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# WOMEN POLITICIANS

## ON THE MOVE

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Women on the Move  
(Second in a series)

cedpa

CEDPA Nigeria Country Office

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(Second in a series)

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## Foreword

**W**omen Politicians on the Move focuses on the lives and experiences of women in politics from across the three regions of Nigeria? What ignited or catalyzed their interest in politics? What are the challenges of participation? What factors in their family and community environment are facilitative and what are the constraints to seeking elective posts? How did they overcome these constraints? How did they mobilize their primary constituencies?

These short narratives by Nigerian women who have won or lost elections, mirror the experiences, hopes and fears of millions of women at all levels across the country engage through CEDPA's Democracy and Governance program, in promoting women's political participation. Their language strikes a common cord and captures well known traits of Nigerian women --commitment, courage, and resilience. They are determined to overcome daunting odds stacked against democracy in Nigeria and, most of all, against women's political empowerment.

Dr. Enyantu Ifenne  
Resident Advisor.  
CEDPA Nigeria Country Office

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**WOMEN POLITICIANS**  
***ON THE MOVE***

# Introduction

Women make up about 50% of Nigeria's population of 120 million. In spite of their numerical strength, very few women occupy leadership and decision-making positions. Close to forty years as an independent nation, the Nigerian political scene is still largely male dominated. The token number of women who make it to decision making levels occupy the less significant positions where they are unlikely to make the kind of impact that can lead to change; sustainable change.

Nigeria has continued to be the focus of attention both locally and internationally, if only for its size (latest reports indicate that out of a 100 persons in the world today, 2 of them are Nigerians! ) and the paradox inherent in the fact that even with its vast oil and mineral wealth, the country's economy has continued to deteriorate at an alarming rate over the decades. This has had far reaching social impact leading to high levels of poverty, insecurity, corruption and unemployment, amongst other social problems. Most Nigerians, especially the youth, have one single-minded ambition—to leave the country's shores, to emigrate by whatever means possible; even at the risk of losing their lives. Those willing to remain and weather the storm have developed an acute sense of apathy towards politics, political processes, governance and elections, generally. Going by past experiences, most Nigerians reckon that queuing up to vote, for instance, is a waste of precious time. The result is that many generations of Nigerians have no first-hand experience or knowledge of democratic practices, principles or values.

This is not unexpected given that since Independence, Nigeria's attempts at democratic governance have always been disrupted by military coups and dictatorships. In the space of thirty-eight years, Nigeria has witnessed 29 years

*The token number of women who make it to decision-making levels occupy the less significant positions where they are unlikely to make the kind of impact that can lead to change; sustainable change.*

of military rule as against a negligible 9 years of civilian rule. So top on the list of Nigeria's most immediate problems is the issue of bad, unaccountable leadership and the absence of democratic, constitutional rule.

Within this very bleak and stifling scenario, the reality is that opportunities for political participation still remain firmly closed to women. Prevailing socio-cultural / religious norms, coupled with economic constraints, often make political activity taboo and act as formidable barriers even for daring women, willing to tread the dreaded paths to public office.

## CEDPA'S INTERVENTION

The Center for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA) with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), started the Democracy and Governance (D&G) initiative in Nigeria in September 1996. The program, which is being implemented in collaboration with John Hopkins University Population and Communication Services (JHU/PCS) seeks to strengthen civil society by increasing women's participation in development and political processes. Community-based organizations representing about 172,000 women throughout the country are partners in the initiative.

Women in Nigeria, historically, have been marginalized despite their essential economic and social roles. They rarely participate in the political processes as advocates and candidates. They often are unaware of their rights and of ways to make their views known. Women themselves cite lack of information, political skills, resources, and networks as major barriers to their participation.



In direct response to this and through the D&G initiative, CEDPA seeks to empower women by facilitating their increased participation in politics / democratic processes; and raising awareness of their fundamental human rights.

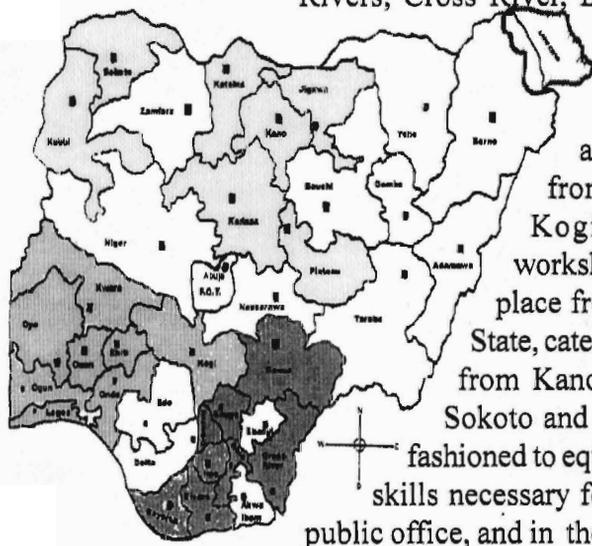
As part of the D&G activities at the beginning of 1998, CEDPA organized a series of **Public Life Skills** workshops targeted at women already in political or decision-making positions,

*Community-based organizations representing more than 172,000 women throughout the country are partners in the initiative.*

*Women in Nigeria, historically, have been marginalized despite their essential economic and social roles.*

well as those vying for elective positions in the Transition-to-Civil-Rule program implemented by the Sani Abacha military regime. A time-table has been drawn up for the elections into the different levels and arms of government. In fact, some of the elections took place in 1997. The grand finale of all the electioneering activities is the presidential election scheduled for July/August 1998.

