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Women's Movement for Gender Quotas in Nigeria and Ghana

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THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT FOR GENDER QUOTAS IN NIGERIA AND GHANA

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Abstract: The third wave of the international women's movement expressly broadened the focus of women's activism to incorporate the clamour for more political representation of women. Within the confines of the struggle, women in Nigeria and Ghana have initiated a movement for gender quotas that will improve their inclusion in decision-making processes. However, there is a paucity of scholarly work on the patterns and precipitating factors of the movement in the context of both states. Against this background, this article draws on interview data to examine the comparative dynamics of the women's movement for gender quotas in Nigeria and Ghana. It specifically offers explanations of *why* and *how* women channel their struggle for political emancipation in both states.

Keywords: *Women's movement; gender quotas; affirmative action; women's representation; Nigeria; Ghana*

Introduction

The third wave of the international women's movement, which started in the 1990s, has broadened the focus of women's activism to incorporate the clamour for more political representation of women (Paxton et al. 2006; Heywood 2011). It is based on the understanding that the realisation of women's equal right to vote, right to ownership of land and general emancipation from patriarchy settings is largely dependent on the satisfactory inclusion of women in decision-making processes. In order to accomplish the overall objective of creating more political space for women, therefore, women's groups in different states of the world have deepened their advocacy for national policies and legislations that would give room for gender quotas (Childs and Krook 2008). By definition, gender quota simply means any national legislation that is aimed at redressing political imbalance through the

allotment of a specific proportion of political seats to women (Sgier 2004). It is a unique political intervention. Many scholars in the field of political science have recognised its potency in augmenting the descriptive level of women's presence in the corridors of power across the world (Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005; Tripp and Kang 2008).

Apparently, in this broad struggle for women's political emancipation, women in Nigeria and Ghana are not left out. Especially since the opening of democratic windows towards the end of the 20th century, Nigerian and Ghanaian women are noted for initiating clamour for positive action that could break the barriers obstructing their adequate political presence in government. Yet, unlike the cases of other African states, where quotas laws have already become a successful story, there is less scholarly work on the patterns of such movement as well as its precipitating factors in Nigeria and Ghana, either specifically or comparatively. This is notwithstanding the fact that both countries are leading Anglophone states in West Africa with respect to population and women's activism.

Against this background, the present article examines the comparative nature and propelling factors of the contemporary women's movement for gender quotas in political representation in Nigeria and Ghana. Invariably, the focus of this piece, which has to do with explanation of *why* and *how* women channel their struggle, is imperative as it will allow proper demythologisation of the intricacies and modern strategies orchestrated by women mainly for gendered inclusive representation. By implication, aside from its usefulness in unravelling local issues relating to women's mobilisation in both states, it will contribute generally to the burgeoning literature on women's modern movement for political survival.

This is particularly so because literature has expressly acknowledged the new focus which the third wave of the international women's movement brought to the fore in terms of demands for a "critical mass" for women in political spaces (Paxton et al. 2006; Heywood 2011). At the heart of this reality, Curtin (2006 :94) posits that "[t]he subject of women's under-representation in legislatures regained momentum in the 1990s, with many national and international women's organisations identifying the issue as warranting immediate attention." However, discussions in the purview of changes in the

agenda of women's mobilisation are mostly cross-national and thereby largely ignore national/local specificities and contexts of *why* and *how* women advance such agendas, particularly in places like Nigeria and Ghana.

Moreover, the increasing adoption and implementation of gender quotas by national governments, especially in Africa, has been widely documented in the literature (Tripp 2003; Ballington 2004; Yoon 2004; Bauer 2008; Tripp et al. 2009). As articulated by Dahlerup and Freidenvall (2005), for instance, the introduction of gender quotas by African states remains unprecedented in the history of any region. But in many instances, scholarly analysis fails to account for the impact of women's groups in domestic processes that set the stage for such gender-friendly measures. It thus corroborates the assertion of Tripp (2016: 383) that "in order to understand how quotas came to influence women's legislative representation, one has to understand the role of women's coalitions and why they have pressed for quotas." On this note, this article draws on Nigerian and Ghanaian cases, specifically and comparatively, to bridge the gap.

