females, making a total of 6 (2.1%), did not respond to the question, probably because they did not know what to say or maybe they were just uninterested in the issue raised.

## Should Nigerian Men Give Women More Opportunities to Assume Elective Posts?

**Question 21** asked if respondents believed that Nigerian men should give women more opportunities to assume elective posts. As many as 191 (66.8%) of the 286 respondents answered in the affirmative. Of this figure, 80 (41.9%) were males while 111 (58.1%) were females. Eighty-five (29.7%) responded negatively, out of which 26 (30.6%) were females and the rest 59 (69.4%) were males. There were also 10 (3.4%) of the respondents who did not give any opinion. Only one female belonged to this category. They did not respond to the question probably because they had not made up their minds on the choice of options made available to them or were just apathetic.

**Question 22** probed the minds of the respondents on their choices. Respondents who agreed that women should be given more opportunities in politics (191), particularly the females among them (111), averred that women are result-oriented, and that they understand the needs of the family and the society. Therefore, they can transfer this ability to the service of the nation and the people in general. The male and female respondents believed that women have equal intelligence and ability with men. They both agreed that women do not often abuse public offices, unlike men. On the contrary, respondents (85) who opposed such a move, the majority of whom were males (59), argued that women should fight for themselves and create 'enabling environments' for their pursuance of political aspirations. The respondents did not explain what they meant by enabling environments and women fighting for themselves. Ironically, some of the women respondents in this category nursed the fear that women might further corrupt an already corrupt system. The respondents however failed to clarify whether they meant moral or material corruption, or both.

**Question 23** did not ask any specific question but requested respondents to make any further comments on the issues raised in the survey. The summary of the avalanche of comments is that, one, the office of the First Lady should be scrapped as it has failed as a women's rights advocacy. The second is that women should be given a free hand and be encouraged to participate fully in the political process, but the respondents were apprehensive that women may be constrained in participating actively because the political field is very rough, violent and lacking in standards, a problem the respondents attributed to prolonged military rule in the country.

In summary, two discernible observations can be made from the field surveys. The first observation concerns the issue of women's marginality generally, while

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the second is about the first ladies. On sexism against women, the survey found the cultural, religious and traditional stereotypes against women to be valid, and therefore, they were not just mere theoretical postulations by feminists. Field observations show that the stereotypes have gained 'taproots' in the minds of most people, both women and men. Most respondents did not envisage feminine leadership for the country in the near future. Such people believed that the cultural and religious limitations against women are sacrosanct and divine, and therefore irrevocable. Male leadership is seen as ordained by God, thereby men assuming positions of leadership is perceived as natural and just. Issues of gender equity, gender justice and gender balance are therefore largely perceived as unnatural, a-historical, sacrilegious and lacking in precedence.

The second observation relates to the First Lady's office and its programmes. Surveyed opinion is that the office is not only illegal, but it has also failed to promote the political interests of women. It is the general belief that the office is only self-serving as it is being used as a conduit to siphon off public funds to enrich the first ladies themselves, their family members, friends and close associates. The majority of opinion suggested that the office should be scrapped for lack of benefit and relevance to common women.







## Conclusion

'First Ladyism' has become a syndrome and a phenomenal issue in Nigerian government and politics. The First Lady's office, since its radical transformation under the Babangida regime, from its hitherto traditional inactiveness to assume a vanguard role in feminist advocacies, is yet to be seen as a potent and effective gender-mainstreaming strategy for negotiating the corridors of power for women. Access to the corridors of power is still gendered, having been restricted to male politicians. Nigerian women are still marginalized in virtually all sectors of the political system including marketable skills, national wealth, prestige and political power. Nonetheless, women have always been seen as playing active political roles since the pre-colonial era, but not much has been achieved in terms of attaining elective positions, taking part in decision-making or providing political leadership.

