Understanding Gender and Inclusive Governance: An Explorative Overview

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Abstract

Building inclusive nations, states and societies is widely understood as a central concern for international development, and history has shown that inclusive nations, states and societies are more prosperous, effective and resilient in the long run. Gender and governance is about finding the conditions under which public affairs are managed so that women are included equally in the government, so that gender equality is one of the goals or results of public management. This understanding would have to be finessed considerably so that in terms of the delivery of justice, regulation of the economy, delivery of public services, resolution of social and political conflict, and other business of government, women are equally included and gender equality is maintained as a goal. Thus, getting more women into public office and decision-making positions is an important issue about equal opportunities and ultimately human rights; although it is not a guarantee that it will necessarily produce better quality governance from a gender perspective. Against the foregoing backdrop, this paper is exploring the understanding of gender and inclusive governance. The paper is anchored on the equity theory of leadership which holds the assumption that an individual is motivated by the desire to be equitably treated in his or her work relationship based on fairness. The study adopted a content/document analysis. Based on the findings, it is recommended that although women participation in governance is gradually gaining acceptance even in predominantly male societies, there is need to review upwards constitutionally, the number and percentage for both elective and appointable positions to women.
Keywords: Gender, Gender Inequality, Governance and Inclusive Governance.

Introduction

Governance means more than just "government". It embodies the set of institutions or rules of the game, both formal and informal, that shape access to and participation and influence in political structures and processes; including parliaments, public sector organisations, electoral processes, legal systems and institutions (Grindle, 2007,Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012) in Alina (2020). Accordingly, World Bank (2017) defines governance as "the process through which state and non-state actors interact to design and implement policies, within a given set of formal and informal rules that shape and are shaped by power". Thus, the emphasis is on how things are done (i.e. how decisions are made and policies implemented) rather than on what is being done. Governance is a dynamic concept that lies at the core of relations between state and society, comprising all of the processes and interactions of governing over a social system – whether undertaken by the state, the market, social groups and networks, or a combination of these.
Governance is inclusive when it effectively serves and engages all people; takes into account gender and other facets of personal identity; and when institutions, policies, processes and

services are accessible, accountable and responsive to all members of the society. That is why Bermeo, (2019)opined that gender equality is a crucial feature of democratic societies. To this end, public institutions must provide services that advance the human rights of women and men equally and consider their specific experiences and needs. Thus, gender equity and governance programmes should seek to foster inclusive societies so that all groups especially women and girls are able to fulfill their life aspirations.

There is growing global awareness that gender equality is the cornerstone of inclusive growth. Providing equal access to public and economic opportunities to both men and women is vital to accomplishing a more sustainable economy and improving national well-being. The composition of public institutions must reflect society if it is to be perceived as legitimate, capable of delivering just policies and upholding equality before the law. Ensuring gender balance in public decision making has been increasingly highlighted by OECD countries as a key governance issue related to fairness, transparency and inclusive policy outcomes. Only gender balanced and different policy-makers can have the know-how to tackle the different needs of citizens. National plans, policies, institutions and budgets reflect how governments translate commitments to gender equality into results for women. Too often, however, there is a gap between policy and practice. It entails comprehensively assessing gender gaps and identifying actions to close them. Changes to promote gender equality need to be backed by adequate funds, and systematically monitored for progress in reducing gender discrimination. That is why UN (2019) averred that gender inequality is governance failure.

Indeed, the issue of gender inequality in the society has been a topical issue and currently assumes a front burner across the globe especially in developing countries. Right from time immemorial, women constitute greater proportion of the society, but their role remains a compelling one. There exists gender differentiation even in the 21st Century African Societies that prevents women from contributing optimally to national development. As noted by Uchendu (2019), the fact that traditional sex assignments vary from one society to another indicates that sexual division of labour is not rooted in biology but rather in custom and tradition. Perhaps, it was from these perspectives that Haralambos and Heald (2014) in Alina, (2020) presented gender inequality from a sociological background when they noted that:

> *Women produce children: women are mothers and wives; women do the*
> *cooking, mending, serving and washing". They take care of men and are*
> *subordinate to male authority; they are largely excluded from high status*
> *occupation and from position of power.*

However, it will be recalled as Berneo (2019), put it that, before the white man came, gender division of labour was restricted to farm and household activities. Irrespective of all these odds, colonialism was able to bring about a parallel shift that gave rise to urban centres, new pattern of work as well as new gender division of labour too.