The article is divided into six sections. The first is devoted to elaborate methodological processes that were adopted in the course of generating data for the study. It enables the authors to discuss issues concerning respondents, research questions and method of analysis. The second section examines the local and external factors propelling the women's movement for quotas in both states. The third and fourth sections address the patterns and nature of the movement in Nigeria and Ghana respectively. The following section focuses on comparing and contrasting the women's movement for gender quotas in both Nigeria and Ghana. The concluding section articulates the main arguments of the article.

Research Methods

The present study adopted a qualitative research design to interrogate the comparative dynamics of the women's movement for gender quotas in Nigeria and Ghana between 2000 and 2016. Data were collected through interviews with purposively selected respondents from both states. Respondents were chosen from women's rights

civil society organisations for their direct involvement in the contemporary women's mobilisation for quota; from government agencies/institutions that are established by either country to promote women's rights; and from academia owing to their hosting of experts noted for vast knowledge of the modern trends of the women's movement in both states. Informants from civil society groups were particularly selected due to their lived experience as women activists. Altogether, seven respondents were interviewed in Nigeria, while six were questioned in Ghana. The interviews were conducted during a fieldwork period taking place from April to May, 2016.

Questions that were discussed during the interviews are purely unstructured and centred around the nature of the movement, factors stimulating the movement and strategies deployed by the key actors. The study utilised content analysis in analysing the information gathered. Responses during each interview were jotted down and also properly recorded through a tape recorder. They were later transcribed; which provided an opportunity for contrasting responsive patterns obtained across respondents. At the end, interpretative content analysis was utilised to tease out information necessary to answer central concerns of the study. Verbatim quotes are provided in some instances to emphasise some points.

Obviously, this methodological and analytical approach is not without limitations. It ranges from a limited number of respondents to how to determine the truthfulness or otherwise of the given explanations. However, it is not about the quantity of informants involved, but rather how well they are able to provide useful information as to better navigate and understand the related *why* and *how* queries. Also, moderate means of controlling the second concern is through the appropriate usage of interpretative analysis that response to meanings which are not necessarily contained in the descriptive text. In essence, while it is agreed that the adopted research design is vulnerable to issues, it is appropriate in examining the women's movement for gender quotas in Nigeria and Ghana through the experience and direct accounts from the key actors.

Navigating Local and Global Incentives: Drivers of Women's Mobilisation for Gender Quotas in Nigeria and Ghana

In the history of social movement, there is hardly any categorical mobilisation without remote and immediate incentives and triggers. Suffice to say that this narrative is not without relevance in the context of women's modern collective actions. Women's group in Nigeria and Ghana, unlike any other time, have intensified efforts in the 21st century expected to produce quota legislation for their political emancipation. This demand for quota system in both polities is a product of some factors (Tinker 2004). In other words, it would not have been set off without corresponding driving forces. However, it has to be noted that these compelling drivers are not necessarily different when considering or reflecting on the phenomena in both states. Second, a broad analysis of these causes is best situated within the local and global exigencies. It is in tandem with the earlier contention put forward by Dahlerup (2003) that the rationale compelling women's activism for gender-friendly measures is a function of international organisations' recommendations and development unfolding at national settings. Putting it differently, it is a product of the interplay between internal realities and international norms (Tripp 2003; Barnes and Burchard 2012).

At the domestic level, the prolonged political marginalisation of women's constituency (Fallon 2008) contributed significantly to the quest for gender quota legislation. Since 1960 and 1957 when Britain granted independence to Nigeria and Ghana respectively, women have been patently marginalised in the corridors of power. A societal stratification of responsibility played out, as domestic tasks were considered the primal duty of women, while their male counterparts focus on public representation and policy formulation (Tsikata 2009). To buttress such phenomena, the percentage of women's representation at the National Assembly in Nigeria or Ghana since independence has not exceeded 12 per cent (Ngara and Ayabam 2013; Godwin 2013). It eventually became disgusting to the women activists and feminist scholars who deem it discriminatory and unjustifiable in the 21st century when the principle of gender equality is well embedded in national and international conventions. It is in this

purview that gender quotas legislation is reckoned as the alternative means overcoming such perpetual subjugation.

Accordingly, a respondent from Ghana, who is an advocate of women's rights, expressly captured the interconnection when stated that:

When you suppress people, naturally they will rebel at a point when they can no longer take the heat. Women's political marginalisation is societal, perpetuating and has come to acceptance as a norm. It is time for total overhauling. When a set of the population has been marginalised for a long time, at a point they will rebel (Interview 3 May 2016).

