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Barriers and enablers for women's participation in governance in Nigeria

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Question

Please provide evidence on women and participation in governance and politics in Nigeria, focusing on:

- Levels of participation and representation
- Barriers and enablers
- What works to build participation/representation in the Nigerian context

Contents

1. Summary

Levels of female participation and representation in Nigerian politics are low. A sexist and patronage-based political culture, combined with gendered economic and household inequalities, are seen to be the main barriers to women's participation in governance. The literature points to quotas, empowerment programmes and better electoral monitoring as possible solutions, but successive governments have been reluctant to implement binding measures.

Following Nigeria's first democratic elections since military rule in 1999, the proportion of women in all levels of government have remained low at all levels of government, although there have been improvements in women's representation at the local level. Women in Nigeria are active in the economy and civil society. There is some variation across the country, with generally higher levels of participation in the south and urban areas. Levels of education and economic development may explain some of this. However, the high levels of patronage and corruption mean that female representation is sometimes tokenistic rather than substantive, as in the case of first ladies' political initiatives.

The main reason for the lack of women's representation are:

- A lack of effective government action;
- Lower levels of female employment and education;
- Sexist attitudes, sometimes but not always deriving from religion or traditional practices;
- A corrupt and patronage-based political system;
- Violence at elections, including against women candidates.

Nigerian governments have subscribed to international agreements and instituted national policies to improve women's representation, but have done little to implement concrete measures. Nigerian civil society organisations and international funders have promoted a number of capacity building and behavioural change programmes, although the overall levels of female representation in government have barely improved since 1999.

Previous and ongoing efforts by civil society organisations and activists to improve the situation include:

- Changing cultural norms through media campaigns and education;
- Programmes to empower women through training or mentoring;
- Monitoring the fairness and conduct of elections;
- Advocating for affirmative action from the state.

The Nigerian government has published statistics on women in elected positions and data is available for national positions for the period 1999-2019. The literature focuses on the mechanisms of Nigerian politics, namely the party system and the prominent role of patronage and corruption; conservative and sexist beliefs and practices across Nigerian society; the use of violence and hate speech against women candidates and voters; and the reluctance of the state to implement robust measures to improve women's representation and engagement. However, there are relatively few rigorous and comprehensive studies explaining the relative importance of these causes for the small numbers of women in Nigerian politics, or ethnographic studies examining the effect of social practices and attitudes to women on a micro-level. Studies also exist of the role of women in comparable Sub-Saharan countries, using data on gross domestic

product (GDP), political representation, and attitude surveys such as Afrobarometer, from which lessons relevant to Nigeria can be derived. For example, Rwanda provides an example of a country with significant numbers of women in government, while South Africa has used quotas.

Although numerous civil society organisations have programmes to increase women's representation, many of their publications include evaluative statements rather than in-depth evaluations of the efficacy of different approaches.

2. Levels of participation and representation

Types of participation

Participation can include voting, work on election campaigns, engagement in the community, contact with political leaders and attendance at demonstrations. (Isaksson, Kotsadam, & Nerman, 2014, p. 311) use whether women 'got together with others to raise an issue' as a measure of inter-election participation broad enough to encompass different political cultures and situations. They use data from the Afrobarometer survey to estimate how many women participated in this way in comparison to men. The results show that Nigeria has one of the largest 'participation gaps' in Sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover, the gap is greater in terms of 'raising an issue' than for 'voting' which they suggest is because the former 'constitutes a more active form of political participation. Moreover, it takes place in groups rather than individually, so it is not surprising that having access to a political network seems more important than for voting'.

Research from the BBC also points to gender gaps in political knowledge (13%), discussion (5%) and participation (16%). The report defines political knowledge as 'self-reported knowledge of political processes and institutions, rights, governance issues and current affairs'. It defines political discussion as self-reported discussion of local or national politics or governance issues with other people. It defines political participation as self-reported participation 'in an organised effort to solve a problem; contact local or national officials; contact traditional leaders; take part in a march or demonstration or participate in local meetings', as well as voting. It is based on a survey of 4,240 Nigerians (Casserly, 2016, p. 7).