Affirmative actions aimed at gender-mainstreaming and gender justice agreed to at both local and international levels are yet to become realistic. For instance, the Political Bureau, a body instituted by the Babangida regime, recommended the allocation of 5 per cent of the legislative seats to women in all the three tiers of government; this remains a laudable ideal only on paper. Likewise, the 30 per cent of representative seats in the legislative and executive arms of government conceded to women, and to be implemented globally, has only been adopted in principle by Nigeria. The reality is that no regime, either military or democratic, has met the two recommended allocations to women at both federal and state levels. The best that has been recorded by women in ministerial appointive positions was in 2003 when 14.3 per cent of cabinet seats were allocated to them and for the first time in the political history of the nation, a woman was made a Finance Minister; she also later became the nation's first female Foreign Affairs Minister. Also, women's best outing in the federal legislative arm was in 1999 when they secured 5.3 per cent of the total membership of the House of Representatives. This marginally met the Political Bureau's recommendations. It was only at the



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local government level in 1990, under the Babangida administration, that women ever controlled 15.9 per cent of the total number of councils nationwide. Although this may be seen as far above the local percentage allocated to women in the legislative arm at the grassroots, nevertheless it fell far below the 30 per cent allocations made at the global level. Besides, the 15.9 per cent was a cumulative figure. A council-by-council analysis would have shown a lower percentage of actual seats won by women in most local governments within the period. In all, women had only been given token appointments.

The failure of the state at all levels to meet these agreed affirmative actions implies that women remain sidelined political actors and appendages of men in power. This is a development that has only reinforced the hitherto imbalanced gender power relations in the nation's politics. The character of Nigerian politics and governance, therefore, remains, that of politics of female gender exclusion and oppression. Women were merely allowed to serve marginally in government through appointed positions but had not been allowed to be in power by assuming elective chief executive positions with decision-making authority. When subjected to critical analysis, the First Lady's office as a framework for en-gendering the nation's politics has not only failed in this desirable goal but it has also become an instrument for meeting diabolical and personalized interests rather than the general interests and welfare of Nigerian women. Foremost are the economic interests of the first ladies. It has become transparent that the hidden motive of the first ladies is the accumulation and protection of family wealth. The office has become an avenue to perpetrate corruption.

Nigeria is noted for endemic and entrenched political and bureaucratic corruption (Ajayi 2003:153-172). The office of the First Lady has no place in the nation's constitution and, consequently, it has no budgetary allocations. Nonetheless, the first ladies have been noted for extravagance. Fleets of cars are allocated to the respective first ladies by their husbands with a retinue of government officials attached to them as press secretaries, special advisers, special assistants and personal assistants on virtually all issues. This is in addition to staffing the office of the Second Lady, that is, the wife of the Vice-President, with the same category of officials. Besides civil officials, the office also has its security unit with security and escort cars. The office also has its own press crew. The First Lady has total control over these officials who are responsible to her. The state is responsible for the upkeep of these officials and the vehicles, implying, therefore, that money is illegally made available to the office of the First Lady. In addition to public officials, the First Lady is always

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surrounded by groups of women, including her friends, close political and business associates, and others who always travel in the convoy of the First Lady while she in turn provides for their welfare, including accommodation in five-star hotels.

To confirm the profligacy that has characterized the office, the Central Bank of Nigeria made public, in 1992, that within the first year of Maryam Babangida's Better Life for Rural Women Programme (BLP), its projects had cost N400 million (about US\$3.13 million), a figure believed not to have included staff salaries, vehicles and other items (*African Concord* 1992:21). Maryam Babangida gave no satisfactory answer when questions were raised about the sources of the money spent by her office (Mama 1995:50). The high level of extravagance and wastage that characterize the lifestyle of the first ladies had at one time or the other irked members of the public into making critical comments about the office and taking legal actions against it.

Besides the illegal budgetary allocations to the office, first ladies since the Babangida era have been noted for arranging special fund-raising from members of the public, groups and associations. Public and civil officials often donate money in their official and personal capacities. Officially, funds of ministries and parastatals under the political and bureaucratic personnel are used as donations at the fund-raising. Whatever amount is realized from such fund-raising belongs to the First Lady and she is not answerable to anyone as to how she spends it. On the whole, the accounts of the first ladies are not subject to audit control and financial regulations to check fraud as the office is not constitutional in law. Hence, most international donor agencies do not like working with first ladies including wives of governors, because of the way funds are diverted to private pockets.<sup>1</sup> It, therefore, becomes very clear that the office is an avenue to have access to the nation's treasury.

