

AN APPRAISAL OF THE IMPACT OF GENDER DISCRIMINATION ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN NIGERIA

By

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Abstract

Discriminatory practices against women is a global phenomenon that cuts across various countries and races of the world. These discriminatory practices happen in many guises, probably inter related in their causes and consequences as they are a part of a complex system of social, cultural, and economic determinants. In every society women play a vital role that contribute significantly to the economics of the society, however there are certain pervasive forces known as gender discrimination that tend to inhibit the female gender from attaining her full potential. In Nigeria, most discriminating laws, culture and tradition, has generally played a great role in relegating women to the background as mere chattels, with no rights at all, expected to concern themselves only with domestic affairs. It is true that women are humans too but the reality for women is that they are denied their humanity as those rights recognized as "human rights" are not applied equally to women in Nigeria. This article critically exposes the rights of women in Nigeria, the various discriminatory practices suffered by women in, the proficiency and impact of human rights and policies in the promotion and protection of women's right and gender equality in Nigeria, while at the same time revealing the plights of the Nigerian women with respect to the enforcement of their rights.

Introduction

Women's rights are fundamental human rights that were enshrined by the United Nations for every human being on the planet. These rights include the right to live free from violence, slavery, discrimination, to be educated, to own property, to political participation, health, dignity and to earn fair and equal wage. Women are entitled to all these rights, yet almost everywhere around the world, women and girls are still denied their rights simply because of their gender.¹

UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, Austria, in 1993 for states to recognize women's rights as human rights. In the Vienna Declaration and the Program of Action adopted at the end of the conference, governments agreed on the following text:

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¹ National Human Rights Commission < <https://www.nigeriarights.gov.ng/focus-areas/women-and-gender-matters> > accessed 18th January, 2022.

The human rights of women and of the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. The full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life, at the national, regional and international levels, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex are priority objectives of the international community. Gender-based violence and all forms of sexual harassment and exploitation, including those resulting from cultural prejudice and international trafficking, are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person, and must be eliminated²

Therefore gender equality, which also imply the equality of rights, focus on the fact that women's rights are also human rights and should be recognised as such; the fact that both genders should have equal rights as given under the constitution and also, the fact that once women have and enjoy their rights, it doesn't deprive men of enjoying their rights and having those rights as well.

Historically, in ancient Athens women were always minors and subject to a male, such as their father, brother or some other male kin. A woman's consent in marriage was not generally thought to be necessary and women were obliged to submit to the wishes of her parents or husband. Also, in ancient Rome a wife was considered a minor, a ward, a person incapable of doing or acting anything according to her own individual taste, a person continually under the tutelage and guardianship of her husband. Under Roman law, a woman and her property passed unto the power of her husband upon marriage. The wife was considered the purchased property of her husband, acquired only for his benefit. Furthermore, women in ancient Rome could not exercise any civil or public office, and could not act as witness, surety, tutor, or curator. Women were also not allowed to make a will or contract.³

Furthermore, in the late 18th century the question of women's rights became central to political debates in both France and Britain. At the time some of the greatest thinkers of the Enlightenment, who defended democratic principles of equality and challenged notions that a privileged few should rule over the vast majority of the population, believed that these principles should be applied only to their own gender and their own race. The philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau for example, thought that it was the order of nature for women to obey men. He wrote 'Women do wrong to complain of the inequality of man-made laws' and claimed that 'when she tries to usurp our rights, she is our inferior.'⁴ In his 1869 essay 'The Subjection of Women', the English

² UN General Assembly 1993: Article 18

³ B.B Lockwood, *Women's Rights: A "Human Rights Quarterly" Reader*, (John Hopkins University Press, 2006) 263

⁴ P. G. Lauren, *'The Evolution of International Human Rights: visions seen'* (University of Pennsylvania Press 2003) pp. 29 & 30.

philosopher and political theorist John Stuart Mill in describing the situation for women in Britain stated that the wife is the actual bond-servant of her husband; no less than slaves commonly so called. During the 1800s women in the United States and Britain began to challenge laws that denied them the right to their property once they married. Beginning in the 1840s, state legislatures in the United States and the British Parliament began passing statutes that protected women's property from their husbands and their husbands' creditors. These laws were known as the Married Women's Property Acts.⁵

Courts in the 19th century United States also continued to require privy examinations of married women who sold their property. A privy examination was a practice in which a married woman who wished to sell her property had to be separately examined by a judge or justice of the peace outside of the presence of her husband and asked if her husband was pressuring her into signing the document.⁶ In the subsequent decades women's rights again became an important issue around the world particularly in the English speaking world. By the 1960s the movement was called 'feminism' or 'women liberation'. Reformers wanted the same pay as men, equal rights in law, and the freedom to plan their families or not have children at all. Over the course of the 20th and 21st centuries, women in different parts of the world took on greater roles in society such as serving in government. Thus, 'The status which women reached during the present era was not achieved due to the kindness of men or due to natural progress. It was rather achieved through a long struggle and sacrifice on woman's part and only when society needed her contribution and work, more especially; during the two world wars, and due to the escalation of technological change.'⁷

In Nigeria, the underlying factors responsible for women's rights infringement include the following – inherent discrimination- women do not enjoy equality with men in the society, Unequal access of women and girls to education, harmful traditional practices, inadequate access to economic resources, unequal access to political participation, various forms of violence experienced specifically by women and girls; Gender Based Violence (GBV) amongst others.

Assuredly, the eradication of these social instability, poverty and ignorance in our society demands that both women and men be given equal rights in the democratic system of governance, whereby fairness is given top priority in the civic responsibility and participation of each and everybody. As this will presents a better playing ground for both sexes in the society to co-exist habitably and as such make for improved sustained development in the Country.

⁵ J. J. Lewis, 'Married Women win Property Rights' <http://womenshistory.about.com/od/married_womens_property/a/property_1848ny.htm> accessed 10th February, 2022.

⁶ S. L. Braukman & M. A. Ross, 'Married Women's Property and Male Coercion: United States Courts and the Privy Examination, 1864-1887', *Journal of Women's History*. Vol 12, No. 2 <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_womens_history/v012/12.2braukman.html> accessed 10th February, 2022.

