

## WOMEN IN POLITICS AND DECISION-MAKING IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

**Ngara**, Christopher Ochanja

National Institute for Legislative Studies,  
National Assembly, Plot 2824 Danube Street, off IBB Way,  
Maitama, Abuja, Nigeria

**cossychris@yahoo.com**  
**+234 8036718097** (Corresponding Author)

**Ayabam**, Alexius Terwase

Stanbic IBTC Bank Plc, 22 Hamman Ruwa Way,  
Jalingo, Taraba State

### ABSTRACT

**T**his paper examines the challenges and prospects of women in politics and decision making in Nigeria. It is observed that from independence in 1960 to 1999 only about 3.1% of women were elected into political office and 5% into appointive position respectively. However, from 1999 with the reintroduction of democracy, there has been a drastic increase in women political participation in both elective and appointive capacities. In spite of these increase, women are still highly marginalized considering the disparity in the proportion of men to women in politics and decision making position. The problem that account for the comparatively low presence of women in politics and decision making in Nigeria as identified in this paper includes: lack of funds, negative perception of politics by women, low self-confidence, cultural and religious barriers, political violence, low level of educational attainment and marginalization in political party leadership. In spite of these challenges, the rising number of educated women and professionals, the growth and increased political activism and advocacy for women's rights by women groups, the increasing recognition of the role of women in governance and implementation of affirmative action by successive government since the return to democracy and the outstanding achievements of women in politics and administrative positions has not only improved the visibility and pedigree of women in governance but has also created a bright prospects for a more active role for women in politics and decision making in Nigeria.

**Key words:** women, decision making, political participation, challenges, prospects.

## 1.0.Introduction

The question of women in politics and decision making has been a topical issue in Nigeria since independence. In the 1<sup>st</sup> republic there were only four female legislators in the whole of the country, a number that was so negligible to give women the necessary influence in politics. As a result, women could not play any active role in decision making process in that epoch. The imposition of military rule, an era that followed this period from 1966 did not foster women participation in politics and very little was heard of women in politics and decision making (Samuel and Segun, 2012:7). The 2<sup>nd</sup> and particularly the 3<sup>rd</sup> Republic witnessed further progress with respect to women participation in politics and decision making. Few women emerged as councilor, one woman, Chief (Mrs.) Titilayo Ajanaku, as Chairperson of Abeokuta Local Government Council in Ogun State, two female Deputy Governors, Alhaja Sinatu Ojikutu and Mrs. Cecilia Ekpenyong in Lagos and Cross River State, respectively. Furthermore, only one woman was elected to the Senate and very few others to the House of Representatives. It is worthy of note that before 1999, the proportion of seats occupy by women in national parliament never exceeded 3.1% and 5% for federal Executive council (Luka, 2012). This for the most part accounted for the marginalization of women in public affairs and the exclusion of their interests in governance.

The year 1999 marked the beginning of a new dawn as Nigeria returned to civilian government after the demise of military rule. Women political participation witnessed sharp improvement over previous experience. President Obasanjo who assumed power on May 29<sup>th</sup> 1999 made a clear departure from the past and appointed 4 out of the 29 senior ministers representing 13.7% and 3 out of the 18 junior ministers representing 16.6%. Furthermore, he appointed 2 women advisors and 2 senior special assistants and 6 special assistants and 1 special assistant to the vice president as well as 8 permanent secretaries (Luka, 2012:29). Women were also appointed as commissioners and therefore members of the executive councils in all the states (Kalawole et al, 2012:135). It should be noted that while the number of women in political position drastically increased between 1999 and 2011, the positions were mostly appointive rather than elective. From 1999 to 2011, no woman was elected into the office of the president or governor in any of the 36 states. However, In 1999, out of the total seat of 469 (Senate and House of Representatives), there were only 15 women representing 3.19%; this increased to 25 in 2003 representing 5.33%; there was a further increase in 2007 to 34 representing 7.24% and a slight decline in 2011 to 33 representing 7.03%. Although between 2003 and 2007, 4 to 6 women were elected as deputy governors. In spite of these improvements, the representation of women in politics and decision making in Nigeria is still a far cry from the global benchmark of 35% affirmative action. It is against this background that this paper examines “women in Politics and Decision Making in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects”.