As a matter of fact, a similar point was raised by some respondents in Nigeria. The interpretative meaning of "rebel" as used in the above quote is not about taking up arms against the government. Instead, it has to do with a conscious effort to challenge government authorities via advocacy about the need to redress the political injustice against women through purposive policies.

Another point that stimulates the women's movement for gender quotas in Nigeria and Ghana is based on the notion that women want their interest to be duly represented and their voice to be heard. In the words of Ray and Korteweg (1999: 49), the formulation of gender interests has framed much of the discussion on women's movements. It is believed that there are differential aggregate national concerns between men and women, particularly with respect to policy predilection. To this end, key prominent actors from women's constituency in both states are worried and therefore questioning the appropriateness of men representing the genuine interests of women. According to them, the continuous domination of national leadership by men would only uphold patriarchal societal structures (Kunovich and Paxton 2005; Obamamoye 2016), unlike an adequate representation of women that has the capacity to facilitate better protection of women's rights, gender-sensitive government policies and all-encompassing national development (Schwindt-Bayer 2010; Fallon et al. 2012). This, invariably, points to why women envisage hope in a national gender quota system as a way out of under-representation, instead of the liberal incremental process that has

not yielded fruitful outcomes for decades. In between the lines, this perception was clearly revealed by a respondent from Nigeria:

Women's collective interests are not the same as that of men. Women want to be heard and be represented. That is just our major goal, that we should not be deprived of our political rights merely because we are women. If we are there [properly represented], we will advance our position on national issues (Interview 22 April 2016).

In other words, the above assertion is emphasising a critical viewpoint that "women want to be heard and represented" in determining public policies and initiatives that will invariably affect the entire citizenry. Primarily, this is one of the focal reasons that are keeping women's activism going without relenting in what it is doggedly committed to – women's political emancipation.

Furthermore, another underlying incentive is the numerical consciousness of women's constituency. The available evidence shows that the proportion of women to men is roughly 50/50 in both Nigeria and Ghana (Dahlerup 2003; Olufade 2013). According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2014), women represent 49.5% of the 174 million Nigerian nationals and constitute half of the electorate in Nigeria. Following suit, Ghana Statistical Service (2013) Report on Population and Housing Census indicates that out of 24,223,431 Ghanaians, there were 11,801,661 men and 12,421,770 women, constituting 48.7% and 51.3% respectively. Yet, such near balance in numerical figures is not reflected in the gender composition of the national parliament in both states (Tsikata 2009; Olufade 2013). This perpetual marginalisation of half the population in decision-making process, according to women activists, amounted to a political injustice that is long overdue for pragmatic attention (Obamamoye 2016). Consequently, it serves as the core target of women's activists to surmount this hurdle through the domestication of gender quotas' legislation. In this case, responding to why women are agitating for political measures, a respondent noted that:

It is partly because of the present population of women, which constitutes over half the total population. So, there is a need for

this population to be well represented in the decision-making arena by whatever legal means (Interview 3 May 2016).

The concept of “by whatever means” refers here to gender quotas as legitimate interventions meant to rectify political practices that are already skewed against one gender. To a large extent, a policy in this direction is gradually turning to be the last hope of women’s rights advocates in attending to the challenging problem of women’s under-representation.

Moreover, in this domestic context women activists realise that there is no better panacea to the problem of women’s under-representation than electoral gender quotas. Generally, within the purview of responding to the enduring women’s political marginalisation, women in Nigeria and Ghana are left with two major alternatives – “incremental track” and “fast track” (Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005). The first option conforms to the notion that women will take their rightful place in due course after a long period of empowering them through education, resources provision and participation in political party activities. Therefore, for a model like this to yield the anticipated outcomes, it requires a *gradual process* that will run through at least five decades. On the other hand, the second choice which is “fast track,” opposes the steady expansion of women’s representation on the premise that there is no certainty that the empowerment of women will prove sufficient in producing the desired results in the face of the embedded gender discrimination. Hence, the “fast track” model recommends affirmative action measures like gender quotas as a straightforward route to the equal representation for women (Dahlerup and Freidenvall, 2005). One can boldly say that the model has proved effective across states discharging this assignment (Hughes et al. 2015).