⁷ J. A. Badawi, 'The Status of Women in Islam', *Al-Ittihad Journal of Islamic Studies*, 8 <<http://iaislam.tripod.com/TSOWII.htm>> accessed on 10th February, 2022.

Political Rights of Women

Women constitute about half of the population in Nigeria, yet they face endemic discrimination and persistent denial of their rights. From the period leading to Nigeria's independence to date, even though some advances have been made in women's participation in governance, yet the political participation of women in Nigeria remains one of the lowest in the world. Despite their huge population, women are the least represented in leadership and governance positions in the country and that has been the sorry state of affairs till date.

There is no doubt that discriminatory attitudes and unequal power relations, account for the low participation and muffled voice of women in public life, despite the promise of equality of political and civil rights by the Constitution.⁸ It is to be noted that participation of women in public life is low all over the world but this varies from country to country and Nigeria has one of the lowest scores in this regard. The discriminatory attitudes have ensured a socialization of women that has left many women too timid to assume positions of leadership, and also makes them untrusting of other women.⁹ This invariably makes women reluctant to vote other women into such positions. There has been a recently concluded election in Nigeria, and suffice it to say that, only one female ran for the office of the President, and that of course, the President is not a female. The election did not produce a female governor either. As for other positions such as Senate, and the various houses of assembly, the usual abysmally low percentages of females were recorded. Men seem to be the officials in the political parties and the electoral process, while women remain essentially supporters, side campaigners and clappers for men's achievements in the field. The effect of non-involvement of women in politics at decision-making levels is that women's gender specific concerns remain un-addressed and the benefit of their perspective on mainstream issues is lost, and thus equality and consequently national development remain an illusion.

Women's participation in government is still a far cry from the expected 35 per cent as stipulated in the National Gender Policy¹⁰. The equal participation of women and men in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life, at the national, regional and international levels, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on the grounds of sex are priority objectives of the international community.¹¹

Women's aspiration to participate in governance is premised on the fact that women in Nigeria represent half of the population and hence should be allowed a fair share in decision-making and the governance of the country. Secondly that all human beings are equal and women possess the

⁸ S. 42 CFRN 1999 (as amended)

⁹ F. Anyogu & C. Arinze-Umobi : ' The Globalized World And Gender Rights In Nigeria: The Gains, The Losses', *African Journal on line* <<https://www.ajol.info/index.php/naujilj/article/view/82397/72552>> p. 151 accessed July 5th, 2021.

¹⁰ National Gender Policy, 2006

¹¹ Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, 1993, paragraph 18

same rights as men to participate in governance and public life¹². The right to democratic governance is an entitlement conferred upon all citizens by law. The 1999 Nigerian constitution by virtue of Section 40 provides as follows:

Every person shall be entitled to assemble freely and associate with other persons, and in particular he may form or belong to any political party, trade union or any other association for the protection of his interests: Provided that the provisions of this section shall not derogate from the powers conferred by this Constitution on the Independent National Electoral Commission with respect to political parties to which that Commission does not accord recognition.¹³

Also, Section 42(1) of the same constitution states further that:

A citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not, by reason only that he is such a person be subjected to any form of discrimination. This further confirms that you can go to court to seek redress if as a woman your franchise is violated and that the constitution as a whole prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex.¹⁴

Section 77 of the Constitution also states:

(1) Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, every Senatorial district or Federal constituency established in accordance with the provisions of this Part of this Chapter shall return a member who shall be directly elected to the Senate or the House of Representatives in such manner as may be prescribed by an act of the National Assembly.

(2) Every citizen of Nigeria, who has attained the age of eighteen years residing in Nigeria at the time of the registration of voters for purposes of election to a legislative house, shall be entitled to be registered as a voter for that election.¹⁵

¹² M.G .Allanana, 'Patriarchy and Gender Inequality in Nigeria: The Way Forward', *European Scientific Journal* vol.9, No.17. p122

¹³ CFRN 1999 (as amended) S. 40

¹⁴ CFRN 1999 (as amended) S. 42

¹⁵ CFRN 1999 (as amended) S. 77(1),(2)

From the foregoing, it appears that there is nothing in the constitution, which excludes the participation of women in politics in Nigeria. Yet when it comes to actual practice, there is extensive discrimination.

Social and Cultural Rights of Women

Despite the fact that there has been ratification of most human rights treaties which protect and promote the human rights of women, there is still the subordination and violation of many women due to age long cultural practices in Nigeria and other parts of the world. Women in some parts of the world, for instance in some cultural settings in Africa, are regarded as subservient to men and as such are relegated to the background.¹⁶

There are stereotype roles for women and men especially in family settings. These roles are inculcated in girls and boys either formally or informally from childhood. Several cultural practices are harmful to women with respect to their enjoyment of human rights, the lesser status ascribed to women by tradition and custom subject them to different forms of discrimination. Other than cultural practices, religion or certain religious beliefs have played contributory role in the subservient status assigned to women. Many of the cultural practices around the world are entrenched in religion thus, religion has further contributed towards the subordination of women. Hindu scriptures for instance, provide that women are powerless and have no inheritance. Men must thus, make their women dependent day and night. Her father should guard her in childhood, her husband in her youth, and her sons in her old age because a woman is not fit for independence. It further describes a good wife as a woman whose mind, speech and body are kept in subjection, and who acquires the same abode with her husband in the next world.¹⁷

The Nigerian society is pluralistic with several ethnic groups with diverse customary law practices, especially the Igbo native law and custom and part of the Yoruba native law and custom. This is so because as most of the notorious discriminatory customary law practices cases emanate from these parts of the country particularly the Igbo speaking.¹⁸

Therefore, acknowledging and addressing these socio-cultural norms that deny women equal rights with men will prevent women from being vulnerable to physical, sexual and mental abuse, and other forms of discrimination.

Economic Rights of Women

Women's economic empowerment is central to realizing women's rights and gender equality. Women's economic empowerment includes women's ability to participate equally in

¹⁶ J. A. Badawi (n.6)

¹⁷ J. A. Badawi (n.6)

¹⁸ J.O. Garuba, 'Discriminatory Customary Inheritance Law in Nigeria: Judicial Activism or Legislative Intervention?' < <https://journals.ub.bw/index.php/ublj/article/view/1647/1042> > accessed 5th February, 2022

existing markets; their access to and control over productive resources, access to decent work, control over their own time, lives and bodies; and increased voice, agency and meaningful participation in economic decision-making at all levels from the household to international institutions.