In the quest for material accumulation by the first ladies, the rural women that they were expected to protect were oppressed and exploited. For instance, Maryam Babangida used her pet programme, BLP, to further impoverish the rural people. She allegedly did this by purchasing from the rural women items including agricultural produce, cultural materials such as beads and handcrafts which were displayed at both local and international fairs but Mrs Babangida neither paid for the items nor returned them after the fairs.<sup>2</sup> Exploitative behaviour through the BLP did not end with this. Credit facilities made available to the rural women were accompanied with exploitatively high interest rates.<sup>3</sup> Rural women therefore largely saw BLP as a programme which increased their yoke rather than providing economic assistance. Similarly, the Family Support Programme (FSP) of Mrs Maryam Abacha was not exempted from the misuse and abuse of the office of the First Lady as a tool for exploiting the less privileged

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women in the society. To complement the FSP, Mrs Abacha established the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) to improve the living conditions of Nigerians, particularly low income earners, through the provision of micro-credit facilities for cottage industries. The rural people and other under-privileged people in the urban centres were made to collect forms at the rate of ₦500 (about US\$4) each and thereafter were required to form creditcooperative groups with members contributing additional minimum ₦500 per head to be able to take the credit facility. It was alleged that the targeted under-privileged rural people were never given the loan while their deposits were not refunded before the regime was replaced. The exploitation of the poor and rural people through the BLP and FSP brings to the forefront the pro-elite character of the programmes of the first ladies. The pet projects of the first ladies lacked popular participation and the actual involvement of rural women. The planning and implementation of the programmes were done by urban female elites who operate from the seats of government, Abuja and the state capitals. The flamboyant dressing and extravagant posturing of the first ladies and wives of state governors, local government chairmen and other men in power do not only distance them from the rural people who were the targets of the programmes, they did not also normally provide a levelled playingfield for the privileged and under-privileged, poor women to rub minds on a common cause bordering on gender equality. The superiority complex often exhibited by the privileged women, coupled with economic oppression and ex-ploitation of the rural and under-privileged women, meant that what needs to be resolved first are intra-gender marginality, inequality and injustice. 'First Ladyism' has become more or less a platform of action for self-empowerment, acquisition of fame and building of personality cults. The first ladies since the Babangida era have used their offices to acquire influence and power at individual levels rather than for women in general. This is particularly so with the two Maryams: Maryam Babangida and Maryam Abacha. The two exerted so much influence on their respective husbands that many Nigerians lobbied them to be able to secure their husbands' favour. The frequency of the First Lady's appearances on television and speeches made on radios, coupled with advertised congratulatory messages in national dailies and magazines by ministries, parastatals, agencies, organizations and wives of other public officials often surpassed those of the president himself. Advertisements in print and electronic mass media were complemented by the award of traditional titles and honorary doctoral degrees. Notably, Mrs Babangida, Mrs Abacha and Mrs Obasanjo received several chieftaincy titles from prominent traditional rulers across the country. They were also awarded several doctoral degrees by the

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universities. Mrs Babangida alone received five doctoral awards. In addition to awards from universities, the first ladies were also noted for receiving local and international awards from private and civil organisations. In 1991, Mrs Babangida received the New York-based Hunger Project's Africa Prize for Leadership as a recognition of her efforts to change Nigerian women's status politically, socially and economically. Many strategic edifices, such as markets, streets, buildings and halls were also named after the first ladies with their portraits hung or painted conspicuously. At the same time, their posters were indiscriminately pasted on any visible structures around towns and villages. Indeed, the office of the First Lady has become an avenue to acquire fame and popularity and for showcasing the latest clothes by the first ladies. The lack of continuity of the successive First Lady's Programmes, however laudable, is not only part of the weaknesses of 'First Ladyism' since it assumed a turning point under the Babangida administration. The successive programmes always die with the originating First Lady. There has been no history of a successor First Lady continuing with the programmes of her predecessor. Each new First Lady always brings forward her own pet programme which may be quite different, in orientation and goals. This only confirms the belief that successive first ladies float their own pet projects in order to pursue self-serving motives rather than the aggregate interests of the Nigerian women.