It is instructive to state that, gender inequality undermines development; so improving gender equality has to be part of any sustainable strategy for development. Inequality in rights, resources and political voice generally disadvantages women, but they also disadvantage the rest of the society and impede development. Even more striking: the costs of gender inequality are particularly large in low-income countries, and within countries, they are larger for the poor. Foremost among the costs of gender inequality is its toll on human lives and on the quality of

those lives. It is not easy to identify and measure these costs, but evidences from countries around the world demonstrate that societies with large, persistent gender inequalities pay the price of more poverty, more malnutrition, more illness and more deprivation to good life.

Reports have established that gender inequality is higher in developing countries of which Nigeria is one (World Economic Forum, 2013; British Council, 2012; & WACOL, 2008). Gender inequality permeates all aspects of Nigerian life. It manifests in the family institution, educational sector, labour market, politics and social service institutions. The Nigerian society is patriarchal in nature. This has perpetuated the domination of women by men, thus bringing about the socialisation of women into a culture of female subordination. Indeed, women are also missing from most historical records because in some cultures it is considered inappropriate for women to take individual credit for their work (Leane&Anneke, 2021).This has severe implications not only for national development but against conventions of modern governance. Thus, the paper particularly attempts an exploration of the consequences of gender inequality and inclusive governance with the motive of identifying challenges associated with gender discrimination and suggesting a way forward.

Methodology
This paper adopts the qualitative research paradigm with textual data obtained from secondary sources such as scholarly publications and other statutory official documents. Accordingly, content analysis through thematic organization was employed as the method of discussion upon which conclusions were drawn and recommendations proffered.

Conceptualization:
Gender and Gender Inequality
Gender refers to the social definition given to being either female or male in a society. It may also be defined as the economic, social, political and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female. Gender, as a social phenomenon, may mean different things to different persons. Basically, gender defines the relationship between women and men and the way this relationship has been socially constructed and institutionalized. Akpabio (2015), sees gender as the socially and culturally defined and constructed roles that women and men play in societies; roles which are shaped by economic, historical and cultural determinants. In similar vein, Nwosu, (2018: 214) citing Ogbuagu, (1998) submitted that:

> gender is socially constructed for the purpose of allocating power, duties, responsibilities, statuses and roles in any given social milieu or context. It is universally conceptualized either as an organizing concept which can be innocuously interpreted as neutral (that is without bias) or as a value laden concept which is applied to impose discriminatory practices against one group by another within a given setting.

Toeing similar line with the above authors, Uchem (2015) submitted that gender refers to socially constructed roles that men and women are expected to perform in a given society; in the community, church and family. According to her, it involves an understanding of what it means to be a man or a woman in a given culture including society's expectations of how men and women should feel, look or act. For example social norms and cultural values encourage women to be passive and men to wield power and to impose their will upon others especially the women and children.

From the foregoing submissions, gender can therefore be seen to be roles and responsibilities expected of and to be performed by women and men in societies based on the belief system in existence. Most often, the term is used in discourse to mean the roles and responsibilities ascribed by societies to women and men based on their biological characteristics which is influenced by cultural, traditional as well as religious practices. This means that gender roles vary from society to society. That is, a particular role deemed to be ideal and appropriate for women and men in a particular society might be seen as an aberration in another society. These roles and responsibilities ascribed to or expected of women and men by societies change with time as result of advancement or modernity. Differences in the roles and responsibilities assigned to women and men are what have resulted in varying degree of gender disparity existing in various societies of the world today, thus the agitations for gender equality. This position was corroborated by Bridge (1998) cited in Uchendu (2019), where he opined that gender constitutes one of the determinants of how poverty is experienced and of wealth creation. Rights and entitlements of women and men to opportunities, resources and decision making are based on socio-cultural norms rather than on human rights or the respective development capability of men and women.

In Nigeria, culture, tradition and religion have been identified as the basic determinants of gender roles which have resulted in the current state of gender disequilibrium the country faces today. The central culture that pervades the Nigerian society is patriarchal in nature. The patriarchal society sets the parameters for women's structurally unequal position in families and markets by condoning gender-differential terms in inheritance rights and legal adulthood, by tacitly tolerating domestic and sexual violence and sanctioning differential wages for equal or comparable work. Tradition, culture and religion have dictated women and men relationship for centuries and entrenched male domination into the structure of social organization and institution at all levels of leadership. Patriarchy justifies the marginalization of women in education, economy, labour market, politics, business, family, domestic matters and inheritance Salaam, (2003) cited in Allanana, (2023). To Ejumudo (2023), this male-dominated culture which has accorded women an inferior and secondary position in the society and promoted male supremacy still remains embedded, obscured and protected within traditional institutions and structures held in abeyance and relative utmost sacredness.

