

Monitoring participation of women in politics in Nigeria

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Abstract:

Nigeria has been recording low participation of women in both elective and appointive positions. This is a growing concern to many Nigerians. However, concerted efforts have been made by government and non-governmental organizations to increase the level of participation of women in politics, in line with the declaration made at the fourth World Conference on women in Beijing, which advocated 30% affirmative action. However, in Nigeria, the extant National Gender Policy (NGP) recommended 35% affirmative action instead and sought for a more inclusive representation of women with at least 35% of both elective political positions and appointive public service respectively. The under representation of women in political participation gained root due to the patriarchal practice inherent in our society, much of which were obvious from pre-colonial era till date. However, the re-introduction of democratic governance has witnessed once again an increase in women political participation both in elective and appointive offices. The national average of women's political participation in Nigeria has remained 6.7 percent in elective and appointive positions, which is far below the Global Average of 22.5 percent, Africa Regional Average of 23.4 percent and West African Sub Regional Average of 15 percent. For instance, out of the 36 recently confirmed ministerial appointments by the administration now in power, only six (6) are women, representing 16.7 percent. In the National Assembly, women constitute 5.6 percent of members of the House of Representatives and 6.5 percent of the Senators. Also with the fifteen years of uninterrupted democratic governance (1999-2015), Nigeria is yet to produce a female governor in any of the 36 states of the Federation. This paper seeks a critical review of the importance of data in monitoring women participation in politics in Nigeria vis-à-vis the affirmative declaration. Recently, the National Center for Women Development embarked on the collection of a national data on involvement and participation of women in politics in Nigeria (1999 to 2015). One of the objectives of the data collection is to provide a baseline for the implementation of the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The data collation of the exercise is ongoing. Hopes are high that the result will show the progress steadily made to achieving the affirmative declaration and determine how the gap that erstwhile existed has been closed as well as measure the variation between where we are and the affirmative action of 35 percent. Also, it will improve evidence-based planning and programming involving women in decision making; increase the support of key stakeholders on measures to increase representation of women in decision making and further improved awareness of new advocacy tools among stakeholders to support the campaign for increased representation of women in decision making in Nigeria.