Of more paramount interest and concern is the use of the office of the First Lady by the respective wives of successive presidents since 1985 as a framework for mobilizing for regime legitimacy and support for their husbands. Virtually all the regimes under focus suffered legitimacy crisis, particularly, the military regimes of Babangida and Abacha under which First Ladyism actually became a syndrome and the inevitable reality of Nigeria's body politics today. The two military regimes lacked popular mandate as they found their way to power through coup d'états. For this reason, military intervention in politics is generally regarded as an aberration as it is neither traditionally, professionally nor constitutionally qualified to govern. The regimes were therefore often faced with the problem of resolving the crisis of legitimacy which accompanied their intrusion into power. The role of the First Lady since the Babangida era is therefore seen as a way of complementing the efforts of state mobilization agencies for the regimes. The office and the pet programmes with the accompanied expenditures by the office, as argued earlier, lack constitutional foundation. One would therefore expect that the illegal and unconstitutional status associated with the previous first ladies and their programmes under military regimes would be avoided by making the First Lady under the present democratic dispensation stick to her traditional ceremonial roles in government, and without engaging in

the illegal allocation of state resources to the office. This expectation is borne out of the fact that in a democratic regime, major policies are subject to constitutional authorization and, hence, state resources being expended on the programmes and the retinue of officials should have been legislatively overruled. This was also the same with the many important projects that Hillary Clinton, America's First Lady, 1992-2000, had dreamed of effecting. The military regimes of Babangida and Abacha, and the civilian presidency of Obasanjo could not do otherwise, as the respective first ladies' programmes promoted their desires for power, their interests and much needed support for the regimes. In particular, President Obasanjo reconciled himself with the activities of his wife despite his earlier pronouncement before assuming power in 1999 that he would abolish the office of the First Lady during his regime.

The scope and organizational structure of the three most outstanding first ladies in the political annals of the country, namely Mrs Babangida, Mrs Abacha and Mrs Obasanjo were manifestations of their real intentions to reach out to the grassroots in mobilizing people in support of their husbands. As part of the mobilization and legitimization strategy, special songs, poems and slogans were composed by urban women. Such songs and poems usually eulogized the persons and achievements of the president and the First Lady. In addition, particularly in the eras of Mrs Abacha and Mrs Babangida, as tangentially pointed out earlier, several markets and parks were named after the first ladies or their husbands by the national, state, local and constituency chapters of the two first ladies' programmes. Statues of the two first ladies or those of their husbands were erected at strategic locations in the country. However, as events later showed, the mobilizing efforts of the two first ladies had hidden motives beyond the advertised purpose of securing legitimacy for their military husbands. Two, Generals Babangida and Abacha had respectively wanted to remain in power for life. Hence, Babangida annulled the June 12, 1993 presidential election which electoral observers, and Babangida himself, claimed to be the freest and fairest election Nigeria ever held, and which was won by M.K.O. Abiola (*Nigeriaworld* 2006), in a bid to remain in power.

General Abacha equally wanted to perpetuate himself in office by planning to contest the transitional election being organized by his regime. He would have won the elections by manipulating the electoral system if he had not died suddenly in 1998. The two first ladies were subtly preparing the ground for their husbands' hidden ambition through their office and programmes. The role of Mrs Stella Obasanjo, before and during the 2003 presidential election, in using her office as First Lady and her pet project, The Child Care Trust, to mobilize women and galvanize their support for her husband in the election also points to the

mobilizing influence of first ladies on the women. Similarly, the aggressive and determined dimension that the campaigns of the Second Lady, Mrs Titi Atiku-Abubakar, have taken regarding her pet project, WOTCLEF, shortly after the 2003 elections, points to the fact that she had been trying to penetrate and influence the women populace in support of her husband who later showed interest in contesting the presidency in 2007. The implication of these first ladies and Mrs Atiku Abubakar's actions is that they never envisaged utilizing their respective office and tenure as wives of men in power to mobilize women in order to facilitate the emergence of a female political leadership at federal and other levels. The truth of the matter, therefore, is that, the first ladies mobilized women electorates to ensure continued male empowerment and domination of critical decision-making centres of the polity, forgetting that participation in decision-making is the kernel of the whole gender-role problem.