Gender equality in the governance Sector is taken to concern fairness and justice in women's access to and benefits from their involvement in decision-making and representations within the government where they can actively participate in decision-making; this may include important qualitative as well as quantitative dimensions. To the extent of the above, gender inequality refers to the unequal treatment or perceptions of individuals wholly or partly due to their gender or sex. It arises from differences in socially constructed gender roles. Gender inequality is a process of being unfair or not given the same chances in life to men and women. To Onah (2019), the term gender inequality refers to the disparities that exist among individuals based solely on their gender rather than objective difference in skill, abilities or characteristics. That is why Uchendu (2019) conceptualized gender imbalance as a situation where there is no equality of access or opportunities for both boys and girls.

In Nigeria, gender inequality is influenced by different cultures and beliefs. In most part of the country, women are considered subordinate to their male counterparts especially in Northern part of Nigeria as well as in other sectors including politics, economy and education.

Inclusive Governance
Inclusive governance is a core value of democratic governance, in terms of equal participation, equal treatment and equal rights before the law. This implies that all people – including the poor, women, ethnic and religious minorities, indigenous peoples and other disadvantaged groups – have the right to participate meaningfully in governance processes and influence decisions that affect them. It also means that governance institutions and policies are accessible, accountable and responsive to disadvantaged groups, protecting their interests and providing diverse populations with equal opportunities for public services such as justice, health and education. Inclusive governance is advocated premised on the assumption that inclusive societies and institutions tend to be more prosperous, effective and resilient in the long run.

The question of how to foster governance processes that: (i) are more inclusive and representative and (ii) lead to development outcomes that are more broadly shared has emerged as a leading priority in international development. The Sustainable Development Goals(SDGs) and the United Nations' 2030 Agenda, which makes a commitment to leave no one behind, are perhaps the most ambitious articulation of this consensus(UN, 2015). SDG 16in particular calls on all signatory countries to "promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels" (UN, 2015). Other SDGs make specific commitments not only to "end poverty in all its forms everywhere", but also to tackle marginalisation and respond to the needs of all groups, including in terms of income, health, education, gender equality, employment and inequality (Glassco & Holguin, 2022). By this way, the SDGs represent a powerful framework for transformation that is grounded in a shared understanding of inclusive institutions as both intrinsically valuable and indispensable for tackling poverty, inequality and exclusion and for achieving peace and development (Nur & Andersson, 2023).

That is why (Bermeo, 2002, 2019; & Sisk, 2017) opined that over the long term, more open and inclusive states and societies tend to be more prosperous, effective and resilient. They agreed that Inclusive governance is noted in power-sharing; women's formal inclusion and political participation; elections; political parties and party systems; electoral systems; decentralization; and new media/information and communications technologies. Thus, as existing research and evidence suggest, there is no one perfect institutional model or design that will always seamlessly work towards cultivating a sense of identity or inclusion that can overcome narrow divides. Different nations and her institutional arrangements will all have important advantages and drawbacks, and they will generate tensions, dilemmas and trade-offs. In all instances, how institutional arrangements work in actual practice and shape in its inclusiveness will depend on the power dynamics and underlying rules of the game in a given context.

Accordingly, Inclusive governance has important intrinsic value that is rooted in enabling people to exercise voice and influence in the processes that concern them. Inclusive governance can also provide the basis for forging shared identity and common values and in this way, it can galvanise social cohesion. Inclusive governance can also help to foster inclusive development outcomes,

butthis process is neither linear nor automatic. Rather, it is highly contingent and requires a great deal of strategic agency, vision, leadership and capacity to be effective (Allanana, 2023). The role of the state in undergirding both inclusive governance and inclusive development is also essential. Premised on the above, Nur and Anderson (2023) submitted that, there are enabling factors that can be harnessed to promote prosperity and shared well-being through inclusive governance, but there are no blueprints for how this can be done. Some of these enabling factors include state capacity, which is essential in undergirding both governance and development; ideas and narratives around identity and belonging; critical junctures (e.g. elections and constitution-making processes, political crises, natural disasters, etc.); political parties; strategic coalitions; and social mobilisation. All of these factors are important but also highly contingent.

