



Research Article

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## Gender and Politics: Gender Balance as a Panacea to a Credible and Successful Election

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### Abstract

*This paper focuses on Gender Balance as a Panacea to a Credible and Successful Election, having as its raison d'être: to review the concept of gender balance and appropriate its implications towards achieving a credible and successful election required for the existence of human centered development process in sub-Saharan Africa, with Nigeria as a case study. Thus, the paper achieves its goal by adopting a qualitative descriptive method of analysis as it examines qualitatively: the urgency for the crusade on gender balance; the inter-linkages between gender balance and a credible-successful election. A few theoretical orientations were employed to mediate for a proper epistemic extrapolations and reconstructions to explaining gender balance as a panacea to a credible and successful election: these include, the notion of Social Contract, the notion of Democratic Culture, and the notion of Participatory Electoral Process. The paper made some findings, a few of these include: 1) there is the tendency in the sub-Saharan African socio-political cultural practice, Nigeria in particular, to socially exclude women in politics because the female gender has been judged first of all from sexuality point of view as a second class gender rather than seeing women, first of all, as humans, hence entitled to human rights for which right to political participation is inclusive. 2) There is a correlation between gender balance and a credible-successful election, and the absence of the former reproduces a negative outcome in the latter. The paper therefore concludes that strict observance of gender balance is a sine qua non for a credible-successful election conducive for human centered development process. It thus recommends for the total commitment of government to democratic culture by mainstreaming women in politics, inter alia.*

**Keywords:** Gender, Gender Balance, Successful Election, Credible Election

## 1. Introduction

*The social distinction between Male and Female forms the basis for Division of Labour, and influences power relations in social institutions. It often manifests as male dominance and female subordination, although at different points the extent of privilege, constraints and beliefs may change – (Bammeke (2006)*

Ideal-typically, the advancement of women and the achievement of equality between women and men (i.e., gender balance) are a sine qua non for building a peaceful, egalitarian and well developed society (Nwakeze, 2006). That is to say, integrating gender perspectives in macro economic reforms of the development process of any nation require an understanding of the practical strategic needs of both men and women, without an exclusion of the other. Its absence (i.e., lack of gender equity) in any political socio-economic development process is, in all ramifications, an *antinomy* to an ideal typical democratic society. Regrettably, the scenario in most countries of the Third World, especially the sub-Saharan African countries like Nigeria, is that men are more favored than women in all aspects of human centered development indicators like, education, political participation, economic empowerment, et cetera. The call for engendering macro-economic issues – that capture an outlook on gender balance imperatives – has been emphasized by many writers among who are Folbre (1996), UNDP (1995) and Sen (1990), et cetera. Interestingly, the consensus among these writers is that, any form of deprivation for women, to a limited or larger extent, portends immanent contradictions or obvious adverse consequences not just on the women but the society at large. Thus, gender considerations should not be viewed simply as mere women's issues or as a minor in development process but should be seen as a robust, credible means of achieving a sustainable, well rounded human centered development process – a sort of development with **democratic permissiveness!**

As an ancillary to that, Nwakeze (2006:173) confirmed that, “Gender Mainstreaming is justified under the assumption that human development would be endangered if not engendered”.

To be sure, a nation truly in pursuit of a sustainable human centered development does not neglect any part of its human resources; that is, its men and women resources. At this juncture, and with the foregoing thought process, the proposal for “gender balance as a panacea for a credible and successful election”, to a limited or greater extent, becomes clearer and meaningful.

Ideal typically, in a democratic society where **democratic ethos** are engendered, a major avenue of assuming political power or electing political elites into power is via the medium of a free and fair election – free and fair, so as to justify its **Credibility**.

By the same token, in every truly democratic electoral process, one of the fundamental expectations is the exercise of the inalienable political rights of both men and women, to vote and be voted for without any discrimination, as required by United Nations declaration of fundamental human rights (1948). In reality, however, there is unfounded disjuncture between **what is** and **what ought to be**: in most cultures, the right to political participation is lopsided, where most cultures prefer to vote men into power to voting for women; not because women lack the potential but because they have been judged on their biological positions as “women” instead of on their fundamental human rights of being human! Most cultures upholding this patriarchal attitude have unhealthy cultural value system where most societal institutions and structures are seen as the world of men. But men and women are first of all humans before the social interpretation of their biological positions as male or female!