## 2.0.Women in National Development in Nigeria

The general awareness created on the condition of women as the result of the International Women’s Year (1975) and the decade that followed (The United Nation’s Decade for Women, 1975-1985) (Aina, 1993:1) as well as subsequent UN Conferences like the 1992 Rio Conference on Environment and Development, the 1993 Vienna Human Rights Conference, the 1995 Copenhagen Summit on Social Development and the Beijing World Conference (which Nigeria effectively participated and signed its legal instruments) did not only set new priorities, but also produced a blue print for sustainable role of women in development. Thus, in the last three decades, the role of women in national development has assumed a centre stage in public debates in Nigeria. However, opinions are still divided on whether the role of women is best suited in the home fronts or they can also engage in economic and political activities like their male counterparts (Luka, 2012).

The role of women in national development cannot be over emphasized. Their contributions to national development go beyond the narrow customary conception of their role in family keeping and procreation and permeate all facets of the nation's economy. Coleman in Onwubiko (2012:68) argues that women in most societies are regarded as currency with which political and economic alliances are cemented. Thus, in social anthropology, the transfer of women between lineages and clans is regarded as a medium of communication more potent and clearer than language itself. From this perspective, it is needless to state the invaluable contributions of women in fostering unity and cohesion among the diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria through inter-ethnic or inter-tribal marriages. Similarly, the overwhelming majority of the labour that sustain life-growing food, cooking, raising children, caring for the elderly, maintaining a house, hauling of water-is done by women, and universally this work is accorded low status and no pay (Onwobiko, 2012). In the same vein, the ability of women as mothers to plan, organize, direct and coordinate all resources at home to the benefit of all members of the family contributes to stability and peace at the home front which promotes national development.

The 1999 census figure put the proportion of women as slightly more than 50% of the total population in Nigeria. Thus with their numerical strength, they have the potential of turning an ailing economy at the family, local, state or national levels, through their inbreed economic strength, organizational skills and single minded focus to surmount obstacles posed by the environment, culture and stronger partners (the men) (Asaju and Adagba, 2013:59). For instance, 54 million of Nigeria's 80.2 million women live and work in rural areas where they make up 60-79% of the rural work force (British Council, 2012; Agu, 2013). In addition, women are responsible for carrying out 70% of agricultural labour, 50% of animal husbandry related activities and 50-60% of food processing (Mohammed and Abdulquadri, 2012; Akpalaobi, 2011). This is in spite of the fact that they have access to less than 20% of available agricultural resources-serious impediment to their maximizing agricultural production (Akpalaobi, 2011:474).

In politics and decision making, Nigeria's pre-colonial history is replete with the exploits of queen Amina of Zaria, who led armies to drive out invaders from Zaria. Moremi of Ile-Ife, among other who have contributed immensely to the development of their society and left a footprint on the sand of history. The table below shows example of some of these women.

Table 1: Statistics of Women Traditional Rulers in Pre-colonial days.

S/N	Name	Town/Village	LGA	State	Type of Rule	Date
1	Luwo Gbadiaya	Ife	Ife Central L.G.	Osun	Ooni of Ife	Pre-colonial days
2	Iyayun	Oyo	Oyo L.G.	Oyo	Alaafin	Pre-colonial days
3	Orompoto	Oyo	Oyo L.G.	Oyo	Alaafin	Pre-colonial days
4	Jomijomi	Oyo	Oyo L.G.	Oyo	Alaafin	Pre-colonial days
5	Jepojepo	Oyo	Oyo L.G.	Oyo	Alaafin	Pre-colonial days
6	Queen Amina	Zauzau		Zaria	Emir	Pre-colonial days
7	Daura	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
8	Kofono	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
9	Eye-moi	Akure	Akure	Ondo	Regent- Monarch	Pre-colonial days 1705-1735 AD
10	Ayo-Ero	Akure	Akure	Ondo	Regent- Monarch	Pre-colonial days 1850-51 AD
11	Gulfano	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
12	Yawano	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
13	Yakania	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
14	Walsam	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
15	Cadar	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
16	Agagri	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
17	Queen Kanbasa	Bony	Bony L.G.	Rivers	Queen	Pre-colonial days

