A Critical Appraisal Of Jonathan’s Transformation Agenda And Gender Equality In Nigeria.

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Abstract

This paper is a critical examination of the Jonathan’s Transformation Agenda in relation to gender equality in Nigeria. The paper, using the combination of documentary, analytical and descriptive method, considers the various legal frameworks on gender equality in Nigeria. To understand this policy background, the paper briefly assess the efforts of two administrations preceding “Transformation Agenda” just a sit proceeds to briefly and critically evaluate efforts of the current administration with its “change reform” so far, at balancing the overarching gender inequality in the country. The paper reveals that gender differentials, especially with regards to employment and access to resources tend to favor the male. It however, identifies among others, tradition, culture and religion as factors militating against achieving gender equality. The paper concludes that though the “Transformation Agenda” of Jonathan administration was able to achieve some gains on the issue of gender equality, however, the current Buhari administration’s “change reform” so far, has not shown any sign at retaining those gains. Therefore, the paper recommends that
to achieve “gender equality”, gender discrimination against women in all its ramifications should be strongly opposed by giving women more representation in politics and administration.

**Keywords:** National Gender Policy, Gender Equality, Gender Discrimination, Transformation Agenda, Women Empowerment.

**INTRODUCTION**

One of the broad national and international debates intoday’s globalized world has been on human rights issue in gender terms. Gender inequality, gender disparity, gender segregation, gender conflict, gender liberation and gender discrimination of all sorts are critical points of references in documentary evidences in various conversations locally and worldwide (Alade, 2012). Despite drafted documents at various times that were expected to have a profound impact on the lives of all human beings, the feminine gender obviously continue to agitate for emancipation, empowerment and repositioning in their respective countries.

Thus, gender equality and women’s empowerment continue to be central themes in global treaties, covenants, and declarations because they are now acknowledged as catalysts to people-centred development strategies which focus on poverty reduction, improved standard of living, and good governments that give men and women equal voices in decision-making and policy implementation. Promoting gender equality is now globally accepted as a development strategy for improving health and living standards and enhancing efficiency of public investments. The attainment of gender equality is not only seen as an end in itself and human rights issue, but as a prerequisite for the achievement of sustainable development.

The gender issue is of considerable significance in the Nigerian society and is concerned with the imperatives of equity. No development effort can succeed if the life chances of more than half of the people involved are in jeopardy, granted that the gender disparity in access to opportunities in Nigeria is rooted in cultural
tradition and the values of imposed religions. The consequences of the above assertion have increasingly translated into unequal access to education, health, employment and other areas between the male and female members of the Nigerian society.

There have been a number of visions and policies pursued by previous heads of government of Nigeria from independence to the present democratic dispensation. The present fourth republic development policies, particularly the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) Policy of Obasanjo regime (2004) and the 7- Point Agenda of President Yar’Adua (2007) are actually for both infrastructure and human capital development. However, the excellent policies and intentions have not resulted in the changes required. About 56 per cent of the illiterate populations in Nigeria are women and in terms of work, women’s participation in the labour force remains low, with only one-third of Nigerians who secure a job in the formal sector being women. In some of the government departments, agencies and some few large private companies, women are chief executives but the number remains low relative to men.

In 2009, the Nigerian Government adopted the Vision 20:2020 and in order to implement the Vision, it devised a new medium-term strategy (i.e. former president Jonathan’s “Transformation Agenda” 2011-2015) which was aligned with Vision 20:2020. Thus, this paper therefore seeks to ascertain the efforts of Transformation Agenda of the Jonathan’s administration in reducing gender inequality in Nigeria with a view to advocate for more improvement by the newly installed government with its “Change Reform”. Arguably, women have comparatively been marginalized, and were made to participate less in both politics and top decision-making positions in Nigeria. The Millennium Resolutions underscored the importance of eliminating all forms and shades of discrimination, exploitation, social harassment and gender bias as well as all situations that encourage the infringement of the rights of women through government policies and decisions, and Jonathan through his transformation agenda was able to increase the numbers of women in cabinet to at least 31 per cent (African Development Bank, 2012), but a lot more commitment and a
pragmatic approach that will translate into concrete actions are still desirable in Nigeria to spread the transformation to parliament, judiciary and other key areas.

In discussing the phenomenon of gender issue and the problem surrounding it in Nigeria, it will be imperative to firstly understand the nature of Nigerian State itself. The major challenges facing the task of executing gender-sensitive and gender-parity policies in Nigeria today is the patriarchal cultural norms, attitudes and practices which have been accepted as the natural order of things. Nigerian society, being patriarchal, power is obviously tilted in favour of men. This male-dominated culture accords women an inferior and secondary position in society. The patriarchal culture of male supremacy still remains embedded, obscured and protected within traditional institutions and structures held in abeyance and relative utmost sacredness. This culture is still in-grained in men and it is demonstrated both consciously and unconsciously, despite the general drive for a meaningful change in gender relations through policy initiatives and actions as well as sundry international conventions and accords to which Nigeria is a signatory (Ejumudo, 2013).

As a result of the patriarchal social structures that exist in Nigeria, her culture, tradition and custom play very important roles in establishing and perpetuating gender roles and relations. In most Nigerian communities women's economic dependence on men is a key element of patriarchy. In several cultures in Nigeria, women do not own or control resources. They are often denied inheritance rights. Stereotypes pervade the educational system in Nigeria. At all levels of education, subjects and courses are stereotyped as masculine or feminine. Careers that reflect care giving roles like nursing, teaching, catering and secretarial work are regarded as feminine, with girls encouraged by parents and teachers to opt for these courses. Remuneration is low compared to careers regarded as masculine, such as piloting, architecture, medicine, and engineering (UNIFEM, 2006).

