

## **Sustainable Women's Participation in Democratic Process in Nigeria: The Community Education Option**

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**Abstract:** There had been many years of political instability and military dictatorship in Nigeria before the present fourth republic. The atmosphere of democratic governance seems not yet steady. Nigeria is still passing through the phase of democratization from 1999 till date. The political scene had been dominated by men, just like other decision-making spheres, women's participation in democratic process is still very low. This still largely accounts for the level of education of women and political practice characterized by godfatherism, violence, money, thuggery, electoral irregularities and weak democratic institution. This paper purports that community education is a good option for Nigeria to get to a threshold level of democratisation, for sustainable women's participation in democracy in Nigeria as it will educate the people on the need for democratisation and an equal representation of the people in democracy.

**Keywords:** Democracy, Democratisation, Sustainable women's participation, electoral irregularities, Community Education.

### **1. Introduction**

Before the emergence of the new millennium, Nigeria is among the developing countries operating military dictatorship of governance. Both the Western world and the African Union clamoured for a better way of governance in the name of democracy which was envisaged will serve as catalyst in boosting the development of the nations including Nigeria, more so, at a time that the Nigerian economy is receding.

Democracy is known to be the best form of governance as it is seen as a pro-people way of governance though; it is by far the most challenging form of governance. It is a form of government, where the constitution guarantees basic personal and political rights, fair and free elections and independent courts of law (Democracy Building, 2004). Democracy is based on a process of the free choice of rulers by the ruled. Features such as freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and the rule of law are indispensable to the concept and practice of democracy (Akpata, 1980).

It is arguably that Nigeria is still in the process of democratisation and further, a phase of consolidation of democracy involving both domestic and external variables leading to the decision to democratise. Among these, include, a strong civil, democratic, free and just society with equal treatment of all citizens by the state and an ordered, stable infused with the spirit of liberty, democracy, justice and equality in society.

Nigeria has moved from military dictatorship to civilian rule where the process of governance is well spelt out by the citizens. However, a salient characteristic of democratisation is that which leads to an involvement and increased participation of citizens that are usually excluded and marginalized, these include women.

According to Igbuzor (2010), a successful democratisation is that which has underlying assumption of acceptance of democratic values, culture, and democratic way of doing things, characterized by respect of other people's views, dialogue, consensus building and respect for the rights of others and the challenge to subordinate military to civil authority.

Wikipedia puts it succinctly that democracy is forms of government in which all people have an equal say in the decisions that affect their lives. This includes equal and direct participation in the proposal, development and passage of legislation into law which also encompass social, economic and cultural conclusion that enable the free and equal practice of political self-determination. This question comes to mind at this juncture, is Nigeria ready to submit to the process of democratisation to practice the ethics of democracy? If yes, why does it still neglect the representation of women especially, in parliament, the crux of legislation?

Despite democracy, the Nigerian political scene is still characterized by thuggery, monetization of politics, culminating in godfatherism in politics which also lead to electoral irregularities like rigging, ballot box stuffing, carting away of ballot boxes, violence, weak legislative framework and a compromised and weak democratic institution. Of course, the aforementioned political scene does not affect women alone as some unscrupulous political elite dominate the scene but women are the worst hit because of their biological sex and a host of societal inadequacies that have kept them in subservient position since time immemorial.

Since the Nigerian political scene is trying to find its feet in the process of democratisation, the role of education comes into place. Many developed and well informed countries of the world operate democracy. In fact, France is a democracy because of a high level of democratic ethics that she practices. Nigeria is a developing country with a high number of illiteracy among her citizenry. She has a population of 48.78% of females FRN (2007) among which are 40% illiterates CDPA (2011) and with only 13 women (3.69%) in the House of Representatives out of 360 members and 4 women Senators (3.67%) out of 109 members (IPU, 2011). This is a very poor representation of almost half of a population of a country that is a signatory to eradication of all forms of inequality. Although, the present government had more women Ministers as supplement to the 30% representation as endorsed by the world, they are mere ceremonial representatives.