Source: Kolawale et al (2012)

Equally, Nigeria's recent past speaks of prominent women leaders like Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, Margaret Ekpo and Hajia Gambo Sawaba who champion various causes of women emancipation (Asaju and Adagba, 2013:60). In modern Nigeria, particularly since the introduction of Structural Adjustment Policies in Nigeria in the mid 1980s, "women have played the roles of bread winners and decision makers in many families in the event of the demise of the father of the house or inadequate male presence" (Onwubiko, 2012:68). Today, many women have established themselves in different spheres and professional callings. Examples of these women include Folorunsho Alakija, Hajia Bola Shagaya (Business); Patience Ozokwor, Genevieve Nnaji (Entertainment); Chioma Ajunwa, Amelia Okoli (Sport); Prof. Francisca Okeke, Prof. Grace Alele Williams (Education); Prof. Adenike Grange, Dr. Olufunmilayo Falusi Olupade (Medicine); Diezani Allison-Madueke, Hajia Zainab Maina (Politics) to mention a few.

The steady advancement of women in contributing to the socio-economic development in Nigeria has impacted tremendously on the national polity and successive governments have responded positively in many ways. These include the establishment of Federal Ministry of Women affairs and its parastatal, the National Council of Women's Societies (NCWS) which provided additional and statutory avenue for the promotion of women related issues and the enhancement of their role in national development. Equally, more women were or are being appointed into key political and decision making position such as Ministers, Judges, Permanent Secretaries, Director-General among others. Despite this tremendous feat achieved by women, the wide disparities between men and women in the country in terms of access to socio-economic opportunities including participation in politics and decision making makes it extremely difficult for women to fully realize their potentials in contributing to national development.

### **3.0.Women in Politics and Decision Making in Nigeria**

The reintroduction of democracy in Nigeria has no doubt imposed new demand on government to foster a more open society and promote a greater role for women in public decision making (Okoronkwo, 2001:38). This is in realization that until a significant proportion of women holds public offices and are given the opportunity to initiate, mould and execute public policy and legislation, they cannot effectively tackle the other problems they are bedeviled with. Women themselves have responded to these opportunities at all levels with more women associations taking advantage of the new political opening to assert their roles and advance their course. It is regrettable that although women constitute the greater number of registered voters in any of the elections held in Nigeria, they are yet to experience full representative positions (Okoronkwo-Chukwu, 2013:40). The role women play during the electioneering campaign and voting processes therefore demands that they take preeminent positions in governance considering their sacrifices to the success of the various political parties in each round of election.

In 1999, women participation in politics and decision making witnessed an improvement over previous experience, but generally the scorecard remained very poor. The general elections saw only 181 position won by women out of the 11, 881 available positions throughout the country (Samuel and Segun, 2012:7). In 2003, in States like Adamawa, Cross River, Ebonyi, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Nasarawa, Oyo, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara, no woman was elected as member of the House of Assembly. In states where women were elected as members of the House of Assembly, they were very few (Agbalajobi, 2010:78). At the April 2007 elections, there were total 1200 women aspirants to 1532 offices. 660 of these aspirants won their primaries. Out of these 660 candidates, only 93 finally emerged as winners and these include 6 Deputy Governors (Asaju and Adagba, 2013). The following tables show some of the trends of women in politics and decision making since 1999.

