



UNDERSTANDING THE SPECIAL SEATS BILL:

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN NIGERIAN POLITICS,
CURRENT STATISTICS, AND CHALLENGES.



LESSONS FROM
RWANDA, UGANDA AND KENYA
ON WOMEN'S POLITICAL REPRESENTATION



Dr. Margaret Fagboyoy,

Founder, Inclusive Pathway Development Initiative (IPADEV).



ipadev.ng

OBJECTIVES OF THE PRESENTATION



01

UNDERSTAND

the Special Seats Bill and its significance for women's representation in Nigerian politics.



02

PRESENT CURRENT STATISTICS

on women's political representation in Nigeria.



03

IDENTIFY AND ANALYZE CHALLENGES

hindering women's political participation and representation in Nigeria.



04

DRAW LESSONS FROM RWANDA, UGANDA AND KENYA

on strategies and approaches that have improved women's political representation.



05

PROVIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

To discuss policies and actions that promote gender equality and women's inclusion in Nigerian politics.



EQUITY. REPRESENTATION. PARTICIPATION. PROGRESS.

PRESENTATION OUTLINE



A ROADMAP TO UNDERSTAND, LEARN AND DRIVE CHANGE

01



INTRODUCTION

Context and importance of women's representation in Nigerian politics.

02



THE SPECIAL SEATS BILL

Overview, objectives and potential impact.

03



CURRENT STATISTICS

Women's representation in Nigerian politics – the numbers.

04



CHALLENGES

Key barriers limiting women's political participation and representation.

05



LESSONS FROM RWANDA, UGANDA AND KENYA

What works for women's political representation.

06



KEY LESSONS FOR NIGERIA

Insights and implications for strengthening women's representation.

07



RECOMMENDATIONS AND WAY FORWARD

Actionable steps toward an inclusive and equitable political future.



EQUALITY. REPRESENTATION. PARTICIPATION. PROGRESS.
TOGETHER, WE BUILD A MORE INCLUSIVE NIGERIA.



WHY REPRESENTATION MATTERS

The Case for Women's Inclusion in Nigeria's Political Space

Representation is the foundation of democracy. When women are included in decision-making, governance becomes more inclusive, responsive, and effective.



This presentation explores why women's political inclusion is essential for Nigeria.



It highlights the gaps, the opportunities, and the need for intentional reforms.



Because when women lead, communities thrive and nations progress.



WHAT IS REPRESENTATION?

Representation is a balanced demographic that captures the interest of major stakeholders.

THE CURRENT REALITY IN NIGERIA



Women occupy **3.6%** of seats in the National Assembly.

3.6%
National Assembly



Women hold **4.1%** of seats in State Houses of Assembly.

4.1%
State Assemblies



Women represent only **6.9%** of local government council seats.

6.9%
Local Government Councils

 Source: IPU Parline & National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), 2023

“A democracy cannot be truly strong if more than half of its population remains underrepresented.”



THE CURRENT REALITY IN NIGERIA

Despite Nigeria's progress in many areas, women remain **significantly underrepresented** in political leadership and decision-making.



Representation is not just about numbers. It is about ensuring that the **voices, experiences, and realities of women** are reflected in policies and national development.



“When women are left out of decision-making, communities are left behind.”



KEY STATISTICS (2023 DATA)



3.6%

Women occupy only 3.6% of seats in the National Assembly.



4.1%

Women hold only 4.1% of seats in State Houses of Assembly.



6.9%

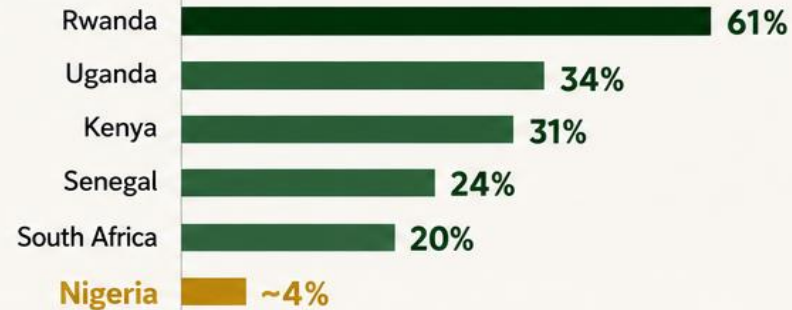
Women represent only 6.9% of local government council seats.