Figure 2: **Men's and women's political knowledge, discussion and participation in seven countries.** See: Casserly (2016: 9).
http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/pdf/practicebriefings/empowering-women-through-media-report.pdf

Other studies point to women's participation in peacebuilding initiatives and market exchange as evidence of women's capacity to participate in governance more broadly. Women leading organisations working against violent extremism has been show to generate 'certain positive results for achieving women's inclusion and gender equality in politics and society' (British Council Nigeria, 2012; Ikelegbe, 2005; Nwangwu & Ezeibe, 2019). However, levels of women's engagement in these issues remain below men overall (Nwadinobi & Maguire, 2013).

Representation in politics

Nigeria has low rates of female representation in politics by global and regional standards. Although the proportions of women in elected positions increased slightly between 1999 and 2007, from an average of 2.3% across both houses of legislature to 7.8%, these small gains had stopped by 2011.

As of the 2015 election, Nigeria had 20 women out of 359 in its lower house (5.6%) and 7 out of 109 in its upper house (6.4%). This put it 180th in the world ("Women in Parliaments: World Classification," 2019). Following the 2019 elections, women make up 7.3% of the Nigerian Senate and 3.1% of the House of Representatives. No state governors are women (NWTF, 2019).

The number of women serving as ministers and appointed executives is also very low, with 11 of the 636 appointed executives between 1999 and 2015 being women (17.5%) and 15% of ministers in the same period (NCWD, 2016).

The World Economic Forum (2018) Global Gender Gap report measures 'political empowerment' in terms of the ratios of women to men in ministerial and parliamentary positions, as well as number of years as head of state over the last fifty years. Out of a total of 149 countries, Nigeria is ranked as having the 139th largest gender gap in 'political empowerment'.

A Nigerian government statistical report shows that in the years 1999-2015, 6% of councillors (local government) were women, 24% of judges in the federal court were women, and an average of 7% of each type of high-level government officials and senior administrators were women. The posts surveyed were: head of service, permanent secretary, special adviser, special assistant, central bank governors, chief executive officer, director general and executive secretary. There were no female central bank governors (of four positions). The role with the highest percentage of women at 28% was special assistant. Data is not available for lower levels of the civil service (Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics, 2018).

The political party system has done little to encourage women's participation, with women only making up a small percentage of nominees for governors and deputies and both legislative houses in the 2015 election. In 2015, of 760 candidates for the positions of governor and deputy, only 87 were women (11.45%). Of the 747 candidates for senator, only 122 were women (16.33%). Of the 1,774 candidates for the House of Representatives, only 269 were women (15.16%) (NWTF (2015)

Local and regional differences

While some commentators point to religion as a factor inhibiting women's representation, it is clear that a number of socio-economic, cultural and geographical causes are at play. Data from the state level reveals regional variations in women's representation. A British Council report (2012) notes that northern and rural regions see lower levels of female representation (British Council Nigeria, 2012).

A quantitative analysis of data from the 2014-15 Afrobarometer survey showed that post-secondary education is the most significant predictor of women's participation. It is followed by

geography and party affiliation, as well as employment, place of residence, and religion (Dim & Asomah, 2015).

Research from Cheeseman et al (2016) shows the number of offices held by women in each state's government, weighed according to their 'autonomy, legitimacy, budgetary influence, oversight capacity, and security of tenure of the position', for the years 2003-2015. The results show that Lagos state, the commercial capital of Nigeria, has the highest representation of women. There is some correlation between GDP and women's representation, but also some exceptions: 'Kano, for example, is 27th on the Institutional Power Index (IPI) for this period but 6th in the GDP rankings, while Edo state is 20th on the IPI but 7th when ranked according to GDP' (Cheeseman, Cooper-Knock, & Elder, 2016).

