

# **EMPOWERING NIGERIAN WOMEN FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper is of the opinion that Nigerian women should be given equal opportunities like their male counterpart in holding vital positions as this will enable them contribute their own quota to the development of the nation both economically, educationally, vocationally and politically. Although, there has been a great change in the implementation but still, there is much to be done to fully empower the Nigerian women.

**Keywords:** Empowerment, women, national development.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In a democratic society, every citizen is entitled to equal opportunities and right as a full citizen of a nation. However, most Nigeria women have been denied of these equal opportunities and right over time. Women in Nigeria can only be economically empowered if enough opportunities are provided for them to acquire necessary and functional education for effective and functional citizenship.

In 1948, the United Nations due to the unrevealing effort of Eleanor Roosevelt the wife of the United States president promulgated the universal declaration of human right. The very first world declaration that all men are equal and giving the same rights to women as are available to men. Between 1948-1995, there have been several other United Nations conventions and resolution convention on woman rights, 1954: the convention on civil and political rights, the convention of the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, 1981 and the Beijing declaration 1995.

Although, Nigeria has accepted all these conventions and agreed to implement them, still there is a big gap between the declaration and their implementation promised.

Until recently that the Nigerian women were accepted as human being capable of being useful in development of their nations, for instance some Nigerian women are now opportune to be given offices as commissioners, deputy governors, ministers, heads of department and so many areas.

## **WHAT IS WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

Women empowerment here means equipping women to the full capacity in economic, material, vocational and politically to stand firm in contributing their quota to the development of their nation.

On the other hand, empowerment refers to a process of enabling a person to develop the capacity to actualize his/her potential. A simple example of such a process is to send a child gifted in arts to a special arts school so that she becomes a good artist. Her potential is thus lost to her personally, to her family, to her community, to her nation, to the world.

Garuba (2006) described women empowerment as a process of getting the women to understand, recognize and further the power within her for the improvement of her life and

situation. He viewed it as a process which both on going and dynamic and which enhances women ability to effect changes in those structures practices and socio economic element which tends to relegate them to subordinate status.

Along this line Akande (2002) gave a simple definition of empowerment as merely a process of enabling a person to develop the capacity to actualize his/her potential; she then submit that women empowerment requires that women be looked at as individual who may have some hidden potential for greatness and then give them the opportunity to develop the capacity to use that potential.

When we speak of women empowerment all that is meant is that women be looked at as individual who may have some hidden potential for greatness and then opportunity to develop the capacity to use that potential.

### **IMPORTANCE OF EMPOWERING WOMEN**

The importance of empowering women for economic development cannot be overstressed, this is because women generally are endowed with skills and abilities which if properly managed could improve their quality of life and behavioural disposition in the society. Awojobi (2005) maintained that the aim of education in any society is to make members imbibe necessary skills positive attitudes and challenges in behaviour. She stressed further that, it is important that the female gender be accorded an opportunity of acquiring skills to be self-reliant, self-sustaining and live a peaceful life in the society in which she belong.

Okeke (2001), in this direction proposed career education which aims at preparing people and children at any level of academic endeavour for useful living. She pointed out that education should be designed to equip women or recipient with knowledge and skills for meeting their unique needs in the area of occupational choice, personal development, and social responsibility and leisure activities. Again, if Nigerian women are empowered economically and other wise, this will go a long way in solving the problems of Nigeria ladies falling into the temptation to escape into cities to become prostitutes when they do they become health hazards for the nation an obstacles to social development.

Akande (2002) opined that if women are prevented directly, indirectly, or by implication from participating in decision making we are by implication creating more

burdens for the few men who are capable when these few men are over burdened, they take bad decision, they select men who are not very capable or efficient to fill vacancies, which could very well be filled by capable and efficient women, if only we would look at them as individuals rather than part of a generic group

### **Conclusion**

It is clear from the foregoing discussion, it must be accepted that women are an integral part of the society and constitute almost half the population. Therefore, they deserve at least 30% of all decision making bodies. This can happen only by taking affirmative action either by legislation in abeyance. Using the above definition of empowerment as a working tool, the first step toward Nigerian women empowerment would be to remove all obstacles and impediments that encourage domination and put in place intervention strategies that will encourage their access and participation in functional economic growth.

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