Obviously, based on their experience for over fifty years, women in Nigeria and Ghana have technically closed their mind on any assurance in the incremental approach. The evident marginalisation or exclusion is not really a function of a lack of resources, but of the patent reality of structural discrimination that cannot be easily overcome without purposeful political interventions. It is on this note, therefore, that the movement for gender quotas to increase the political representation of women became the inevitable course of action in both states.

At the heart of the external dimension to why women are rallying for quota legislations in Nigeria and Ghana lies the conformity of the agitating goal to the international norms/principles. According to Hughes et al. (2015: 358), the “emphasis on women’s access to decision making is evident in the recommendations... of international bodies.” Quite a number of global conventions have bestowed responsibility on national governments to put in place legal measures that will enhance the level of women’s representation (Krook 2009). With the benefit of hindsight, many of these international and regional frameworks designed towards this particular global goal, such as the 1995 Beijing Declaration and the 2003 Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, had already been ratified by both Nigerian and Ghanaian government without reservation (Krook 2006; Sam 2010; Adams et al. 2016). It thus signifies the readiness of both states in responding to women’s political plights via the instrumentality of legal measures (Krook 2006).

Nevertheless, the refusal of both governments in fulfilling their international pledges domestically reminds women of the necessity to set off a mobilisation for the actualisation of corresponding affirmative measures. Hence, it is revealing to know that the proponents of electoral gender quotas have turned the international conventions in question to reference point when engaging their respective governments. In this case, international tipping influences domestic affirmative action campaigns by providing new sources of normative leverage in national debates that often vindicate new policy activism (Krook 2006). While responding to why gender quotas, a respondent replied succinctly that “the international community has been advocating for this [affirmative action measures]” (Interview 3 May 2016). Suffice to say that a comment like this is a shared perception of informants interviewed across the two states.

More so, another factor motivating proponents of the movement in both states is the increasing adoption and implementation of gender quota laws across many countries of the world (Krook 2009; Olufade 2013; Inter-Parliamentary Union 2015). Since the late 20th century, a large number of states have responded to women’s political exclusion or marginalisation by introducing varying degrees of legislated measures. Narrating the trends, Dahlerup and Freidenvall (2005: 26) maintain that “about forty countries have already

introduced gender quotas for parliamentary elections... in recent years.” Although such government interventions have not succeeded in eliminating overall obstacles confronting women in politics, they have otherwise demonstrated potency in initiating progress towards women’s anticipated level of representation. Hughes et al. (2015: 369) could not hide their feelings when noting that “quotas for women in politics” have now become “a force to be reckoned with on the global stage.” Being considered as international best practices and a proven strategy towards gender fairness representation, women activists in Nigeria and Ghana are well encouraged to press for quota systems. This corroborates the stance maintained by Krook (2004: 64) that policy-makers’ decision in one part of the world influences not only the international principles, but also encourages women in other parts of the world to organise for change.

By and large, it has to be emphasised that the factors discussed above in relation to the struggle for gender quotas are far from being exhaustive. Merely reading through the literature in Political Science, one can boldly testify that a plethora of reasons, though with varying degrees of importance, had already been articulated by political analysts in this regard. Limitations associated with some of them are a lack of local specificities and over-generalisation. Nonetheless, the issues raised and discussed above resonated across divides and dominated in the overall analysis of what could have compelled local women’s movements in the direction of affirmative measures in 21st century Nigeria and Ghana.

Women’s Movement for Gender Quotas in Nigeria

Nigeria is one of the countries in Africa where women’s collective mobilisation is enduring and has never faded away. The unique attribute of the movement in the 21st century is the quest for an electoral gender quota system that will augment a better inclusion of women in political representation (Tripp 2003; Tinker 2004; Paxton et al. 2006). This is against the background of a protracted structural bias against women in politics and the understanding that such barriers needed to be overcome for women to be empowered politically (Schwindt-Bayer 2010; Fallon et al. 2012). Oni (2014: 107) grasps the new move when asserting that “women [sic] movements

and activism in Nigeria have turned to veritable tools for demanding the domestication of the numerous instruments of enhancing women involvement in public decision making processes particularly the 35% affirmation for women political participation in elective positions.” This modern activism is within the scope of the third wave of the international women’s movement that centres on the clamour for gender political equality.