### The Way Forward

The office of the First Lady since 1985 has, no doubt, promoted gender awareness and made it possible to bring to national limelight the problems of Nigerian women, particularly concerning their restricted access to the nation's power structure and exclusion from the centre of decision-making at all levels of governance. However, the first ladies' programmes have not really met the expectations of feminists as frameworks for fostering gender-equality in, and fair access by both sexes to, the nation's politics. Since the First Lady's office has become an impotent tool for mainstreaming gender into the nation's political space, especially under the present democratic rule, it therefore becomes imperative to explore some other interventionist platforms of action for accomplishing the much-desired gender justice in the country. The study therefore suggests the following.

First is the need to really understand the issue at stake. What exactly are women and feminists fighting for? Gender mainstreaming deserves adequate understanding and co-operation of both sexes and particularly, the male political elites who may be feeling threatened by women's demands for gender equality, gender equity and gender justice. Men really need to understand what women and women advocacies want. Unless men understand what they actually want, they may not accord women and gender advocacies the desired co-operation. Indeed, women are not actually seeking favour from men in terms of giving them positions not deserved by merit. Women and feminists are neither planning a *coup detat* against men by asking them to abdicate their positions for women, nor are they appealing for men's compassion. Gender advocacies and women are

seeking gender equality operationalized as advocating for a levelled plain field for both sexes to realize their potential assets respectively within the political system. Women also want to actually be in the corridors of power where critical policy issues are discussed and decisions taken, rather than be sideline political actors, playing second-fiddle and marginal roles. Feminist appeals, therefore, border on providing equal power opportunities earned through merit for both sexes, and thereby liberalize the occupation of all high positions in all sectors of the polity including the social, political and economic spheres. It is also a demand for equal employment opportunities and equal labour standards. The understanding of these women's desires by men and sexists cannot but significantly motivate them to co-operate in mitigating the age-long gender imbalance and injustice being suffered by the female gender in Nigeria. Invariably, a clear understanding by men, of the demands of women and women's movements, will inevitably lead to a re-orientation of the need for women to be actively involved in politics and decision-making processes. It has been enunciated earlier that women account for half of the nation's population and about 70 per cent of agricultural food production. It will therefore amount to mere social injustice and wickedness to exclude such a large and critical population from the mainstream of national development efforts. It is also the belief that the nation's progress will be retarded if women are excluded from development efforts. These demands are in no way posing any threats to men's position in the societal scheme of things.

Any sustainable re-orientation towards promoting new attitudes and behaviour about feminine issues within the Nigerian system needs to be reinforced and backed up by official policy change towards the equal status of women with men in terms of equality of opportunities. Affirmative legislative action in terms of the introduction of legal reforms should be put in place by the National Assembly, and such legislation should also be effectively enforced. Effective enforcement is emphasized because the nation previously took some statutory decisions geared towards gender-mainstreaming but which remained laudable only on paper. An example of this is the 5 per cent allocation of all elective legislative posts to women at all levels recommended by the Political Bureau which has not been met by any form of government. Similarly, the 30 per cent allocation of elective positions to women agreed to at many international forums is yet to be implemented to the letter by the country's leaders.

The starting point of legal reforms in favour of all sexes is the review of the 1999 constitution, which is perceived as absolutely gendered. As pointed out earlier, the pronoun 'he' was used in the Constitution 235 times, implying that the contents and language of the constitution are deeply gendered. To make the