Figure 4: Proportion of elective offices held by women by state, 2003-2015, see: Cheeseman et al (2016: 67) https://www.slideshare.net/winihinjemideseries/research-and-ranking-report-on-gender-representation-at-state-local-government-levels-in-nigeria-from-1999-to-2015-59325568

Formal versus substantive

Political scientists note a difference between formal, descriptive, symbolic and substantive representation. Descriptive representation means the similarity between the elected and those who elected them, whereas substantive representation focuses on whether legislators enact policies for their constituents (Burchard & Barnes, 2012; Fink, Frohn, & Heideking, 1991).

In the Nigerian context, the literature shows that women are sometimes given nominal roles with little actual power in government and political parties. 'Too many analyses of women in Nigerian politics still focus on numbers over substance. Questions need to be asked about the nature of women's political power and the terms of their participation' (Ajayi, 2019). Seeking to weigh the influence of women in elected office by weighing their roles according to their legitimacy and authority, Cheeseman et al have devised a power index. It weighs the potential power of each position in Nigerian state government in order to show not just the numbers of women on office, but the 'proportion of political power wielded by women in a given state' (Cheeseman et al., 2016). Such an approach can help produce a more realistic picture of women's power in government.

A broader criticism can be made of the lack of substantive representation in a country where violence against women and discriminatory legislation is widespread. Nelson (2012), for example, describes 'state patronage through the quota system'. Okonkwo (2016) argues that because corruption is so endemic in Nigeria, the women who manage to get elected are often subject to the country's patronage system. Because of this, the election of women does not, in most cases, lead to any substantive representation for women. He documents numerous examples of corruption among female politicians, including 'first ladies project syndrome, whereby expensive projects led by presidents' wives have failed, often because of misappropriate, procurement scams or embezzlement (Ibrahim, 2005; Okonkwo, 2016).

3. Research and evidence on barriers

The literature surveyed points to a number of barriers to women's participation in politics. It does not specific any particular enablers, other than reversing these barriers. The programmes in section 4 attempt to enable more female participation. According to Isaksson et al, there is little research on the reasons for the 'participation gap' between men and women in developing countries. They analyse data from the Afrobarometer survey of 27,000 respondents in 20 African countries, set against World Bank and Social Institutions and Gender Index data, and conclude that 'clientelism, a lack of civil liberties, economic development and gender norms' explain the gender gap in Africa. They note that they do not have enough data to prove the role of clientelism, reduced civil liberties, economic development or gender norms in reducing women's participation (Isaksson et al., 2014)

However, think tanks, journalists and NGOs have identified a number of barriers to women's political participation using surveys, interviews, analysis of laws and the party system, and anecdotal evidence.

Laws

The Nigerian government has been reluctant to implement laws to improve gender equality in politics, despite a formal support for it. There are no formal bars on women taking office and the Nigerian constitution (1999) guarantees equal political rights. The National Gender Policy (2006) recommended a benchmark of 35% of seats in parliament to be filled by women. The country is also a signatory to international agreements. The government ratified the United Nations' Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1985 and endorsed the 2005 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (British Council Nigeria, 2012; Denney, 2011; "Nigeria | Freedom House," 2019).

Advocacy groups are also pushing for more government action. In 2014, the Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre (WARDC) and the Nigerian Women Trust Fund (NWTF) drafted a "Nigerian Women Charter of Demand". It demanded: "a reform of electoral law to provide for affirmative action as a criterion for registration of political parties" as well as the establishment of "a system of gender mainstreaming which incorporates 35 percent of women in all sectors of government" (Orji, Orji, & Agbanyim, 2018).

However, legislators have resisted implementing gender equality measures such as binding quotas. Several bills have been rejected on the grounds that they compromise traditional Christian or Islamic beliefs, such as the 2016 gender and equalities bill (Jollie Bako & Syed, 2018). The Constitution does not specify a right to freedom from discrimination. Electoral law does not reserve any percentage of seats of offices for women and political parties are not subject to quotas (Orji et al., 2018).

