



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE
OF ADMINISTRATIVE SCIENCES

Une étude comparative
Afrique, Amérique, Asie, Australie, Europe, Maghreb - Machrek

A comparative study
Africa, America, Asia, Australia, Europe, Maghreb - Machrek

Sabah Chraïbi Bennouna

1998

1400 02072 DE

SOMMAIRE / CONTENTS

Raport introductif <i>Sabah Chraïbi Bemmouna</i>	11
Methodological Approach <i>Lucila Leal de Araujo</i>	69
Thematical Approach <i>Sonia Heptonstall</i>	75
I. Afrique - Les femmes dans la démocratie en émergence et les résistances culturelles Africa - Women in emerging democracies and cultural resistance	
Public policies in favour of Women and Men - The case of Lesotho <i>Mamolete Pitso</i>	89
Public policies that favour Women - The case of Kenya and Nigeria <i>Joyce Mangwat</i>	99
Public policies in favour of Women : A case study of Nigeria <i>Iyabo Olojede</i>	105
Les politiques publiques en faveur de l'égalité des femmes et des hommes dans le processus de décision et de responsabilité publiques - Le cas du Sénégal <i>Pauline Seck Diouf</i>	131
Women, Power and Culture in Zimbabwe <i>Hope C. Sadza</i>	151
II. Amérique - La voie féminine de la citoyenneté partagée America - Women's approach to mutually shared citizenship	
Women in Public Administration and Management in Canada <i>Mary J. Murphy & Michèle L. Veilleux</i>	173

Public policies in favour of Women : A case study of Nigeria

Iyabo Olojede *

I. Introduction

Consideration of Women's rights and equality with men has assumed a global concern. This is manifested in the adoption of numerous international instruments such as Universal Declaration on Human Rights [1948], the Covenant on Human Rights [1976], the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against women [1979] and the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies [1985]. The globalisation of women's issues illustrate universal consciousness of the problems confronting women in a predominantly patriarchal world. The growing importance of women's rights notwithstanding, it is unfortunate that despite the formulation of public policies to redress gender inequality in Nigeria, women's roles in public and private realms remain peripheral. We view this as an issue of vital importance warranting thorough research.

1. Overall objective of study

The major focus of this study is to examine the nature and contents of major public policies in favour of women in Nigeria. Examination of public policies will however not be limited to their formulation. Rather it will include the identification of how the existing public policies are implemented and problems, if any, hindering their effectiveness.

2. Specific objectives

1. To examine the status of women in Nigeria.
2. To examine the extent to which women have advanced to high levels of Government and Political Administration.
3. To identify the most critical factors such as socio-cultural, education, institutional which impede women's access to public decision-making positions.
4. To examine the role and effectiveness of public agencies entrusted with implementation of affirmative policies in favour of women.

* Iyabo Olojede is Professor, Department of Political Science, Lagos State University, Apapa Lagos

5. To examine the role of non-state authorities in promotion of gender equality.
6. To examine and propose strategies to ensure true gender equality in Nigeria.

3. Data Collection

Data for this report were availed by the use of secondary source. Secondary data were obtained from existing documents such as works of notable authors on women's studies, previous research reports, official gazettes and files, national constitutions, national surveys and monographs.

4. Background to the study and study area

Nigeria operates a federal system.

Nigeria at independence in 1960 inherited the legacies of British political system. This system was operated between 1960 and 1966. It was however changed to presidential system in 1979. One of the most persistent features of Nigerian politics is military interventions. This phenomenon has negatively contributed to the retardation of democracy in Nigeria. Out of the total number of thirty four years of Nigeria's existence, military has ruled for 24 years while the civilians had a share of 10 years.

Nigeria in pre-independence years had an agricultural economy. During this period, agriculture contributed to about 65% of the GDP¹. By 1958 when oil was discovered, agriculture was relegated to the background. Women's contributions to the Nigerian agriculture is estimated between 60 - 80%. Oil contributes about 96% to the GDP. With the global oil glut of 1980's, Nigerian's economy experienced a severe shock. It was against the background of a recessed economy that Nigeria adopted the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in 1986. The major elements of SAP are deregulation of the economy, devaluation of Nigerian Currency (Naira) and commercialisation / privatisation of public enterprises. About 12% of women were employed in the formal sector in the pre-SAP period². This proportion declined rapidly to about 8% in the SAP era due to the retrenchment exercises in public and private sectors. From 1984 to 1992 Nigeria had an expanding economy with a GDP growth rate of 5.2% per year.

¹ See Okigbo, 1987, p. 92.

² Draft National Policy on Women, 1993.

5. The status of women in Nigeria (Past and Present)

The status of women in Nigeria can be classified into three historical periods – pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial. In pre-colonial Nigeria, the status of women vis-à-vis men was fluid³. Undoubtedly, it cannot be disputed that pre-colonial Nigeria was essentially patriarchal. Women nonetheless had access to political and economic participation through a complex and sophisticated network of relationships, rights and control of resources. Women's status varies from one traditional community to another. In some communities, women shared equal powers with men, while in others their roles were complementary or subordinate. In some areas of Igboland (now Eastern Nigeria) women shared equal status with men⁴. In many traditional Igbo societies, the status of women is reflected in the dual political system⁵. Traditionally, structures of political participation equivalent or parallel to those of men existed for women whereby women's voices were heard and their participation guaranteed from the familial household to the councils in society. Allen succinctly reveals this pattern of authority in the following extract :

In this society, political power is diffuse and leadership was fluid and informal. Community decisions were made and disputes settled in a variety of gatherings, village wide assemblies, women's meetings, age grades, secret and title societies...

*Decisions were made by discussions until mutual agreement was reached. Any adult person who had something to say on the matter under discussion was entitled to speak as long as he or she said something that others considered worth listening to...*⁶

From the foregoing, it is obvious that gender was not a criterion for political participation in some traditional communities such as Igboland. Some measure of egalitarianism existed. Women had their own societies which legislated on women's issues, while they equally participated in the wider political arena.