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legal instrument gender-blind and be seen as providing equal opportunities for both sexes, all gender gaps such as the issues of language, citizenship and religion should be reviewed in favour of both genders. For instance, the words 'any person' can be substituted for all the places where 'he' has been used. The constitution should also provide for clauses that will remove all cultural biases against women. Providing an accommodating legal environment is not enough to actualize the ideals of feminism. It is necessary that the *ad hoc* rotational presidency among the government's own designed geo-political zones be reformulated to cover rotation between the two sexes. That is, gender-rotational advocacy, implying rotating the presidency between Nigerian women and men as the position goes round the geo-political zones. This suggestion is born out of the fear that it may take time convincing men and sexists to jettison the age-long stereotypes against women, coupled with the belief that traditions and cultural attitudes are not easily or quickly changed. A constitutional reform incorporating gender-based rotational presidency would make it a permanent design that could ensure that both sexes have a stake in the Nigerian development project and therefore both sexes should contribute to its achievement. In addition to this, a quota system should be established for the sharing of other political offices in the system between the sexes. For instance, the exact number of seats to be occupied by women should be made known in law. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the 30 per cent allocation of elective positions to women agreed to at the United Nations and other global forums have not been taken seriously by the nation. The constitution reformers should state the quota for women in the cabinet, legislature and other centres of authority and decision-making. The quotas at all the levels can again be subjected to rotations across geo-political zones, states, local governments and senatorial districts. A quota system, in filling political positions, may eventually become the enduring platform of action against gender-violence in politics. It is also advised that Nigerian leaders should no longer waste time in adopting the African Union's (AU) Protocol to African Charter on the Rights of Women as a complement to local statutes and legal reforms on gender-mainstreaming. It amounts to financial mismanagement and economic sabotage to spend a lot of state resources, energy and time on attending international conferences where gender affirmative legislations were discussed, signed and adopted without putting them into concrete and effective use.

Political education for women is another desirable interventionist action to mitigate gender violence, particularly in politics. Advocacy for feminine political education is informed by the fact that women do not know what they actually desire. Many women are ignorant of the need for active participation in politics

or why they should provide national leadership. Many women share the stereotype that women are not born to rule but to assist men. This accounted for the loss of the presidency by the female contestants in the 2003 election despite the fact that women constituted 60 per cent of electorates (Dorgu 2003: 6). The female contestants lost the election to male candidates because even women electors preferred male leadership. This naïve political behaviour by the female gender was caused by their lack of consciousness that sexism in the contemporary world system is a class struggle in non-production capitalist terms.

Women's unconscious status is a product of the fact that the illiteracy rate among them is 61 per cent, implying that many of them are uninformed because they are not educated. The few women that tend to play active roles in politics are seen as wayward, morally undisciplined and corrupt. In an election therefore, such 'wayward' women are voted against by their own gender. Most women political aspirants are therefore victims of gender discrimination and bias. Same-sex bias therefore constitutes a paradox in gender-mainstreaming in Nigeria. Women need intense political education for them to be liberated from their status of unconsciousness on the issue at stake. They need to be educated that the essential key to female empowerment is women themselves. Women political aspirants need the support of other women to accomplish their goals as they have the electoral strength to do so. Giving mass support to fellow female contestants can assure their victory at the polls. At another level, political consciousness through effective political education will give the women a new orientation that they are not to be used as political campaign tools in the hands of male politicians. Women are accorded their most important status and relevance during electioneering campaigns where they sing and dance endlessly to the admiration of the crowds but after the actual elections, male politicians are noted for abandoning such women without considering them for appointment to the high political posts where they can participate in decision-making.

The urge for political consciousness through political education boils down to a call that women themselves should be more affirmative. They should aim high and make themselves indispensable in all sectors of the polity. It is within this appeal that more women were advised to compete for high positions in the 2007 elections. As at then, more than 20 women and 380 male contestants had respectively indicated their intentions to contest the presidency and governorship seats (Ogienagbon 2006:13; Muogbo and Daniel 2006:4). To this end, they had been crossing the length and breadth of the country engaging in the alignment and re-alignment of political forces in preparation for the election. Ironically, no female politician showed any interest in the race for the two elective positions. If any woman eventually showed up, it must have been too late for her to win the

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primaries, as this early set of male aspirants would have covered a lot of ground which would be to her disadvantage. In essence, women should start strategizing for the 2007 elections now.