Essentially, inclusive governance can be summarized to have 8 major characteristics. It is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. It assures that corruption is minimized, the views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making. It is also responsive to the present and future needs of society. Thus, a society's wellbeing depends on ensuring that all its members feel that they have a stake in it and do not feel excluded from the mainstream of society. This requires all groups, but particularly the most vulnerable, have opportunities to improve or maintain their wellbeing.

Women in Governance
The place of women in governance has always been an ongoing study due to patriarchal domination of men in Nigeria. In developed nations, the role of women in governance has taken a wider dimension due to high level of electoral literacy. In developing nations however, governance is seen from a patriarchal dimension that excludes women in major decisions. A patriarchy is a set of social relations which has a material base and in which there are hierarchical relations between men and solidarity among them which enables them to dominate women. The material base of patriarchy is men's control over women's labour power, a control maintained by excluding women from access to necessary economically productive resources and reducing their sexuality (Hatman, 2021). More often than not, men constitute a larger percentage of party membership and this tends to affect women when it comes to selecting or electing candidates for elections, since men are usually the majority in the political party set-up. They tend to dominate the party hierarchy and are therefore at advantage in influencing the party's internal politics (Modupe et al, 2019). Suleiman, (2017) observes that the increasing salience of women's issues and the resurgence of women's movements have raised popular consciousness and intense academic discourse on poor participation of women in politics. It should be noted that sustainable democratic government relies upon the participation of all citizens in determining through elections and political process.

Women in governance entail structures and processes that ensure the effective participation of women in governance and political decision-making processes including women in critical numbers in key institutions, e.g. in the National Assembly, State government and local governments. This will translate to delivery of services in key sectors that enhance participatory and transparent decision-making, institutional accountability and responsiveness to both women's and men's specific needs. Accordingly, features of such inclusiveness are Parliamentary oversight of a gender balanced appointment of most senior positions in public

office and measures to promote gender equality and women's empowerment as a key aspect of reforms to national legal and judicial legislations including the bills of rights providing civil and political rights recognized in international law.

Therefore, positive impacts of good governance on gender equality will ensure that poor women and men's rights and fundamental freedoms are respected and allow them to live with dignity. Introducing inclusive and fair rules, institutions and practices governing social interactions to improve outreach to the vulnerable, such as poor men and women, youth and the older generations, ensure that women are equal partners with men in decision-making over development, use and access to technology, financing and other aspects of welfare management and also ensure that the environmental and social needs of future generations are reflected in governmental policies and practices.

It is instructive to mention here as noted in Punch, (2023) that, Dr. Okonjo-Iwela, Prof Dora Akunyili, and Dr. Obiageli Ezekwesili and other women that have occupied political and decision making positions in Nigeria have demonstrated exceptional leadership qualities and outstanding track records of achievement. They have contributed immensely to the development of Nigeria both politically, economically and socially. This should serve as a model to encourage women to engage and participate in politics. This should equally show that women have high prospects to serve well in leadership positions and national development contrary to the stereotypical beliefs of the society that women should be confined to the roles of family. These women exhibited exceptional qualities that endeared them to the hearts of most Nigerians, thereby giving credence that women in leadership positions have impacted positively and will continue to impact positively to national development.

Gender Disparity in Government
Understanding gender issues in governance requires examining the participation and decision-making of women and men in different institutions. Addressing gender gaps in governance entails the adoption of reforms to engender different governing institutions at the various levels of government to ensure development effectiveness and results.

Good governance is central to the achievement of the MDGs, as it provides the 'enabling environment' for the realization of the MDGs, in particular and the elimination of poverty. Recognizing this, in the Millennium Declaration, world leaders committed to "spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law, as well as respect all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms including the right to development" Idike (2023). They resolved to strengthen the capacity of all countries to implement the principles and practices of democracy and respect for human rights".

In practical terms, Idike (2023) posits that in the spirit of its expressed policy, in support of 30% Affirmative Action for the benefit of women, the Government of Nigeria under President Jonathan, made conscious and positive efforts to take appropriate measures, to reflect a good percentage of women in governance. For instance, the administration took off in 2011 with the appointment of 13 female Cabinet Ministers, 5 female Special Advisers, 10 female Ambassadors, 16 female Judges of the Court of Appeal; 11 female Permanent Secretaries, 16 female Judges of the Federal High Court, 3 female Judges of the Supreme Court, 6 female

Judges of the National Industrial Court; a female Acting President, Court of Appeal and The Chief Justice of the Federation as female (Idike, 2023). By this, the President made good his campaign promises by raising the number of women in decision-making positions to an unprecedented level. What is striking was that, it was under the Jonathan administration that Nigerian women attained the highest level of participation in the nation's social, political and economic life. President Jonathan's Transformation Agenda contained a National Gender Policy which mainstreams into all aspects of government planning and development.