However, history is replete with women leaders who have contributed immeasurably to the development of global politics and administration in Nigeria and other parts of the world. Immediate names that come to mind at international level include: Baroness Margaret Thatcher, former Prime Minister of the United
It is interesting to note that handful of women have occupied important and key administrative and political positions in Nigeria since 1999. In most instances, these women have performed creditably well thereby leaving no doubt about the ability and capability of women to perform when saddled with responsibilities at all levels. Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala; Professor Dora Akunyili; Mrs. Oby Ezekwesili; Professor Grace Alele-Williams; Dr. Kema Chikwe; and Ms. Christine Lagarde, former French Finance Minister and presently managing director of the International Monetary Fund, among scores of other women worldwide.

Today, women constitute a higher percentage of the poor in the Nigerian society. Women of reproductive age are often discriminated against in employment in some establishments e.g. banks, for fear of absenteeism due to maternity leave. In some places, women receive unequal pay for equal work as they are excluded from certain allowances under the notion that they have no dependants. Thus, Nigerian women are more vulnerable to economic shocks because they largely work in sectors such as garments, agriculture and electronics which are affected by declines in consumption (Buvinic, 2009). The observation is that when there are fewer jobs, it is often the men (who are also paid more) whose jobs are secured (ILO, 2012). Other scholars have observed that the responsibilities that women have to bear and raise children in such community like Nigeria, will affect their right to access education, employment and other activities related to their personal development. Those responsibilities also impose inequitable burdens of work on women. Moreover, impacts are greater because women have fewer assets such as financial resources, education and social networks to fall back on (BRIDGE, 2010).

There are several scholars who have carried out similar studies to our subject matter in this paper. For instance, Nwagbara, Etuk & Baghebo (2012) examine
the Social Phenomenon of Women Empowerment in Nigeria with a theoretical perspective and finds that the major constraints in realizing gender equality and women empowerment in Nigeria are an unsupportive legal environment, inadequate resources and the mindset that is not open to new approaches in addressing the needs of women. Scholars like Charles & Ikenna (2009), Nelson (2012) and Nse (2015) who research in the area of women in politics and governance, all find that women’s participation in politics and involvement in governance was very low in spite of decades of struggle for gender equity and women’s empowerment in Nigeria. In another research carried out by Eme & Onuigbo (2015) on the analysis of Nigerian women’s score card in 2015 polls, it was found out that the outcome of the just concluded 2015 elections in the country has not shown improved women representation in elective positions in the country.

Also, Ihemeje (2013) studied the level of women participation in local governance in Nigeria, the study finds out that there is male domination in local governance over and above the women for low political consciousness. Also, on Gender equity in education and enrolment Status, Gunawardena et al (2004), Omirin & Faremi (2012), Agu & Omenyi (2013) and Aja-Okorie (2013) were all empirical studies with similarities in their findings which show that female children have lower enrolment. However, a critical look at all the empirical and theoretical studies mentioned above suggests that none of them has been able to researched on gender equality in the light of a particular policy agenda of a specific regime. Hence, the need for the present study which seeks to appraise gender equality in Nigerian the light of Jonathan’s Transformation Agenda and that is the issue that we intend to examine in the subsequent sections of this paper.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to critically appraise the Nigerian National policy on gender issues before, during and after the era of Jonathan’s “Transformation Agenda”. Thus, the paper sought to examine the level of gender inequality and
the efforts of different administrations, particularly since the beginning of the fourth Republic, at balancing the gender disparity in Nigeria.

**Methodology**

The paper is a descriptive and qualitative study. Thus, it fundamentally based on library research enriched with internet resources and government publications. Relying majorly on secondary sources of data collection, the paper uses the combination of documentary, analytical and descriptive method to consider the various legal frameworks on gender issues and efforts of Nigerian government in the light of acceptable global indicators for discussing gender equality (i.e. education, employment and political life) vis-à-vis roles accorded to women in Nigeria.

**Conceptualising Gender Equality**

The term ‘gender’ is used to describe a set of qualities and behaviours expected from men and women by their societies. Gender is not a synonym for women neither is it biological. There is a fundamental difference between gender and sex. Sex refers to the biological differences between women and men. It is biologically determined, that is by birth and it is generally unchanging and universal. Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, responsibilities and identities for women and men. Gender roles and identities are learned in the family, school, religious institutions and through the media. They are historically and socially specific. In other words, what is expected of our grandparents as women and men may not be the same for our grandchildren. Similarly, the appropriate roles and identities for women and men in one cultural setting may be different from those in another cultural setting. Also, gender and sex are different in the sense that, sex is natural, universal and unchanging, while gender is learned and varies in time and space. Moreover, since gender roles, responsibilities and identities are learned, they can also be changed (United Nations, 2013).
Therefore, gender is a social construct, which is brought about by different societies ascribe to the two sexes. It is a culturally determined concept based on beliefs and traditions of a given society or community. It refers to the rules, behaviours and qualities ascribed to male and female folks. Gender can best be understood when sex is mentioned. Sex is the biologically determined characteristics or functions of male and female. Gender refers to those characteristics and functions that society ascribes to male and female (Alade, 2006).

**Gender Equality**-Gender equality implies that differences between women and men are not an essential obstacle to equality. This was the opinion of the Council of Europe when it argues that “Gender equality means an equal visibility, empowerment and participation of both sexes in all spheres of public and private life. . . .Gender equality is not synonymous with sameness, with establishing men, their life style and conditions as the norm... ...Gender equality means accepting and valuing equally the differences between women and men and the diverse roles they play in society” (Council of Europe, 1998: 7-8).