Establishing a Community-Based Advocacy Networking (CBAN) is also essential for a sustainable and effective political education of women. CBAN is informed by the knowledge that the first ladies interventionist programmes failed, in part, because they were urban-based and therefore too far away from their units of analysis and targets which were the rural people. Women movements and feminists need to establish effective operational bases in the rural areas where they can mix and mingle with the rural women on a constant basis in a bid to keep them constantly informed and agitate their consciousness level as to their marginality and the needs for political empowerment through self-help by supporting women aspiring for positions. Advocacies and feminists need to know that gender mainstreaming is not an easy task and therefore needs continuous determination and devotion of time and resources to be able to make significant impacts.

Lastly is the issue of women's economic empowerment. There can be no meaningful, successful and durable female political empowerment without economic empowerment. Operationally, the interdisciplinary gender research community and feminists see economic empowerment as fundamentally connoting transformation of power relations between men and women in societies at four distinct levels, namely the household/family, the community, the market and the state (Adedokun 2000:131). Such a transformation has different dimensions in terms of power contexts. These include access to, and control over, material and other resources – economic, legal, institutional and social, as well as a possible and measurable change in self-perception and confidence (ibid). Female gender economic empowerment is an end in itself as it directly results in the improvement of women's rights, status, abilities and capabilities in society.

Female gender economic empowerment advocacy is informed by a number of reasons. One, poverty is deeper among women than men, and it affects a greater number of women than men. Statistically, according to the Beijing Conference, 70 per cent of women live in poverty. Paradoxically, Nigerian women are responsible for 70 per cent of production and processing of the nation's food supply, yet they have access to less than 20 per cent of the resources available in the agricultural sector (Ojuolape 2001:4). Two, because of the expensive nature of Nigeria's electoral politics, not many women have the economic wherewithal to engage in prolonged election campaigns that characterized the nation's transitional elections in the past. Economic empowerment and financial capacity,

therefore, serve as a vital key to political opportunities. The race for the 2007 elections had already started in 2003, four full years ahead. It seemed that no woman could match the economic strength of the male candidates that had signified their intentions to contest the presidential ticket in the elections. Therefore, besides the traditional stereotypes against women, poverty is another crux for their low participation in competitive politics.

On-going economic reforms embracing structural adjustment programme (SAP), deregulation of the local sector of petroleum consumption with the accompanied incessant hike of prices of domestic petroleum products, in addition to the overall ill-effects of globalization, have continued to adversely affect the economic conditions of Nigerian women. In confirmation of the ill-effects of economic reforms on women, the Third World Network (2002:1), in its reports on 'Engendering Development through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources and Voices', noted that in Eastern Europe, there had been a drop in female representation from 25 per cent to 7 per cent since the adoption of economic reforms after the fall of communism. Nigerian rural women bear a heavy brunt of the economic reforms as they have to toil harder to eke out a living. Under these circumstances, not many women can contemplate contesting political positions. There is therefore a need for public economic policies that will be gender-friendly in terms of reducing the economic burden on the masses of women and at the same time promoting their economic empowerment, and consequently arousing a measure of capacity building for their active political participation. Interventions necessary to effect female economic empowerment to be contained in such economic policy changes should include:

### **1. National Gender Specific Employment Policy**

There cannot be female economic empowerment without gainful employment. There is a positive correlation between unemployment and economic powerlessness on one hand, and political powerlessness on the other.

Unemployment is more rampant among women than men in the country because of gender discriminatory labour laws. Most employers have a preference for male employees, as they detest married women and nursing mothers. Hence, most women are informal sector workers. The professional and marginal occupations constitute only 18 per cent women (FRN 2000:9). A new employment policy, making the employment of women mandatory for all employers in all sectors, should be made. Such employment policy must enforce a specific quota for women in the workforce across sectors. The female gender, mainstreaming into the labour force through the new national policy should, in addition,

genuinely eliminate all discriminatory practices against women in the workplace, including contempt for nursing-mother workers, discriminatory tax laws and inequality in gender wages.