In Yorubaland (now Western Nigeria) women were also involved in policy-making. They occupied important positions in the social, political and economic spheres of their communities. In Yorubaland, oral traditions

³ For details on status of women in Pre-Colonial Nigeria see Olojede, 1990, pp. 78-86.

⁴ Olojede, 1993 pp. 1-10.

⁵ The dual political structure is elaborately discussed in the work of Okonjo, 1988. In Igboland, the Villages and Rural Towns are ruled jointly by the Obi (the male king) and the Omu (the female king). The Omu is not the wife of Obi and is in no way related to him. The Omu rules in conjunction with Obi.

⁶ Allen, 1988, pp. 59-85.

speak of female kings in Ile-Ife, Oyo Kingdom, Ilesa and Ondo⁷. In Hausaland, (now Northern Nigeria) before the introduction of Islamic religion in mid 14th century, women played key roles in the political and economic spheres of their communities. There were women military and political leaders such as Queen Amina who had resounding political and military successes⁸.

In addition, economic prowess in agriculture and trading activities also conferred status on Nigerian women⁹. So also did high fertility particularly in the farming communities. In some communities mother of 10 children got special ceremonies¹⁰.

The advent of colonial period in Nigeria upset the traditional balance of gender relations and power. In the political and administrative arena, the colonial period heralded the functioning of the traditional institutions by suppressing them and imposing its own gender system. Britain ruled its new colony, Nigeria based on its own gender ideology of separate spheres for men and women¹¹. In the process of reordering traditional economic, political and social structures along British model, women seem to have suffered more from these changes than men. Before colonial period, women had higher political roles. Under colonial rule they were systematically excluded from any participation in the new political and administrative systems which the new colonial power had instituted and which ignored their customary roles. More men than women were educated and thus recruited into the new emergent power structure. Women unlike before became confined to the domestic sphere. Politically, the position of women took a bad turn. Women who used to wield political power in the pre-colonial societies were marginalised with the introduction of native administration. Men, for reason of their exposure to Western Education, were recruited into the new administration to the neglect of women. Women political title in some traditional communities especially in Igbo land fell into disuse. Thus, women stopped functioning in the political sphere. In Igbo societies, the native courts effectively replaced the judicial functions performed by women's meetings.

These new economic and political structures were reinforced by the inculcation of the ideology of mission schools. At the early life of colonialism, the missionaries enjoyed a virtual monopoly of education in Nigeria, particularly in the Southern parts. This arose out of economic

⁷ Fasheke, 1993, pp. 1-4.

⁸ Mohammed, 1985, p. 46

⁹ See Sanday, 1981, p. 14.

¹⁰ Oyekanmi, 1992.

¹¹ Mba, 1989 p. 3.

imperatives of British policy. Since the colonial government was neither interested nor had the money to provide education, the missionaries took control of educational arena¹². Since missionaries had a virtual monopoly of schools, they were able to use them as a means of conversion in all aspects of life. Women were inculcated with the spiritual values for the "home and the needy". It is no surprise that most of the first Nigerian women who attended schools in the South felt obliged to become teachers and nurses. Sexism became manifested in educational practices, range of subjects open to girls, content of textbooks and teachers attitudes. Thus women were encouraged to take subjects which are complementary to their domestic roles while men were oriented towards professions which tend to enhance their skills. As late as 1950's very few women had university education in Nigeria. The miserable turnout of female graduates from the only existing university in Nigeria, University of Ibadan between 1950 and 1960, shows the pattern of colonial education. As shown in Table 1, out of the total number of 615 University graduates from 1950 to 1960, only 37 were women.

Table 1 : Women and colonial education

Year	Total No. of Graduates	Number of Women Graduates
1950	2	None
1951	18	None
1952	32	1
1953	31	3
1954	33	2
1955	48	2
1956	46	2
1957	66	3
1958	54	2
1959	103	9
1960	182	13
Total	615	37

Source : Alexander Iwara, "Nigerian Women Formal Education and the colonial period", Being a Paper Presented at the symposium on... "The Impact of Colonialism on Nigerian Women", Held at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, 16th-19th October, 1989, p. 2.

¹² For more information on British attitudes towards education of Nigerians see Crowder, 1966 pp. 239 - 240.

The differentiation in educational orientation of men vis-à-vis women contributed immensely to the range of opportunities available to men at independence in 1960 and thereafter to accede not only to leadership positions in the affairs of modern Nigeria but also to a higher social status. Despite the laudable goals of National Development Plan of 1962 which include the creation of a just and egalitarian society, women still occupy a peripheral position in political institutions that determines the present and future course of affairs. The lower representation of women in public decision-making positions is illustrated in Table 2. Data from Table 2 show that women in public decision-making institutions are in the minority. In the political history of Nigeria, there have been no women Governors of States or Chief Justice. Table 2 underlines this point. It is further discernible from Table 2 that in 1960, there were only two women in the Senate, the highest law making body during the democratic rule in Nigeria. The observed scenario persists in the 1980's during the short democratic rule and in the 1990's when the new Senators for the Third Republic were elected. This shows that women have not participated or participate fully in the enactment of laws governing the nation.

Table 2 : Women in political institutions In Nigeria

	1960's		1970's		1980's		1990's	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Senators	2	54	-	-	1	94	1	90
Lower House Parliamentarians	0	277	-	-	3	442	13	588
Federal Ministers	0	21	0	20	4	31	3	53
Governors of States	-	-	0	19	0	19	0	30
Deputy Governors of States	-	-	0	19	0	19	2	30
Chief Justice of Federation	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1

Sources : (i) Calculated from Nigeria Year Books, 1960-1992 Daily Time Publication, Lagos.