Gender equality means that males and females have equal opportunities to realize full human rights and contribute to and benefit from economic, social, cultural and political development. Party and equity are the building block of equality in education (USAID, 2008). Equity is the process of treating girls and boys fairly. To ensure fairness, measures must be available to compensate for historical and social disadvantages that prevent girls and boys from operating on a level playing field.

**Transformation Agenda**- What constitutes “Transformation Agenda” is the major policy thrust of Jonathan administration otherwise referred to as the policy direction. The Jonathan Administration in Nigeria was headed by Dr Goodluck Ebele Jonathan who became Vice-President of Nigeria in 2007, Acting President in 2010. Jonathan was subsequently sworn in as the President, Commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces of the federal Republic in Nigeria in 2011. On that historic day, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan promised Nigerians a policy package tagged as the Transformation Agenda when he declared that, “together we will
unite over our nation and improve the living standard of all our people whether in
the North or in the South; in the East or in the West” (Emmanuel, 2012).
Jonathan’s “Transformation Agenda” is articulated around nine thematic objectives:

- Macroeconomic Stability through Fiscal Prudence and Appropriate Monetary Policy;
- Good Governance and Effective Institutions;
- Human Capital Development;
- Real Sector Development;
- Infrastructure Development;
- Distribution of Key Programmes and Projects by Sector;
- Promoting Sustainable Growth and Development;
- Financing and Implementing Strategies for the Key Policies, Programmes, and Projects (KPPPs); and

The Jonathan administration based the Transformation Agenda on and draws its inspiration from the Vision 20:2020 and the first National Implementation Plan according to the summary of federal key priority policies and programmes. It aims to deepen the effects and provide a sense of direction. The agenda is based on a set of priority policies and programmes which, when implemented, would transform the Nigerian economy to meet the future needs of the people (Oyewole & Adeyemo, 2013).

Theoretical Analysis

There are various theories which have been propounded in order to explain gender issues; however, this study is based on the feminist framework, and therefore for the purpose of our analysis in this paper the feminist theory is adopted. Nussbaum (2000) observes that the most important aspect in gender discussion is the ‘sameness/difference’ debate that has taken place within feminist theory. This key analytic distinction, indeed often dichotomy, has been subject to much debate within feminist theory. Gender discussion is a multi-faceted debate, which is simultaneously normative, philosophical, theoretical, substantive, empirical and policy-relevant (Folbre, 2001). Though ‘Gender’ can be an example of difference, but it is a major issue in social theory. This is so because, in trying to analyse gender equality, several classical arguments came
up within feminist theory about difference, universalism and particularism (Felski, 1997). Liberal Feminism for example embraces the philosophy of liberty, equality and justice for all men; both men and women should share domesticity, so that each can devote more energy to production. This philosophy, according to Oyekanmi (2004) influenced the declaration of 1975-85 as the UN Decade for Women’s Development. During this period, issues pertaining to human rights such as monogamy/polygamy and female-headed households were highlighted.

On the other hand, the feminist political economy theory seeks to understand how society produces goods to meet its material needs, how such goods are distributed and the type of social relations that arise from the organisation of production. The model assumes a dialectical relationship between and among elements of social life, including economic and political structures and the belief system. The issue of women’s inequality is seen as a phenomenon deeply rooted in the social, economic and political structures of society. The change from simple society of substance production to a more complex one of large production goes hand in hand with the development of a complex division of labour which results in economic inequality between gender groups. Thus, this theory identifies the extent to which women are constrained within the system due to individual and structural variables such as patriarchy and capitalistic system (Afonja & Aina, 1995).

However, some scholars have suggested that womanism instead of feminism should be used to explain the quest for removal of vestiges of gender inequality in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. This argument is based on the fact that the esoteric preoccupation with equality between men and women in the western developed countries can hardly be pursued in an atmosphere of pervasive poverty and human rights abuse found in most African countries (Oyekanmi, 2004). Deduced from the above, is the fact that, the fate of a Nigerian woman is determined by culture and system of values as much as by economic and political system. The feminist resolution strategy to the problem of gender inequality must therefore take the cognisance of the overlapping indicators of women’s underdevelopment viz: high level of poverty, low level of literacy, high level of unemployment, low income rate as well as low capitalization.
Legal Framework and Gender Policy

In every nation ‘Gender Policy’ is guided by international, regional and national gender equality protocols as well as national legal instruments and development frameworks. Some of the landmark decisions which highlight international, regional and national leadership efforts of Nigerian Government in ‘Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment’ include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 which was the first step taken in this direction. This document requires member States to uphold the security of all persons and the right to protection without discrimination. It promotes the right of people to participate in the governance of their countries as well as the right to equal access to public services. Again, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) of 1966 promotes equality and non-discrimination of all persons before the law. Thus, ICCPR is one of the international instruments that uphold the principle of non-discrimination on the basis of sex (ADB, 2008).

Nigeria embraced gender policies since the decades of 1980s by pursuing economic growth through structural adjustment and broad liberalisation policies. This comprised short-term economic stabilization measures and longer-term market reforms and liberalisation of all key sectors of the economy. Worthy to note here is that among the poor populace in Nigeria, women form the larger part but the World Bank’s Poverty Reduction Strategies have been broadly accepted and, although Nigeria has exited the strangle-hold of debt crises and enforced liberalisation, by virtue of substantial debt forgiveness and unprecedented foreign reserves (ADB, 2012).