Economic rights include the right to decent work, to equal pay and to land and adequate housing.¹⁹ These are rights that women living in poverty are often denied. Women who are also discriminated against due to other aspects of their identity - such as their age, religion or ethnicity - face even greater barriers to the fulfilment of their economic rights.

Globally, women take on three times as much unpaid care work as men. This includes caring for children, the sick and the elderly, taking care of household tasks such as cooking, collecting water and subsistence farming. Furthermore, for women with paid jobs, the amount of unpaid care work that they face at home is not being reduced at the same rate. This leaves many women facing a 'double burden' of work inside and outside the home. When paid and unpaid work hours are combined, women currently work longer days than men in nearly all countries globally.

The time and energy spent on care work may not leave enough time in a day for decent paid work, for studying, for taking part in women's rights organizations, or for rest and leisure. This means that unpaid care responsibilities also narrow women's choices in the type of job they get, often forcing them into informal, part-time or low-paid employment. This is often reinforced by social norms and perceptions around the role that women 'should' play in the family and in wider society. As a result, many women are financially dependent on male partners or family members. This can limit the choices that a women has, including her ability to leave a violent partner.

Women's lives are affected by the burden of unpaid care work at every age. Older women work for longer and girls are pulled out of school to do household chores, denying them their right to education and economic empowerment.

Reproductive Rights of Women

With a maternal mortality ratio of 576 deaths per 100,000 live births, Nigeria continues to have one of the highest levels of maternal mortality.²⁰ One Nigerian woman dies in childbirth every ten minutes. Spending and implementation have not matched policies. Nigeria spends only 6.5% of its budget on health care.²¹ Incidences of gender-based violence have health consequences and result in health complications including miscarriages, long term disabilities, unwanted pregnancies, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Women in Nigeria are still denied

¹⁹ Action Aid <<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/ESCR/Pages/ESCRIndex.aspx>> accessed 2nd February, 2022

²⁰ 2018 National Demographic Health Survey

²¹ National Gender Report 2012

their reproductive health rights to choose the number of children they want to have or to choose whether to carry a pregnancy to term in the event of rape or incest.

The maternal health indicators, as well as reproductive health indices for Nigeria are one of the worst in the world. Nigeria's Total Fertility Rate is 5.67; Contraceptive Prevalence Rate is 15%; Life time risk of maternal death is 1/29.²² This simply implies that Nigeria is one of the worst places for a woman to have a child, and explains why women are dying daily.

Hence, it has been said that "women are not dying because of diseases they cannot be treated. They are dying because since have yet to make the decision that their lives are worth savings."²³

Dimension of Gender Disparity in Nigeria

From the start of colonization in Africa and, in Nigeria in particular, women have always been exposed to varying forms of discrimination owing to the simple fact of their being female, which ought to have been taken on grounds of their communal expediency, and as observed, most African countries have not had specific laws or policies to stalk the flow of gender disparity.²⁴ However, the colonial, dependent political ideology and identifiable socio-economic exigencies are seen as factors aiding the prevailing distinctions between men and women in our society.²⁵

Furthermore, there are some ideological Factors such as Patriarchal systems, where male dominated gender shape the relationships of female societal members in all spheres of human endeavour, including politics. Patriarchy facilitates the transformation of males and females into assuming the role of men and women and further constructs the hierarchy of gender relations where men are offered more privileges, and defined as:

A familial-social, ideological, political system in which men by force, direct pressure or through ritual, tradition, law, and language, customs etiquette, education, and the division of labour, determine what part women shall or shall not play in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male.²⁶

The gender role philosophy is used as an ideological tool by patriarchy to place women within the private arena of home as mothers and wives and men in the public domain, and is one of the

²² *ibid*

²³ M. Fathalla, *International Conference on Population and development* (1994 Cairo, Egypt) p13

²⁴ J.Ine-Ebi., Gender-Based Discriminatory And Unfair Practices In The Nigerian Legal Profession: *International Journal of Innovative Legal & Political Studies Vol 8, No.3* p 45 <www.seahipaj.org> accessed 23rd February, 2022.

²⁵ A. Adeniran, "A Non-Dependent Framework for Development" *Thisday News Paper*, Wednesday, August 23, 2006, p 45.

²⁶ G A Makama, "Patriarchy and Gender Inequality in Nigeria: The Way Forward" (2013) 9 (17) *European Scientific Journal* p 185.

energetic factors that shape the level of women's political participation globally.²⁷ However, this ideological divide is not contemplative of the reality. The borders between public and private are often unclear in the daily lives of women. Nonetheless, domestic domain continues to be perceived in Nigeria as the legitimate galaxy for women while public space is associated with men. Unfortunately, women continue to be defined as private across countries which resulted in their exclusion, disempowerment and subordination/discrimination even in every aspect of the society.

Another aspect of gender disparity is Social and Cultural Factors, where many gender dictated roles do not only foster dichotomous feminine and masculine identities, but equally places them in a manner that is hierarchal, so that women are generally valued less in relation to men simply because of their socially attributed roles in reproductive spheres.²⁸ As women play dual roles in the productive economy and in reproductive spheres, this limits their participation in politics and other socio-cultural activities. In countries like Nigeria, women are also meted with cultural restrictions which in some cases limit their freedom of movement.

