

The Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development charged with bringing a focus to women and gender related issues.

The Argument for Affirmative Action

It has been argued that women fare better in systems with proportional representation. (UN, 1987). Women's role in Nigeria has so far been marginal. For instance, in the second republic (1979 - 83), only twelve women were in the national legislature - one senator out of 57 and 11 out of 445 members of House of representative. In the aborted third republic (1993), 14 were members of House of representatives of 589 and one senator out of 91. Out the 3,000 gubernatorial aspirants, only eight were women and none succeeded.

In the Nigerian context the particular argument put forward by feminists is the need for equity and justice in the allocation of national resources. Meaningful democracy can only be attained for women when they are allowed to make critical decisions which affect them. Arguments for the 30% (Beijing 1995) quota was put forward by numerous women's groups to the Constitution Debate Co-ordinating Committee in 1998 resulting in the inclusion of specific gender recommendations which cover issues of representation.

Potential Strategies for the greater inclusion of Women in the Policy Process

Historically, contradictions exist between women's domestic role - the gendered division of labour - and participation in the public sphere where national policies are made.

There is therefore the need to recognise :

- That space creation for women must thus begin from a renegotiation of their domestic position as active rather than passive agents of change.

- View policy as emanating from two levels - the informal and the formal level and the existence of a multiplier effect positive or negative on the latter level.

- That policies designed must have a built in strategy of effective implementation continuous monitoring and evaluation.

- That the process for change demands the inclusion of Government, Civil Society Organisations, Community Based Organisations (CBOs) as well as the Private Sector.