A major component of that policy was the women empowerment in politics. Thus, there was a remarkable success in the creation of awareness on the participation of women in politics. Moreover, not only was a Political Trust Fund established to provide support for women aspirants willing to participate in general elections, a database of women political aspirants was also created. Therefore, the implementation of Jonathan's Gender Policy resulted in an increase in women's representation in Government, from 10% in 2011, to over 33% in 2013, with the appointment of 13 female Ministers out of 42, representing 31% and 4 Special Advisers out of 18, representing 23%. These appointments set the stage for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) target number three, on Gender Equity and Women Empowerment (Idike, 2023). The above was not the case in the administration of Mohammadu Buhari where during the celebration of the International Women Day in March 2023, the Presidency released a statement naming 50 women appointed into various official political portfolios. The list contained the names of 7 women Ministers and 43 Presidential Aides (Punch, 2023)

UN on Gender Equality
The United Nations holds that fair representation of women in political life has a positive impact on gender mainstreaming in various policies. That is why it set a dedicated target within the sustainable development goals dealing specifically with women's access to leadership (Joanna et al, 2019). The available data on the presence of women in parliaments and in governments show a gradual positive trend, but much still remains to be done to ensure an equal presence of both genders in decision-making.

Statistically worldwide, women are still under-represented in leadership positions in comparison to the male counterpart. Female heads of state or governments are still a minority, although the number has increased from 12 to 21 over the past 20 years (Joannaet al, 2019). As at the end of 2020, approximately one in four members of lower or single houses of parliament worldwide is a woman. Thus, globally, women's membership of parliaments rose to 24.1% at the end of 2019, representing an increase of 13 percentage points compared with two decades earlier. In 2018, similarly, only 18 % of appointed ministers are women, and they are usually assigned portfolios related to environment, natural resources, and women affairs Nigeria as a member of the United Nations signed and ratified the various relevant international instruments, treaties and conventions without reservation. These instruments have always emphasized that member nations put in place all the necessary mechanisms needed to eliminate gender discriminations, ensure equality and human dignity to all, men and women. This is regardless of the fact that a National Gender Policy has been formulated to promote a 35 percent affirmative action for women – a policy that demands 35 percent involvement of women in all governance processes. The national Gender Policy (NGP) formulated a 35% Affirmative Action (AA) in Nigeria since 2006. This policy demands that 35% of women be involved in all governance processes.

Unfortunately, the NGP is recognized but is not practiced as the structures and processes for implementation are not in place (This Day, 2021).

UN Women (2023) reports that as at 1 January 2023, there are 31 countries where 34 women serve as Heads of State and/or Government. With this number, it noted that, gender equality in the highest positions of power may not be reached for another 130 years. Just 17 countries have a woman Head of State, and 19 countries have a woman Head of Government. Furthermore, first-time compiled data by UN Women show that women represent 22.8 percent of Cabinet members heading Ministries, leading a policy area as of 1 January 2023. According to it, there are only 13 countries in which women hold 50 percent or more of the positions of Cabinet Ministers leading policy areas.

The report states further that only 26.5 per cent of parliamentarians in single or lower houses are women, up from 11 per cent in 1995.Only six countries have 50 per cent or more women in parliament in single or lower houses: Rwanda (61 per cent), Cuba (53 per cent), Nicaragua (52 per cent), Mexico (50 per cent), New Zealand (50 per cent), and the United Arab Emirates (50 per cent).A further 23 countries have reached or surpassed 40 per cent, including 13 countries in Europe, six in Africa, three in Latin America and the Caribbean, and one in Asia. Globally, there are 22 States in which women account for less than 10 per cent of parliamentarians in single or lower houses, including one lower chamber with no women at all (UN Women, 2023).

Challenges to Women Participation in Governance in Nigeria
Patriarchal and Socio-Cultural Practices in African Societies
Some socio-cultural practices in Nigeria do not allow participation of women in politics and decision-making processes. In Nigeria, traditional perceptions of women as inferior to men prevail, as many people uphold cultural practices which enhance the subordination of women. Consequently, men continue to dominate women in political, economic, social, and religious realms. Such practices keep women 'silent' in the public sphere.