~4%

Nigeria ranks very low in women's political representation globally.

NIGERIA COMPARED TO THE WORLD



Nigeria's numbers remain among the **lowest** in the world and significantly below the African average.



Why This Matters

Low representation limits:



Inclusive governance



Diverse policy priorities



Accountability and transparency



National development



HISTORICAL CONTEXT: WOMEN IN NIGERIA'S POLITICS

Nigerian women have a long history of **leadership, activism,** and nation-building. However, their presence in formal political structures remains **deeply limited.**



From the Aba Women's Riots to today, Nigerian women have always stood for **justice, equality, and progress.**



Our history shows courage.
Our future must reflect **inclusion.**

”



WOMEN'S POLITICAL REPRESENTATION OVER TIME

Pre-Independence



Women led major movements and advocated for rights and reforms.

1960s – 1990s



Some women entered politics, but numbers remained very low.

1999 – 2010



Democracy returned, but women's numbers remained marginal.

2011 – Present



Slight improvements, but Nigeria still ranks very low globally.

WHERE WOMEN ARE REPRESENTED (2023)

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY



3.6%

House of Representatives
(8 out of 360 seats)

STATE ASSEMBLIES



4.1%

State Houses of Assembly
(44 out of 1,081 seats)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT



6.9%

Local Government Council Seats

EXECUTIVE POSITIONS



~6%

Ministers, Commissioners, and Special Advisers



Source: IPU Parline & National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), 2023

WHY PROGRESS HAS BEEN SLOW



High cost of politics and campaigns



Patriarchal norms and stereotypes



Party gatekeeping and limited access to opportunities



Political violence and intimidation against women



Weak policies and lack of enforcement mechanisms



THE PROBLEM: WHY THE GAP EXISTS

Structural Barriers Limiting Women's Political Participation in Nigeria

The underrepresentation of women is not due to lack of interest or ability—it is the result of deep-rooted structural, cultural, economic, and institutional barriers.

KEY BARRIERS



HIGH COST OF POLITICS

Campaigns are expensive and financial support for women is limited.



CULTURAL AND SOCIAL NORMS

Gender stereotypes and traditional norms undermine women's leadership.



LIMITED ACCESS TO NETWORKS

Women have less access to political networks, godfather structures, and influential circles.



LACK OF MENTORSHIP AND PIPELINE

Few mentorship opportunities and weak leadership pipelines for women.



WEAK INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Political parties lack internal quotas, support systems, and gender-sensitive structures.



“Talent exists. Capability exists. What is missing are equal opportunities and enabling structures.”



THE REALITY BEHIND THE NUMBERS



49%

Nigerian women make up 49% of the population...



~4%

...but hold less than 5% of political leadership positions.



<50

Nigeria ranks below 50th globally in women's political empowerment.



150+

Countries have implemented quotas or special measures—Nigeria is not among them.

ROOT CAUSES OF UNDERREPRESENTATION



Perception that politics is a “man's domain”



Financial constraints and lack of funding opportunities



Limited visibility and media representation



Caregiving responsibilities and time burden



Weak enforcement of gender-friendly policies

POLICY MAKES A DIFFERENCE: COUNTRIES WITH QUOTAS DO BETTER



Rwanda
Reserved Seats + Quotas

Women representation in Parliament



Uganda
Reserved Seats

Women representation in Parliament



Kenya
Gender Quotas + Reforms

Women representation in Parliament



Nigeria
No effective system

Women representation in Parliament



Remove the barriers. Create equal opportunities.
Build an inclusive democracy.



WHAT ARE GENDER QUOTAS?

A TOOL FOR INCLUSION, EQUALITY,
AND DEMOCRATIC REPRESENTATION

Gender quotas are **temporary special measures** designed to **increase women's representation** in political and decision-making spaces.



Quotas are not about lowering standards.
They are about removing barriers and creating a level playing field.



Over **30** African countries have adopted some form of gender quota or affirmative measure.



These countries have seen significant increases in women's political participation.