Thus, without losing focus of the *raison d'être* of this paper, and in order to have a proper understanding of the interpenetrations of the twin concepts of ‘Gender Balance’ and ‘Credible-Successful Election’, the onerous task before us here therefore is, to tackle this intellectual treatise along the following lines: 1) Why Gender Balance? (With special considerations on the deplorable status of women and the need for the amelioration of human conditions); 2) the inter-linkages between the twin concepts of ‘Gender Balance’ and a ‘Credible-Successful Election’ –with helpful

theoretical insights; and 3) the way forward or recommendations.

It is hoped that a meticulous and an adroit handling of the above adumbrated thematic rubrics will help in the achievement of the purpose of this paper. We shall return to these shortly in the furtherance of the discourse.

## 2. Objective of the Study

The objective of this paper is, to review the concept of gender balance and to appropriate its implications towards achieving a credible and successful election in any political process.

### 2.1 Conceptual Clarification

There are certain peculiar terms that are preponderant in the process of this paper which we intend to de-mystify for a better understanding as follow:-

#### 2.1.1 Gender

Sex and Gender are often confused with each other; hence, the need for distinction between the two here. **Sex** refers to either of the two divisions of organism identified as male or female. It is determined at conception and it is fixed. It is the province of biology (Ostergaard, 1992:6). It has to do with the chromosomes and hormones – that is, the ‘XX’ chromosomes for female and then ‘XY’ for male.

**Gender** on the other hand, according to Bammeke (1990:298), “is the social interpretation of being male or female”. That is to say, the social perception of the expectations and behaviors deemed appropriate for those who occupy the sexual positions of male or female. Unlike sex which is fixed, gender is dynamic; this is because gender identities do change and are culture bound. In other words, the expectations/privileges considered appropriate for those identified as male or female vary from society to society, also do change over time.

#### 2.1.2 Gender Balance

Gender balance refers to **gender equity**. Literally speaking, the word “**equity**” simply means ‘fairness’, ‘justice’ or ‘egalitarianism’. Gender balance or gender equity may therefore be defined as, the process of being fair to both women and men. At the risk of over simplification, gender balance (Gender equity) means that, both women and men enjoy the same status. To be sure, gender equity (gender balance) means that, women and men have equal conditions for actualizing their full human rights and potentials which would enable them participate in the development process, be it political, economical or social (Nwakeze, 2006).

Ultimately, **Gender Balance as a Panacea for a Credible and Successful Election** suggests ‘*Gender Mainstreaming*’. By gender mainstreaming, we mean integrating gender issues into policy-making and over all development process (Nwakeze, 2006). Confirming this, United Nations (1997) stated that, “Gender Mainstreaming is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated”(Nwakeze, 2006:173).

#### 2.1.3 Successful Election

**Election** can be defined as a process where candidates under the platform of political parties are selected to assume political powers having emerged as winners in the process. By way of a heuristic conceptualization, a successful election, on the other hand, denotes an electoral process in which the

desired election objective to elect a candidate into power is achieved without hitches/impediments; or achieved in spite of hitches/impediments. However, election can be successful but **not credible**. We shall see this shortly in the conceptualization of **credibility**.

#### 2.1.4 Credible Election

**Credibility**, according to Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, is the quality of being generally accepted and trusted. To be sure, a **credible election** is one that not only is it successful but the processes of its success and manner of conduct is generally accepted and believed by the generality of the people to be true and acceptable. Hence, elections can be **successful but not credible**. That is to say, there exists a **credibility gap** between the acclaimed “successful” elections **versus** what the generality of the people believe about its success story. Typically, the ongoing election tribunals and petitions against some conducted elections in some sub-Saharan African countries like, Nigeria, presently corroborates the fact that most acclaimed “successful” elections are **not credible!** The public do not generally trust and accept that the acclaimed winners are the actual winners! Typically, an election where a candidate “successfully” emerges as the winner but through the political vices or shenanigans of **rigging**, ‘**thugger**’ and **political manipulations** is not a credible election, albeit “successful”!

Having clarified some of the concepts peculiar to this thesis, we shall now proceed to review some literatures about the main task at hand. To this we now turn.