(ii) Nigerian Newspapers, 1993.

Figures for Federal Ministers for 1990's include Interim National Government which lasted for three months.

Since independence in 1960, during the different civilian periods, the political parties in Nigeria nominated far fewer women as candidates for elections than men. In the Second Republic, 1979-1983 in the Senate elections, of the roughly 475 candidates who contested, only four were women and none was successful. However, at the tail end of the Second

Republic in 1983, one woman was elected as a Senator. In the Federal House of Representatives elections, of the 2,000 candidates, only 10 were women, while only 3 women succeeded. However, in terms of the number of women holding political positions, the Second Republic measured greater success than the First Republic and the Third Republic better than the Second Republic.

In the executive arm of government, where public policies are initiated and implemented, women are equally invisible. As shown in Table 2, in 1960's and 1970's, there was no single woman influencing the course of public policies. At independence in 1960, the Nigerian Federal cabinet was an all-men affair. All the Ministers were men. Similarly, all the 16 Federal Permanent Secretaries policy advisers were men¹³. In the 1980's, there was slight improvement with the appointment of four women as Ministers. Two of the women were of cabinet rank while the remaining two occupied junior ministerial positions. Given women's low participation in legislative assemblies and executive councils, affirmative policies in favour of women are less likely to be vigorously pursued in institutions dominated by men.

Data on employment in the public service are generally scanty and inconsistent. More significantly, there is almost non-existence of desegregated data by gender. The available data (1986) on public service employment in Table 3 reflect the status of women in all the different sectors of the public service. As shown in the table under discussion, women constituted about 21.03% of the total federal civil service employment. In Federal Government parastatals, women's share in employment was 11.12% ; 23.37% in State Government Civil Services 20.93% in State Government Parastatals and 29.94% in Local Government.

¹³ See Nigerian Year Book, 1960.

Table 3 : Distribution of employed females in Nigerian public service, 1986

Type of Ownership	All Employed Persons No	Employed Persons No	Female as % of Total Employment
Federal Government Civil Service	146 403	30 786	21.03
Federal Government Parastatals	105 975	11 785	11.12
State Government Civil Services	297 388	69 496	23.37
State Government Parastatals	101 204	21 185	20.93
Local Government	95 863	28 697	29.94

Source : National Manpower Board Office of Planning and Budget The Presidency, December, 1989.

In the Federal Civil Service, where data are fairly available the disproportionate participation of women in this vital public institution is shown in Table 4. In 1970's, women's participation in civil service employment ranged between 9.7% in 1973 and 11.2% in 1979. Women's participation marginally improved by about 3% in 1980's from what was obtained in 1970's.

Table 4: Women in federal civil service employment - 1973 - 1991

Year	Total No. Employed	Male		Female	
		No.	%	No.	%
1973	100,048	90,440	90.3	9,608	9.7
1974	122,914	108,796	88.5	14,118	11.5
1975	121,335	109,280	90.1	12,055	9.9
1976	131,971	119,061	90.2	12,910	9.8
1977	121,883	110,441	90.6	11,442	9.4
1978	187,677	165,567	88.2	22,110	11.8
1979	197,319	175,204	88.8	22,115	11.2
1980	231,802	202,789	87.4	29,013	12.6
1981	256,334	224,341	87.5	31,993	12.5
1982	266,345	232,374	87.2	33,971	12.8
1983	292,985	253,396	86.5	39,589	13.5
1984	285,479	250,182	87.6	35,297	12.4
1985	255,156	222,983	87.4	32,173	12.6
1986	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A
1987	255,881	223,388	87.3	32,493	12.6
1988	255,579	222,802	87.1	32,777	12.8
1989	273,346	236,678	86.5	36,668	13.4
1990	287,553	242,661	84.3	44,872	15.6
1991	182,254	137,486	75.4	44,768	24.5
Total	3,825,861	3,327,869	86.98	497, 972	13.01

Sources : 1) *Federal Civil Service Manpower Statistics 1983 - Federal Government Printer Lagos, 1986.*

2) *Federal Civil Service Manpower Statistics 1985 ; Federal Government Printer Lagos 1985 p. 19.*

3) *Federal Civil Service Manpower Statistics December 1991, Office of Establishments and Management Services, The Presidency 1991, p. 4.*

In the upper stratum of the Federal Civil Service, the gap between men and women's participation is much wider. In Table 5, it is discernible that women in upper management positions constituted about 4.46% as against men's share of 95.53% while women in middle management positions constituted about 8.7% as against men's share of 91.29%. This scenario of women's unequal participation in decision-making levels persists in 1980's and 1990's as reflected in Table 6. The underrepresentation of women in

key positions in vital implementing government institutions is a probable explanation for lack of commitment of government to the implementation of affirmative policies.

Table 5 : Distribution of women in federal civil service - 1978
Employment by level

Levels	Total No Employed	NO	%	NO	%
Junior Levels	164.279	144.561	87.99	19.718	12
Lower Middle Management	18.632	16.636	89.28	1.996	10.71
Middle Management	4.318	3.942	91.29	376	8.70
Upper Management	448	428	95.53	20	4.46

Source : Establishments Department Office of the Head of the Civil Service Manpower Statistics, 1978.

Table 6 : Women in upper management levels in the federal civil service

Year	Total	Male		Female	
	NO	NO	%	NO	%
1988	899	825	91.7	74	8.2
1989	1.086	977	89.9	109	10.0
1990	1.120	981	87.5	139	12.4
1991	1.138	980	86.1	158	13.8
Total	4.243	3.763	88.6	480	11.3

Sources : 1) Establishments and Pensions Department.

2) Federal Civil Service Commission.

3) Federal Civil Service Manpower Statistics, Office of Establishments and Management Services, The Presidency Federal Secretariat, Ikoyi, Lagos December 1991.