TYPES OF GENDER QUOTAS



LEGISLATIVE QUOTAS

Reserved seats in parliaments for women.



CANDIDATE QUOTAS

Political parties are required to field a minimum percentage of women as candidates.



LEGAL QUOTAS

Constitutional or legal provisions mandating a minimum level of women's representation.



VOLUNTARY QUOTAS

Political parties or organizations adopt quotas voluntarily as part of internal reforms.

HOW GENDER QUOTAS WORK

1



SET A TARGET

A minimum percentage or number is set for women's representation.

2



CREATE OPPORTUNITIES

Measures are put in place to support women to run, compete and lead.

3



IMPLEMENT THE QUOTA

Through laws, party rules, or institutional mechanisms.

4



INCREASE REPRESENTATION

More women are elected or appointed into decision-making positions.

5



STRENGTHEN DEMOCRACY

Diverse voices lead to better policies and more inclusive development.

THE BENEFITS FOR DEMOCRACY



More inclusive representation



Better policies that reflect real community needs



Stronger social justice and equality



Improved governance outcomes



Inspires future generations of women leaders

“ Quotas are a bridge to equality, not a replacement for merit. They help democracy reflect the people it serves. ”



EXAMPLES FROM OTHER COUNTRIES

Many countries have adopted constitutional or legislative measures to **increase women's representation in Parliament.**



RWANDA

Constitutional Quota



The Constitution provides for a minimum of **30%** representation of women in all decision-making organs.



Outcome:

Rwanda has the highest representation of women in Parliament globally.

61.3%

Women in Lower House
(as of 2023)



SOUTH AFRICA

Party List System



A party list proportional representation system encourages political parties to include women candidates.



Outcome:

Women's representation has steadily increased since democracy.

46.1%

Women in National Assembly
(as of 2024)



SENEGAL

Parity Law (2010)



The Parity Law requires political parties to field a **50%** quota of women candidates for elected positions.



Outcome:

Significant increase in women's representation in the National Assembly.

44.4%

Women in National Assembly
(as of 2022)



UGANDA

Constitutional Provision



The Constitution reserves seats for women representatives in Parliament.



Outcome:

Women's representation has grown steadily over the years.

39.6%

Women in Parliament
(as of 2024)



THE TAKEAWAY

Constitutional guarantees, quotas and supportive laws can significantly increase women's representation and promote inclusive governance.



What's the special seat bill (HB 1349 at a Glance)

An Act to alter the provisions of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 to provide for seat reservation for women in the National and State Houses of Assembly; and for related matters.

SPONSORED BY



Rt. Hon. Benjamin Okezie Kalu
(Lead Sponsor)

CO-SPONSORS

- Hon. Tolani Shagaya
- Hon. Oriyomi A. Onanuga
- Hon. Joshua Audu Gana
- Hon. Chinwe Clara Nnabuife
- Hon. Khadija Bukar Ibrahim
- Hon. Jafaru Gambo Leko
- Hon. M. D. Hassan
- Hon. Blessing Onuh
- Hon. Kama Nkemkanma
- Hon. Amobi Godwin Ogah
- Hon. Jonathan Gaza Gbefwi
- Hon. Francis Waive



Purpose of the Bill

To create additional seats for women in the National and State Houses of Assembly to promote inclusive governance and gender equity.



A Bill for an Act to alter the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999.

EXACTLY WHAT SEATS WILL BE CREATED?

The Bill creates additional seats reserved only for women in the National and State Houses of Assembly.



SENATE

Section 48 of the Constitution
(as proposed)

1

ADDITIONAL SEAT

for women in:

- ✓ Each State
- ✓ Federal Capital Territory (FCT)



This seat will be exclusively for a woman.



Three existing Senators from each State and one from the FCT remain unchanged.



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Section 49 of the Constitution
(as proposed)

1

ADDITIONAL SEAT

for women in:

- ✓ Each State
- ✓ Federal Capital Territory (FCT)



This seat will be exclusively for a woman.



The 360 existing seats based on population representation remain unchanged.



STATE HOUSES OF ASSEMBLY

Section 91 of the Constitution
(as proposed)

1

ADDITIONAL SEAT

for women in each of the three senatorial districts in every State.



This seat will be exclusively for a woman.