Table 2: Comparison of Women Representation in the 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 Nigerian Elections

Office	1999		2003		2007		2011	
	Seat Available	Women	Seat Available	Women	Seat Available	Women	Seat Available	Women
President	P	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Senate	109	3 (2.8)	109	4 (3.7)	109	9 (8.3)	109	7 (6.4)
House of Reps	360	12 (3.3)	360	21 (5.8)	360	25 (6.9)	360	26 (7.2)
Governor	36	0	36	0	36	0	36	0
State House of Assembly SHA	990	24 (2.4)	990	40 (3.9)	990	57 (5.8)	990	68 (6.9)
SHA Committee Chairperson	829	18 (2.2)	881	32 (3.6)	887	52 (5.9)	887	-
LGA Chairperson	710	13 (1.8)	774	15(1.9)	740	27 (3.6)	740	-
Councilors	6368	69 (1.1)	6368	267 (4.2)	6368	235 (3.7)	6368	-

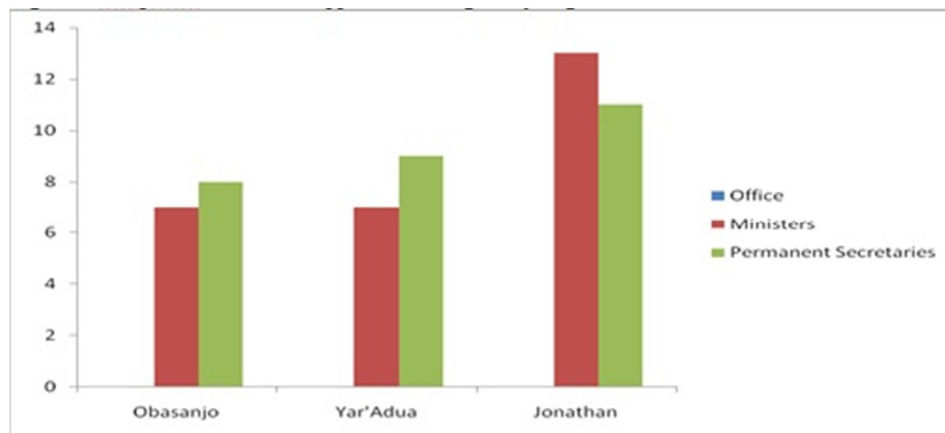
Source: Eyeh (2010) (2012); Irabor (2012) and Okoronkwo-Chukwu (2013).

Table 3: Trends of Women Deputy Governors in Nigeria Since 1999

Election Year	No. of Women Deputy Governors
1999	1
2003	2
2007	6
2011	1

Source: Adapted from Ogunyankin (2012)

Figure 1: Comparison of Women Appointees in Nigeria by Regimes



Derived from data compiled by author from the following sources: Asaju and Adagba (2013); Luka (2012) and Wikipedia (2013).

Table 4: Global Comparison of Percentage of Women in National Parliament.

	Both Houses	Lower House	Upper House
World Average	19.5%	19.7%	18.7%
Sub-Saharan Africa	20.4	19.4	20.2
Nigeria's Percentage	5.5%	5.3%	6.4%

Source: Ogunyankin (2012).

In spite of the poor performance of women in the 2011 National Assembly elections, there is an improvement in the number of women political appointees as reflected in the number of women in the current Federal Executive Council (FEC) led by President Goodluck Jonathan. Out of the 42 ministers appointed before the 13<sup>th</sup> September 2013 cabinet reshuffle, 13 are women, representing 31.0 percent. Similarly, there are 11 female permanent secretaries out of 43 constituting 25 percent, and 5 female advisers out of 13 representing 38 percent. Also, another important milestone recorded by women under the present regime was the appointment of female ministers to manage key ministries hitherto managed by men, e.g. petroleum and aviation Ministries. However, despite the above achievements, a UNDP report concludes that women participation in politics and decision making is still inadequate (Asaju and Adagba, 2013). The British Council (2012) report indicates that Nigeria currently stand at 118 position out of 192 countries in terms of gender parity thereby lacking far behind African countries like South Africa (43%) and Rwanda (65%).