To start with, the movement for quotas in Nigeria is clearly dependent on the utilisation of a non-violent or non-confrontational approach – which devoid of public unrest and protest – in engaging key stakeholders. The deployment of a pacifying strategy in bringing the political marginalisation of women to an end through measures is a function of deliberate choice. Of course, this is unlike the style during the colonial era in Nigeria when women timely carried out protests against government over policies that were considered not gender sensitive (Okome 2013). At the forefront of this activism for gender quotas legislation are the women’s rights civil society organisations. According to Krook (2006: 307), the efforts to increase the representation of women would “never occur without the prior mobilisation of women.” This is the exact situation in Nigeria as women activists are making use of these women’s organisations to advance the need for purposefull quota measures that will allot a specific proportion of elected representatives to women.

Many of these women’s organisations committed to quota campaigns are to a large extent autonomous from government’s control in terms of finance, agenda and membership. The geographical coverage of these civil society groups varies. While some are only effective within a particular state, others operate or draw members across a geo-political zone. Frankly, these women’s rights civil society organisations are platforms for activists, lawyers, and other professionals to articulate issues that are germane to the interest of women, which include a demand for the political emancipation of women. Women’s rights civil organisations are not only prominent as a locus for mobilizing women’s constituency, but also in engaging government officials, agencies and the public towards the advancement of women’s demand for gender quotas. A respondent, who is a woman activist and a member of a civil society organisation, emphatically enunciated that:

If you look at the struggle for affirmative action or more women representation, you will see that we [her organisation] and some other NGOs [non-governmental organisations] are those groups that are really agitating for 35% affirmative action that would permit women to have a better stake in government. Our activism every year revolves around improving women's chance in elective and appointive offices (Interview 22 April 2016).

Beside the emphasis on the centrality of women's groups to the movement, two main points are discernible in the above quote. First, gender quotas are mostly construed as affirmative action in the campaign for women's political emancipation in Nigeria. Second, the target of such activism is basically focusing on 35% representation for women. In other words, women's advocacy for quota systems in Nigeria has not gotten to the point of pressing for gender parity in decision making process as expressly emphasised by some international conventions.

However, it should be noted that the key players in the women's movement in Nigeria are not limited to civil society groups, but also involve government agencies established for the advancement of women's rights. The National Centre for Women Development (NCWD) and the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs are classic examples in this regard. They are noted for articulating concerns on the need to ameliorate the political predicament of women. The NCWD, as an agency of the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, is saddled with the ultimate task of stimulating societal consciousness towards attaining holistic development for Nigerian women. To this end, as relating to the political marginalisation of women, the Centre at different times created a platform for deliberation on issues related to affirmative action measures for women. More importantly, such an arena permitted a direct dialogue between women activists and political leaders on the subject matter of quotas for women.

Furthermore, feminist scholars are also key actors in canvassing the argument for the exigency of a gender quota system in the Nigerian polity. They do this mostly by joining forces with local women advocacy organisations through the provision of scholarly analysis and justification for the advancement of the struggle. Essentially, their publications in various outlets have contributed towards a regular

sensitisation of the public, including political stakeholders in Nigeria, as it affects domestic rationales and international underpinnings necessitating the need for affirmative action measures. Broadly, it symbolises a subtle strategy of reaching out to the public and changing equal gender representation debates without direct encounters.

Probing the patterns or dynamics of the women's movement for gender quotas in political representation in Nigeria will be incomplete without discussing the methodological question of *how* the activism is unfolding. In the course of the struggle under discussion, a number of mechanisms have been employed. It corroborates Antrobus's (2004: 109) argument that "women employ a variety of strategies" in pushing for change when necessary. Some of these strategies revolve around consciousness-raising campaigns, public awareness and advocacy (Kang 2014). As per consciousness-raising campaign, women advocates use it to expand the level of their constituency's cognisance on the level of marginalisation confronting women politically and why government intervention is the surest panacea. Among others, it creates an avenue for the proper mobilisation at the women's end. This is usually followed by the other methods – public awareness and advocacy – through which key proponents of gender quotas in Nigeria engage the public on this subject of concern. With special reference to civil society groups, many platforms have been created, which bring together different categories of participants, for the ultimate objective of gender-based affirmative action advocacy. The essence is to galvanise a common front and to rally support for gender quota measures that will increase the level of political representation of women.