Parties and patronage

Political parties are important in providing access to political parties, but often function on a closed manner and on the basis of patronage.

The high cost of politics likely prevents many women from standing. The nomination forms required to stand for office often cost the equivalent of tens of thousands of pounds. Although,

'some parties provided free forms for women … this has not had significant impact on the number of women contesting. Such waivers appear not to be adequate antidotes to the other extraneous but heavy incidental expenses that are peculiar to the Nigerian type of democracy.' (Itodo, Abdu, Dadan-Garba, Ezeayinka, & Asubiaro, 2015). The two largest parties, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressive Congress (APC), waved nomination fees for women in 2015, but this did not have any effect on the total numbers elected (EUCOM, 2015).

Political parties have done little to effectively encourage women standing for office. Many of the major parties have gender empowerment principles in their manifestoes, but it is argued that their actual commitments to improving the representation of women is limited (Orji et al., 2018, pp. 34–36). As of 2015, there were no legal requirements for parties to appoint a certain number of women. Moreover 'most political parties have also failed to implement their party gender policies and there are no sanctions imposed by the members for this failure' (NCWD, 2016).

The workings of parties are geared towards men and patriarchal patronage systems. The rules of engagement at the nomination stage are 'defined and organised around male norms and values' (NCWD, 2016). As well as money, getting a nomination often requires the influence of elders (Orji et al., 2018). Women often do not have the experience of campaigning, organising and winning support in male-dominated environments. In the 2011 election, women candidates had a 'conversion rate' that was roughly half that of male candidates, which is likely because they were given hard to win seats to contest (British Council Nigeria, 2012).

Female candidates are often disadvantaged, and even disqualified, by rules and cultural norms surrounding marriage and indigeneship (the status of being native to a particular area): 'Often times, women become stateless once they are married. Their state of origin asserts that she has adopted her husband's state while her husband's state refuses to recognise her as an indigene' (Itodo et al., 2015).

In some cases, parties have actively excluded women from standing for office. Many parties use 'indirect primaries' to select candidates which means, in effect, that a small number of leaders are in a position to choose candidates (Itodo et al., 2015). In one example, a woman, Bakori, stood for nomination but was sidelined by the party leadership who declared that her opponent was standing 'unopposed' (NCWD, 2016, p. 506).

Violence

Female political candidates are often subject to hate speech, threats or violence. There is considerable anecdotal evidence for this (NCWD, 2016; NWTF, 2015). According to a 2019 report by Peace Direct, 'Invariably, Nigerian women are targeted in both the private and public spheres to prevent them from participating in rallies, voting and/or running as candidates. Despite decreasing incidents of violence and improved transparency measures during elections, violence against women continues to be a significant threat to Nigerian democracy' (Direct, 2019, p. 46). In some areas, gangs have been hired by politicians to stop female candidates (British Council Nigeria, 2012).

In the run-up to the 2015 election, the National Democratic Institute surveyed hate speech against women across Nigeria. They used 900 observers across Nigeria's 774 local government areas, finding higher levels of gender-based hate speech in the North East and South East. They also conducted informal surveys showing that 'gender-based hate speech was sometimes

accompanied by other acts of gender-based violence, including threats of divorce, sexual violence, blackmail or destruction of property.'

Figure 5: **Gender-based hate speech in Nigeria, November 2014-March 2015.** See: NDI (2015). https://www.ndi.org/violence_against_women_elections

Attitudes to gender

Attitudes to women in politics vary across the country for a variety of religious, cultural, economic and educational reasons. While women were enfranchised in the south of the country in 1960, the same did not happen in the north until 1979. Islam is often blamed for the lower levels of participation in the north, but socio-economic and geographical factors also play a role (British Council Nigeria, 2012).