The picture of the political scene in Nigeria equally indicates that the educated also need to be sensitized for a sustainable democratic process. Nigeria's cultural values has since been eroded. The indigenous Nigerian society is that, that is endowed with uprightness in all spheres. However, a re-orientation will bring back these attributes. Community Education is the option to be embraced. African traditional community education had always been the practical reflection of the way of life of a people which promotes collective, communalistic and largely democratic approach that is common to African communities Anyanwu (2002) before the advent of the colonisers' culture. Even in patriarchal Nigerian culture, egocentrism was not as pronounced as what obtains in the society today. Community Education is defined as

*...a process designed to enrich the lives of individuals and groups by engaging with people living within a geographical area, or sharing a common interest, to develop voluntarily a range of learning, action and reflection opportunities, determined by their personal, social, economic and political needs.*

*(CeVe 1990 p.2)*

Community education is endowed with the philosophy of citizen involvement, decision-making sharing and the participation of the total community members of which the acceptance of the tenets enhance and sustain true integration of the total society.

The attributes of community education as a non-formal and informal approach with the commitment of fulfilling the needs of the whole society, more so the society that was democratic before westernisation; Nigeria stands the chance of maintaining positive democratisation, through expanding the space of women's participation in the democratic process. The flexibility of Community Education makes it to be appropriate in the process of democratisation. It could be given through public sensitisation on mobile phones, radio, television sets and even in classrooms and Community Learning Centers. It is considered beneficial and appropriate to use this medium as it has the potential of reaching all without necessarily disrupting or interrupting economic, social and political activities of everyone. Children, women, the rural populace and all will be reached. Education, public awareness and training are essential tools for achieving sustainability. Community education is capable of enhancing sustainability in democracy. A country that has an equal representation of her citizenry is likely to make policies that will be beneficial to all.

## 2. Literature

### 2.1 Governance and Democracy: The Nigerian Past and Present Situation

This paper proceeds from the discussion of governance and democracy in the past till the present.

Nigeria is a Federal Republic, covering an area of 923, 768 sq. km on the shores of the Gulf of Guinea. Benin is on its Western side, Niger on the North, Chad on the north-east and Cameroon on the east and south-east (Collins, 2006) Nigeria was a British colony until 1960; her bureaucracy was modeled after the British which was federal in structure. Nigeria was a federal state of three regions initially – the Eastern, Western and Northern but later expanded to four regions (Phillips, 2002)

From independence till 1966, Nigeria was under a federal parliamentary system of government with Nigerians ruling the country. The Prime Minister became the head of government with a British Governor-General as the Head of State (Harriman, 2006). This marked the first republic and Nigeria became a republic in 1963 and the country adopted a revised constitution which contained features including fundamental human rights, the rule of law and the principle of derivation. Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe became Nigeria's first President (Phillips, 2002 and Harriman, 2006). The military coup of January 15, 1966 terminated the first republic (Harriman, 2006). The military retained power for thirteen years in which provision of schedule 1 of the 1963 Constitution was suspended. Decree No. 1 of 1966 was promulgated. The nation was converted from federal to unitary state with the promulgation of Unification Decree No. 34 of 1966 (Harriman, 2006).

There was a counter coup in July 29, 1966 and the Head of State, General Aguiyi Ironsi was killed along with many Southern Army officers. Lt Col. Yakubu Gowon became the Head of State in August 1, 1966 and the country returned to its former federal status. Gowon also announced an AdHoc Advisory Committee on Constitutional proposals for Nigeria. They consisted of notable politicians of the First Republic and they met in September 12, 1966 to consider alternative forms of government (Harriman, 2006). The North, West, Midwest and Lagos delegations agreed to a federal system with a strong center and the creation of more States. The East was undecided. The continued violence and killing of the Ibos in the North called for a threat of succession by the East in May 1967. The country was divided into 12 States on May 27, 1967 (Phillips, 2002 and Harriman, 2006).