By and large, it is evident and instructive to emphasise that the campaign for gender quotas in Nigeria is still at the elementary stage. A realisation like this is not dependent on when the activism started, but rather on the intensity and approach of the struggle. A thorough analysis of the strategies adopted so far falls within what Antrobus (2004) called "activist strategies." The next phase of the mobilisation will come at a point when the actors in the struggle begin to see the usefulness of coalition/alliance building, caucus formation and lobbying in dealing with the government and key political stakeholders. Not surprisingly, no specific bill has been forwarded to the Nigeria's National Assembly for necessary actions regarding gender quotas for women. To further show how the movement has

not gotten to the advance phase yet, the number of Nigerian women involved in this struggle for legislative measures for the political emancipation of women is very limited compared to the overall population of women in Nigeria. One of the respondents affirms that “we discovered that those of us working towards this goal [affirmative action legislation] are really few” (Interview 12 May 2016). Another woman notes that “one of the major challenges of the mobilisation has to do with the limited involvement of the teeming population of women” (Interview 9 May 2016). Of course, one should not expect that all women or a large percentage of Nigerian women will take part in the mobilisation for gender quota measures at the same time, yet hardly will it succeed when a substantial portion of women elite, women parliamentarians, women scholars and their leaders at the local level consider maintaining equidistance from such a movement that aims at increasing women’s representation through deliberate legislations.

Women’s Movement for Gender Quotas in Ghana

Ghana is one of the major countries in Africa where women’s press for gender-based affirmative action measures is fully-grown and currently awaiting remarkable achievements. Ocran (2014: 30) could not ignore this realisation when noting that since the late 20th century, “women in Ghana have exhibited a fervent zeal to partake in the democratization discourse in diverse ways.” In other words, the struggle for increasing women’s representation in the decision-making processes via workable gender quotas has become a force to be reckoned with in the present-day Ghana’s political landscape (Fallon 2008). Not only is there a consensus among the progressive women’s coalitions and key political stakeholders in advancing the course of gender quota legislation, but more importantly, appropriate legislative actions are already initiated that are likely to produce legislated quotas for women in political positions. At the heart of this movement is the expectation that such an outcome will permit the bringing back of women to take their public space in Ghana’s political landscape after decades of patent marginalisation.

The contemporary women’s political consciousness and movement for adequate representation in Ghana can be dated back to 2003/4 when a particular women’s mobilisation resulted in the codification of a political document titled “The Women’s Manifesto for Ghana.”

Although it was an idea originally conceived by the Abantu for Development, the drafting of the Manifesto gave room to wide consultations with women's groups, non-governmental organisations, civil society, representatives of political parties, District Assembly women and press agents (Tsikata 2009b; Adams et al. 2016). The Manifesto unequivocally lamented the relegation of women to the background in decision-making processes and thereby recommended affirmative action measures within political parties that would create room for 50% women's representation by 2012 (Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana 2004). Ever since then, women's activism for gender quotas or affirmative action (as they preferably called it) in Ghana has taken a more forceful dimension. More importantly, emphasis has been extended beyond making the constitution of political parties gender-friendly to the demand for national quota legislations.

As a matter of fact, a notable attribute of the women's movement for quota systems in Ghana is the realisation among the advocates of the struggle that the first appropriate step towards such a policy change is the enactment of a corresponding law. To this end, they have committed lots of effort to ensure that suitable legal measures are put in place that will facilitate the overarching objective of increasing the political representation of women. It is therefore not surprising that an Affirmative Action Bill is presently before the Ghana's National Parliament for consideration and final approval into municipal law. The Bill is said to have recommended 40% representation for women across government institutions/agencies. A respondent from a civil society organisation stated that:

We [her organisation] have been advocating for an affirmative action law since 2011 with the support of the European Union. And currently, we [her organisation] are nominated to serve in the technical committee established by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection to draft the Affirmative Action Bill and it is presently before the parliament (Interview 3 May 2016).