### 3. Literature Review

#### 3.1 Why Gender Balance?

*“The ultimate goal of development in Africa is to ensure the overall well-being of the people through a sustained improvement in their living standards. It is the quintessential human aspect of development that underlies all other objectives that Africa will have to pursue, be they economic, social, cultural or political”. Adedeji (1989:10)*

An appropriate response, under this rubric, to the above germane question should be captured in two ways: A) Gender balance, because lack of it reproduces itself in inequality as epitomized in the deplorable status of women conditions. B) Gender balance, because of the need for the amelioration of human conditions (especially, women conditions) for a sustainable human centre development. We shall address these two points, in sequence:

- a. The deplorable social status of women as a factor necessitating the crusade for gender balance in a political process:

As Bammeke (2006) rightly pontificated, the social distinction between male and female forms the basis for division of labour, and influences power relations in social institutions. It often manifests as male dominance and female subordination.

In African socio-cultural milieu, for instance, women are not socially recognized to play any leading role either in the family, religious community or elsewhere (Oyekanmi, 1999). This is as a result of male preference and male dominance (**Patriarchy**) which is endemic in African culture. Despite the fact that male and female roles shape society, the female gender is still regarded as playing “second fiddle” to the male counterpart (Oyekanmi, 1999). This is quite glaring as females are generally pushed to the rear in the scheme of things both in the family and the community at large. As a consequence, UNFPA (1993) observed that, this low status of women restricts their access to productive assets and social services, affecting their health and education, their working conditions and participation in public life. Women in many developing countries are denied the right to own

land, inherit property and establish credit or rise in the professional world. In sub-Saharan Africa where women produce up to 50% of food grown for local consumption, only 8% of these women hold titles to the land they work (UNFPA, 1993).

This gender imbalance as well as its constraints is hydra-headed and impinges on almost every area of the women's life – their literacy, marriage, reproductive health, economic empowerment and political participation, et cetera. Many girls have been withdrawn from school for marriage even at young ages. Some have been withdrawn in order to give chance to their brothers who “deserve” education more (Oyekanmi, 1999).

By the same token, when it comes to employment women are marginalized, used as sex stereotypes and instruments because wherever they turn, it is patriarchy, the world of men! In as much as women now take up white-collar jobs (although not without discriminations in those fields), majority of them are still in the rural areas with very little or no education, lack of good medical care, low income and lack of other socio-economic human centered development facilities. Moreover, in political participation, it is considered as a strange occurrence where a woman vies for political power, not because she lacks the political will or potential but because she has been judged, first, on her biological position as a “woman” without considering that she is first of all human; and as such has human rights! But great regard to Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf former President of Liberia (and the first female President in Africa) who broke that ‘patriarchal jinx’ and took the bull by the horn and has demonstrated with much credence to the cliché that, “*what a man can do, a woman can also do, even better*”.

Ultimately, empirical evidence confirms the fact that what we have in our society presently is gender imbalance and not gender balance. Typically, as regards political participation, evidence shows that the proportion of seats held by women vis-à-vis men in the national parliament of some African countries, e.g. Nigeria, from 2002 - 2007 was very low and shows a wide gap of gender disparity between men and women as indicated below.

**Table 1:** Proportion of Seats held by Women in National Parliament in Nigeria

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Men	339	351	336	343	360	338
Women	12	12	24	17	23	22

**Source:** UN (2007): MDGs 2007 Update in Nigeria

These records imply that a key important institution for political decision, like the national parliament, is still an exclusive preserve for men in spite of the ongoing MDGs and/or SDGs reforms. More so, the Gender Development Index (GDI) – which adjusts the average achievement of human development index to reflect the inequalities between men and women in the areas of life expectancy, adult literacy and gross school enrollment ratio – in Nigeria in 2005 was very low at 0.439 (UNDP, 2005) an indication that inequality between men and women (Gender Imbalance) still exists in some sub-Saharan African countries like, Nigeria despite the ongoing MDGs reforms. The situation is even better when compared with other countries GDI like, Ghana (0.517) and South Africa (0.652) (UNDP, 2005). In recent times, in terms of Human Development Index 2017 report between men and women in some African countries, Nigeria HDI for women, for instance, was as low as 0.494 while their male counterpart was better at 0.569 (UNDP, 2017). The HDI disparities between men and women in 2017 were even a little better in other countries, yet with men leading over women like in Ghana (women, 0.563; men, 0.619), South Africa (women, 0.692; men, 0.704) (UNDP, 2017). Comparatively, same UNDP (2017) HDI report for men and women had a better outlook for advanced countries where both women and men were almost averaging with same index with little or no differences in their human development report like U.S.A (women, 0.919; men, 0.926), United Kingdom (women, 0.903; men, 0.941) and Canada (women, 0.916; men, 0.930). These comparative

statistics between advanced nations and sub-Saharan African nations signify that, while the advanced countries have embraced the need for gender equity, the sub-Saharan African nations are still lagging behind. Thus, with the visible gaps in the human development index of women vis-à-vis their male counterpart, it becomes difficult to submit that the situation has become better presently over the years.