The death of General Ironsi precipitated plots of top administrators in the former Eastern Regions with the military Governor, Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu for the succession of the East as Biafra. This resulted into Civil War which lasted for about 2<sup>1/2</sup> years, (Phillip, 2002 and Harriman, 2006).

Gowon was overthrown and General Murtala Mohammed became the Head of State on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 1975. General Murtala announced the presidential system of civilian rule by October 1979. This dream did not materialize as he was assassinated on February 13, 1976 while General Olusegun Obasanjo took over. He tread the steps of his predecessor and brought civilian rule to the country the second time (Ajayi, 1985).

The Murtala/Obasanjo transition to civil rule produced for the first time an Executive President in Alhaji Shehu Shagari, the declared winner of 1979 general elections (Harriman, 2006). The second republic spanned through 1979-1983. Shagari's government was toppled peacefully on December 31, 1983 by General Buhari and his deputy Major General Tunde Idiagbon (Sambo, 2002), Buhari and his deputy's regime was characterised by a high level of discipline. They put in place War Against Indiscipline (WAI) for all and sundry to obey. Corrupt past political leaders were arrested and tried. However, Buhari's government was also toppled peacefully in August 1985 (Sambo, 2002) Major General Ibrahim Babangida became the military president of Nigeria and ruled from 1985 – 1993.

Babangida promised to restore democracy during his regime but it was evident that he did not have definite plans for handover of power to civilians. A Constitution Review Committee was set up in 1987 to examine the 1979 constitution and make possible recommendations. The Constitution did not result in any fundamental changes in 1979 (Harriman, 2006). However, the 1989 Constitution included the following provisions that were not in the 1979 Constitution.

1. The provision of a two party system.
2. The establishment of a traditional ruler's council
3. The addition of three more fundamental rights i.e. right to own property, to free medical care and to free education (Harriman, 2006 p.10).

Babangida annulled the result of June 12, 1993 Presidential election believed to be the most free and fair. The full operation of the constitution was also scuttled. General Babangida abdicated power to an Interim National Government (ING) headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan in August 27, 1993. The ING was forced to hand over power to General Sani Abacha in November 27, 1993. Abacha established the National Constitutional Conference (NCC). The NCC came up with a three point agenda to form the basis of a new constitution. The conference produced a draft constitution which was neither promulgated nor adopted before the death of General Sani Abacha (Harriman, 2006).

General Abdulsalam Abubakar was elected Head of State by the ruling military council after the death of Abacha in June 8, 1998. The current 1999 Constitution was derived and promulgated by Decree No. 24 of May 1996 by the Abdulsalam administration. The framework remained Presidentialism, a bicameral legislature at the centre and unicameral at the state levels (Harriman, 2006). However, in May 29, 1999 General Abdulsalam Abubakar handed over power to a democratically elected government. Former Head of State, General Olusegun Obasanjo became the President of Nigeria under the flagship of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), this bringing the country to the Fourth Republic.

Obasanjo was in power from 1999 to 2007, thus serving two terms of four years each. Although, he intends serving a third term through the amendment of the constitution. There were financial inducement, enormous threats and intimidation of members of parliament; some governors also faced impeachment due to non-compliance of the third term agenda but it was resisted (Harriman, 2006). President Obasanjo had to hand over to the PDP flag bearer Alhaji Umaru Yar'Adua through the April 14, 2007 election that was argued to be the worst election in the history of the country through irregularities and reversal of election results by election tribunals (Igbuzor, 2011).

The winner of that election, late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua attested to this. Although, former president Olusegun Obasanjo debunked the third term agenda, several school of thoughts were of the opinion that Obasanjo deliberately rigged the election against those who opposed his third term agenda.

