

**URBAN GOVERNANCE AND GENDER EQUITY IN
NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF OGUN STATE**

BY

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ABSTRACT

The study examines gender issues in urban governance in Nigeria, with Ogun State as case study. Data on the level of involvement of women in both governmental and non-governmental sides of urban governance were obtained from both primary and secondary sources and descriptively and inferentially analysed. It was discovered that women are seriously marginalized on both sides with very low participation rate compared with their male counterparts. Likely negative effects of this trend on effective urban governance were pointed out to include endemic poverty and its other consequences, such as poor access to education, health and other socio-economic benefits.

Keywords: Urban governance, Gender equity, Women participation, Inclusion, Poverty and Civil Society.

INTRODUCTION

Governance is a term that has become popular in development literature in recent times.

According to Isaac et al as cited by Iorliam (2010) it is the process of wielding power and authority in society. It is broader in scope than government, as it involves the interaction between formal institutions and those of civil society, and has become an important concept for international development. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) in 2004 traced the root causes of all evil within modern society to bad governance. Prior to 1980s it was widely believed that government has the wherewithal to govern; to formulate and implement policy and to realize development policy and to realize development goals (Rakodi, 1999) but the reality of the present time has changed that misconception. The contributory roles of wide range of actors, outside the mainstream of government is being increasingly realized, especially in city management. Therefore, urban governance can be defined as the exercise of power to manage a city's socio-economic resources for development. It must however be pointed out that the nature of political authority has a lot of influence on urban governance, as it determines the level of involvement and participation of the key actors needed in development. For instance, more participatory local governance has been observed to have considerable importance for the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in urban areas (Satterthwaite, 2005: 87 – 112). Therefore, where an important segment of the society, such as womenfolk is poorly represented in government, their role in urban governance could be seriously hampered. This fact is buttressed by the various criteria for good governance adopted by reknown international organizations such as United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Bank and United Nations Centre for Human

Settlement (UNCHS) which emphasize participation, equity and inclusiveness among others (UNCHS, 2000; UNDP 004; World Bank, 2000).

Women are no doubt at the receiving end of most of the social injustices across the globe. The situation in developing countries appear to be more precarious than the rest of the world due to deep-rooted cultural bias against womenfolk. Here, women are discriminated against on all fronts: socially, economically, educationally and above all politically. For instance, despite their immense contribution to household welfare and nurturing the patriarch system, in many developing societies still keep women in perpetual subjugation (Milimo, 1987:3). The age-long social stratification, as noted by Bogunjoko-Adukwu (2000) has also continued to treat women right as a non-issue. Even in matters as common as choice of housing for the family, statistics have revealed that only 9% of such decisions were made solely by the wives (Olatunbara, 2033). This wanton subjugation of the interest of women could be traced to their lack of political power, as a result of under representation in almost all arms of government. Government by its nature deals with the allocation of resources in the society. A segment of the society that is under represented in government can hardly get a fair treatment, especially when it comes to the issue of fundamental change to highly institutionalized bias such as gender inequality. In a situation where a law or policy is enacted to address such prejudice it required adequate number of women in government to see to its implementation. Under 1988 National Population policy, for instance, all government and private establishment with a sizeable number of employees were required to establish crèches to ease the burden of working nursing mothers. How many of such crèches are in place today? There can not be any logical explanation for the continued near-zero participation of women in the governance of their country, other than socio-cultural prejudice which has no scientific basis. Population wise, women are not in minority in a Country like

Nigeria and they are by no means inferior to men in other performance indices. Even in Ogun State females are more than males in population.

CONCEPTUAL UNDERPINNING

According to Ugoh (2010), the concept of governance is not new, as it is as old as human civilization. However, the term gains increased usage in the last few years. Similarly, there has been variety of definitions on what governance is or not is by Scholars in recent time. Therefore, there has not been a single generally accepted definition or conceptualization of this term.

However, there is a uniformity of opinions on the key focus of governance which deals with the process of decision-making and the process by which it is implemented (or not implemented) (UNESCAP, 2004). There is also emphasis on the role of formal and informal actors in the process of governance, with government on one side and other actors such as Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), Labour Unions, Cooperative Societies, Trade Associations, Religious groups etc on the other side.