In 1981, the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights (ACHPR) was adopted to ensure that rights of individuals (including women) are protected; also in the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the responsibility of government agencies to appropriately address issues of gender inequality and to mainstream gender into policies and programmes was formalized. The declaration was endorsed by 160 governments and was adapted into many national gender policies and other legal and policy provisions of member States including Nigeria (United Nations, 1995). Moreover, in year 2000, the adoption
of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set targets for 2015 on eradicating poverty; achieving universal primary education; promoting gender equality and empowering women; reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; combating HIV and AIDS, and other diseases; ensuring environmental sustainability; and providing financing for development. Others are the Economic Community on West African States (ECOWAS) Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance of 2001; the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) adopted also in July 2001, the ACHPR and its Women’s Rights Protocol of 2003; all these initiatives are policy directions that encourage non-discrimination against particular groups, including women (Dode, 2010).

Furthermore, through the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (FMWASD) the Nigerian Government began the process of institutionalizing gender instruments for the overall advancement of women and children through the adoption of various policies and strategies. United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA, 2012) identifies some of these nationally adopted policies and strategies that provide the legal framework through which gender issues are institutionalized in Nigeria, especially in affairs of government as follow:

- National Policy on Women in 2000,
- Child Rights Acts in 2003,
- The National Gender Policy in 2006 and

The National Gender Policy of 2006 which replaced and reinforced the previous National Policy on Women, is particularly targeted at the gender inequality problematic in Nigeria. This National Gender Policy clearly stipulates various actions to ensure gender equality and women empowerment.

**Gender Parity in Nigeria and Acceptable Global Indicators**

The level of gender inequalities in Nigerian state can only be seen clearly when we scan through the acceptable global indicators for discussing gender equality.
(education, employment and political life) vis-à-vis roles accorded to women. These indicators include:

(a) Education- The first indices in assessing the level of attainment of the Millennium Development Goals in respect of Gender Equality and Women Empowerment are school enrolment at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels (Ejumudo, 2013). It has also been well observed and confirmed that “knowledge is critical for development because everything we do depends on knowledge” (World Bank, 2012:17). Parity and equity are the building block of equality in education (USAID, 2008).

Generally enrolment gaps between girls and boys are narrowing in Nigeria, however, large disparities still exist at the tertiary level, which reflect structural and institutionalized discrimination that disadvantages women by restricting their choices and reducing their opportunities for income and employment. The disturbing implication is that due to the nexus between maternal education and child health, gender discrimination equally constrains progress in child mortality reduction (Igbuzor, 2006). This inequality does not necessarily change in adulthood (Aja-Okorie, 2013).

With regard to women’s education in Nigeria, education policy has evolved since the 1980s towards a gender focus. Thus, due to government intervention over time, the imbalance in gender ratios on education, for instance, seem to have reduced. Data indicate that the ratio of literate females to male between 15 to 24 years of age in 2004 was 0.95, although there are regional variations in this regard. Generally a gradual improvement in the proportion of girls enrolled in primary school, though noteworthy, is not yet enough to meet the target. There are still fewer girls than boys in school. There are signs of backsliding in the number of girls in tertiary education. Measures to encourage girls to attend school, particularly by addressing cultural barriers in the north of the country were taken in the form of “Almajeri” Schools.

Thus, there have been several considerable efforts to improve the level of girl-child enrolment as a key policy initiatives embarked on by the Nigerian
government to show policy commitment on education equality. For example, table 3 below shows the ratio of boy-to-girl enrolment in primary and secondary school between 1990 and 2009.

**Table 1: Enrolment Ratio of Girl/Boy Child in Nigeria 1990-2013**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: UNICEF (2014); NPC cited in Ngara & Ayabam (2013)*

The table 1 above shows that there has only been a marginal increase in the number of girls enrolling for secondary school over the 20 year period. The table also reveals that many boys and girls do not enroll for secondary education. The net attendance rate for both is only 44 per cent. Despite the long-term trend, which shows a doubling of the net attendance ratio for female students between 1990 and 2010, the data indicate that most do not make the transition to secondary school.

Omirin & Faremi (2012) observe that ensuring gender equality for girls and boys means that they have equal opportunities to enter school, as well as to participate in and benefit from the range of subjects or other learning experience offered in classroom and schools. In fact through gender-sensitive curricula, learning materials and teaching-learning process, girls and boys become equally equipped with the life skills and attitudes that they will need to achieve their fullest potentials, within and outside of the educational system, regardless of their sex (APPEAL, 2005).

It is mandatory for women to receive proper education as enshrined in Chapter 11 Section 17 (2) of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria where it was emphasized that “every citizen shall have equal rights, obligations
and opportunities before the law”. Ubanna (2000) observes that the highlight of the policy was that the Nigerian woman should enjoy the full benefits of contemporary living. They required basic education to contribute meaningfully to the development of the country. Under Transformation Agenda, government has intended to tackle the problem of gender disparity especially in the Northern part of the nation by creating several nomadic and Almajiri schools.

(b) Employment- The second indicator for determining the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal in respect of gender equality and women empowerment is employment. Existing data show that there is a persisting wide gap between the income generating and employment opportunities of women and men in virtually all sectors of the Nigerian society (FG, 2012). Women involvement in the industrial sector is estimated at 11 per cent compared with the 30 per cent for men, while women’s participation in income generating activities that are predominantly characterized by intense manual labour like mining and quarrying is virtually non-existent mainly as a result of the gender-related perception concerning the social construction of labour and production-related activities (NBS, 2004).