Despite the agreement of scholars on the irregularities of previous elections, Ibeanu as quoted by Igbuzor (2010) argued that the 2007 election is unique in some sense because it was in a quantitatively different stage than what was obtained in the past.

*...the state acted in Primitive Accumulation of votes in externality, often serving to create an enabling environment for rigging to occur and supervising its implementation as in the past.*

*...under direct capture, however, the State does not act in neutrality but in the principal implementer of primitive accumulation of votes.*

*p.5*

In the past, political parties rigged elections using the State but in direct capture, the States rig elections for political parties. This accounts for the brazenness of election malpractice in 2007 elections (Igbuzor, 2010).

President Umaru Yar'Adua died on the 5<sup>th</sup> May, 2010; Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, his deputy became the president on 6<sup>th</sup> May, 2010. Goodluck Jonathan of the People's Democratic Party served Nigeria till April 16, 2011. The Presidential election of April, 2011 also saw Goodluck Jonathan coming back to power as the winner under the PDP ticket. The international media also reports that the 2011 elections ran smoothly with relatively little violence and voter fraud in contrast with previous elections.

### *2.1.1 Democracy and Democratisation in Its Right Perspective*

Unlike Plato who in the Statesman said democracy is in every respect weak and unable to do either any great good or any great evil and Aristotle in the Politics who described democracy as the most tolerable of the three perverted forms of Government in contrast to oligarchy and tyranny. Awolowo (1981) said democracy is the best form of government. According to him, he said:

*it will be agreed by those who have given thought to the matter that a freely elected parliament is an essential of a civilised society which can claim to comprise the accredited representatives of the people and can therefore, legitimately make laws for and supervise the administration of the affairs of the people. It is also, the most effective and acceptable organ which mankind has evolved for the promotion at all times of what Lincoln described as the government of the people by the people and for the people.*

*p. 40*

To him democracy is not the only form of government. It has had powerful rivals down the ages such as gerontocracy, autocracy, absolutism, tyranny, despotism, fascism, authoritarianism and oligarchy.

Democratisation according to O'Donnell and Schmitter as quoted by Igbuzor (2010) is

*the process whereby rules and procedures of citizenship are either applied to political institutions previously governed by other principles (e.g. coercive control, social tradition, expert judgment*

*or administrative practice) or expanded to include persons not previously enjoying those rights and obligation (e.g. non-tax payers, illiterates, women, youth, ethnic minorities) or extended to cover issues and institutions not previously subject to citizen participation (e.g. state agencies, military establishments, partisan organizations, interest associations, productive enterprises, educational institutions, etc).*

*p.2*

Meanwhile, Nwabueze as quoted by Igbuzor (2010) argues that democratisation is also concerned with certain conditions of things and in its fullest sense requires that the society, the economy, politics, the constitution of the state, the electoral system and the practice of government should be democratised with the following things:

- i. Multi-partyism under a democratic constitution having the force of a supreme over-riding law;
- ii. A complete change of guards from the exclusion of certain other categories of persons from participation in democratic politics and government;
- iii. A genuine and meaningful popular participation in politics and government;
- iv. A virile civil society;
- v. A democratic society;
- vi. A free society;
- vii. A just society;
- viii. Equal treatment of all citizens by the State;
- ix. The rule of law;
- x. An ordered stable society;
- xi. A society infused with the spirit of liberty, democracy and justice; and
- xii. Independent, self-reliant and prosperous market economy.

*p.2*

Nigeria was among the colonised African countries with the exit of colonial power; democratisation was characterised by one party rule, tolerance of opposition and charismatic leaders who fought for independence, dictatorship, collapse of dictatorship, regression into authoritarian rule after brief experimentation of democracy Igbuzor (2010) and a fourth republic heralding democracy, the present status of Nigerian politics The present constitution is said to be faulty as far as democracy is concerned as it is arguably unitary rather than being republican or democratic.