With the above situational analyses of the deplorable women conditions, it is quite glaring that any political process that any sub-Saharan African nation should embark upon should give amelioration of the human condition (especially, women conditions) an urgent attention. This, thus, brings us to our next response to the foregoing question, “why gender balance?” –Because of amelioration of the human condition. To this, we now turn.

- b. Amelioration of the Human Condition as a factor necessitating the crusade for Gender balance in a political process:

The proposal here for the amelioration of the human condition invokes the need for the provisions of human centered development facilities in any pursuit of development process. In concrete terms, a vital component of the prerequisites for human centered development has to do with the quality of life of the people and their general welfare. This has to do with readily available access to adequate nutrition, housing, individual personal security, basic formal education, healthcare, communication facilities as well general democratic permissiveness and tolerance (Ninalowo, 2004). Contrariwise, it is quite unthinkable to envisage human centered development without a liberal access to these basic opportunities and facilities for both men and women.

Ideal typically, in a true democratic society where fundamental human rights are not only entrenched but practiced without lip-service, the above adumbrated human centered development provisions are guaranteed for the enjoyment of both men and women. Unfortunately, as praxis, the scenario has been a situation where men enjoy most of these provisions more than women – this is Gender imbalance! It is this gender imbalance and its negative implication to sustainable human centered development that has triggered off many international, regional and national treaties, conventions and policies to advocate that gender imbalance should be eliminated and be replaced with Gender balance. Such treaties and conventions include: African charter for Human and People’s Rights (1986)– which predominately dwell on women rights or the need for gender balance; the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), by UN (1979); UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) declaration, year 2000 (which profoundly emphasized the need to mainstream women in governance and development process), and several women world conferences in Nairobi, Vienna, Beijing; 1985, 1993 and 1995, respectively – all evolved to address the issues of Gender balance and the recognition of women’s rights as human rights, and as a sine qua non for any human centered socio-politico-economic development process.

For instance, one of the sub-Saharan African nations, Nigeria is not left out in this crusade. Former Nigerian President, Olusegun Obasanjo during his administration (1999-2007), his **9-point agenda** as contained in the national economic empowerment and development strategy (NEEDS), addressed predominantly the issue of Gender balance as a necessary condition for a truly sustainable socio-politico-economic development process. To be sure, the chapter (4) four of NEEDS document (the social charter) presents the social agenda that underpins NEEDS (Nwakeze, 2006). The social agenda seeks to fully integrate women by enhancing their economic, political, social and cultural life in the country (National Planning Commission, 2004). A few of the specifics of the 9-point social agenda of NEEDS include, inter alia, to ensure equitable representation of women all over the country in all aspects of national life; to implement the provision of UN convention on elimination of all forms of discrimination against women; to support legislation for the abolition of all forms of harmful traditional practices against women; to mainstream women concerns and perspectives in all policies and programmes, et cetera. Moreover, in his successor’s administration, late President Umaru Musa Yar’Adua (2007 - 2010), his emergent 7-point agenda equally sought to address the issue

of Gender balance as a topical issue in the desired sustainable human centered development as was emphasized in the MDGs proposal. Thus, signifying that, the issue of Gender balance is imperative for any credible political process that could usher in a robust sustainable human centered development process in a nation's polity.

Although, in spite of these initiatives by some notable administrations in Nigerian polity, the issue of Gender equity in development has been hampered: socio-cultural factor like the case of male bias (patriarchy), permeating all parts of the African socio-economic structure (Abane, 2000), has been advanced for this limitation. Hence, for any political process like (election) to succeed and become credible with the people, the issues of the amelioration of the human condition – without the exclusion of women condition – must be sincerely addressed without lip service.

Now, having answered the preceding engaging thematic poser, “Why Gender Balance” in the above foregoing utterances; in what follows, we shall proceed to the *raison d'être* of this paper – that is, **the inter-linkages between Gender Balance and a Credible Successful Election**.