6. Public Policies in favour of Women

In section 1.5, we observed the lower representation of women in the vital political and government institutions in Nigeria. This section examines the major affirmative policies in Favour of women in Nigeria.

Prior to 1970's, there was little government action in redressing gender inequality. The first major political action in redressing of gender inequality

was in 1957¹⁴. In this particular year, the elected representatives from Eastern, Western and Northern Nigeria who attended the Constitutional Conference agreed to enfranchise women in the Eastern and Western Nigeria and only male adults in Northern Nigeria. The Northern Nigerian Women were excluded on account of strong Muslim traditions prevalent in that region. The Northern Nigerian women were later enfranchised in 1976 during the New Local Government Reforms. It is noteworthy to mention that the enfranchisement of women in Nigeria is not stated in any of the Nigerian Constitutions.¹⁵

Since 1970's when women's issues have assumed an international dimension, Nigerian Government has formulated specific policies to resolve some of the problems facing women. The first major governmental action in favour of employment of women is the Labour Act of 1974 under the Gowon Military administration. Under this Act, there were provisions designed to protect women as employees. Section 53 of the Act focuses on maternity protection and it stipulates that :

In any public or private industrial or commercial undertaking or in any branch thereof, or any agricultural undertaking or any branch thereof, a woman

- a) shall have the right to leave her work if she produces a medical certificate given by a registered practitioner stating that her confinement will probably take place within six weeks ;*
- b) shall not be permitted to work during the six weeks following her confinement (Section 53(1) (a) (b)). Women employees who fulfil the above conditions are to be paid at least 50% of the income she would have earned if she was at work. Women covered by the provisions cannot be given notice of dismissal during her maternity leave.*

However in Nigeria, despite the minimum tag of 50% wages attached to maternity leave by the Labour Act, many employers still pay women employees full income during maternity leave. However, women employers especially small/medium indigenous enterprises (in the private sector) do not comply with the Labour Act Provisions. Unfortunately, the women who are bold enough to seek redress in law courts do not get the desired justice. In some cases, Judges have upheld the dismissal of women employees without reference to Provisions of the Labour Code.¹⁶

¹⁴ Uzum, 1981 p. 6.

¹⁵ See Report of Resumed Nigerian Constitutional Conference, 1958 ; 1963 Republic Constitution ; 1979 Constitution.

¹⁶ See Agomo, 1985, pp. 12-14.

²⁴ See Abe, 1988 pp. 11-17.

Another notable governmental action designed to promote equal employment of women and men is contained in 1979 Constitution¹⁷. Under Chapter 11 of the 1979 Nigerian Constitution which deals with non-justiceable directive principle of state policy, the state is enjoined to direct its policy towards ensuring that all citizens without discrimination on any ground whatsoever have the opportunity for securing adequate means of livelihood as well as adequate opportunities to secure suitable employment. It is further averred in Section 17 (1) that the conditions of work are just and humane, that the health safety and welfare of all persons in employment are safeguarded and not endangered or abused, and that there is equal pay for equal work without discrimination on account of sex or any ground whatsoever Section 17 (1) (d). In addition, discrimination on grounds of ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion is prohibited. Thus a Nigerian citizen is not to be subjected either expressly by or in the practical application of any law in force in Nigeria or any executive or administrative action of the government to disabilities or restrictions to which citizens of Nigerian of other group, place of origin, religion, political opinion or sex is not subject Section 39(1) (a). Furthermore, a citizen of Nigeria is not to be accorded any privilege or advantage which is not accorded to other citizens of Nigeria of other ethnic groups and inter-alia sex Section 39 (1) (b). Nonetheless, discriminatory treatment is allowed in respect of appointment of persons to any office of the state or as a member of the armed forces of the Federal Nigerian Police Force or other government security service established by law.

The underlying principle deducible from the constitutional provisions is that of equality of men and women before the law. This implies, equality of reward for work of same kind performed by both men and women alike. Similarly contained is the right to work without discrimination on grounds of gender. Legally, women have a right to equal place with men in decision-making bodies such as boardroom, parliament and executive councils. However, in practice, the position is not that simple. There is a wide gap between policy and practice. The justification for this gap is written in the Constitution itself. On one hand, the constitution prohibits discrimination on grounds of sex among other considerations. On the other hand, the same constitution permits discriminatory practices in the appointment of persons to public offices or as members of the Armed Forces and Security Service. This ambiguity negates the expressed principle of equality of every Nigerian citizen before the law.

Superficially, the 1979 Constitutional provisions appear gender sensitive in guaranteeing equality of men and women in employment. However, a critical examination of employment and promotion policies in the Nigerian

¹⁷ Constitution of the Federal Republic, 1979.

public service as contained in the 1988 Civil Service Reforms (which existed until 14th, January 1995 when it was abrogated) illustrates gender insensitivity.¹⁸ According to the 1988 Civil Service Reforms, recruitments into the entry positions in lower middle management cadre Grade Levels 07-10, were to be based on appropriate educational qualifications and federal character. Federal character refers to how fair and effective representation can be given to the various component units and communal groups in the country's institutions, agencies and positions of power, status and influence.¹⁹ It was emphasised that federal character was to be faithfully adhered to while the issue of gender was totally ignored at the critical entry points from which women and men filter up to upper and senior management positions in the Federal Civil Service.²⁰

Paperwise, there is the absence of gender discrimination as reflected in general rules and regulations governing recruitment and career advancement. Despite these seemingly equal employment and promotion rights, there is gender discrimination which is contained in our traditions which men unconsciously practice against women regardless of written policies.²¹ Since men dominate panels of interview during recruitment and promotion periods, men cannot be guaranteed to be fair.²² The imbibed culture of appropriate women's roles are bound to reflect in recommendations for recruitment and promotion. Culturally, women are considered inferior to men. They are not expected to hold high public positions. Whatever training they acquire should be utilised at home. It is this traditional definition of women's roles that may result into unwritten laws which men may unconsciously implement against women in recruitment and promotion.