## **2. A Special Micro-credit Scheme for Women**

Instituting a special micro-credit scheme for women by the government would go along way to wards reducing poverty and increasing the economic status of women. The need for this is a product of the thought that women are marginalized in the formal sector of employment, which has subsequently reduced their access to substantial regular salaried income, and in addition confined the majority of women to the agricultural and informal sectors of the economy. Most of the women in these informal sectors engage in trading with little or no money to invest in the expansion of their trades. Many have also learned one vocational skill or another such as tailoring, dyeing, weaving, hair dressing and soap making but without capital to start off. Attempts by official schemes such as the National Poverty Eradication Programmes (NAPEP) by the federal government have been politicized as only the ruling political party's members and loyalists are the ones benefiting. Even these beneficiaries are mostly male. The Federal government should establish a special micro-credit agency or bank for onlywomen so as to ensure guaranteed access to institutionalized credit facilities to pursue their trades and buy the necessary ingredients for their learned vocations. The women who constitute 80 per cent of the labour force in agriculture but who are only in control of just 20 per cent of resources in the sector should be given adequate access to credit facilities so as to enable them to possess the necessary implements, crop seedlings, fertilizers and chemicals for their farms.

Finally, attempts to engender the nation's politics and other sectors of the polity should be perceived as a national responsibility that involves all, individually and collectively, rather than being left only to the first ladies who are constrained by privatized interests and are therefore not adequately or genuinely committed to female empowerment. The over-riding dual interests of their husbands' aspirations to remain in power while they, too, continue to enjoy the admirable office of the First Lady have weakened the gender mainstreaming potentials and capabilities of Nigeria's first ladies. Their lack of commitment and genuineness to women's political empowerment due to these reasons, therefore, brings into clear focus the self-endangering character of Nigerian women and, indeed, the paradox of gender equality in the Nigerian political system in general.

## Notes

1. Information collected during an oral interview survey with Mrs O. Ogunyemi, Director, Ministry of Women Affairs, Ekiti State, Nigeria, January 14, 2004.
2. This fact was collected during interactions with some rural women across the geo-political zones surveyed for primary data.
3. Information collected from the affected women during field survey for primary data collection.

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# Appendix

## Research Questionnaire

Dear respondent, please, this is a questionnaire on a study titled *The Concept of the First Lady and the Engendering of Politics in Nigeria*.

The study, among other objectives, aims at examining the basic problems of women and factors that facilitate gender inequality and women vulnerability to political marginalization in Nigeria. At the same time, the study will interrogate and assess women advocacy strategies of successive first ladies as gender-gap alleviation measures in Nigeria.

Please, the questionnaire requires you to answer the following questions the way you feel about them. There are no correct or wrong answers. We hereby assure you that your responses will be used for the purposes of this research only and consequently, **will not** be disclosed to any one, group(s) or organization(s).

1. Sex  
(a) Male (b) Female
2. Occupation
3. Highest level of Education attained
4. Status/Rank/Position Held
5. Age Rank  
(a) 13-17 yrs (b) 18 Yrs and above
6. Do you subscribe to the notion of equality between men and women?  
(a) Yes (b) No.
7. Give reasons for your answer to Question 6
8. Do you agree with the belief that women are being marginalized in Nigerian politics  
(a) Yes (b) No
9. Give reasons for your answer to Question 8.

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10. Are women having a fair share of elective/political posts in the present democratic dispensation in Nigeria?  
(a) Yes (b) No
11. Give reasons for your answer to Question 10.
12. In the May 2003 Presidential election, which gender did you vote for  
(a) Male candidate (b) Female Candidate
13. Will you support a female as Governor of your state in the 2007 election?  
(a) Yes (b) No
14. Will you want a woman to emerge as the next President of Nigeria in 2007  
(a) Yes (b) No
15. Please, give reasons for your answer to Questions 13 and 14.
16. How would you assess Nigerian first ladies' programmes, especially Maryam Babangida, Maryam Abacha and Stella Obasanjo?
17. Have the first ladies' programmes improved the status of women in Nigeria  
(a) Yes (b) No
18. Give reasons for your answer to Question 17
19. In your own opinion, what impacts do you think the first ladies' programmes have had on the Nigerian women?
20. In what ways do you think the Nigerian Women can be made to participate more actively in decision-making and political leadership?
21. Finally, do you believe that Nigerian men should give women more opportunities to assume elective posts in Nigerian politics?  
(a) Yes (b) No
22. Give reasons for your answer to Question 21.
23. Other comments (please, feel free to say your mind).