It is interesting to note that handful of women have occupied important and key administrative and political positions since 1999. In most instances, these women have performed creditably well thereby leaving no doubt about the ability and capability of women to perform when saddled with responsibilities at all levels. The performance of such women as Ndi Okereke Onyiuke, former Managing Director of the Nigerian Stock Exchange; Prof. Dora Akunyili, former Director General, National Agency for Food and Drugs Control (NAFDAC); Dr. Obiageli Ezekweseli, former Senior Special Assistant to former President Obasanjo on Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit (otherwise known as Due Process Unit); Mrs Evelyn Oputu, Managing Director of Nigerian Bank of Industry; Prof. (Mrs) Ruqayyatu Ahmed Rufai, former Minister of Education; Mrs. Ifueko Omoigui Okauru, Immediate past Executive Chair Federal Inland Revenue Service; Prof. (Mrs.) Grace Alele William, former Vice Chancellor, University of Benin; and Dr. Okonjo Nwela who as Minister of Finance during Obasanjo's administration worked indefatigably and secured a reprieve for Nigeria's external debt among others. The role of these women have no doubt lifted the pedigree and profile of Nigeria women as hard working, disciplined, thorough, creative, enterprising and productive. Their enormous contribution to national development is gradually engineering re-evaluation of the role, and capabilities of women in public capacities in positive light. Despite this feat, plethora of challenges still beset effective women participation in politics and decision making even though there are also great prospects. The following section examines some of the challenges and prospects of women participation in politics and decision making.

#### **4.0.Challenges affecting effective Women Participation in Politics and Decision Making**

The challenges militating against women participation in politics and decision making are manifold. In this paper, few critical ones are examined:

**4.1 Funding:** Politics, particularly seeking elective office in Nigeria as it is elsewhere is an expensive venture requiring huge financial involvement. The generally poor financial disposition of women in Nigeria is a serious militating factor which account in the most part for women's political defeat. The lack of financial muscles has placed womenfolk either as subordinate or weak players in the political game. About 90% of women in Nigeria currently live below poverty line, so in spite of concession granted by some major political parties like the PDP and ANPP which lowers the cost of obtaining party nomination forms for women into elective office, nonetheless, the cost of realizing electoral ambition is still far beyond the reach of even the most highly placed women in the absence of godfather who is willing to "foot the bill in exchange for unlimited favour when the seat is eventually secured" (Yahaya, 2012:9). The relatively pathetic financial status of Nigerian women is a major limiting factor for their effective participation in politics.

**4.2.Cultural and Religious Discrimination:** Women are discouraged from participating in public life from childhood through adulthood by authority figures such as husbands, fathers, mothers and other relations due to cultural image of a virtues woman define as quite, submissive who should be seen and not heard (Muoghalu and Abrifor, 2012). Therefore, partisanship is seen as ventures that are beyond the limit of societal expectation of a descent feminine behavior thus leading to stereotyping. These cultural orientations constitute disincentives for women participation in politics. Similarly, religion is also used as instrument of stereotype against women who venture into politics or as barriers to prevent them from public life. For example, Pudah- which is the restriction of women to their quarter predominantly in practice among Muslims in Northern Nigeria ensures that they are barred from participating in politics either as voters, aspirants or even participation in economic activities. Likewise, the Christian faith also does not accord women much role in public affairs.

**4.3.Women's Perception of Politics:** Nigerians are awash daily with tales and news of dishonest and disreputable practice of some politicians. Thus, the common perception of politics is that it is a dirty trade that is reserve for people of questionable integrity who have little regards for the rule of law and due process. Therefore, women in politics are seen either as partners in crime or abettors of the vile committed by the political class. In order to avoid the discoloration or blot associated with politicking, some women prefer to stay out or take a backseat.

**4.4.Political Violence:** Political violence is another aspect that reduces women participation in Nigerian politics. Involvement of thugs before, during and after elections (Kolawale et al, 2012), and the attendant insecurity such as destruction of lives and properties that characterized a typical electoral process in Nigeria makes politics something out-of-the-way for most women. A female aspirant, Dorathy Nyone, who state the tales of her personal ordeal narrated that "A ward chairman was shot dead; all the women and most of the men fled the scene. My husband rushed there and took me home. I was scared; men who were fully prepared for the violence were the only ones who remained behind to hand pick the various winners" (Luka, 2011:32). While this tale typically illustrates electoral violence in Nigeria, the spate of political assassination, incessant political thugery and general violence have made female folk to dread politics.