There are other problems impeding women's employment which have not been concretely addressed. The foremost in this regard is in the area of support facilities to facilitate women's employment.

In Nigeria since independence there has been no formal gender discrimination of women's education. Women just like men are formally encouraged to take opportunities provided by education. The formal gender neutrality in Nigeria is attested to by the National Policy on Education [1981]. As contained in this policy, Nigeria's philosophy of education shall

¹⁸ See Decree No. 43, 1988.

¹⁹ See Report of the Political Bureau, 1987.

²⁰ See Section III (7) of the 1988 Civil Service Reforms.

²¹ Olojede, 1994 pp. 7-18.

²² For example, the Personnel Management Board which determines personnel matters in each Ministry consists of top level officers on Grade Levels 17, Director General, Civil Service Commissioner and Minister who are in most cases men.

be based on the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and equal educational opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system.²³

Furthermore a critical examination of the objectives of the curricula in primary, secondary and universities shows non-bias against women. In general Nigeria's educational policies are gender neutral. However, societal norms or expectations limit women's access to education, thereby contributing to their lower participation as shown in Table 7. As shown in Table 7 in the 1987/1988 academic session, women had insignificant share of 25.8% of total enrolment in selected Nigerian universities. On an individual basis, the percentages ranged from low 13.3% for Kano to 34.2% for Maiduguri.

Table 7: Enrolment in selected Nigerian Universities for first degree courses by sex - 1987/88 Academic session

Institution	Total Enrolment	Male		Female	
		NO	%	NO	%
Benin	8,707	6,589	75.7	2,118	24.3
Calabar	4,040	3,009	74.5	1,031	25.5
Ibadan	9,430	6,805	72.2	2,625	27.8
Ife	11,694	8,904	76.14	2,790	23.9
Jos	6,443	4,495	69.8	1,948	30.2
Kano	3,203	2,775	86.6	428	13.3
Lagos	10,535	7,561	71.8	2,974	28.2
Maiduguri	6,723	4,419	65.7	2,304	34.2
Nsukka	11,547	8,862	76.7	2,685	23.3
Sokoto	2,981	2,536	85.1	445	14.9
Zaria	9,855	7,931	80.5	1,924	19.5
Total	85,158	63,886	75.0	21,272	25.0

Source : National Universities Commission, Nigeria Annual Report - January 1988 - December 1988.

It is generally believed among all cultural groups in Nigeria that male children are more beneficial to their families than female children who eventually separate from their family homes to be joined with their husbands. This point is underscored by the Yoruba's traditional concept of «aarole» which means the perpetuation of one's lineage through the male

²³ See National Policy on Education, 1981.

line. This traditional belief is reflected in parental attitudes towards women's education. It is also believed that whatever gains will come from the education of women will accrue to the family of the girl's husband once she is married. This is due to the fact that parents expect more help from their sons than their daughters. This expectation is of course related to the traditional responsibility of men for their parents and the extended families. In some communities, the only advantage women's education might offer is the attraction of higher bride price, which may not compensate fully for the amount expended on her education. Also, where finances are limited, any available resources will be invested on the person who is most likely to bring the highest and surest dividend to the family.²⁴ Since boys always remain a part of their families and are considered a safer risk than the girls who will marry either before or shortly after the completion of their education and perhaps never contribute anything to the family in terms of financial support. Consequently, women's education especially at the higher levels are frowned against by the society. In light of the socio-cultural impediments towards girls/women's educational attainment, women are consequently prevented from getting jobs especially at the higher levels.

During the military administration of Babangida [1985 – 1993] more concrete measures were made to redress gender inequality. The first was the establishment of Better life for Rural Women Programme (BLP) in 1987. As the name suggests, it was to assist rural women and not stimulate women's access to decision-making positions. The key objective of BLP was to improve the living conditions and uplift the socio-economic status of rural women. The key areas of the programme include food production, improve health condition, formal and informal education, social welfare service and research work on various women activities especially on markets and their conditions in various parts of the rural areas. An assessment of BLP shows that it has succeeded in creating some level of awareness among women about the need for improving their income generating skills to make them economically self-reliant during the present adverse economic conditions. Rural women farmers have been trained and exposed to services offered by the World Bank sponsored agricultural projects. Modern processing machines were made available to women farmers across the federation in order to assist them in processing foods. Avenues were also created for women to enable easy marketability of their numerous products. Multi purpose centres were also established in Abuja and all state capitals where women have been trained in various skills. All these are tremendous achievements on the part of the present administration. However, it is pertinent to point out that BLP more or less encourage women in sustaining their traditional roles as caretakers at home and distributors of primary products. BLP is more or less restricted to rural

²⁴ See Abe, 1988 pp. 11–14.

women. Much still needs to be done by government to boost activities that are likely to enhance the access of women to public decision-making positions.

In 1989 the Federal Government in compliance with United Nation Directive established the National Commission for Women by Decree 30. As a sign of good intentions to promote the status of women, the NCW is situated in the presidency. Its objectives are :

- (i) To improve the welfare of women in general ;
- (ii) To promote the full utilisation of women ;
- (iii) To promote responsible motherhood and maternal health of women ;
- (iv) To stimulate actions to improve women's civic, political, cultural, social, economic and education ;
- (v) To support the work of non-government organisations and co-ordinate government and women's organisations ;
- (vi) To encourage the sense and essence of co-operative societies ;
- (vii) To formulate and propagate moral values within the family units ;
- (viii) To work towards the total elimination of all socio-cultural practices tending to discriminate against and dehumanise womanhood.