Gender Inequality Occasioned by Patriarchy

There is no gainsaying that traditional attitudes towards women and the stereotypical roles of women in the society constrains their ability to exercise choices that will enable them end abuse.²⁹ Patriarchy has been drawn into gender and development theories in order to challenge not only unequal gender relations but also unequal capitalist relations, sometimes seen as underpinning patriarchy.³⁰ In societies where patriarchy is practiced, privileges are granted to the men who are encouraged to dominate, oppress and exploit the females. Patriarchy is viewed as a wide spectrum of hierarchical organization that cuts across all power sectors of the society which men control a significant number of juicy positions.³¹

The Nigerian society is traditionally patriarchal in nature, it sets parameters for women's structurally unequal positions in the family and in the larger society by condoning gender differential terms in most facets of human endeavour including the workplace. By assuming male superiority over women, patriarchy allows for the domination and subjugation of women. There is therefore the need to adopt the suggestion by Akande, when she noted that there is need for change in treatment of women and their exclusion from the developmental structure. In her view, it was

²⁷ J.Ine-Ebi, (n 24)

²⁸ T. Nmadu, "On Our Feet: Women in Grass-root Development" *Journal of Women in Academics* Vol, 1, No.1 p.66

²⁹ Jekayinfa, A.A., Types, Courses and Effects of Gender Based Violence: Challenges for Social Studies Education in Nigeria. <http://www.unilorin.edu.ng/unilorin/publications/jekayinoluw/12% accessed 12January 2018>

³⁰ Mies, M., *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour* (Zed Books, London 1998) p 76

³¹ Okpeh, O., *Mainstreaming Gender in the African and the Women Question* (Benue State University Press, Makurdi, 2005) p 7

time to end sexual discrimination and all other shameful acts that oppress women as the Apartied in gender has no place in a modern society.³²

In spite of women's education, expertise and experience, the patriarchal nature of most societies have continued to foster the belief that most women are less competent than men. Patriarchy has helped to create the erroneous impression particularly in the workplace that women are less qualified, less competent and inferior to men.

Discriminating Laws and Customs

With a population of over 200 million and over 250 ethnic groups, Nigeria has diverse cultures and traditions. Different customary laws and cultural practices obtain in different communities and many of these are harmful and discriminatory towards women.³³ Some of these customary laws and customs include widowhood practices, wife inheritance, female disinheritance, and female genital mutilation among others.³⁴

In some ethnic groups, widows are subjected to inhumane treatment and are expected to undergo some rituals to absolve them of any guilt in the death of their husbands such as drinking the water used to wash the corpse, or shaving their hair, sitting and sleeping on the bare floor to help ward off the evil spirit of their deceased husbands.³⁵

In some communities, their movements are restricted, and they are banned from economic activities which affect their livelihood while in others, the demise of their husbands does not end the marriage, but they are inherited by their brother-in-law as part of the deceased estate. Female genital mutilation (FGM) is also a discriminatory culture practiced in many societies in Nigeria on the belief that it preserves female virginity, reduces promiscuity in women, prevents still birth and enhances male sexual performance.

Some Customary and Sharia laws are discriminatory against women for example, under the Sharia law, punishment given to women in adultery cases is disproportionate to that given to men where a woman can be punished for adultery but her co-adulterer can be let off if he swears an oath of innocence³⁶.

³² Akande, J., *Apartied in Gender: Miscellany at Law and Gender Relations* (MIJ Publishers, Lagos 1999) 164

³³ O.C. Okongwu, "Are laws the appropriate solution: The need to adopt non-policy measures in aid of the implementation of sex discrimination laws in Nigeria", *International Journal of Discrimination and the Law*, Vol. 21, No. 1 p. 26-46

³⁴ S.C Ifemeje & N. Umejiaku, "Discriminatory cultural practices and women's rights among the Igbos of south-east Nigeria: a critique", *Journal of Law, Policy and Globalization* Vol. 25, No. 18, p53

³⁵ E. Durojaye, 'Woman, but not Human': Widowhood practices and human rights violations in Nigeria.' *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family* Vol. 27 No.2, p 176-196.

³⁶ S.C Ifemeje & N. Umejiaku,(n.32)

The Penal Code also authorizes a man to beat his wife for the purposes of correcting her.³⁷ Most customary laws are patrilineal in nature whereby land and landed property are inherited by male heirs thereby disinheriting women from their deceased husbands' or fathers' properties. However, the Court of Appeal in *Mojekwu v Ejikeme*³⁸ struck down this customary law that disinherits a daughter from her deceased father's estate as being repugnant to equity and natural justice.

In *Eshugbayi Eleko v. The Government of Nigeria*³⁹, customary law was referred to as 'unwritten customs and traditions, which have been accepted as obligatory by members of a community.' Furthermore, in many communities in Nigeria, some customary practices/law discriminate against women in the country. In several communities in Nigeria, women cannot own land except through male relatives.⁴⁰ More often, women are regarded as property and therefore cannot own property themselves. In some communities in Nigeria, a woman is not allowed to inherit her husband's estate, instead she may be inherited along with the estate of her husband by another male relative in the family.⁴¹ Some customs in Nigeria give preference to the male child against the female child in matters of inheritance. However, recently there have been legislative interventions upturning some of these obnoxious customary practices.

Customs and Tradition

The cultures of many societies subjugate women to men, and undermine their self-esteem.⁴² Women are typically associated with domesticity, and gender inequality remain pervasive in many dimensions of life, the nature and extent of the discrimination very considerably across countries and regions.⁴³ In Nigeria, females suffer a lot of discrimination even in families, as most men were trained not to partake in most domestic chores such as cooking, sweeping, fetching water and firewood, which are exclusively left for women. .

Most customary practices openly discriminate against women in Nigeria. In *Eshugbayi Eleko v. The Government of Nigeria*,⁴⁴ customary law was referred to as 'unwritten customs and traditions, which have been accepted as obligatory by members of a community'. Customary practices differ from place to place, and have many variations as there are ethnic groups in the country. Thus, in many communities in Nigeria, some customary practices/law discriminate against women in the country, especially in the Southern and Eastern Part of the Country. In most cases, women are regarded as property and therefore cannot own property themselves, women cannot own land

³⁷ Penal code

³⁸ (2000) 5 NWLR 402

³⁹ (1941) AC 662

⁴⁰ O. Oyelade, 'Women's Right in Africa: Myth or reality', *University of Benin Law Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 100

⁴¹ *ibid*

⁴² L. Anyalebechi, The Issue of Gender Inequality in Nigeria: *Journal of Policy and Development Studies* Vol. 10, No. 2, p 65 <www.arabianjbm.com/JPDS_index.php> accessed 23th February, 2022.