**4.5.Lack of Self-Confidence:** one of the major challenges facing women in politics and decision making is women themselves. Most women lack confidence in their own ability and capacity to lead. In most cases, they feel the game of politics is an exclusive reserve of men and dare not venture into it; and those who manage to venture are usually content with the back seat. Similarly, many women do not have confidence in the leadership abilities of their fellow women. Although, factors like envy, jealousy, and other problems associated with interpersonal relations are common with women, generally, most women would rather vote or support men to win election than their fellow women in spite of their numerical strength. This has often given the men an upper hand when it comes to mobilizing support for elections. A classical example of this scenario was the case of Mrs. Sarah Jubrin, who contested against the President Goodluck Jonathan and former vice President Atiku Abubakar in the PDP presidential primaries preparatory to the 2011 general elections. At the end of the exercise, Sarah Jubrin pulled only one vote-obviously an own vote. This shows that even her closest female supporters did not vote for her.

**4.6. Women's Marginalization in Political Party Leadership:** Most political party hierarchy in Nigeria is dominated by men. The comparably poor financial status of women to finance or support party activities have fundamentally limited their influence in the political party structures. Hence women are not likely to be voted into key positions in the political party hierarchy. These also affect the extent of their powers and influence within the party structure. Thus during party nomination they are usually unable to assert themselves or even push for the interest of women leading to the marginalization of women during elections.

**4.7. Illiteracy or low Level of Education:** A major social disadvantage for women in politics is mass illiteracy or low levels of education. A UNICEF, Nigeria survey in 2004 revealed that only 60% of women aged 30-45 years manage to complete their elementary education and only 26% proceeded to the secondary level. Similarly, a survey by the National Planning Commission indicates that 50% of women had no formal education (Okpilike and Abamba, 2013:159). This invariably translates to why comparably few numbers of women qualify for jobs in the formal sector. The limited number of educated women also account for why only few women present themselves as candidates for elective positions.

#### 5.0. Prospects of Women Participation in Nigerian Politics

5.1. The deepening of democracy and democratic institutions is inevitably leading to the gradual revision of laws and provisions that are antithetical to the interest of women. This development is further galvanized by the role of transnational institutions and agencies in creating awareness and advocacy for expanded role for women in national development particularly as it affects political participation. These efforts have yielded a lot of positive outcomes. In many quarters the hitherto existing prejudices and discrimination against women in public affairs is gradually ebbing as emerging societal institutions are being transformed to officially accord women equal privilege and status with men in line with constitutional provisions.

5.2. In spite of the current low level of women participation in politics, the numbers of women in elective and appointive positions have progressively risen since 1999 when democracy was reintroduced in Nigeria; and despite the poor performance of women in the 2011 elections, there have been comparatively significant growths in the interest of women in politics as reflected in the number of women who indicated interests or vie for the various elective positions in the 2011 general elections.

Table 5: Participation in Elections in Nigeria by Gender in April 2011.

Office Contested	Gender		Total
	Female Candidates	Male Candidates	
President	1	19	20
Vice President	3	17	20
Governor	13	340	353
Deputy Governor	58	289	347
House of Reps	220	2,188	2,408
Senatorial	90	800	890

Source: British Council (2012).



There were 13 female governorship candidates, 90 women contested senatorial seats, 220 women for seats in the House of Representatives and “493 for the various Houses of Assembly” (Okpilike and Abamba, 2013); and more importantly, a woman contested a presidential primary for the first time, under the banner of the PDP. This development gives women a glimmer of hope that they can actually do more and better in future elections and occupy important decision making positions.