The functions of NCW are :

- (i) To formulate policies and programmes within the context of National Development's plans aimed at enhancing the position and development of women in the social, economic and political context ;
- (ii) To establish the commissions at the state and local government levels ;
- (iii) To promote, develop, and concretise income generation and employment through loan scheme/home and cottage industries ;
- (iv) To monitor, liase with appropriate government bodies and international organisations, etc, on matters concerning women and development ;
- (v) To monitor and submit report on women education, counselling, health, children and existing legislation ;
- (vi) To coordinate, structure and monitor the activities of women voluntary organisations, grant and monitor the activities of women voluntary organisations, aid them and evaluate their performance ;
- (vii) To conduct research and planning aimed at improving the status of women and the attainment of policy objectives generally related to women.

The NCW serves as a direct evidence of government's readiness to improve the conditions of women. NCW has made modest contributions since establishment. Its achievement includes the organisation of workshops to sensitise women and public ; mobilising non-governmental organisations for assistance ; cooperating with other government agencies to promote women's issues. The greatest achievement of NCW to date is the attempt to produce an acceptable National Policy document on women development. A team of national experts were commissioned in 1993 to produce a National Policy on document on women's development. The consultants conducted interviews across the country. Policy inputs were sourced from Federal, State and Local Governments, the private sector, international agencies and individuals at the grassroots levels. The policy is yet to be adopted by Federal Government.

The NCW has not been very effective in carrying out its mandate because of the underlisted constraints.²⁵

- (i) Underfunding by government ;
- (ii) Application of civil service rules in work activities and recruitment which have tended to slow the pace of activities of the NCW ;
- (iii) Dearth of experts on women issues to direct effectively the numerous activities of the commission. Many of the operating directors in NCW are inexperienced whose appointments were politically motivated ;
- (iv) The objectives of the Commission are too broad to the effect that energies and attention are focussed in too many directions which undermine its overall effectiveness.

In 1994, the wife of the present Military Head of State, Maryam Abacha launched a new programme in favour of women, the Family Support Programme (FSP). FSP effectively replaced the BLP which was a pet project of the former First Lady, Maryam Babangida. The gains of the BLP were not consolidated neither are the defects improved upon before launching another programme. In philosophy, FSP is more or less like the BLP which it replaced. However, FSP locates more the role of women within the family set up rather than seeking to balance gender equity at home, work and public decision-making positions. The general objectives of FSP are :

²⁵ In a discussion with the pioneer/former Chairperson of National Commission for Women, Professor Bolanle Awe in October 22nd, 1992 she highlighted these problems ; also see National Draft Policy on Women, 1993.

- (i) To improve and sustain family cohesion through the promotion of social and economic well being of the Nigerian Family for its maximum contribution to national development ;
- (ii) To promote policies, programmes that strengthen the observance and protection of human rights and the advancement of social justice and human dignity.

Its specific objectives are :

- (i) To improve decent health care delivery in reducing maternal and child mortality and morbidity through improved health care system ;
- (ii) To eradicate negative social and cultural factors affecting women and children ;
- (iii) To assist families identify economically viable enterprises for income generation and to provide technical and financial support for their implementation ;
- (iv) To assist rural families increase their agricultural productivity as well as improving their nutritional status ;
- (v) To assist a Family Roundtable for the promotion of discipline, morality and family cohesion through projects such as girl child scheme distress ;
- (vi) To enhance the capacity of parents to act as role models to their children through various means including guidance and counselling ;
- (vii) To help family members learn more about the psychological dynamics of families as units on which more effective social organisation and responsibility can emerge ;
- (viii) To create, arouse and sustain the interest of government, the Nigerian people and the International Community on the activities of the FSP ;
- (ix) To sensitise government on the need to provide adequate shelter for all Nigerians ;
- (x) To promote the maintenance of high moral standards of the nation as well as responsive actions against policies and trends both foreign and local that militate against such standards ;
- (xi) To promote and improve on the welfare of the most disadvantaged groups in the society, notably women, disabled, destitutes, the aged and children ;

- (xii) To carry out public enlightenment campaigns to sensitise the general public on matters of human decency, civic responsibility and concern for the welfare of the disadvantaged.²⁶

The FSP has its component schemes on Health, Education, Agriculture, Women in Development, Child Welfare and Youth Development, Disability and Destitution, Income Generation and Shelter.

The latest attempt to consolidate government measures to promote women's status is the promise of the present Head of State, General Sanni Abacha to create a Women's Ministry in 1995.²⁷ According to the Head of State in the extract below :

... Women had made tremendous contributions in very facet of the nation's development, and therefore deserved institutional recognition, encouragement and protection. Therefore to give effect to the nation's appreciation of their contributions, and to provide an effective specialised forum for a proper coordination and execution of women and social welfare related programmes, the establishment of the ministry had become inevitable.

Under the new ministry, a department would be created to take care of the welfare of disabled persons . . .

*Time had come to harness the endowments of every stratum of the society in order to promote and gainfully realise the collective drive for development and progress.*²⁸

There is no doubt that the creation of such a Ministry, if matched with adequate financial resources and competent women and men, will go a long way in enhancing the status of women in Nigeria.

7. Women associations and empowerment of women

In section 1.6, we noted that specific measures were adopted during successive administrations in Nigeria particularly under military administrations to facilitate women's access to employment and key decision-making positions. We also observed that socio-cultural discrimination is a major constraint to the effectiveness of these policies.

This section examines the role of women associations in promotion of women to public decision-making positions in Nigeria. The history of women's movement in Nigeria dates from colonial period. During the

²⁶ See Blue Print on the family Support Programmes, 1994.

²⁷ The promise is contained in President's Budget Speech of 1995.