⁴³ *ibid*

⁴⁴ [1931] AC 662

except through male relatives. In some communities in Nigeria, a woman is not allowed to inherit her husband's estate, instead she may be inherited along with the estate of her husband by another male relative in the family where there is no surviving son of a deceased man, the closest 'male relative of the deceased inherits his property, rather than his wife or daughters. Some customs in Nigeria give preference to the male child against the female child in matters of inheritance. These customs and tradition are obnoxious and unjust which have no legal backing as displayed in the landmark case of *Onyibor Anekwe & anor v. Maria Nweke*.⁴⁵ which sought to establish and reinstate the right of a widow without a male child to inherit from her husband contrary to the obnoxious discriminatory customary practice of Amikwo community in Awka in Anambra State. In the words of Ogunbiyi J.S.C:

The custom and practices of Awka people upon which the appellants relied for their counter claim is hereby outrightly condemned in very strong terms... It is punitive, uncivilized and only intended to protect the selfish perpetration of male dominance which is aimed at suppressing the right of the womenfolk in the given society... Any culture that disinherits a daughter from her father's estate or wife from her husband's property by reason of God instituted gender differential, should be punitively and decisively dealt with. The punishment should serve as a deterrent measure and ought to be meted out against perpetrators of the culture and custom...⁴⁶

In the Eastern part of Nigeria, there is a customary practice where a man has no male child, his daughters are prohibited from getting married and are instead required to remain in the father's house to procreate in order to preserve the family lineage. The case of *Mojekwu v. Ejikeme*⁴⁷ found this custom to be discriminatory and in violation of the right of the female to get married.

Furthermore, the patterns of inheritance and succession under intestate estate is one major area of discrimination under Customary Law Nigerian customary law follows a patriarchal system, which does not allow women to inherit real property. The fact that a wife is not a blood descendant of her husband's family deprives her of succession rights in that family. As regards her father's place, a woman by culture is never allowed to come from her husband's house to inherit her father's property. In both cases the female loses, as she cannot inherit on either side, especially under the customary law where married women were regarded as minors under the guardianship of their husbands.

⁴⁵ [2014] 9 NWLR (Pt. 1412) 393

⁴⁶ *ibid*

⁴⁷ [2000] 5 NWLR 402

In some communities in the Northern states of Nigeria where the individual has not adopted Islam as a religion, intestate succession is essentially patrilineal. The primogeniture rule has been severely criticized on the ground that it prohibits female children from inheriting. Unlike a woman who marries under the Marriage Act, a woman who marries under customary or Islamic Law in Nigeria does not enjoy adequate legal protection in the distribution of assets. Consequently, under this customary arrangement however, the husband is generally regarded as having dominant/legal power to dispose of family property. This is similar to what is operational in the Eastern part of Nigeria. In some cases, the husband often exercises this power without taking cognizance of the wife's contributions to the assets as they are usually acquired in the husband's name. Conversely, it can be argued that whereas patriarchy has often been a feature of customary law rule of inheritance, it was often fortified with checks and balances that ensured the welfare of women and other dependents.

Gender Based Violence

Violence against women or Gender-based violence (GBV) is a social phenomenon that mainly affects women and girls. It is a private or public act of gender-based violence that results in physical, sexual or psychological harm to women. GBV is a form of discrimination against women rooted in gender inequality and acts as a barrier to equal participation of women in social, economic and political life.

Over a decade now, numerous cases of women's rights violation such as acid baths, murder of women, rape, widow abuse, and physical assaults, have occurred in Nigeria. Unfortunately, it is only extreme cases of women's rights violation which results in death or permanent disability that earns the media attention and the police interests. Critical cases like female circumcision or genital mutilation, wife battery, marital rape, sexual harassment, verbal and emotional abuse, incest, termination of employment as a result of pregnancy, etc. are not considered problematic enough to be highlighted in the media as well to be taken seriously by the police⁴⁸.

More so the victims of violence, especially domestic violence and rape, hardly report to the appropriate authorities. For instance wife battery is considered a private affair between the husband and wife. Moreover, the tradition or culture and religious beliefs in Nigeria as a typical patriarchal society see the wife as a property of her husband, who has moral right to beat her as penalty for insubordination and or perceived wrong doing. In the case of rape, women consider it a social stigma if their ordeal becomes a public knowledge.

⁴⁸ L. Anyalebechi (n.43)

According to the World Bank, one in three women have experienced GBV in their lifetime with 35% experiencing physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner or non-partner⁴⁹. The most common acts of violence against women in Nigeria are harmful traditional practices, domestic violence, physical violence, sexual violence, socio-economic violence, forced marriages and female genital mutilation. Cultural and religious norms have been advanced as reasons why women condone and tolerate these types of violence because they are expected to endure any vices in their marriages or for fear of being ostracized. Studies have found that more females experience both physical and sexual violence than males and young age, drinking and smoking have been attributed to perpetration. To address GBV, the government passed the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act 2015 (VAPPA)⁵⁰ which prohibits harmful traditional and widowhood practices, FGM and all forms of violence against persons. GBV however remains a problem for the female gender and is compounded by the nonchalant attitude of the police to investigate.

As recently in May 2020, a university student who went to read in a church was raped and murdered and it took an outrage from the members of the public for the police to investigate⁵¹. It is this sort of nonchalant attitude of the police to investigate and prosecute, and sometimes victim blaming that continue to silence women and encourage offenders.

A former Minister for Women and Social Developments, Mrs. Hajo Sani at the 19th United Nations Session, in New York in 1998, captured the state of women who are victims of violence in Nigeria. She said,

"There is no record of the prevalence of violence against women especially within the home. This is because women hardly report violence to the police for fear of reprisal from both the husband and wider family. In addition, the law enforcement agents do not readily entertain complaints of domestic violence. They treat such complaint as a minor offence of 'two people fighting' or laugh it off as 'husband and wife problem'...

In the same vein, in Nigeria, laws to protect women from violence are inadequate. For example, marital rape is generally not recognized as an offence in any system of law in Nigeria, even when the wife is wounded in the course of forced sexual intercourse. Formal mechanisms to seek redress in cases of domestic violence or rape, through police investigation followed by a court proceeding, are often ineffective. This is particularly the case in rape cases, where police are not adequately

⁴⁹ World Bank Report: 'Gender-based violence (Violence against women and girls.'