The other seats (based on population) remain unchanged, subject to the minimum and maximum numbers.



IMPORTANT:

Nothing in the Bill stops any woman from contesting for the existing (non-reserved) seats.



WHEN DOES THIS START?

These new provisions will start after the life of the current Assemblies (see next slide for timeline).

HOW MANY NEW SEATS WILL BE ADDED?

The Bill creates additional seats reserved only for women in the National and State Houses of Assembly.



SENATE

1 ADDITIONAL SEAT
for women in:



Each State



Federal Capital
Territory (FCT)



TOTAL: 37 additional seats
(36 States + FCT)



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

1 ADDITIONAL SEAT
for women in:



Each State



Federal Capital
Territory (FCT)



TOTAL: 37 additional seats
(36 States + FCT)



STATE HOUSES OF ASSEMBLY

1 ADDITIONAL SEAT
for women in:



Each of the three
senatorial districts
in every State



TOTAL: 108 additional seats
(3 per State × 36 States)



WHEN WILL THESE SEATS START?

All additional seats will commence after the life of the current Assemblies and be reviewed 16 years after their commencement.



IMPORTANT:

Nothing in the Bill prevents any woman from contesting for any existing (non-reserved) seat.



HOW WILL THE CONSTITUTION BE CHANGED?

The Bill amends six key sections of the 1999 Constitution to create and provide for women-only reserved seats.



1. SECTION 48 – SENATE



Provides for one **additional Senator** for each State and the FCT who shall be a woman.



2. SECTION 49 – HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



Provides for one **additional member** for each State and the FCT who shall be a woman.



3. SECTION 71 – SENATORIAL DISTRICTS & FEDERAL CONSTITUENCIES



Empowers INEC to create additional Senatorial seats for women and to divide each State into two Federal Constituencies to be occupied by women.



4. SECTION 77 – ELECTIONS



Introduces “special constituency” and ensures elections can be conducted for these women-only reserved seats.



5. SECTION 91 – STATE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY



Provides for one **additional member** in each of the three senatorial districts in a State who shall be a woman.



6. SECTION 117 – STATE ELECTIONS



Introduces “special constituency” for State elections in line with Sections 91 and 117 of the Constitution.



WHEN WILL THESE CHANGES START?

The new provisions on additional seats for women will commence after the life of the current Assemblies and will be reviewed **16 years** after their commencement.



IMPORTANT:

Nothing in the Bill prevents any woman from contesting for any existing (non-reserved) seat.



WHY THIS BILL MATTERS

THE BENEFITS

This Bill promotes fairness, inclusion and better representation by creating dedicated seats for women in our legislatures.



INCREASED WOMEN REPRESENTATION

Guarantees women dedicated seats in the National and State Houses of Assembly.



PROMOTES GENDER EQUALITY

Advances equality and ensures women have a stronger voice in lawmaking and decision-making.



STRENGTHENS DEMOCRACY

Broader representation leads to more inclusive policies and better outcomes for all.



DRIVES NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Women's participation in governance improves development in health, education and social welfare.



COMPLIES WITH GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES

Aligns Nigeria with international standards on women's political participation.



WHEN WILL THESE BENEFITS BE REALIZED?

The additional women-only seats will commence after the life of the current Assemblies and will be reviewed **16 years** after their commencement.



IMPORTANT:

Nothing in this Bill prevents any woman from contesting for any existing (non-reserved) seat. This is an **addition, not a restriction**.

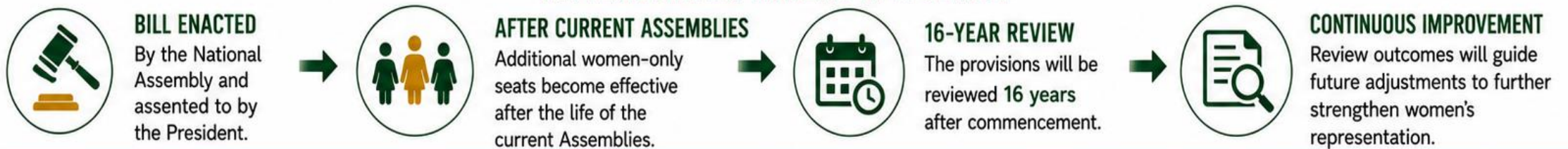


KEY PROVISIONS & IMPLEMENTATION DETAILS

How the Bill will work and important safeguards included.



IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE AT A GLANCE



THE BIG PICTURE

This Bill is a major step towards a more inclusive Nigeria where women have equal opportunities to lead, decide and build a better future for all.



OUR GOAL

Fair representation.
Stronger democracy.
Better Nigeria.



ABOUT THE BILL

Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Alteration) Bill, 2024.

THE WAY FORWARD: BUILDING A MORE INCLUSIVE POLITICAL FUTURE

Closing the representation gap requires **action from** government, political parties, institutions, and all of us.

TOGETHER,
we can build a Nigeria
where women **belong,**
lead and **decide.**



A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY



GOVERNMENT

Pass and implement gender-friendly laws and policies.



POLITICAL PARTIES

Adopt and enforce internal quotas and support women candidates.



INSTITUTIONS

Provide funding, training and mentorship for women.



CIVIL SOCIETY & MEDIA

Advocate, sensitize and hold leaders accountable.



EVERY CITIZEN

Challenge bias, support women leaders and vote for equality.

THE IMPACT OF CHANGE



More women in leadership



Better policies for women, families and communities.



Stronger democracy and social justice.



Improved national development and economic growth.



A fairer and more inclusive Nigeria.

OUR CALL TO ACTION



1 RAISE AWARENESS

Speak up and start conversations.



2 SUPPORT WOMEN

Encourage, mentor and create opportunities.



3 DEMAND ACCOUNTABILITY

Hold leaders and institutions accountable.



4 VOTE

Vote for leaders who champion gender equality.



5 STAY ENGAGED

Sustained action brings lasting change.

“

When women participate in politics, **everyone wins.**

Let's build a Nigeria where every woman has a **seat**, a **voice** and the **power** to shape our future.

”



EQUALITY TODAY. A STRONGER NIGERIA TOMORROW.



SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS

Time to Act. Time for Equality.

Gender quotas are a proven tool to open doors, create opportunities, and build a more inclusive democracy.

Now, let's turn progress into lasting change.



Equality strengthens democracy.
Inclusion builds the nation.

KEY TAKEAWAYS



THE GAP PERSISTS

Women remain underrepresented in political and decision-making spaces.



QUOTAS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Countries using gender quotas have achieved significant increases in women's participation.



CHANGE IS POSSIBLE

With the right laws, resources and political will, we can close the representation gap.



A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Government, parties, institutions, media and citizens must all play their part.



A SHARED GOAL

A fair and inclusive Nigeria where every woman can lead and every voice counts.

TOP RECOMMENDATIONS



ENACT & ENFORCE GENDER-QUOTA LAWS

Make quotas mandatory and legally binding.



STRENGTHEN POLITICAL PARTIES

Adopt internal quotas and support women candidates.



INVEST IN WOMEN LEADERS

Provide funding, training and mentorship opportunities.



RAISE AWARENESS & CHANGE NORMS

Challenge stereotypes and promote women's leadership.



MONITOR & ACCOUNT

Track progress and hold institutions accountable.



ENGAGE ALL STAKEHOLDERS

Work together for a more inclusive and democratic Nigeria.

THE PATH FORWARD



COMMIT
Make equality a priority.



ACT
Implement policies and allocate resources.



TRANSFORM
Create lasting impact for women and society.



THRIVE
Build a stronger, fairer and more prosperous Nigeria.

TOGETHER, WE CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN.

Let's build a Nigeria where women's leadership is the norm, not the exception.



EQUALITY TODAY. A STRONGER NIGERIA TOMORROW.



FAIRNESS



INCLUSION



JUSTICE



DEMOCRACY



THANK YOU

for Listening!

Together, let's champion equality,
empower women, and build
a more inclusive Nigeria.



EQUALITY

A right.
Not a privilege.



INCLUSION

A responsibility.
Not a choice.



JUSTICE

For all.
Not for some.



PROGRESS

Stronger together.
Better together.



NIGERIA

Our country.
Our future.



WHEN WOMEN LEAD, NIGERIA SUCCEEDS.

Let's keep moving forward—together. ♡