It is imperative, at this juncture, to note that the on-going movement for quotas in Ghana is not without the commitment and steadfastness of a group of actors that considered women's political marginalisation as injustice and violation of their inherent rights. First in this

category of actors are the women's rights civil society organisations. These organisations are at the forefront of pushing for affirmative action measures as contemporary means of actualizing women's political survival and thereby promoting their often neglected interests (Krook 2009). In the words of Abdulai (2009: 16), "the role of civil society organizations in public policy making in Ghana has evolved over the last two decades from one of minimal involvement to greater engagement in various stages of the policy process." These organisations are usually varying, both in size, composition and objectives. Although they normally receive external support, they are totally autonomous from government's control (Tsikata 2009b). The actors who are utilising these organisations as rallying point for mobilising support for gender quotas include activists, lawyers, academics and political analysts. These organisations have orchestrated unrelenting actions to improve women's presence in the national decision-making process in Ghana and at the same time canvassing for affirmative action legislation. In this context, Adams et al. (2016:152) stressed that "women's organizations [in Ghana] have pressured politicians to adopt and implement party and legislative quotas. They have gained some headway in amassing party and government support for these initiatives, but this support has not yet led to changes in laws or official policies."

Moreover, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection is also playing a pivotal role in the broad struggle for affirmative action legislation in Ghana. In 2011, the Ministry launched a programme titled "Women in Governance and Decision Making Project." The utmost ambition of the project situated in the agenda of promoting women's representation in positions of authority. One of the priority areas of the project centred on the nation-wide mobilisation of support for the implementation of affirmative action quota of 40% representation for women. In addition to organising different consultative workshops with members of the public, lawmakers and political parties on affirmative action, the Ministry in 2011 constituted the Affirmative Action Law Working Committee. The membership of the Committee was drawn from parliament, political parties, CSOs, legal practitioners and the Ministry itself. Basically, the committee was saddled with the responsibility of facilitating the passage of gender-based affirmative action legislation in Ghana (Department of Women 2012). As a matter of fact, the on-going legislative process of enacting

gender quota law in Ghana was initiated through the coordination of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection. It is therefore not an overstatement to contend that the Ministry is a leading actor in the women's struggle for affirmative action in Ghana in the 21st century.

Besides, scholars who develop an interest in the cause of women's rights are equally very active in the movement for quota systems for women's representation in Ghana. Many of them, like Bernice Sam and Dzodzi Tsikata, have presented some arguments in their write-up which women activists often deploy in pressing for positive action laws. Such scholarly ideas are paramount to women's group as they exploit the substance of these publications in convincing decision-makers and the public over the exigency of quota system.

With respect to strategy, different approaches have so far been deployed in the course of pushing for gender quotas in Ghana. The methods adopted by the proponents of the struggle range from public awareness to advocacy, coalition building, lobbying and policy dialogue (Antrobus 2004). On the one hand, the first three techniques aimed at creating and driving public empathy and support on the subject matter of gender quotas for women. To a certain extent, the adopted strategies have yielded significant success as the leading women activists at the forefront of the movement were able to carry out effective mobilisation across Ghanaian society on the primacy of overcoming the political domination of men through decisive quota legislation. At the time of writing this article, affirmative action legislation has already taken its space in the realm of public debate and had become a subject to be reckoned with in Ghana's political discourse. On the other hand, the last two approaches – lobbying and policy dialogue – are directed at top decision-makers, members of parliament and other political stakeholders for necessary actions on quota policy for fair gender representation. Not surprisingly, therefore, the executive arm of government and some members of parliament have already declared their support for the enactment of gender quota law in Ghana (Lithur 2016).

In a nutshell, the women's movement for the internalisation of affirmative action measures in Ghana has gained momentum and has been so pragmatic and appealing in the contemporary era. The

agitators make it pragmatic and systemic by forging a strong and more cohesive women's front that incorporates varying groups in engaging the law-makers, precisely, for a corresponding legislation. In the eventual situation that this activism achieves preferable outcomes for women, it will challenge the assertion by Muriaas and Wang (2013: 316) that "quota policies are understood to be initiated from the top-down" process.