Progress towards MDG3 (gender equality) indicator and towards the target of “full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people” under MDG1 has been slow and uneven. The share of women in non-agricultural paid employment has increased only marginally from 35 per cent in 1990 to 40 per cent in 2009 (United Nations, 2011). Even where women make up a large share of paid jobs outside the agriculture sector they tend to be concentrated in low skilled, poorly paid and informal sectors. Also, in the Federal Civil Service, which is the largest single-entity employer in Nigeria, men form 76 per cent of the civil servants while 24 per cent are women? Meanwhile, women constitute less than 14 per cent of the total management level positions, while 17.5 per cent of those engaged in the medical field are women compared with the 82.5 per cent men (CIDA, 2012).

The informal sector is large and growing, has given pressure to keep wages down. The 2012 MDG Report found that in 27 out of 37 countries, women are
more likely than men to have informal jobs in formal or informal sector enterprises. More than 80 per cent of women working outside the agricultural workforce in Nigeria have informal jobs (United Nations, 2012). Informal sector jobs often lack security, social and legal protections and entitlements such as sick leave and maternity pay and women occupy the lowest paid and most precarious employment in the informal sector. Migrant workers are particularly vulnerable. Thus, while the informal sector may present opportunities for employment, the quality of the work women engage in, often violates their labour rights (Action Aid, 2013).

(C) Political Decision Making- The third indicator for assessing the accomplishment of gender parity in line with the Millennium Development Declaration is involvement in political decision-making. Gender relations establish precisely the ability of males and females to participate in governance, policy formulation, and decision making from household to national level. However, women participation in politics is still a great challenge. The 30 % political positions for women, proposed in order to close the gender gap have not been met at least in Nigerian parliament. The need for equity must, therefore, compel government to promote more effective programs in favour of women in the cultural, political, economic and social sectors for their empowerment to meet the target of the MDG (CBN, 2006, CBN, 2007).

There are household, community and national level restrictions on individual females who aspire to participate in political or communal affairs. For this reason, Duverger (cited in Nziome 2012) opines that, if majority of women are little attracted to political careers, it is because everything tends to turn them away from them, and if they allow politics to remain essentially a man’s business, it is because everything is conducive to this belief: tradition, family life, education, religion and literature. Although few women were currently elected into National Assembly, the new policy framework is encouraging.
Comparative Analysis of Gender Friendliness of Regimes in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic

Confronting regional variations in the determinants of gender inequality requires policies based on an understanding of the underlying socioeconomic, social and cultural factors. State and local government efforts will thus be critical to the achievement of this goal. Also, justifying why more women should participate in decision-making, the United Nations (UN, 2011:15) in its World Survey on the “Role of Women in Development”, observed that “there are many reasons why there should be more women in decision-making positions”.

Obasanjo, Yar’Adua and Gender Issues

Since gaining independence in 1960, the economic and political transformation process in Nigeria has been marked by periods of limited progress and many setbacks. Apart from two brief phases of civilian government (1960-1966 and 1979-1983), the current dispensation is the third serious attempt (from 1999 onwards) to establish a lasting democratic political system. Nigerian Government is committed to building a nation devoid of gender discrimination, guaranteeing equal access to political, social and economic wealth creation opportunities for women and men; and developing a culture that places premium on the protection of all including children.

Initially, progress towards gender equality in Nigeria was slow. However, progress was accelerated internationally in 2000 by adopting Millennium Development Goals-MDG 3. In 2004 the Nigerian Federal Government integrated the MDGs into Nigeria’s comprehensive economic development framework, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS, 2004). Former President Olusegun Obasanjo, with his much advocated and widely publicized NEEDS Policy, was only able to appoint 6 women as Ministers out of 42 positions, 2 women as Special Advisers out of 21, 10 women Ambassadors out of 106 Nigerian foreign missions, 30 women National Confab delegates out of 492 available positions (see table 3 for easy and clear comparison). This little statistics shows that women during the Obasanjo administration were poorly represented and marginalized (Anya, 2004).
In 2007, the late president Umaru Musa Yar’Adua declared his administration’s 7-point agenda, aimed at keying into the objectives of the MDGs, the goal 3 of which is to promoting gender equality and empowering women. The major policy thrust of Yar’Adua’s administration, otherwise referred to as the 7-point agenda are: (1) Critical Infrastructure, (2) Niger Delta, (3) Food Security, (4) Human Capital Development, (5) Land Tenure and Home Ownership, (6) National Security and Intelligence, (7) Wealth Creation (Federal Ministry of Information and Communications, 2007). But the agenda was short live by sudden death of the late president and the administration had to be completed by his deputy.

Jonathan’s Transformation Agenda and Gender Equality: Any Improvement?

President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan took oath of office as the newly elected President and Commander-in-Chief of the Nigeria Armed Forces on 29th of May, 2011 amidst thunderous expectations of a new dawn, given his humble background and the mountain of problems and decay that the country has found itself over the years. Realizing the high expectations, the former President promised not to let the people down.

A major tool for the required social transformation in Nigeria is the system wide approach of promoting gender mainstreaming and women’s empowerment in all public and private policies and programming priorities and in all organizational and community cultures in Nigeria using Government, Development Partners, Civil Society Organizations and others. For instance in Nigeria, maternal and child health programme is currently going on in four northern Nigerian states. The programme, through DFID’s involvement, has adopted comprehensive strategy addressing three key areas – seeking care at the household level, securing transportation for emergencies, and receiving services at the hospital (DFID, 2010).