The involvement of this array of informal actors in urban governance varies from one level of government to the other, especially in a three tier of government practiced in Countries like Nigeria. These actors are also collectively referred to as “Civil Society” as opposed to public authority represented by government. The greater their involvement in urban decision-making and implementation process the better the outcome. According to the Governance Working Group of the International Institute of Administrative Sciences (1996), governance can be truly achieved when the elements in society wield power and authority, and influence and enact policies and decisions concerning public life, and economic and social development.

Therefore good governance is anchored on certain basic parameters that have been evolved over the years. They include participatory, transparency and accountability; rule of law; effectiveness and equitability; consensus building and the protection of the interest of the poor and the most vulnerable groups in the Society such as children and women. Criteria of good governance by four different Institutions/Authors, adapted from Inkoom (2011) are presented in table 1.

Table 1: Criteria of Good Governance used by Four Institutions/Authors

UNDP	WORLD BANK	FRIEDMAN	UNCHS
Participation	Participation		Decentralisation of Authority and resources (Subsidiarity).
Equity		Inclusiveness	Equity of Access to decision making and resources.
Transparency	Transparency		Transparency
Accountability	Accountability	Public Accountability	Accountability
Rule of Law			
Responsiveness	Sensitivity to the need of the poor	Responsiveness	Civic engagement and citizenship
Consensus Orientation		Non-violent conflict management	
Effectiveness and efficiency	Strong public management, cost effectiveness, sound financial management		Efficiency
Strategic Vision	Strong public management, cost effectiveness, sound financial management		Efficiency
		Inspired political leadership	Strategic vision of sustainable human development.
			Sustainability
			Security

Source: Inkoom (2011)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research relies on both primary and secondary sources of data. It made use of data primarily obtained from different civil society organizations on the level of involvement of women in running such bodies. It similarly consulted available government records to ascertain the level of women representation in political offices. Data collected covered a period of 12 years (1999 – 2011), except in certain area where available data permitted further extension. Eleven civil society groups comprising of professional bodies, religious bodies, trade groups and so on were randomly picked for the analysis from the list of 142 of such groups with visible presence in the state, i. e. 7.74% sample. The analysis was basically descriptive but an inferential statistic, chi square (χ^2) was used to test the main hypothesis of the research with significance level set at 0.05.

WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN GOVERNMENT

The level of women involvement in direct political administration of the state was looked at from two angles: elective/appointment at the top echelon of the executive arm and that of the legislative arm. The judicial arm was deliberately excluded since appointment there is largely by promotion. Therefore the analysis of the top political office holders in the state executive, as revealed in table 2, indicates an overwhelming bias in favour of men who clinch 82.3 per cent of the total number, as against 17.7 percent for women.

Table 2: Ogun State Executive Office Holders in (1999-2011)

Office	Male	Female	Total
Governor	3	-	3
Deputy Governor	2	1	3

Commissioner	46	10	56
Total	51	11	52
% of Total	82.3	17.7	100

Source: Author's Compilation, 2012

The lopsidedness in the executive position appears to be a child-play as that of legislative arm is definitely more worrisome as shown in table 3. Out of the total of 170 legislative slots in the House since second republic only 8(4.7%) have been occupied by women leaving their men counterparts with a whooping 95.3 per cent. Infact, only 5 women have so far sat in that hallo chamber as members with 3 of them serving two terms.

Table 3: Ogun State House of Assembly membership (1979-2011)

Legislative Period	Male	Female	Total
Oct. 1979 – Dec. 1983	34	2	36
Jan. 1992 – Nov. 1993	29	1	30
May 1999 – May 2003	26	-	26
May 2003 – May 2007	25	1	26
May 2007 – May 2011	24	2	26
May 2001 - Date	24	2	26
Total	162	8	170
% of Total	95.3%	4.7%	100%

Source: OGHA, 2012 , Author's compilation, 2012

WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIVITIES

The marginalization trend remains the same, and even worse than the Scenario observed in the two previous analysis. In this case, none of the eleven civil society groups sampled has its executives headed by a woman in the twelve years covered by the exercise as shown in table 4.

the composition of the executives also showed little, if any regard for gender sensitiveness. Considering the pivotal role expected from civil society in shaping public policy and decision-making, it goes without saying that this kind of marginalization is a great disservice to the effective contribution of womenfolk to urban governance, and by extension nation building.