### *2.1.2 Community Education*

Anyanwu (2002) attempts the definition of Community Education with a review of words in Community and Education. Community was viewed from the sociological approach as a feeling because community education realises its power through with relationships in a community.

Community here involves consensus in the recognition of the common end, and the regulation of activity in view of it. Also, in the analysis of Community education, the potential in bringing about change for better living is crucial. Wells 1929 says education is the preparation of the individual for the community and Dewey (1963) posits that education is that reconstruction or reorganization of

experience which adds to the meaning of experience and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience. This way, community education can be appreciated in the sense that community is a feeling and education, a means to think and reason (Anyanwu, 2002).

Community education was defined by Fletcher (1980) as a process of commitment to the education and leisure of all ages through social participation in setting priorities, sharing resources and the study of circumstances.

A philosophical concept was put forward by Minzey and Le Tarte (1972) thus; the ultimate goal of community education is to

*Develop the process by which members of a community learn to work together to identify problems and to seek solutions to these problems. The contention is that it is through this process that an on-going procedure is established for working together on all community issues. (Minzey and Le Tarte 1972 as quoted by Anyanwu, 2002 p.81)*

This philosophical analysis recognizes the basic tenets of community education – citizen involvement, sharing of decision – making and total community participation in the education enterprise. Community education seeks immediate coping strategies and solutions to problems in inhibiting progress in the community. It is thus problem-solving. The major goal of community education is community self-actualization. Community education is essentially locally based, which could be non-formal or informal. People learn to help themselves and improve their lives individually and collectively. It is a basic education for life which calls for adjustments and acquisitions for new habits, attitudes and values. It is therefore evident that community education is necessary for Nigerians in the process of democratisation.

### *2.1.3 Women's Participation in Democracy: the Present Situation in Nigeria*

Nigeria is a signatory to the Beijing Declaration and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). She adopted the National Policy on Women (NPW) in year 2000 which affirmed the rights of girls and women educationally, economically, socially and politically (NPW, 2000). Despite policies and constitutional provisions, Nigerian women are yet to be well represented in decision-making processes in Nigeria. In Africa generally, women's actual participation remains relatively low in spite of remarkable increase in the level of literacy and political awareness among them (Duke II, 2010).

The past and present record of women representation in transition to democracy and democracy is still largely dismal. For instance, in the 1990 Local Government Council elections, women won 112 councillorship seats (22.4%) out of 500; 16 (3.5%) out of 453 Vice-Chairmanship seats and 7 (1.5%) out of 453 Chairmanship seats contested (Akpochafo, 2009). In 1991 State gubernatorial elections, women won two positions (6.7%) as Deputy Governors in the 30 states. In the National Assemblies, women got 11 (2.1%) out of 543 seats in the House of Representatives and 1 (1.1%) out of 92 seats in Senate. In the March 1997 Local Government Elections, women won only 7 (0.9%) Chairmanship seats out of a total of 795 (Akpochafo, 2009).

In 1999, female membership in all political parties was just 5% (Duke II, 2010). Between 1999 and 2003, only 12 seats out of 990 in State House of Assembly (regional parliamentary) were occupied by women. Of the 774 Local Government (mayoral) chairs, only nine were held by women. A dismal 17.8% of the municipal councillorship positions were held by women. Between 2003 and 2007, women made up of only 3.67% of the population of Senators. At the House of Representative, women constituted only 6.39% (Oha, 2007 as quoted by Duke II, 2010).

In the 2007 elections, out of a total of 7,160 candidates that contested in the April elections, only 628 women participated. Of the twenty five candidates that contested for the office of the President, only one was a female. Only five women contested for the office of the Vice-President. A total of 474 candidates contested for the gubernatorial elections in the thirty six states of which only 14 (3%) were women. 21 female candidates contested for the office of the Deputy Governor. 779 contested for Senate of which 59 (7.4%) were women. Of the 2,342 that contested for seats in the House of Representatives, only 150 (6.4%) were women. Out of the 5,649 contestants for the House of Assemblies, only 358 (6.3%) were women. There are 9 (8.2%) female senators out of 109 and only 27 (7.8%) women in the House of Representatives out of 360 members. There are only five female Deputy Governors from Imo, Lagos, Osun, Ogun and Plateau States (Udogu, 2007 as quoted by Duke II, 2010).