The transformation agenda’s key priority projects are derived from 20 Ministries, Department and Agencies (MDAs) and sectors where a total of 1,613 projects were identified. What is required no was Uwagboe (2012) advocates is a framework that will inspire firstly, a sense of belonging, ownership and
accountability in Nigeria which will in turn inspire responsibility, accountability and gender equality. The equitable distribution of power and resources which is underpinned by recognition of and respect for everybody’s economic, political and social rights, especially as it concerns gender issues in Nigeria must be prioritized. This is when we are truly ready for the transformation or perhaps the transmogrification.

So, the Jonathan administration started making effort to drastically reduce youth unemployment through its “Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria” ‘You Win’ project. The 2013 edition of the project popularly called (You Win Women) was exclusively designed for women in which 1200 young women entrepreneurs emerged as winners of the business plan competition. This was as a result of not having more than 17 per cent of the women from the winners of the first batch (in 2012) and that government so determined to promote gender equality in Nigeria.

During President Jonathan’s administration, women empowerment in Nigeria was highly commendable. A major component of Jonathan’s policy is women empowerment in politics. There was increase in and growing political consciousness of women. This was achieved as a result of gradual activities of civil society organizations and women associations. The principal officers in the various houses of parliament include among others Hon. Mulikat Akande Adeola (Leader, House of Representatives); Hon. Chinwe Nwebili (Speaker, Anambra); Hon. Monsurat Jumoke Somonu (Speaker, Oyo); Hon. Wale Fwa (Deputy Speaker, Adamawa); Hon. Theresa Egbo (Chief Whip, Enugu); Hon. Uduak Akaba (Chief Whip, Cross River); Hajia Sikirat Anako (Deputy Chief Whip, Kwara); Hon. Adaku C. Ihuoma (Majority Leader, Imo); Hon. Ngozi Pat-Ekeji (Minority Leader, Imo); Hon. Beatrice Omawumi-Udo (Chief Whip, Delta); Hon. Helen Chundusu (Clerk, Plateau); Hon. Alice Ekpenyong (Chief Whip, Akwa Ibom); Hon. Ekaette Obong Okon (Deputy Leader, Akwa Ibom); Hon. Omowumi Ogunlola (Chief Whip, Ekiti State); Hon. Olusunmi Oriniowo (Minority Leader, Ekiti State) and Hon. Agatha Aguma (Deputy Minority Leader, Bayelsa) (Igbuzor, 2011).
Buhari and Gender Issues in Nigeria

After the era of transformation agenda, we are now in another era tagged the “Change Reform” era. Buhari, towards 2015 general elections in his manifestos, promised to “fully review provisions of the Universal Basic Education Act with emphasis on gender equity in primary, secondary school enrolment whilst improving the quality and substance of our schools, through outcome based education, that address the individual, family, and societal roles in education; and the associative skills and competencies that go with these responsibilities”. On Women Empowerment, the President promised that he will:

1. Ensure the rights of women are protected as enshrined in our Constitution;
2. Guarantee that women are adequately represented in government appointments and provide greater opportunities in education, job creation, and economic empowerment;
3. Recognize and protect women empowerment and gender equality with special emphasis on economic activities in the rural areas;
4. Use the Party structures to promote the concept of reserving a minimum number of seats in the States and National Assembly, for women (Buhari, 2014).

However, apart from the acting Independent National Electoral Commission Chairman and the three women on the list of Ministerial Nominees, eight months down the journey after the inauguration of the Buhari’s administration, it is not clear yet whether the new Government will continue to sustain little achievement made so far at promoting gender equality in the country. It is instructive to note that, all the above statements are still regarded as normal campaign promises which must be fulfilled accordingly.

After a gradual increase in female elected representatives since 1999 as we have seen in above analysis, there was a drop in the 2011 elections. The 28 March, 2015 National Assembly election furthered the negative trend of 2011, with another decrease in the number of women elected. From the 119 female candidates running for the Senate (16.7 % of the total number of candidates), 7
women won a seat (6.4% of the total seats). According to media reports, from the 264 women competing for a seat in the House of Representatives (7.7% of the total number of candidates) not more than 19 were successful (5.2% of the total number of seats). Thus the proportion of women elected is well below the 30% Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action target and the 35% National Gender Policy target of Nigeria (EU, 2015).

However, for clearer and deeper comparison of regimes in Nigeria, tables 2 and 3 below show the level of women in politics and decision-making positions in Nigeria.


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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H. Reps</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>12/360 (3.3)</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>21/360 (5.8)</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>25/360 (6.9)</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>26/360 (7.2)</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>19/360 (5.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0/36</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0/36</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0/36</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0/36</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0/36</td>
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<tr>
<td>SHA</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>24/990 (2.4)</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>40/990 (3.9)</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>57/990 (5.8)</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>68/990 (6.9)</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHA C.Cha</td>
<td>829</td>
<td>18/829 (2.2)</td>
<td>881</td>
<td>32/881 (3.6)</td>
<td>887</td>
<td>52/887 (5.9)</td>
<td>887</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>881</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGA Chair</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>13/710 (1.8)</td>
<td>774</td>
<td>15/774 (1.9)</td>
<td>740</td>
<td>27/740 (3.6)</td>
<td>740</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>774</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor</td>
<td>6368</td>
<td>69/6368 (1.1)</td>
<td>6368</td>
<td>267/6368 (4.2)</td>
<td>6368</td>
<td>235/6368 (3.7)</td>
<td>6368</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6368</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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</table>

Source: www.inecnigeria.org; Okoronkwo-Chukwu (2013); Irabor (2012)