- 5.3. Some of the few women that have occupied political and decision making position since 1999 have demonstrated sterling leadership qualities and outstanding track records of achievement. The contributions of such women as Mrs. Abigail Ukpabi, Dr. Okonjo-Iwela, Prof. Dora Akunyili, and Dr. Obiageli Ezekwesili has not only increased the visibility of women in the national polity but also led to the general appreciation of the potentials of women to serve as catalyst of social change (Chiejina, 2011:160). The role of these women and many others to numerous to mention in different spheres of their professional callings in both public and private sectors have put women on a good pedestal thus giving a promising signal of high prospects of more roles for Nigerian women in public affairs.
- 5.4. The need to reserve certain quotas for women in appointment into political and decision making position including political parties is gradually gaining recognition and acceptance. In Europe and other Western countries tremendous advancement has been made in this respect. In Africa, countries like South Africa and Rwanda have taken the lead in this direction. Since the enthronement of the present democratic regime in Nigeria, women have been given reasonable concession by successive government. The appointment of women by President Goodluck Jonathan in his administration accounting for 31% is a positive indication that the traditional barrier against women participation in public affairs is receding and government commitment to implement the 35% affirmative action may be realized.
- 5.5. Women are known to possess certain important qualities that are suitable for leadership. This includes hard work, dedication, patience, endurance, tolerance, thoroughness, honesty and transparency all of which are great assets in public relations and public acceptance (Tashi, 2000). With the crisis of leadership that have bedeviled the Nigeria society since independence and against the backdrop of the outstanding performance of women in public capacities in recent decades, there seem to be a growing consensus among scholars and observers of this trends that women could fill the critical leadership gap in providing the much desired good governance in Nigeria. This seems to be translating into concrete action with the key roles being assigned to women by the present government of President Goodluck Jonathan in his administration.
- 5.6. There is a comparatively higher increase in girl child school enrolment today in Nigeria than ever before even though more needs to be done. Since 1990 there has been a progressive growth in the rate of girl child school enrolment in Nigeria. The Universal Basic Education programme introduced by former president Obasanjo in 1999 and other educational reform policies by subsequent government also impacted positively on the rate of school enrolment for the girl child especially at the primary and secondary education levels as shown in the table below:

Table 6: Net Primary and Secondary Enrolment Ratio 1990-2009. Nigeria

Year	All		Female%		Male%	
	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
1990	51	24	48	22	54	26
2003	60	35	57	33	64	38
2009	61	44	58	44	64	44

Source: National Population Commission (2011).

Also, the number of educated women has correspondingly increased and still increasing by the day. This increase is fast translating into more number of women that are empowered educationally and materially to occupy public office. Women who are educated are better suited to participate in decision making. Women who are empowered economically have less difficulty in playing active roles in politics as they can assert themselves and are unlikely to become pawns in the hands of political godfathers with sinister ends (Luka, 2011:30). Thus the growth in the number of educated women in Nigeria is not only increasing their access to opportunities in the formal sector but also access to other resources that would enable them participates effectively in politics.

## **6.0.Conclusion**

The transition from military to democracy in 1999 has tremendously improved the stake of women in politics and decision in Nigeria than any other time in its post-independence existence. It is no doubt that women still remain highly marginalize in all spheres of the socio-economic and political life of the nation. This is more obvious when the proportion of men to women in politics and decision making position is compared. Several challenges such as lack or inadequate finance, cultural and religious discrimination, political violence, illiteracy and inadequate education, marginalization in political party hierarchy among others has been identified as responsible for this state of affair. In spite of these challenges, women have made considerable in-road into the political landscape of the country since 1999. The tremendous energies of women activism and advocacy groups, the track records of achievement of women in politics and decision making, the increasing number of educated and professional women, the positive disposition of successive government towards women political empowerment and the growing interests of women to participate in politics have place women as important players in the Nigerian political topography with bright future prospects.

To consolidate on the current gains, women leadership organizations, government and relevant stake holders should continue to advocate for the revision of legislations to favour the protection of women from abuse, empower them economically and politically especially through the strengthening of affirmative action and allocation quotas for women in politics and decision making positions.

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