Female candidates in Nigeria often suffer from lack of media coverage. Moreover, the nature of his coverage is often gendered and serves to undermine the credibility of the candidates. A 'content analysis of newspaper coverage of four high-profile women politicians during the 2015 electoral cycle' has concluded that female candidates suffered from a relative lack of coverage and a presumption of 'unviability' (Ette, 2017). However, it is unclear if this was a product of the reporting, or reflected the marginal position of the four female candidates and the difficulties they would face given the political system and prevailing attitudes to women.

Negative attitudes to women in leadership persist across the country. A 2015 study of men and women's attitudes to women in leadership roles showed the persistence of gendered attitudes**.** The study consisted of a quantitative survey of 1,532 men and 504 women across six states, each representing a geopolitical region, and qualitative focus groups featuring a total of 192 participants. While over three quarters of men agreed that women and men would make equally good leaders, sexist attitudes were also prevalent in both the survey and the focus groups. The authors of the study attribute this to a social desirability bias.

Figure 6: Percentage of men (n=1532) who agreed with statements on women's leadership. See: Voices for Change (2015: 29) https://promundoglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/V4C-Nigeria-Men-and-Gender-Equality-Survey-NiMAGES.pdf

The men surveyed also expressed favourable attitudes, with some variation by region, to quotas for women in government and executive positions (with the exception of the northern state of Kano, where only 46% of respondents supported quotas for executive positions). However, the authors of the study attributed the fact that this finding sat alongside a number of sexist attitudes to the fact that quotas have not been implemented, and are unlikely to be, so they are 'abstract' and do not affect the lives and interests of the respondents and so are evidence of a 'social desirability bias'.

Figure 7: Male respondents' rates of affirmative responses to gender equality policies and laws. See: Voices for Change (2015: 32) https://promundoglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/V4C-Nigeria-Men-and-Gender-Equality-Survey-NiMAGES.pdf

These attitudes have their corollary in restrictive social norms that make it harder for women to participate in politics. In some places, a husband's permission is required to take part in political activity. Women are also disproportionately burdened with childcare responsibilities. Many political meetings are held at night-time, which makes it difficult for women to attend. In some areas, women will not have a bank account and so will struggle to pay registration fees (British Council Nigeria, 2012). Levels of education and formal employment are also lower for women, which have been correlated with lower political participation (Dim & Asomah, 2015; Isaksson et al., 2014). However, women's political participation still lags behind their increasing prominence in economic life and civil society (British Council Nigeria, 2012).

4. Lessons from existing programmes

The Nigerian state formed the National Commission for Women in 1989, which was changed to the Ministry of Women Affairs in 1995. A national Gender Policy was released in 2006, including a non-binding recommendation for 35% of decision-making positions to be held by women.

Several Nigerian civil society organisations are working to improve women's representation in politics. Their efforts consist of changing cultural norms, programmes to empower women through training or mentoring, monitoring the fairness and conduct of elections, and advocating for affirmative action from the state.

A number of programmes, funded by international bodies such as the UN Democracy Fund, UN Women, the For Foundation, the National Endowment for Democracy, the US Department of State, USAID, Oxfam, DFID, the National Democratic Institute, the EU and others, have sought to improve female participation (Orji et al., 2018, pp. 65–67). It is not possible to survey every programme, and there are few thorough evaluations. However, using civil society organisation (CSO) evaluations and the academic literature mentioned above, it is possible to get some insight into 'what works'.

A Commonwealth evaluation of the National Women's Trust Fund's work suggests the following framework.

Figure 8: Commonwealth framework for analysing policies to increase women's representation. See: Commonwealth (2015:4) http://nigerianwomentrustfund.org/wp-content/uploads/Nigeria_Gender_Case_Study_P13863_14_V4_lowres-1.pdf

Clearly, attitudes and practices need to be changed alongside laws. However, the academic literature disagrees on the relative importance of the factors and strategies to effectively improve representation and participation.