Comparing and Contrasting Women's Movement for Gender Quotas in Nigeria and Ghana

The women's struggles for gender quota systems in Nigeria and Ghana have some salient attributes, both in common and in contrast. These country-level similarities and differences are applicable across different indices such as patterns, actors, targets, approaches and outcomes. With respect to resemblance, the patterns of pursuing gender quotas for women in Nigeria and Ghana are purely non-confrontational and peaceful. None of the key players such as women activists, feminist scholars, lawyers and others who are operating through the instrumentality of civil society organisations or government gender agencies have any reason to resort to violence or take up arms against the government in the process of pressing for affirmative action measures in both states. In other words, acts of aggressive demonstration and disruptive protest were not on the women's agenda as instruments for attaining the overarching goal of quotas for augmenting the political representation of women. Moreover, it is cogent to accentuate that the actors playing major role in the movement, both in Nigeria and Ghana, are not necessarily different. These are the civil society organisations (led by women activists), feminist scholars and government agencies established mainly to protect the interests of women. Whatsoever feat attained and progress made so far regarding the struggle as to ensuring the political emancipation of women over the need for affirmative action measures are attributed to the undaunted exertions of these players.

Conversely, notable variations characterise the struggle for gender quota systems in both states. Contrary to the scenario in Nigeria, the movement has amassed significant momentum in Ghana to the point where there is an existing common front and strong national

collaboration/networking among the advocates of gender quotas. Through the creation of this unified/joint platform that aggregates interests across Ghanaian women's groups, it obviously becomes easy for the supporters of gender quotas to directly engage not only the public, but also the key national political stakeholders, including Members of Parliament (MPs), on the need for corresponding legislation. To this end, the movement is not without eliciting support of female MPs as well as some national leaders. On the other hand, women's struggle for affirmative action measures in Nigeria is still at an early stage where different groups that have interests in such policy change are disjointedly campaigning for it. Due to the paucity of this joint front and even non-participation of key women leaders, it could not therefore permit the issue of gender quotas to really enter the realm of public debate in Nigerian politics or having prospects of producing anticipated success soon. More so, as fallout from this difference, women's activism in Nigeria has not advanced to the point of utilising lobbying and policy dialogue in pressing for affirmative action legislation, unlike the case in Ghana. Instead, attention is still basically concentrated on awareness creation and advocacy which are mostly directed towards the public.

In addition, the actors participating in the women's struggle for quotas in Ghana seem to have better understood that a domestication of affirmative action policy would not kick off without the intervention of the law makers who are responsible for making and modifying laws. It was based on this insight and comprehension that necessitated the on-going legislative process of enacting 40% quotas for women's political representation. Accordingly, respondents from Ghana concur that there could not be an implementation of affirmative action, as prescribed by international conventions, without an equivalent domestic legislation. On the contrary, such a realisation is yet to be properly grasped or valued in the holistic pursuit of gender quotas in Nigeria. To this end, the necessary steps that could initiate an affirmative action bill to the Nigeria's National Assembly have not been taken. Up till the time of writing this article, there was no recent instance of sending a Bill to the National Assembly on "Affirmative Action for Women Representation," either by the Ministry of Women Affairs or by civil society organisations. It buttresses a misplacement of priority in the Nigeria's context of the struggle.

In a nutshell, the activism for gender quotas aimed at expanding the level of women's representation in Nigeria is not as robust or effective as the case in Ghana where the quest for affirmative action measures had already gathered national momentum. This assertion is not mainly based on the outcome, but also on the process and approach. Obviously, there is no single factor in explaining the difference between the two cases. However, the creation of an all-encompassing women's front in pushing for gender quotas in Ghana played a significant role in marking this difference.

Conclusion

This article has attempted a comparative assessment of the women's movement for gender quotas in political representation in Nigeria and Ghana in the 21st century. It specifically examines the dynamic patterns of the struggle as well as the precipitating factors that made the struggle inexorable with the ultimate aim of comparing and contrasting both contexts. Drawing on interview data from both states, the authors maintain the central argument that women in Nigeria and Ghana are currently mobilising in pursuit of a quota system for their political relevance and survival. As established earlier, the impetus paving way for the movement are similarly located within the domestic and external realities. Notwithstanding the fact that the struggle has registered consciousness both in Nigerian and Ghanaian political landscapes, the findings reveal that the undertaking is more effective in Ghana than in Nigeria. In conclusion, it is recommended that the actors steering the activism for gender quotas in Nigeria intensify efforts, make the struggle more formidable and set up an assertive National Coalition for Affirmative Action Network that will directly engage political leaders over the need for affirmative action laws for an adequate representation of women.

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