### 3.2 *The interconnections between gender balance and a credible successful election: Extrapolations from relevant theoretical orientations.*

Perhaps, a useful starting point in the demonstration of the interpenetrations between the twin concepts of ‘**Gender Balance**’ and a ‘**Credible Successful Election**’ – in view to examine the extent to which Gender balance is a panacea to a credible and successful election – is to capture their interconnections via the mediations of a few helpful theoretic notions namely: the notions of ‘*social contract*’, ‘*democratic culture*’, and ‘*participatory electoral process*’, with an admixture of the notion of ‘*political passivism*’, as a fall-out. We shall demonstrate these taking each of the notions, sequentially.

#### 3.2.1 *On the notion of social contract*

According to the notion of the symbiotic social contract, the state qua state is supposed to provide instrumentalities toward the amelioration of the human condition. That is to say, the state in terms of its historical reason for being, must be oriented towards the quality of life of the people and their general welfare (Ninalowo, 2007) through the provision of the human centered development facilities like, access to housing, healthcare, nutrition, formal education, employment, et cetera for its citizenry. While the citizenry on the other side of the contract is expected to pay taxes and other civic obligations like political participation in electoral process. To be sure, where the state fulfills its part of the bargain by providing the above human centered development facilities for the generality of its citizenry without any disparity there would be semblance of order and the citizens would be law abiding. However, where the state provides these facilities only to the favor and enjoyment of men more than women, this is tantamount to gender imbalance and a clear case of **breach of contract** with the generality of the citizenry, and in all ramifications reducible to a case of **legitimation-crisis!**: that is, a disjuncture between ‘what is’ and ‘what ought to be’! Such anomaly further reproduces itself into **political passivism** of the female gender. By political passivism, we mean that the female gender being marginalized would lose interest in the political process and boycott exercising their voting rights since their interest are not represented. A situation where the female-half of a nation’s universal adult suffrage population boycotts election, would definitely, not lead to a credible and successful election!

We shall see more of this in the discourse of the notion of participatory electoral process later. We shall like to turn to the **notion of democratic culture**.

#### 3.2.2 *On the notion of democratic culture*

Democracy connotes **representative government** and equally invokes the **rule of law**. Representative government suggests the representation of the interest of the generality of the people

in government and the fulfillment of their aspirations for their general welfare.

By the same token, the rule of law, on the other hand, preaches **the principle of equality**, inter alia. That is, everybody is equal before the law no matter status, class or sex. To be sure, both the immediate and ultimate abiding interest in the democratic project is towards the goal of improving the human condition. That has to do with readily available access to adequate nutrition, housing, personal security, basic formal education, healthcare, etc. (Ninalowo, 2007) for both men and women to prove to be an ideal typical society where democratic ethos are engendered.

In ideal typical sense, it is expected that a truly democratic state should represent the interests and aspirations of both the female and male gender of its citizenry. By the same token, it is equally expected that the **principle of equality** should prevail no matter the sex, as provided in the rule of law.

However, in a situation where gender inequality exists in contradiction to the rule of law, and the interests of the citizenry not mutually represented in government but with disparity, it is practically inconceivable to expect a total political participation from the female gender; the female gender must naturally develop **political apathy or political passivism** towards the electoral process which may not give room to a credible and successful election. We shall now turn to the notion of '**participatory electoral processes**'.

### 3.2.3 *On the notion of participatory electoral process*

The notion of **participatory electoral process** is very much in tune with the idea of **universal adult suffrage**, a key defining component of citizenship as a fundamental inalienable human right (Ninalowo, 2007).

Participatory electoral process invokes the concept of **political participation**. By political participation, we mean, the process whereby individuals get themselves involved in the political activities and in the decision-making of their country. Of great importance is the fact, that it is the political participation of the citizenry that makes relevant the electoral processes of party systems, electioneering campaigns, even the Independent Electoral Commission institution. That is to say, without political participation of the citizenry the whole gamut of electoral process is meaningless!

Admittedly, it is expected that the totality of the citizenry within the universal adult suffrage bracket should involve in political participation; but a situation where men have more opportunities than women, and the interests of men represented more in government than women, the female gender is bound to develop lack of trust in the government, fear of intimidation, apathy or lack of interest in politics. These factors tend to hamper political participation, and without political participation there cannot be a successful election; even where the election is successful, it can never be credible because not the totality of the citizenry accepted it or trust in it.