Gender Inequality
One of the major factors that affect women's participation in politics is gender inequality. Since politics is traditionally conceived as a male domain, all financial, economic, commercial and political negotiations conducted outside the home are expected to be controlled by males. This results to Nigerian women having very limited access to decision-making process. This in turn reduces women's chances of participating in politics. These stereotypical constraints against women limit women's opportunity to attain political and leadership roles.

Poor Education/Poor Access to Education
According to the national policy on education (2004), every Nigerian child has the right to equal educational chance. It is a fact that women contribute meaningfully to national development, but a closer look at the educational system of Nigeria shows that female education is relegated. This problem has not only affected females 'access to education, but their performance towards national development. There is clear disparity in the field of education between the two sexes. There are a lot of barriers the girl-child faces and these bring about problems in education. They include: Early or forced marriage, household responsibilities, preference of male children to female, cultural norms and practices (in most communities in Nigeria, boys are allowed to go to

school while girls learn how to cook, how to care for children and how to be a good wife, girls and women are expected to do household chores) Chioma (2019) All these affect girls' and women's access to education thereby limiting them from participating in politics and national development.

Lack of Finance and Political Funding
Lack of funds is another factor that constrains women's participation in politics. Most women feel reluctant to contest forpolitical positions as a result of inadequate funds to enable them to venture into politics. The fact is that, politics in Nigeria is financially demanding and women lack such requisite financial muscle to engage in politics except by appointment.

Religious Practices
The two major religious practices in Nigeria (Christianity and Islam) do not give room for women to appear in public and freely engage in politicking, thus limiting women from contesting elections and applying into political offices.

Women Empowerment
Stereotypical and cultural practices in the past have confined women to the kitchen and other domestic activities. women and their voice are made to appear irrelevant in issues that affect their lives and society as they are regimented to 'kitchen' and' bedroom' responsibilities alone. Thus, most women are not yet empowered to participate and engage in political and public offices. This limits women's participation in politics and national development. Factors like gender discrimination, lack of political funding, illiteracy and inadequate education, marginalization in political party, patriarchy hierarchy, early marriages, and stereotypical constraints among others, have been identified as inhibiting women's low participation in leadership, politics and national development. OpenAI, (2024)

Conclusion
From the foregoing, it is clear that good governance or rather 'inclusive governance' is an ideal; which is difficult to achieve in its totality. Very few countries and societies have come close to achieving inclusive governance. However, to ensure sustainable human development, actions must be taken to work towards this ideal with the aim of making it a reality. No doubt, a society's wellbeing depends on ensuring that all its members feel that they have a stake in it and do not feel excluded from the mainstream of society. This requires all groups, but particularly the most vulnerable (women), have opportunities to improve or maintain their wellbeing.
Accordingly, it is no gainsaying that women are now becoming a powerful force to reckon with in international politics when it comes to mental capability and decision taking. Their involvement in politics should be seen as a blessing to the nation in the light of development they have brought to the country in their participation in governance.

Recommendations
We hereby recommend for full, functional and practical participation by both men and women is a key cornerstone of inclusive governance. Participation could be either direct or through legitimate intermediate institutions or representatives. It is important to point out that inclusive governance does not necessarily mean that all the concerns of the most vulnerable in society (women) would be taken into consideration in decision making. Secondly, participation needs to

be informed and organized. This means that, freedom of association and expression on the one hand and an organized civil society on the other hand should be encouraged.

Furthermore, women empowerment in politics requires a multidimensional approach. Preventing violence, enhancing political party participation and legislation on harassment against women in elections, for example, should be a priority. More efforts are also needed to bring more, and particularly young women into leadership positions to train women leaders, and boost women skills to participate actively in elections as candidates and voters. This is crucial in the current political context characterized by citizens' dissatisfaction with politics.

What is more, Cultural orientation towards the value of women is needed to avert and change gender stereotype in girls, in particular and there should be the formation of women alliance to sustain a broad-base struggle by women to eliminate all the inequalities or barriers that women are subjected to. But most fundamentally, we recommend herein that, although women participation in governance is gradually gaining acceptance even in predominantly male societies, especially in Africa, there is need to review upwards constitutionally, the number and percentage for both elective and appointable positions to women.

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