<<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/socialdevelopment/brief/violence-against-women-and-girls>> accessed 20th February, 2022

⁵⁰ VAPP Act 2015

⁵¹ Guardian News Paper on line, 2020< www.theguardian.com> accessed on 20th February, 2022

trained to handle such cases and the burden of proof remains with the prosecution, requiring a woman to prove that she did not consent, or where a woman's testimony, under Muslim law, is not as valid as that of a man. As a result of the foregoing, women's right issues and situation in Nigeria is not given the seriousness it deserves by both government and individuals.

Elimination of Gender Discrimination in Nigeria

Are laws the appropriate solution to gender inequality against women in Nigeria? Calls to have efficient and comprehensive laws that promote equality and protect women against all forms of discrimination have been an uphill task. However, from the foregoing discussion, it is apparent that there are laws, that lawyers and judges can use to protect women's rights in Nigeria. Despite this, inequality and gender-based discriminatory practices against women persist because of ingrained religious and cultural beliefs and practices that prevail. Lawmakers have also expressed that religion and culture are the primary reason they opposed gender equality laws because it is a challenge to God and the Nigerian way of life.

Therefore, to address gender inequality in Nigeria, laws are not necessarily the first step to promoting equality. This is because equality laws do not change normative culture nor end discriminatory practices but focus on equal rights between men and women which ignores assumptions about gender that informs social practices and contribute to systemic discrimination of women. To address inequality, there first needs to be a change to individuals' attitudes and conceptions about gender. Ingrained beliefs of superiority of men and the role of women in society first need to be addressed through non-policy measures such as education and awareness-raising. Individuals need to be made aware that gender and gender roles are socially constructed and fostered by culture and religion and be educated on the harmful effects of gender stereotypes.

By raising awareness, individuals can understand the pervasiveness of gender bias and how it informs societal values and norms which they are expected to conform. Through education and awareness-raising, the fallacies of gender stereotypes will be deconstructed and made visible as a mere societal creation used to maintain a divide between the two social groups and as an act of injustice to get people to conform to certain standards or be punished for failing to do so. Awareness can start as early as childhood because to achieve a sustainable human development in a sustainable and long-lasting way, people at all ages need to be empowered at every point in time. Therefore, focus should start before pre-school and younger ages when children develop a self-concept of themselves and their academic and career interests.

Children should be made aware of how social norms and gender stereotypes affect their decisions and lifestyle choices and the ills caused by stereotypes. This can be achieved through statutory guidance targeted at schools to develop a comprehensive curriculum designed to remove gender stereotypes from educational materials and teach children that their life and career choices are not

dependent on their gender. This guidance should also be used to encourage parents to raise their children irrespective of their gender in a non-gender biased way. Religious leaders are known to have a big influence on their members and these leaders should be made aware of the implications of gender stereotypes, the ills of certain discriminatory culture such as early marriages, inheritance rights and widowhood practices and how they harm society.

When these are impressed on children and parents through religious institutions, there is a prospect that they will begin to form new concepts of who they are and their self-worth as individuals will not be based on their gender. To ensure a lasting change to attitudes and to address the remaining persistent effects and harms caused by gender stereotypes, reformed and new laws and policies will then be needed to reinforce change which the State must enforce.

Legal Protection of Women in Nigeria

There are legal frameworks that protects the rights of women in Nigeria, in 1985, Nigeria ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against women.⁵² CEDAW which was established to bring into focus and promote women's rights. The Convention affirms that discrimination against women still exist and violates the principles of equality of rights. It covers the protection for civil and legal status of women and addresses the impact of cultural factors on gender relations such as cultural stereotypes, customs and norms which give rise to constraints on the advancement of women. It proposes a change in the traditional role of men and women in society and family to achieve full equality as well as eliminate prejudices and customary practices which are based on the idea that women are inferior. It also aims to target cultural practices that define the public domain as men's sphere and domestic field as women's domain.

Nigeria also signed the Optional Protocol of CEDAW on 8th September 2000 and ratified it on 22nd November 2004. The Optional Protocol gives individuals and groups the right to complain to the Committee if the government fails in its obligation to implement the policies of the Convention. This stimulates governments to implement CEDAW to avoid complaints being made against them and encourages them to remedy violations by amending their legislation, ending discriminatory practices and implementing affirmative action measures.⁵³

The CEDAW periodic report on Nigeria identified women's perception of themselves, goals and expectation for themselves as a limiting factor in enforcing laws intended to protect them from

⁵² CEDAW<www.ohchr.org> accessed 20th February, 2022

⁵³ UN Women: 'It's election season in Nigeria, but where are the women?' Available at <<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2019/2/>> accessed 20th February, 2022

discrimination.⁵⁴ Only enlightened and educated women who are aware of the laws and policies in place and know their self-worth can only hope to reap from the benefits under such laws. The report stated that to benefit from the Convention, focus should not only be on using laws and policies to eliminate discrimination but that other factors such as tradition, customs, religion, illiteracy and poverty should be tackled.⁵⁵

The government set up panels to propose recommendations to bring existing laws in conformity with the CEDAW and other Conventions. Deliberate efforts were taken to economically empower women and they were given opportunities in political participation by increasing the number of female representations, which saw an increase in the House of Representatives and the Senate from 1.9% and 2.8% in 1999 to 6.9% and 6.4% in 2015 respectively.⁵⁶ Despite these efforts, the CEDAW is inadequate to protect women's rights in Nigeria because it has not been domesticated.

By virtue of section 12 of the Constitution, treaties which has been signed and ratified will not have any effect until a corresponding law is made by the National Assembly.⁵⁷ This was confirmed by the Court of Appeal in *MHWUN v Minister of Health and Productivity & ors*⁵⁸ that the provisions of an International Labour Convention cannot be invoked and applied by a Nigerian court until it has been re-enacted by an Act of the National Assembly.⁵⁹ Therefore, CEDAW though ratified does not have any effect and is inapplicable if there is no law addressing the purpose of the convention. Despite the status of CEDAW, the Court of Appeal recognized and applied it in *Mojekwu v Ejikeme*.⁶⁰

Also, apart from the Africa Charter, international conventions have not had any positive impact or have had minimal impact on the lives of Nigerian women because they have not been domesticated.⁶¹ An attempt was made in 2007 to pass a CEDAW Bill in Nigeria but failed after

⁵⁴ O. C. Okongwu, "Perception of sex discrimination and sexual harassment among bank employees in Nigeria: a comparative study of the Nigerian and the British employee protection laws". (PhD Thesis, De Montfort University, UK.)