Table 4: Gender Distribution of Headship of selected Civil Society groups in Ogun State (2000- 2012)

Group	Number of Headship (2000-2012)	
	Men	Women
Nigeria Medical Association	7	0
Nigeria Association of Nurses and Midwives	2	0
Nigeria Union of Journalist	2	0
Campaign for Democracy	3	0
Christian Association of Nigeria	3	0
Nigeria Labour Congress	3	0
Nigeria Institution of Estate Surveyors	4	0
Nigeria Institute of Town Planners	6	0
Ogun State Muslim Council	1	0
Nigeria Union of Teachers	3	0
National Union of Road Transport Workers	3	0
Total	37	0

Source: Author's Field Survey, 2012

HYPOTHESIS OF THE RESEARCH

In order to ascertain the level of significance of the gender imbalance emphasized in this study, data of political office holders in both executive and legislative arms of the state government as appeared in table 3 and 4 were used. Data for Civil society groups (table 4) were excluded

because of zero representation of women which gives no room for comparison. Testing the hypothesis with the use of Chi Square (X^2) it was found that there is a significant difference between the level of representation of men and women in the two arms of government as shown in tables 6 and 7.

Table 5: Chi Square Analysis of the Proportional Gender Representation in the Executive and Legislative Arms of Ogun State Government.

			Exco representation	Legislative Representation	Total
Sex	M	Count	51	162	213
		Expected Count	56.9	156.1	213.0
		Row %	23.9%	76.1%	100.0%
		Residual	-5.9	5.9	
	F	Count	11	8	19
		Expected Count	5.1	13.9	19.0
		Row %	57.9%	42.1%	100.0%
		Residual	5.9	-5.9	
Total		Count	62	170	232
		Expected Count	62.0	170.0	232.0
		Row %	26.7%	73.3%	100.0%

Table 6: Chi Square Test

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig
Chi Squire (X^2)	10.156	1	0.000
Yate (2 x 2) correction	8.512	1	.021
No. of Valid cases	232		

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The negative implications of under representation of women in key decision making organs of government and non-governmental organizations cannot be over emphasized. In the area of urban governance women are central to the achievement of most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) targets such as reduction in poverty level, maternal and infant mortality, environmental degradation, slum development and so on. In fact, social and political exclusion are largely responsible for the precarious poverty level in many developing countries. As observed by DFID (2008; 17), resolving conflict is essential to reduce poverty, but will only be achieved by ending discrimination. It further added that there is no better way of keeping a person poor than being excluded.

It must also be pointed out that while exclusion begets poverty, poverty in turn leads to many other socio-economic problems such as low literacy level, prevalence of avoidable diseases, short life span, social insecurity among others. These by-products of poverty are common place in Nigeria today. Nigeria currently loses an average of one million children to avoidable diseases every year (National Vaccine Summit, 2012). The country has one of the lowest level of girl-child education in the world with Zamfara State has about 82 per cent of its school age girls out of school (Ibrahim 2012:8). The precarious situation of women in Nigeria also reflects in their health status. They account for about 69 per cent of reported cases of cancer (Nanna 2012:44). All these and many other social burdens shouldered by women weigh heavily on urban governance in the country. Unfortunately, little is being done to address gender issue that would have put our women in a position to take their destiny in their own hands. While other African countries such as Uganda, Malawi, Ghana, Lesotho and Rwanda have made significant stride in women participation in governance, Nigeria has continued to pay lip service to the issue

as revealed in this study. According to DFID (2008:8), in politics, Rwanda leads other developing countries with 49% of parliamentary seats taken by women. Even, Nepal, an Asian country ravaged by decades of civil war elected a total of 119 women in its first multi-party election thus giving women the chance to actively participate in the rebuilding process of the country.

CONCLUSION

The study has been able to examine and throw light on the level of women participation in key decision making process that affects urban governance in the country. The result is a damning report and eloquent testimony to the lip service that has characterized the issue of gender equality in Nigeria, over the years. This would no doubt serves as an eye opener for the concerned authority to take more pragmatic ways of addressing issues thrown up here. This becomes imperative in view of the bold steps already taken along this direction by other developing countries like ours and the dividends already accruing from such efforts. Nigeria, with its strategic position, not only in Africa, but globally cannot afford to lag behind for too long in this direction. Therefore, it is imperative “to treat women as equals, instead of sequels” as counseled by Lette (2009).

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