Examples of programmes and CSOs

Nigerian Women's Trust Fund

The Nigerian Women's Trust Fund (NWTF) works to help women into politics through funding, networking opportunities, mentoring, training for leadership, and advocacy. It is backed by the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (MWASD), UN Women and others.

Its objectives are:

- To provide aspiring female politicians with financial and other resources to support their campaigns, through transparent processes irrespective of their political inclinations;

- To enhance the leadership capacity of aspiring female politicians and women in appointed positions;

- To sustainably raise funds, invest and manage resources for women's political participation, in fulfilment of Nigeria's affirmative action quota, designating at least 35 per cent of seats in political bodies to women;

- To facilitate networking opportunities for female politicians, with the support from relevant organisations;

- To promote and carry out research and advocacy that raises awareness about the current situation of women in politics, and that generates support for women who currently hold or are seeking high elective or appointed positions in government.

The Policy Advice and Legal Centre (PLAC)

The Policy and Legal Advice Centre (PLAC) is 'a capacity building organisation that works to strengthen democratic governance and citizens' participation in Nigeria. Through broad-based technical assistance and training, PLAC works to promote citizens' engagement with government institutions and to advocate for legal and policy reforms and promote transparency and accountability in policy and decision-making processes. At the core of our programming is a deep commitment to increase legislative advocacy, promote transparency and good governance, support and promote electoral reforms, enhance citizen's access to public policies and advance anti-corruption campaigns.'

Voices for Change

'Voices for Change (V4C) was a £29 million programme funded by UK Aid, working to strengthen the enabling environment for gender equality in Nigeria. The programme targets young women and men aged 16–25 years old. It operated in four states in Nigeria: Enugu, Kaduna, Kano and Lagos and for some activities, at federal level. V4C is a unique example of a programme applying social norms theory at scale and is addressing the structural barriers to gender equality; in particular, discriminatory and harmful attitudes, behaviours and social norms. The three normative areas that V4C sought to change were women's voice and leadership, women's role in decision-making and violence against women and girls' (Asubiario- Dada & Gaynor, 2017).

Affirmative action

Quotas for women in parliament, government and political parties have the potential to improve women's representation and have been shown to be effective in other Sub-Saharan African countries.

A 2018 Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC) report argues that efforts to increase representation have failed because most observers have misdiagnosed the problem. It argues that focusing on 'expanding women's political resources' such as education, networks and mentoring, have produced only 'incremental change'. Women are increasingly prominent in Nigerian business and civil society, including activists for more political representation, and cultural restrictions are being eroded, yet these achievements are not being matched in politics. It suggests the question should be reframed as one of 'discrimination'.

The PLAC report also suggests that women should seek to gain experience in provincial government. Advocating affirmative action and quotas, the report suggests: 'there is a growing consensus that Nigeria's federal system, its local and regional settings provide a platform for

emerging female politicians to garner experience in all the main aspects of political activity, including running for elections, dealing with social and economic stakeholders, and taking decisions affecting the life of a community' (Orji et al., 2018).

A study using time-series data from 20 countries with varying levels of women's participation, gathered in the Afrobarometer survey, has concluded that **increased representation of women will increase women's engagement in politics**. It argues this is because the visibility of women in structures of government shows other women that they can participate, as well as increasing the chances that issues affecting women will be addressed. According to the study 'when a country adopts institutional rules (e.g., gender quotas) to increase women's descriptive representation and these rules result in significant political gains for women, we can expect that the country will also benefit from women's increased political engagement.'

Moreover, it argues that improvement in women's representation should be fast-tracked. This is because increased engagement by women in economic life and civil society will not automatically lead to better political representation and engagement: 'Quotas were not a result of increased participation of women in the electorate or based on changing attitudes at the mass level' but were the result of political transitions/ruptures, the advocacy of women's rights activists and international and regional pressures (Burchard & Barnes, 2012). That is to say, they advocate for quotas to improve women's representation and engagement rather than waiting for social change.