The table 2 shows that, gradual gains in parliamentary representation for women particularly with reference to 2003 to 2011 general elections could not be consolidated in 2015 general elections and it is falling back gradually to the state of things in 1999. For instance, out of a total of 11,117 elective positions available during the 1999 elections, only 631 women contested, which is a mere 5.6 per cent of the number of positions available for contest. Again, out of the 631 female contestants, only 180 (143 of whom were elected as ward councilors) managed to win elections representing 1.6 per cent of the elective positions. The violent manner in which elections are conducted in Nigeria almost completely excludes women from vying for elective posts. In general, females have significantly little or no space to participate in governance as males do. In a
senate of 109 members, only 3 are women. Also, there were only 21 women of 360 members in the Federal House of Representatives. Not a single state Governor is a woman. The percentage of women elected into the State House of Assembly rose from 3.9 per cent in 2003 to 5.8 per cent in 2007 and to 6.9 per cent in 2011; also 5.8 per cent to 6.9 per cent and to 7.2 per cent in that other (for House of Representatives); and 3.67 per cent to 8.3 per cent (for senate), it is still far behind that of men as well as the 30 per cent international benchmark (Okoronkwo-Chukwu, 2013).

In the just concluded 2015 general elections, women were given only 6.4 per cent in the Senate while 5.2 per cent of available seats were given to them in the House of Representatives; also only 4 out of 36 States were able to elect women as Deputy Governors while no woman was elected as Governor (www.inecnigeria.org). Moreover, research shows that in the gubernatorial elections there were 87 women out of 760 candidates (11.4 %); 23 of whom were running for governorship positions (6 % of the total governorship candidates) and 64 for deputy governorships (16.8 %). PDP presented no female governor candidate, and APC only one (in Taraba state), with the other 22 being nominated by smaller parties. In four states there was no female governor or deputy governorship candidate at all (Bauchi, Katsina, Plateau and Yobe). Similarly only 14.36 % of the SHoA candidates are female. No woman was elected as a governor (EU, 2015).

Table 3: Women Representation in Nigerian Political, Administrative and Judicial System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Decision-Making Positions</th>
<th>Regimes Available</th>
<th>Obasanjo</th>
<th>Jonathan</th>
<th>Buhari</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ministers</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Special Advisers</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ambassadors</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Permanent Secretaries</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Chief Justice Nigeria</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 shows some statistics of women representation in Nigerian politics and decision-making positions. President Buhari has, on 12th October 2015, sent the 16 final names of ministerial nominees to the Upper Chambers of the National Assembly making it 37 together with the 21 names contained in the earlier list. The list shows that only 6 nominees were females representing 16 per cent of the total nominees. The good representation of women in President Jonathan’s Administration is that, there were at least 13 women (as against 6 in Obasanjo and Buhari’s regime) among a 42 member cabinet (31 per cent). The appointment of more female Permanent Secretaries is another achievement during the era of transformation agenda. It has widely been criticized that of all 35 appointment made so far, such as Directors General of Extra Ministerial Agencies, Departments and Organisations, only one was a female (i.e. INEC). Also, in Judiciary, the appointment of the first female Chief Justice of Nigeria during Jonathan era, contributed to the cause of women empowerment. In that era, women wage employment outside the agricultural sector also increased from 46 per cent to 65 per cent (Mid Term Report, 2013).

**Impediments to Promotion of Gender Equality in Nigeria**

Nigeria is a highly patriarchal society, where men dominate all spheres of women’s lives. Women are in a subordinate position (particularly at the community and household levels), and male children are preferred over the female. The influence of the mother and the father is particularly significant in shaping and perpetrating patriarchy. The mother provides the role model for daughters, while the father demonstrates to sons what it means to ‘be a man’

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<th>1</th>
<th>1</th>
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<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>0</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Pres. Court of Appeal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Judges of F. H. Court</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Delegates: National Political Conference</td>
<td>492/398</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>398</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Source: Ministry of Women Affair (2013); Anya (2004); www.fhc-ng.com;  
** Buhari only nominated 37(21+16) Ministers which include only 6 women as against 42  
** Federal Ministries were firstly reduced to 18 in order to manage the country efficiently especially in the absence of ministers.
A Critical Appraisal Of Jonathan’s Transformation Agenda And Gender Equality In Nigeria

(World Bank 2005). For instance Ejumodu (2013) posits that Nigeria has a male-dominated culture which accords women, an inferior and secondary position in society. The patriarchal culture of male supremacy still remains embedded, obscured and protected within traditional institutions and structures held in abeyance and relative utmost sacredness. A major challenge to the task of executing gender-sensitive and gender-parity policies in Nigeria, therefore, is the patriarchal cultural norms, attitudes and practices, which have been accepted as the natural order of things. This culture is still in-grained in men and it is demonstrated both consciously and unconsciously, despite the general drive for a meaningful change in gender relations through policy initiatives and actions as well as sundry international conventions and accords to which Nigeria is a signatory.

As in other male dominated societies, the social relations and activities of Nigerian women and men are governed by patriarchal systems of socialization and cultural practices which favour the interests of men above those of women. Consequently, a high percentage of women’s employment is restricted to low income-generating activities, concentrated within the lower levels of the unregulated, informal sector, which are not adequately represented in the National Accounting Systems (NAS). By comparison, men employed within the informal sector are located in the upper levels and are predominantly engaged in higher income-generating activities. The need to support initiatives that ensure financial independence for women is a critical step for mainstreaming gender into governance, especially with respect to politics and public life in order to liberate Nigeria’s human capital resource for active participation in the vision for a free market economy (Canadian International Development Agency CIDA, 2006).