⁵⁵ *ibid*

⁵⁶ A. Akiyode-Afolabi & S. Amadi, 'Examination of the Provisions of the Women's Protocol to the African Charter and Its Relationship to the CEDAW Convention as well as the Interpretation and Implementation of the Protocol in Other African Countries in Adopting Women's Human Legislation in Nigeria' (Nigeria: InfoVision Limited)

⁵⁷ 1999 Nigeria Constitution (as amended) S. 12

⁵⁸ (SC 201/2005) [2008] 10

⁵⁹ F. A Onomrerhinor, 'A re-examination of the requirement of domestication of treaties in Nigeria'. *Nnamdi Azikiwe University Journal of International Law and Jurisprudence*. Vol. 7, p.17–25.

⁶⁰ *ibid*

⁶¹ E.O. Ekhaton, 'The impact of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on domestic law: a case study of Nigeria'. *Commonwealth Law Bulletin* 41(2). p. 253–270.

going through the National Assembly.⁶² The Bill failed because there was a strong opposition to it by some law makers who believed it was anti-God and anti-family and as a foreign imposition, it was believed it would encourage abortion and sexual indulgence.⁶³ This misconception was based on the belief that the subordination of women to men is a social order designed by God and a challenge to it is a challenge to God and the family institution. A further criticism of CEDAW was that it was insufficient to protect African women against discrimination and it had western values which did not address issues faced by rural women in Africa.

Another International law that protects the rights of women in Nigeria is the African Charter; ratified by Nigeria as the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (the Charter) which was enacted in 1981 to protect the rights of people in Africa including women.⁶⁴ The Charter provides a framework for the protection of human rights in Africa such as civil and political rights, socio-economic and cultural and individual and collective rights.

The Charter was domesticated in Nigeria through the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (Ratification and Enforcement) Act 1983 and is subject to the Constitution per the Supreme Court ruling in *Abacha v Fawehinmi*.⁶⁵ The Charter however was found to be inadequate in addressing in detail the various discriminatory issues African women encountered in their daily lives such as being victims of harmful cultural and widowhood practices. It failed to address the problems of inequity in laws on property and customs in relation to inheritance and succession. The major limitation of the Charter is that the non-discrimination provision can only be invoked in relation to the implementation of a right under the Charter.⁶⁶

To mitigate against the oversight, the Charter made provisions for the adoption of protocols to complement the agreement in areas it was found lacking. This led to the adoption of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) in 2003 ratified in Nigeria in 2004 to address the issues African women encounter by seeking to strengthen their control over their roles as mothers and in the community as a whole. The Protocol sought to ensure that women's rights are protected so they could enjoy in full all their human rights. The Protocol covers a host of issues affecting African women including elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and elderly women, disabled women, women's dignity and their human and legal rights, prohibition of cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment

⁶² A. M. Iman: *'Adopting Women's Human Rights Legislation in Nigeria: A Synthesis Analysis and Report*. (Nigeria: InfoVision Limited).

⁶³ A. M. Iman: *'Adopting Women's Human Rights Legislation in Nigeria: A Synthesis Analysis and Report*. (Nigeria: InfoVision Limited).

⁶⁴ E.O. Ekhator (n.67)

⁶⁵ (2000) 6 NWLR 228

⁶⁶ A. Akiyode-Afolabi & S. Amadi (n.62)

and treatment, widows' rights and inheritance rights. The Protocol also makes provisions for State Parties to undertake to provide appropriate remedies for women whose rights have been breached to seek such remedies as would be determined by competent authorities provided for by the law.⁶⁷ In efforts to eliminate discrimination against women, courts have taken a stand in using the Charter to declare as unconstitutional some of the customary practices that are discriminatory against women.

Furthermore, in 2017, the ECOWAS Court of Justice relied on the Protocol in the case of *Dorothy Njemanze & ors v Nigeria*⁶⁸ to hold Nigeria responsible for violating the rights of women who were illegally arrested as suspected prostitutes. It was the first time a human rights institution used the Protocol to hold a state in breach of protecting the rights of women.⁶⁹

There are also some provisions under national laws that seeks to protect women for discrimination.

The 1999 Constitution in Section 42 of the Constitution prohibits discrimination against a Nigerian citizen based on sex and other characteristics listed.⁷⁰ It provides protection for any citizen of Nigeria from being subjected to restrictions by any law in force or by any government action. It goes further to prohibit privileges or advantages from being given to a Nigerian citizen by any law in force or executive or administrative action by reason of the person's sex. Women have used this section of the Constitution to challenge discriminatory practices against them. In *Dr. (Mrs.) Priye Iyalla-Amadi v the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS)*,⁷¹ Mrs Iyalla Amadi challenged the Immigration Service's policy that a woman needed her husband's written consent before she could obtain an international passport. The Federal High Court relying on section 42(1) of the Constitution and Article 18(3) of the Charter to declare the policy unconstitutional.

A similar decision was reached in *Miss Yetunde Tolani v Kwara State Judicial Service Commission and ors*⁷² where the appellant was dismissed from a newly appointed post of Magistrate Grade II because of a petition sent by an unknown man who claimed to be her husband. She was accused of lying about her marital status in a bid to secure employment when she was in fact a married woman, but her employer could not show how her marital status affected her ability to do her job. On appeal, allowing the appeal and setting aside the judgment of the lower court, Sotonye Denton-West, J.C.A expressed his doubt that the same measure would have been applied to a man similarly situated. Child's Rights Act 2003.

⁶⁷ A. Akiyode-Afolabi & S. Amadi (n.62)

⁶⁸ ECW/CCJ/JUD/08/17

⁶⁹ C. O'Connell, 'Reconceptualising the first African Women's Protocol case to work for all women.' *African Human Rights Law Journal* . Vol.19, No.1. p. 510–533.