Some scholars argue that quotas will simply be used by existing parties to perpetuate the patronage system, and will therefore do little to increase women's substantive representation and engagement (Nelson, 2012; Okonkwo, 2016). The examples of South Africa and Rwanda can be analysed to understand the efficacy of quotas in achieving more women's participation (British Council Nigeria, 2012; Devlin & Elgie, 2008; WJ, 2016).

Monitoring elections

A number of initiatives have sought to monitor and prevent the threats and violence against women voting and standing in elections. In 2015, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) established a Women's Situation Room (WSR) to monitor, report and respond to electoral violence. It was based on similar programmes in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Kenya. A hotel room was rented and women 'took part in mediation, coordination, political and legal analysis, observation of the polling process and documentation of incidents'. The programme also trained and deployed election observers and trained activists in talking to the media effectively. The WSR received '4,973 reports which were all resolved by the Independent National Electoral Commission with the help from local police'. The participants all felt that it had been a success, although it has not been formally evaluated (Direct, 2019).

In the same year, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) launched a 'Stop Violence against Women in Elections' (Stop-VAWIE) campaign. It undertook the following activities:

- Stop-VAWIE documented and reported first-of-its-kind data on types and incidents of violence against women;
- It engaged with election officials, security services, women's groups and others to mitigate violence;
- It organised civic education around preventing violence against women in elections.

- Provided support for women's groups to conduct legislative advocacy campaigns in target states for the passage of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act (VAPP), which enacts a new framework to address domestic and electoral gender violence.
- Supports local partners to conduct get-out-the-vote campaigns targeting women during gubernatorial polls.

(*National Democratic Institute Nigeria*, 2018)

This type of intervention has the potential to reduce the direct physical attacks as well as hate speech encountered by women, although it will do little to stop political parties' side-lining of women or negative cultural attitudes.

Changing cultural norms

A BBC Media Action project has sought to increase women's engagement and participation in politics, across seven developing countries including Nigeria, through gender-sensitive television and radio programmes discussing issues of governance. The project sought to include female panellists and audience members to show women participating in debates about political issues. However, it noted the difficulty of getting equal shares, with only 43% audience shares being reached for the BBC programmes in Nigeria. Based on its regression analysis of results, it concluded that 'Across all seven research countries, regularly watching or listening to BBC Media Action's governance programmes is associated with increased political knowledge and discussion among men and women in equal proportions. In five of the seven countries [including Nigeria], exposure to these programmes is also associated with increased political participation for men and women in equal proportions' (Casserly, 2016).

Similarly, the Nigerian Women's Trust Fund (NWTF) runs the 'She Should Contest' and 'Create Her Space' internet campaigns and has released the 'A New Dawn' film to disseminate positive images of women in positions of power. These campaigns have not been formally evaluated, although the NWTF notes that they have been screened widely on the internet and at leadership workshops (Commonwealth, 2015, p. 12). Such efforts clearly have the potential to change attitudes, although this is dependent on the reach of the media used, as well as the ability to overcome more 'traditional' views shared by religious figures or rooted in ownership laws or everyday social and economic structures.

Empowerment programmes

Many civil society programmes focus on improving women's chances of election by bringing together female aspirants to discuss strategies, network, provide training, and research and advocacy (*Working Together for 2019!*, 2019).

The National Women's Trust Fund also runs mentorship programmes for girls to encourage future female leaders. For example, the 'Young Women Leadership Project, a political mentorship programme in which adolescent girls and young women will undergo intensive training in political leadership and advocacy, observe sessions of the National Assembly, and lobby their legislators to address a pressing issue in their communities.'

There is no rigorous evaluation of these programmes. There are also concentrated mainly in Abuja and Lagos and so have little effect in rural or provincial areas (Commonwealth, 2015).

They have the potential to help women participate in various forms of governance if scaled up, although can do little to alter structural barriers.

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