The bit about the inter-connections of the twin concepts of 'gender balance' and a 'credible successful election' is that, where gender imbalance exists instead of gender balance, there is every tendency for political passivism or apathy to erupt; and political passivism is anti-electoral process! This equally, manifests in turn, as a ripple effect leading to social uprisings from some subaltern individual (civil societies; irate marginalized women) and anti-state brouhaha from the rabble who felt their interests are not represented – and these, typically, stifle development efforts. A case in point is the Aba women's riot of the 1920s. Therefore, it is the relative infringements of the terms of social contract; democratic culture; the rule of law in relation to the observance or lack of observance of gender balance that partly explains how credible and successful an election can be.

Thus, from the backdrop of the foregoing explorations; we can submit the following propositions:

- Without gender balance, not many people will participate in the election: a situation which may usher in the wrong candidate since not many people exercised their voting rights for the right candidate.
- An election conducted without gender balance sensitivity is likely to produce a government



that will perpetuate inequality between men and women, such election and the government it produces will never be deemed credible in the sight of the people.

- An election conducted in the atmosphere of gender imbalance is likely to produce a government that is not human centered development-oriented and hence may cause apathy among the citizenry who may not like to be part of such electoral process.
- Without gender balance, the existence of the independence electoral commission and other electoral activities lose relevance because the whole exercise does not represent the interests of the totality of the citizenry, hence already undemocratic.
- Without gender balance, the emergent government of the day will make inefficient policy choices which may tend to maintain the existing gender imbalance without planning to ameliorate the conditions.

Thus, the inter-linkages between gender balance and a credible-successful election is reducible to one simple mathematical equation:

Democratic Election (DE) minus Gender Balance (GB) = Patriarchal Election (PE) = Negative Human Development (- HD).

That is,  $DE - GB = PE + (- HD)$

### 3.3 Summary/Conclusion

From the onset, the paper informs that the reasons for the crusade on Gender Balance find expressions in two ways: first, because of the consequences of the absence of it to human centered development process as epitomized in the deplorable low status of women conditions; secondly, because of the urgent need for the amelioration of human conditions, especially women conditions required as a sine qua non for a sustainable human centered development process. Besides, the paper demonstrated that there exists an inextricable affinity or inter-linkages between Gender balance and a credible-successful election, because without gender balance the whole gamut of the political process will not represent the interests of the totality of the citizenry thereby causing political apathy, passivism from the marginalized female gender which consequently reproduces itself in the election of the wrong candidates since not the majority of the universal adult suffrage of the citizenry would exercise their political rights; for that, such electoral process even though by any means **successful** cannot be **credible** with the generality of the people. Thus, the foregoing utterances are reducible to the following findings:

1. There is the tendency in the sub-Saharan African socio-political cultural practice, Nigeria in particular, to socially exclude women in politics because the female gender has been judged first of all from sexuality point of view as a second class gender rather than the female gender being perceived, first of all, as humans, hence entitled to human rights for which right to political participation is inclusive.
2. There is a correlation between gender balance and a credible-successful election, and the absence of the former reproduces a negative outcome in the latter.
3. An election conducted without gender balance has the propensity to produce a government that will perpetuate inequality between men and women instead of abating it.
4. The absence of gender balance does not engender an all-inclusive political process needed for a true participatory human centered development.
5. Without gender balance the whole gamut of electoral processes loses relevance and credibility because the whole exercise doesn't represent the interests of the generality of the citizenry, and hence undemocratic.

The paper therefore concludes that strict observance of gender balance is a sine qua non for a credible-successful election conducive for human centered development process. It therefore recommends as follows.

#### 4. Recommendations

- There is need for cultural value re-orientation to embrace values of egalitarianism so as to destroy the patriarchal attitude endemic in our culture which breeds gender inequality.
- There is need for the government to show avid commitment to the provisions of democratic culture and the rule of law so as to maintain a level playing field for the generality of its citizenry and hence encourage political participation of the female gender along with their male counterpart.
- Besides, national governments essentially in sub-Saharan African nations should be committed to the ongoing global crusade on mainstreaming women in development and ensuring equality between men and women in their home countries as provided in the charters and principles of several international and regional development initiatives (e.g., SDGs, CEDAW, African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, etc)
- Finally, non-state actors (e.g. NGOs, Civil Society Organization (CSO) and autonomous mass media should continue in their watch-dog roles and advocacy campaigns for social justice so that we can stamp out gender imbalance in our socio-political structure to achieve a credible and successful elections that could usher in a sustainable human centered development process. They should continue with programs that can sensitize the female gender and the generality of the people on the relevance of women in development and hence the need for the political participation of both genders in any political process.
- The female gender themselves should as well be proactive in showing interest in governance by encouraging one another to participate in political affairs of their country.

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