⁷⁰ 1999 CFRN (as amended) S. 42

⁷¹ [FHN/PH/SC/198/2008]

⁷² (2009) LPELR-8375(CA)

The Child's Rights Act 2003 (CRA) was enacted to give effect to the principles enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Union Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.⁷³ The Act enjoins individuals, public and private bodies to ensure that the best interest of the child is the primary consideration in all actions regarding the child. It entrenches fundamental rights for the child including the dignity of the child and access to free and compulsory basic education. It also provides protection for the child by prohibiting child marriages and betrothal, employment of children as domestic servants among others.⁷⁴

As issues concerning children are outside the legislative capacity of the National Assembly, the states have to adopt and domesticate the CRA for it to be applicable. However, out of 36 states in Nigeria, only 25 states have adopted the Act with 11 predominantly Muslim northern states refusing to ratify it.⁷⁵ However, it is believed that the Constitution protects a girl child from early marriage whether the CRA has been domesticated or not because an Islamic marriage can be deemed unconstitutional if it encroaches on her fundamental rights.⁷⁶ The Supreme Council of Sharia protested against the CRA on the grounds that it is against the Muslim faith and culture and that it is unacceptable for a law to seek to establish equal inheritance rights between boys and girls and to accord legitimate and illegitimate children the same rights.⁷⁷ Implementation in the states that have domesticated it continues to be a problem due to lack of awareness, lack of funds and conflict with the cultural values and customs of the people.⁷⁸

Furthermore, women are also protected under the Violence against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015 (VAPPA).⁷⁹ The VAPP Act was passed into law in 2015 in a bid to eliminate all forms of violence both in public and private life. The Act covers most forms of violence women face such as physical, psychological, sexual and socio-economic violence and criminalises practices such as FGM, domestic violence, abandonment, emotional, verbal and economic abuse. The Act expanded the meaning of rape to include not only the use of sexual organs in penetrating the female vagina but has included the use of objects in penetrating the vagina, anus or mouth of another person without consent or with forced consent. The Act also makes rape non-gender specific unlike

⁷³ O.U. Okoye, 'Knowledge and awareness of the child's rights act among residents of a university town in Enugu State, Nigeria'. *Educational Research*. Vol. 2 No.10, p.1595–1601.

⁷⁴ F.D Nzarga, Impediments to the domestication of Nigeria Child Rights Act by the states. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences* Vol.6, p. 123–130

⁷⁵ This Day Newspaper live 2019, 'Non-domestication of the child rights act by 11 Northern states worries UNICEF.' <<https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2019/11/24/non-domestication-of-thechild-rights-act-by-11-northern-states-worries-unicef/>> accessed 20th February, 2022

⁷⁶ E.S Nwauche, 'Child marriage in Nigeria: illegal and unconstitutional?' *African Human Rights Law Journal*, Vol.15, No.2, p.421–432

⁷⁷ Nzarga FD (2016) Impediments to the domestication of Nigeria Child Rights Act by the states. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. 6, p. 123–130

⁷⁸ *ibid*

⁷⁹ VAPP Act 2015

previous laws which restricted protection only to females.⁸⁰ This however neglects the fact that gender-based violence stems from the historic power relations between men and women and is a form of discrimination against women.⁸¹

It has been indicated that the enactment of the Act is to comply with Nigeria's obligation under CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol through legislative transformation. The issues contained in the Act are outside the legislative capacity of the National Assembly and therefore will only be applicable in the Federal Capital Territory and the states that have adopted it. States that have not adopted it may have refused to do so due to religious or cultural reasons.⁸² The Act also fails to recognize that gender-based violence towards women is perpetrated because of their gender and should make specific provisions to protect women.

Conclusion

Over the years, the rights of women have gradually progressed in Nigeria with the provision of the right to freedom from discrimination as contained in 1999 constitution of Nigeria, the adoption of various international Conventions and Articles on the elimination of all forms of discrimination, and the enactment of various gender friendly laws to address these discriminatory challenges faced by women at various level. These advancements and efforts notwithstanding, woman still experience gender biases, and suffer considerable forms of discrimination in all strata of the economy.

Globally women are among the hardest working population, but have remained economically and politically marginalized. Women suffer gender discrimination in all aspect of social life such as politics, commerce, agriculture, industry, the military, religious and educational institution and find it extremely difficult to advance in social status except through the status the gain from either their husband or father.

The discriminatory practices against women is currently and universally recognized as unethical, every country strive towards gender equality by ensuring that both men and women enjoy equal rights and opportunity in every sector of the economy. In Nigeria there is need for education enlightenment, and national awareness on the fundamental rights of citizens in order to eliminate legal, cultural, and other constrains against the full realization and promotion of the rights of women.

⁸⁰T. U. Akpoghome, 'Analysis of domestic legal framework on sexual violence in Nigeria', *Journal of Law and Criminal Justice* Vol.4, No.2, p.17–30.

⁸¹ C. Onyemelukwe, 'Legislating on violence against women: a critical analysis of Nigeria's recent Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, 2015', *DePaul Journal of Women, Gender and the Law* Vol. 5, p. 1.

⁸² A. Micheal, *Women and Minority Rights Law: African Approaches and Perspectives to Inclusive Development*. (The Hague Eleven International Publishing) pp. 17–35.

Recommendation

In order to achieve the goal of eliminating gender discrimination, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. A constitutional provision of 30% of the seats in the National Assembly, States' House of Assembly and Local Government Councils in Nigeria should be reserved for women and this quota system of female gender representation should reflect in all their committees.
2. Furthermore, an amendment to the Constitution is required to define the state of origin of a married woman for the purpose of political representation. An additional amendment should be adopted to provide for gender parity in political representation, like the 2010 Kenya's Constitution in Article 27(8) which states that no more than two-thirds of the members of elected or appointed bodies shall be of the same gender. Equally, the Constitution of Rwanda which also provides that women should make up 30 percent of decision-making bodies in Article 9(4) of the Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda, 2003. Nigeria also should in line with the National Gender Policy, amended her constitution to state that women should occupy 35 percent of elected and appointed positions in the political sphere.
3. Governments should recognize, reward and redistribute the unpaid care and domestic work, majority of which is carried out by women, by providing quality public services and infrastructure that work for both women and men, and ensure women have access to decent work including equal pay for work of equal value, social protection, pensions and so on.
4. Finally, women themselves are the most critical instrument in ensuring that their voices are heard in politics. They need to rise to the occasion and take advantage of the opportunities that society offers them. A gender balance in parliament would enable women to lobby for the domestication of the various international instruments on women's rights which Nigeria has ratified, thus enhancing the promotion and protection of women's rights in this country.