²⁸ See Sunday Times, January 15th 1993, p. 3.

colonial period, some women activists acting independently and collectively defended their perceived interests as well as work for changes in the political system and in the position of women within the system.²⁹ The first of such women's efforts was the popular women's war of 1929. The 1929 Women's War was a mass uprising by Igbo, Ibibio, Ogoni and Andoni Women in Calabar, Ogoja and Owerri provinces which in fact continued spasmodically in 1930 and 1931.³⁰ The women's war was caused by the fear that women were to be taxed. The women's war was primarily a movement of women to protect their economic and political interests. It was a feminist movement in the sense that the women were very conscious of the special role of women, the importance of women to society and the assertion of their rights as women vis-à-vis men. In the Western region, the Abeokuta Women's Union (AWU) equally protested against the payment of poll tax by women and the Sole Native Authority system of colonial administration in the Western provinces, as represented by Alake (the traditional ruler). More significantly they demanded for representation or participation of women in a reformed system of administration. The AWU succeeded in obtaining the abrogation of the poll tax on women, the removal of unpopular traditional ruler and the appointment of several women to the local government.

The movements discussed above became predecessors of contemporary women movements which emerged in 1950's, 1960's and 1970's. Some of the prominent leaders of AWU such as Funmilayo Ransome Kuti provided effective leadership in new emergent women's movements like the Nigerian Women's Union (NWU), and its successor the Federation of Nigerian Women Societies (FNWS). The objectives of FNWS were the enfranchisement of women, provision of more facilities for women's education and enhancement for the status of women. Their activities and pressures contributed largely to the enfranchisement of women in South-Eastern and South Western Nigeria.

In general, the earlier movements discussed above were active and vocal in articulating women's problems through mass mobilisation. From 1959, new women associations emerged which replaced the former. Some of these associations are more or less collaborative with the political class in the marginalisation of women. They were/are beneficiaries of government token appointments in state executive councils, federal executives councils and board chairpersons. Given their collaborative nature, they could not adequately represent women's interests. The first of such organisations is the National Council of Women Societies (NCWS). The objectives of this association are the following :

²⁹ Mba, 1992, pp. 51-52.

- a) To promote the welfare and progress (economic and social) of women, laying special emphasis on education and training.
- b) To awaken and encourage in women the realization of their responsibilities to the community.
- c) To ensure by every legal means that women are given every opportunity to play part as full responsible members of the community.
- d) To encourage the affiliation of all non-political women organisations in Nigeria.
- e) To foster cooperation with other national and international bodies with similar aims.

The membership of NCWS included the elites and non-elites. Nevertheless, the executive committee was/is composed mainly of elite women. NCWS received/receives government subvention annually. Between 1959 and early 1980's, NCWS was far less active in articulating women's interests especially their accessibility to key political and administrative positions. Its activities are more or less in the social sphere. These included the education of women on hygiene and sanitation, the market and homes, promotion of women's handcrafts on economic scale, community and rural development, family planning, establishment of day care centres, nurseries for children of market women and recently training of women for civic responsibilities and leadership roles. Since mid 1980's, NCWS has assumed a more active role in making significant political demands to change the status of women in Nigeria.

In 1989, the NCW set up a task force committee on political Transition Programme to use the NCWS organisational hierarchy to assist in educating Nigerian women on their need to become active participants in the Political Transition Programme of the Third Republic³⁰. Similarly, NCWS in 1994 requested that NCW should be upgraded to a Women's Ministry to enhance its effectiveness in its coordination of women's issues.

There are other numerous women associations which serve to promote their members narrow professional and economic interests. Their objectives are largely non-political. Some of these associations are elitist while some are non-elitist. Among the former are society Women Accountants of Nigeria (SWAN), Nigerian Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ), Nigerian Associations of Medical Women etc. The non-elitist associations include the Association of Women Traders.

³⁰ Mba, *ibid.*, p. 53.

In contemporary time the most radical feminist movement in Nigeria is the Women in Nigeria (WIN). This association consists mainly on the female intelligentsia. WIN has contributed significantly to the upliftment of women's status by bringing to fore fundamental issues as it affects women. WIN's objectives are :

- a) To promote the study of the conditions of women in Nigeria, with the aim of combating discriminatory and sexist practices in the family, in the work-place and in the Wider society ;
- b) To defend the rights of women under the Nigerian constitution and the United Nations Human Rights Convention ;
- c) To provide non-sexist alternatives to government and institutional policies ;
- d) To fight against the harassment and sexual abuse of females in the family and elsewhere ;
- e) To promote an equitable distribution of domestic work in the family ;
- f) To provide a forum for women to express themselves ;
- g) To ensure for women equal access to education ;
- h) To combat sexist stereotypes in literature, the media and educational materials ;
- i) To provide the means of educating women on relevant issues ;
- j) To form links and work with other organisations and groups fighting sex and class oppression ;
- k) To fight for social justice.

In order to achieve its objectives, prominent strategies of WIN include organisation of seminars, symposia, workshops and presentation of its positions on critical public policies as it affects women. For example in 1986, WIN presented some guidelines considered essential for the active participation of women in Nigeria to the National Political Bureau. The National Political Bureau was a body set up in 1986 by President Ibrahim Babangida to identify a basic philosophy of government which will determine goals and serve as guide to the activities of government among others. WIN's guidelines for the active participation of women, revolve around these major areas :

- a) Structures of government and forms of representation
- b) Economy
- c) State and Citizenship
- d) Human and Family rights

- e) Mobilisation, awareness and political participation
- f) Work and Labour
- g) Education
- h) Health
- i) Religions
- j) Information
- k) Legal System
- l) Armed Forces.

One defect of women's movement in Nigeria is the lack of cooperation among existing women associations. Women associations are very much isolated from one another to the effect that they are incapable of generating mass political actions which can enhance women's access to public decision-making positions. Many of the women associations are very much differentiated by class, education and age. While it cannot be ignored that women ought to belong to associations that meet their personal, professional, social and economic needs, there is need for cooperation among existing associations to present common fronts on issues such as enhancement of women to key decision-making positions. Through their co-operative efforts they can ensure quantitative and qualitative participation of women in local governments, state governments, legislative assemblies and federal executive councils.