At the April 2011 elections, there were 4 women senators in Nigeria out of 109 and 13 (3.69%) women out of 352 seats in the House of Representatives (IPU, 2011). The 30% representation in parliament is still far to be reached in Nigeria. Although the President had appointed women ministers to make up for the thirty-five percent that he promised the electorates, while this is commendable, women still need to be duly represented in parliament, the crux of legislation and decision-making.

#### *2.1.4 Community Learning Centres, Schools and Community Education for Sustainable Women's Participation in Democratic Process*

Democracy in the right perspective means every individual having a say in the decision of that society he or she belongs. In Nigeria, majority of the people live in rural areas, besides, illiteracy is still high especially, among women; community education could be used in schools and community learning centres to teach lifelong education in the form of civic education, democracy and socio-economic issues.

In rural areas, after a hard day's work, people gather in local leader's houses and under trees as meeting places to discuss political, social, economic and personal issues; they solve their problems through sharing of their experiences and knowledge. Such places could serve as community learning centres which will serve as service sources for providing activities that are consistent with the changes in the globalisation era which also encourages the development of a learning society. This will enhance the ideals of democracy and self-reliant development, the milestone of long term sustainable development (Leowarin, 2008). It has been argued severally by scholars that Nigeria's curriculum is not rich enough to accommodate lifelong learning. Such skills that incorporate democracy and democratisation could be integrated into the schools' curriculum.

#### *2.1.5 The Radio, Television and Community Education for Sustainable Women's Participation in Democratic Process*

The radio and television sets are viable instructional materials in community education for sustaining women's participation in democracy. The radio was brought into Nigeria by the British to serve as an instrument of administration, a medium of education and instrument of the colonial people in public health, rural development and agriculture (Duyile, 2009). However, the Television came later through the effort of Nigerians themselves, led by Chief Obafemi who declared that Television will serve as teacher, entertainer, and a stimulus to all, to transform Nigeria into a modern and prosperous nation. The radio and television had since served as a stimulus to educating the people apart from performing other functions.

The radio and television will enhance m-learning since they are instruments of change. Community radio is highly instrumental to learning because it is a radio for, by learning and about the people. The ownership and management is representative of the community while pursuing social



development agenda without profit. Community radio promotes free expression initiatives, peace and good rapport among the people which will certainly enhance rural women's participation in politics and bring them out of excessive trepidation. A study jointly carried out by the Federal Government of Nigeria and UNESCO in 2004, *Improving Community Education and Literacy, Using Radio and Television* revealed that 37% of Nigerians owned only radio, 1.3% owned only television sets, nearly 47.8% owned both radio and television sets, while 13.9% had neither (Aderinoye, Ojokheta and Olojede, 2007).

The Nigerian government has introduced radio and television educational programme, Aderinoye, Ojokheta and Olojede, (2007). This could be expanded beyond literacy skills teaching to involve lifelong learning including civic education and the ethics of democratization, promotion of the rule of law, journalism, culture, economic planning, management and marketing information. This will enhance women's participation in politics, reduce patriarchy in all ramifications and promote the socio-economic status of women generally.

#### *2.1.6 Mobile Phones and Community Education for Sustainable Women's Participation in Democratic Process*

Women's participation in democracy in Nigeria is still at the low ebb despite increase in political awareness and literacy. Since community education is flexible to accommodate informal and non-formal learning process, mobile phones and wireless devices could be used for fostering lifelong skills in literacy and democracy through mobile learning. Mobile learning is novel and accommodates all age groups, gender, locations irrespective of the geographical situation. Mobile learning is the use of any mobile or wireless instrument for learning which could be carried along without necessarily disrupting other activities of the carrier.