Another major impediment is stereotypes that pervade the every sector in Nigeria. For example, as mentioned earlier at all levels of education, subjects and courses are stereotyped as masculine or feminine in our schools. Economic Factor can also be identified as one of the factors used in discriminating against women as women do not own or control resources in many cultures in Nigeria. They are often denied inheritance rights. Many women farm on their husband’s
farmland and in the event of his demise or divorce, they have no claim to the land. Women also have limited access to credit. It is instructive to note that when economic value of designated female careers increases it is usually ‘hijacked’ by males. For example, a crop like tomato, initially regarded as a female crop, suddenly became a male crop when its economic value increased (UNIFEM, 2006).

Last but not the least is lack of political will and genuine commitment from the part of government. Although the Nigerian Government has severally expressed its commitment to gender parity and women empowerment, the existing policy environment across sectors, inter-sectoral cooperation and programming priorities belie this commitment that is more theoretical than pragmatic. In actuality, the present relatively tolerant policy on environment was preceded by a regime of resistance to gender equality. A possible explanation for the previous atmosphere of lackadaisical attitude to gender equality in Nigeria was the patent weak conception of the implications of gender balancing for sustainable national development (IDEA, 2010).

Concluding Remarks

Our analysis in this paper shows that Nigeria has participated in many International Conferences on development issues such as the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. In order to domesticate these international decorations and conventions, Nigerian government drafted a National Gender Policy which was enacted in 2006 to speed up the implementation process of the policy. Thus, government takes cognizance of many International Conventions and aims at harmonizing them with the National Gender Policy. Taking inspirations from International Conventions, MDGs and AU gender policy, President Jonathan’s ‘Transformation Agenda’ tried to promote gender equality by improving the level of political participation of women in Nigeria. We may conclude that lack of continuity, consistency and commitment in the implementation of policies and programmes constitute a strong bottleneck towards the realization of gender
equality in Nigeria. The need for a holistic transformation of the Nigerian State has necessitated a strategy that gives cognizance to the 3Cs (Continuity, Consistency and Commitment) that are common and required to any good policy. In view of the numerous devastating consequences gender discrimination has occasioned on women, the need to combat all gender inequalities in Nigeria is extremely imperative. Also, it is quite glaring that while significant strides have been made in many countries of the world to bridge gender gaps, and advance gender equality in compliance with the demands of international instruments on women’s right, most African countries like Nigeria are still lagging behind. It is believed that reducing gender disparities may not be an easy task as gender mainstreaming goes beyond women's participation but it also entails bringing into account the experiences, knowledge and interests of women and men to bear on all development agenda.

It is our observation that the share of women in the current administration, although the highest ever- 31 per cent, but there is still no woman State Governor among the 36+1 States. The Ministry of Women Affairs has the mandate to empower women and work towards achieving gender equality especially in political representation. The Ministry should also focus its attention on vulnerable groups to help them to reduce their child mortality and morbidity rates; work on girl-child education. To be sure, the Beijing Declaration recognizes education as the center of achieving all other critical areas. In view of the direct correlation of education with poverty alleviation, improvement in health, employment, and women’s rights, access to basic and higher education levels to women and girls is an important ingredient in enhancing their economic empowerment, political participation, combating gender-based violence, and eradicating discrimination. Cognizant of the dividends of education and commitment to Universal calls like “Education for All”, Nigeria should improve access to education through such measures like free and compulsory education at the primary level and facilitate adult education in order to reduce illiteracy among adult women, enhance enrolment in primary, secondary and tertiary education through affirmative action, scholarships, and by establishing distance special learning facilities to accelerate gender equality in education.
Gender mainstreaming as an organizational strategy to promote gender equality depends on the skills, knowledge and commitment of staff involved in management and implementation. There is therefore need to develop appropriate understanding, commitment and capacity as well as addressing issues of gender inequality in organizational structure and operations. There should be the inclusion of gender sensitive provisions in party’s constitution and manifestoes as this will serve the purpose of mainstreaming gender into its activities. There should also be examination/assessment of parties’ primaries with a view to formulating and implementing reforms that will support a more level playing field. Furthermore, an amendment of the Electoral Law to encourage independent candidate sand to provide for persons disenfranchised from voting should be included.

Also, transformative economic development as proposed by the President Jonathan cannot be achieved without women’s economic empowerment. Women’s economic empowerment is clearly about more than securing stable work in return for pay. If the post 2015 framework is to put women (including young women) at the centre of economic development, it must in particular tackle the key structural barriers that have been identified by various research works such as giving women equal access to decent work, ensuring live free from violence against women and girls, addressing unpaid care work with safe conditions, fair and equitable rights, advancing women access to land and other resources and giving women power to decide in order to ensure that they have control over the resources generated through paid work as well as decision-making control over whether and what work to take on ( paid and unpaid). In addition, women and girls must have access to health services and infrastructure, as well as the skills they need to compete for jobs.

The integration of gender issues into all aspects of policy and planning and a mix of legislative change, advocacy and community mobilization is needed; governments, international organizations and education providers should join up to tackle school-related gender based violence and governments should recruit, train and support teachers effectively to address gender inequality in Nigeria.
In view of the decisive role of women and the cross-cutting dimension of gender in achieving meaningful and sustainable development, the urgency to invest in women (if indeed the targets of gender equality are to be met) need to be emphasised. Kofi Annan (cited in ECA, 2012) opines that “there is no time to lose if we are to reach the Millennium Development Goals by the date of 2015. Only by investing in the world’s women can we expect to get there”.

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