8. Suggestions for achievement of true gender equality

In section 1.5, we identified the lower representation of women in key decision-making positions in Nigeria. We also identified in section 1.6 the affirmative policies adopted to redress gender inequality in Nigeria. We however noted that socio-cultural discrimination against women is a major impediment to the effective implementation of affirmative policies. Nigeria is a patriarchal society which gives ascendancy to men and women in authority and decision-making in and outside the family structures. It is important that these male-centred structures should be softened to ensure equal access of men and women to decision-making positions. Similarly government needs to ensure that egalitarian principles form the basis of early socialisation of Nigeria. Most of the stereotypes of men and women's roles are carryovers from childhood indoctrination. There is a need to break these traditional attitudes and stereotypes of women's roles and inequality with men. This can be done through mass mobilisation campaigns. Toward this end government should enlist the support of mass media and religious organisations.

Women should be guaranteed greater access to education at all levels not just by policy proclamations but through breaking traditional prejudices against women's education. Government should encourage parents to send their female children to school at all levels. Government should channel their efforts through relevant adult education programmes and public enlightenment campaigns. Parents should be made aware that investment in women's education is as profitable as men's education.

Government needs to evolve a policy for the provision of support facilities for working mothers to facilitate their employment and upward mobility. Government should encourage employers to provide support facilities for their own women employees. Government should encourage and if necessary make it mandatory for large employers of labour to provide support facilities for their women employees. These support facilities if handled by capable hands, will likely enhance the effectiveness of working mothers as well as encourage employment of women.

Women should also endeavour to influence the institutional environment to ensure enactment and implementation of affirmative policies. Towards this end, systematic civic and political educational programmes must be adopted by the NCW and other women organisations to raise the consciousness of women on power structures in Nigeria, how they can best be used to achieve a radically transformed environment for women's active participation in policy positions.

NCW which was established to coordinate women's programmes should be provided with adequate human, financial and material resources to enable it discharge its functions effectively. Its activities must also be made autonomous of political interventions.

Bibliography

1. Abe, I. Politico-Cultural Factors that Influence Women's Education in Nigeria , Unpublished Manuscript, July 1988.
2. Agomo, C.K. Labour Legislation and Women Workers in Fashoyin et.al (eds), Women in the Modern Sector Labour Force in Nigeria, Department of Industrial Relations, University of Lagos, 1985.
3. Allen, Van, Aba Riots or the Igbo Women's War ? Ideology, Stratification and the Invisibility of Women in Hafkin and Bay, (eds), Women in Africa Stanford, University Press, California, 1988.
4. Blue Print on the Family Support Programmes (FSP), Federal Republic of Nigeria, Ternem Publicity Abuja, 1994.
5. Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1979, Daily Times Publication.
6. Crowder, M. The Story of Nigeria, Faber & Faber, London, 1966, p. 11.
7. Decree No. 43, 1988 Civil Service Reforms, Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette No.79, 30th November 1988, Vol. 75.
8. Draft Copy of National Policy on Women, June 1993, p. 4.
9. Fasheke, M. The Role of Women in Traditional Yoruba Society in Ogunremi, G.O. and Adediran, O. (eds) Essays on Yoruba Culture, Obafemi Awolowo University, Forthcoming.
10. Mba, N. Women and Politics in Colonial Nigerian, Paper Presented at the Symposium on the Impact of Colonisation on Women in Nigeria, Women's Research Documentation Centre, Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, October 16th-18th, 1989.
11. Mba, N. Women in Politics : Pre-Independence Political Struggle to Date, Paper Presented at the National Seminar on Democratic Governance and the Role of Women in the Third Republic, Sheraton Hotel, Abuja, July 8th-10th, 1992.
12. Mohammed, H.D. : Women in Nigerian History : Examples from Borno Empire, Nupeland and Igboland in Bappa, S. et.al (eds) Women in Nigeria Today, Zed Books, London, 1985.
13. National Policy on Education (Revised) Federal Government Press, Lagos, 1981.
14. Okigbo, P. Essays in the Public Philosophy of Development, Vol. 1 No. 5, Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1987.
15. Okonjo, K. The Dual-Sex Political System in Operation, Igbo Women and Community Politics in Mid-Western Nigerian in Hafkin, W.J. and Bay, E.G. Women in Africa, Stanford University Press, California, 1988.
16. Olojede, I. Women, Power and Political System in Olurode, L. (ed) Women and Social Change in Nigeria, Unity Publishers Lagos, 1990.
17. Olojede, I. Women in Contemporary Nigeria, Paper Presented at the Seminar on Women in Management, Administrative Staff College of Nigeria, Topo, Badagry, July 20-23rd, 1993.

20. Olojede, I. Women's Access to the Nigerian Higher Civil Service, Paper Presented at the Women in Management Seminar, Administrative Staff College of Nigeria, Topo - Badagry, October 18th-22nd, 1994.
21. Obi, Chizea : Women's Participation in the Transition to Civil Rule Programme Paper Presented at the National Seminar on Democratic Governance and The Role of Women in The Third Republic at Sheraton Hotel, Abuja, July 8th-10th, 1994.
22. Oyekanmi, F.D. Women and The Law : Historical and Contemporary Perspectives in Nigeria, Paper Presented at the Seminar on women and The Law Organised by Southern University Law Centre, Baton Rouge, USA and the Faculty of Law, University of Lagos, November 23rd-26th, 1992.
23. Report of the Political Bureau, Federal Government Publication, Lagos, 1987, p. 106.
24. Report of the Resumed Nigerian Constitutional Conference Held in London, September and October, 1958.
25. Sanday, P.R. Female Power and Male Dominance, Cambridge University Press, London, 1981.
26. Sunday Times, January 15th, 1995.