According to Kinshuk (2003) there are three ways in which learning can be said to be mobile – learning is mobile in terms of space, in different areas of life and with respect to time. With our day to day activities, education is increasingly being transformed from the conservative teacher to learner activity. The mobile learning also referred to as m-learning presents unique attributes. The devices are personal, potable, situated, interactive and collaborative. A just in-time formal and informal learning can be delivered anywhere and anytime. This indicates that mobile learning systems will deliver educational contents to learners anytime and anywhere it is needed.

Sharples (2000) defines mobile technologies in learning as the knowledge and skills people need to prosper throughout lifetime. Because of the portability, unobstructive and adaptability of mobile technologies to learning contexts and the skills and knowledge gained by learners, such technologies will enhance sustainability of women's participation in the democratic process, lifelong continuous learning, second chance learning for the early school leavers, local entrepreneurship, better banking and marketing, and health initiatives. Take for instance, the fact that it does not obstruct their traditional roles as care givers and home makers. Community education through m-learning is desirable in Nigeria.

#### *2.1.7 The Recent Election Situation in Nigeria*

At this juncture, it is important to note that democracy brought its dividend in elections to Nigeria. The 2011 elections featured the following:

- The involvement and participation of civil society groups that was better than the previous elections, as the process was made more democratic and open.
- The type of apathy in participation, crisis of confidence on the leadership of the electoral body (INEC) was not pronounced if not absent.

- Also, there was the readiness on the part of the electoral body to surpass the positive performance of the previous electoral bodies and avoid its pitfalls.
- The assessments of foreign observers were more in support of an improved election.
- The process was considered credible before and after the election by the critical mass of the society. For instance, foreign and local observers appraised the situation thus:

*...the election overall was transparent and orderly, allowing Nigerians the opportunity to exercise their right to vote. Chairman Jega and his team have made great strides in improving the quality of Nigerian election and deserve credit for what has been achieved in the short eight months since they were appointed.*

IRI (US) April 20,2011 [http WordPress.com](http://WordPress.com)

*The African Union (AU) observer mission has hailed the conduct of Saturday presidential election by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), concluding that the fair conduct has raised a hope for the rest of Africa on growth of democracy.*

AU April 20,2011 [http WordPress.com](http://WordPress.com)

*This historic event marks a dramatic shift from decades of failed elections and a substantial improvement over the 2007 presidential election.*

Hilary Clinton. April 20,2011 [http WordPress.com](http://WordPress.com)

*...aside the impressive voter turnout, the elections were transparent, free and fair.*

*...He said the unbelievable killings and carnage that followed the declaration of Jonathan as the winner of the presidential election in some states of the Northern region were absolutely uncalled for.*

Soyinka as reported by Jegede, Daily Independent May1, 2011

The above culminated to the reduction in number of litigations compared to previous elections.

### **3. Challenges of Community Education towards Sustainable Women's Participation in Democratic Process in Nigeria**

The option of community education for sustainable women's participation in democratic process may be faced by the following:

1. Illiteracy is very high among Nigerian women and this class of women has been tuned to the fact that decisions are meant for men, even the literates among them. It is also believed that politics is a dirty game and women should not be found there. A well designed public awareness campaign aimed at sensitizing the people will help address the issue of low participation of women in politics. Equally, the issue of not allowing women/wives by their husbands probably by feeling threatened should be a thing of the past now.
2. The cost of procuring mobile phones, radios, television sets, community learning centres in strategic locations for rural women and people is likely to limit the coverage of this

programme for a government that is underfunding education presently. The Nigerian government should show more commitment on this issue to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

3. The government of Nigeria should show seriousness on the provision of energy and infrastructure, people will need electricity to charge their phones and watch television in cities and probably villages. The epileptic supply of electricity presently will reduce the effectiveness of the innovation.
4. Nigeria lacks effective monitoring and evaluation of her programmes and these are salient factors for sustainability and maintenance of any programme. Nigeria only needs to ensure prompt and up to date monitoring and evaluation of the novel way of ensuring democratisation in Nigeria.

### **3.1 Perceived Benefits of Community Education for Sustainable Women's Participation in Democratic Process in Nigeria**

Going by the tenets and philosophy of community education as being basically democratic and enabling people to discover and exploit their potentials and resources to increase competence and confidence in handling issues; the flexibility of community education combined with its attributes are capable of delivering the components of education in all ramifications towards sustainable participation in democracy. Nigerians, old and young irrespective of tribe and gender, elite, educated or illiterates, need to be properly educated to change the status quo as it obtains today in Nigeria. It is believed that community education can be used to sensitise and inculcate in citizens especially women

- Political education/Civic education: This type of education will sensitise women and citizens on their rights, the right to elect their leaders, voter education, power analysis, gender equality and the evil of patriarchy.
- Protection of Mandate: But for the 2011 election which was acclaimed better than the previous elections especially, 1999 and 2003 elections which were known to be far from being free and fair. One of the strategies that could bring franchise to democracy in Nigeria is the protection of mandate in Nigeria that will enable citizens to protect their votes so that election results reflect the actual votes of citizens.
- Lifelong literacy skills that will have little or no disruption to women's livelihood and traditional roles. Women are known to be very busy because of their traditional roles as care givers and home makers. Women can be sustained and maintained when education is given on radio, mobile handsets and television without necessarily disturbing or obstructing their lifestyles and citizens at large.
- Community education can enhance the threshold level of education of women. Basic education is good as it is now a global phenomenon but a higher level of education is desirable and could be given to women in the form of non-formal or through information technology. Education changes the lives of women profoundly, their economic status which is essential for interaction in the society, their ability to participate in community decision-making and ability to achieving sustainability.
- Community education will enhance good community based decisions. This will promote socio-economic and environmental well-being of the people. Citizens will be able to act to protect their communities, deal with community issues and help shape community response.
- Community education is capable of boosting interactional and transactional skills that women possess to equip them with skills needed to enhance their relationships with the

people to place them on a good footing to participate in democracy and raise them beyond the level of excessive trepidation which is needed in Nigerian politics.

- Community education is capable of building women's capacity for collaboration vision and leadership.
- Community education is capable of reducing corruption and enhancing security which has been identified as missing in Nigeria's polity. Community education is good at reconstruction of ideals and ethics.
- Community education will build in citizens the continuous need to resist and fight against the propensity of the state to homogenize its citizens by resisting apparent policies and standards that claim equality but discriminate and marginalize in an egalitarian society.
- Community education is capable of instilling the lost traditional ethics and values in the society which is the bane of loss of conscience culminating in corruption and 'get rich syndrome' today. The Electoral Act of 2006 and our constitution are excellent documents on the rule of law, human, civil and political rights, elective institutions, governmental accountability, separation of powers but they are not followed. The institutions that are supposed to ensure franchise include the Legislature, Judiciary, Security Agencies and Election Management Bodies. However, they are weakened and compromised. The awakening of citizens' conscience will go a long way to bringing back the "good name is better than riches".

#### 4. Conclusion

Nigeria had passed through a phase of political instability with men dominating the scene, even with democracy. Political practice in Nigeria is characterised by elitism, godfatherism, affluence and violence. This limits the participation of women especially, rural women who are poor and lack the educational wherewithal to participate in politics. It is apparent that education is a key to sustainability targets. Educating the population of Nigeria including women in political ethics through m-learning which community education stand to achieve will go a long way to enhancing good democratic values and a good representation of all citizens irrespective of sex.

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