**Public Life Skills** workshops were organized in the three major regions of Nigeria catering for needs of politically active women in 23 of the 36 States of the federation. The first workshop took place in Enugu in the south-east from January 12 - 15, drawing women from Anambra, Abia, Imo, Enugu, Rivers, Cross River, Benue and Bayelsa states. This was followed by the workshop at Oshogbo in the south-west of Nigeria from January 19 - 21, 1998 and was attended by women politicians from Osun, Ondo, Oyo, Ogun, Kwara, Kogi, Ekiti and Lagos States. The workshop for the northern cluster states took place from February 25 to 27, 1998 in Kano State, catering for the needs of women politicians from Kano, Kaduna, Kebbi, Katsina, Plateau, Sokoto and Jigawa states. The workshops were fashioned to equip women leaders/politicians with the skills necessary for good performance and survival in public office, and in the highly competitive political arena.



**Map of Nigeria** showing states represented at CEDPA-funded Public Life Skills workshops.

**I**t was a period of experience-sharing and brain-storming on knotty problems; while learning new, life-changing and career enhancing lessons. The total of sixty-six women who participated in the various workshops formed networks and forged alliances to act as support groups for women in politics.

*Women Politicians on the Move* is a product of the interviews CEDPA conducted with the women politicians in the course of the workshops.

# 1. CEDPA's Empowerment Goal

**C**EDPA's mission is to empower women at all levels of society to be full partners in development. CEDPA views empowerment as a process characterized by four progressive stages: **Access, Conscientization, Participation and Decision-Making**. Movement through this continuum is made possible by gender-sensitive and enabling programs. These stages designate hierarchical levels of increasing empowerment whereby at the level of decision making the subject is more in control of own life.

CEDPA's training programs, and especially those that raise political awareness of women (both as politicians and voters), directly enhance the capability of the women to increase their participation in decisions and activities that directly impact on their well-being. Thus, these training activities impact largely on the third and fourth stages of the empowerment process or continuum—**PARTICIPATION and DECISION-MAKING**—the stages at which women initiate action, both individually and collectively, to make practical and strategic changes to their environment. Needless to say that most women who reach these levels of empowerment are most likely to have been through the Access and Conscientization stages; where **Access** refers to the stage at which women are able to gain access to all types of resources (ultimately on an equitable basis with men) and **Conscientization** is the stage at which women have become aware of their rights and recognize gender inequities.

**T**he stage of **Decision-making** is the ultimate goal of CEDPA's empowerment strategies. This is the stage at which women have fair and appropriate access to, and control of resources and their distribution. It also implies that women have gained the ability to participate fully in decision-making and to set an agenda that responds to their specific needs.

*...Movement through this continuum is made possible by gender-sensitive and enabling programs*

*This is the stage at which women have fair and appropriate access to, and control of resources and their distribution.*

## 2. Why Women Must Participate

Perhaps, the most obvious reason why Nigerian women must participate fully in public life is the fact that they make up about half of the population of the country. It follows therefore that, as a matter of right, women should be availed all the opportunities open to the other half of the population to be participants in all aspects of socio-economic and political life of the country. They should also be co-beneficiaries of development gains accruing from active involvement. In 1996, only 6% of ministerial and sub ministerial officials were women. There are many other reasons why women must participate.

“...The situation of women in the public domain is very different and warrants the organizing by CEDPA of this workshop to promote women’s role in public life. Women are not visible in our public life. Very few of them are seen playing any crucial role at that level. This situation is regrettable and must be addressed for several reasons. It is not our tradition to be left out of public life. Our history is replete with stories of our women who have played significant roles in the development of our society.” — Prof. Bolanle Awe, Country Director Macarthur Foundation. Culled from keynote address at the opening of CEDPA workshop, “Promoting Women’s Role in Public Life” at Osogbo on January 19, 1998.



Prof. Bolanle Awe.

“The purpose of this workshop is to equip our women so that they become models of good leadership. Converting power to meeting peoples’ needs is precisely what this workshop is about. Leadership is about commitment, and women have a heart, they have the guts...” What we need is knowledge”

— **Dr. Enyantu Ifenne**, *Resident Advisor, CEDPA/Nigeria during the opening of Public Life Skills workshop in Kano.*

“Actually, I found that the men [in the River State House of Assembly] were not more knowledgeable than the women. If you went into discussions with them, it was not as though they had any better vision of what they wanted to do. It was just that it was accepted that men always had the political power. So naturally, it was assumed that the men knew better...” — **Agatha Goma**, *contested and won State House of Assembly elections at age 26. Presently a caterer and mother. Agatha is from present Bayelsa State.*

“Well, we have to persevere, we don't have to be scared; not because this or that has happened so you get disinterested. You are a woman and you know that if you don't get involved, you may be in your house and a major decision is taken that will affect your life and you will not be there. You will realize this when it is too late” — **Eunice C. Aguomba**, *chief registrar of the Court of Appeal, Umuohia, Abia State and woman activist. Was a participant at the Enugu workshop*

“...There is just one common constitution which does not discriminate between a woman and a man..I was in the Constituent Assembly; so, that should be our focus. We have to refer to the constitution...only traditional values are hindering us.” — **Sa'adatu Kande Balarabe**, *trained as staff nurse/ midwife, went into active politics in 1982. In 1993, contested elections into the House of Representatives and won. Was Director General Women Commission 1991/92 and member of Constituent Assembly 1987.*



**Eunice C. Aguomba.**

“So if any woman should decide to challenge them, they face her squarely with money, they support themselves with thugs, molest her very well; they will try to frustrate that woman. Unless the woman too has thick skin, before she can face them”

—*Kehinde Ola-Oni, Chairperson, Ward 5, Ibadan North Local Government Area, Oyo State (1991-1993).*

### **3. Making a career of politics** **( Why some choose to develop ‘thick skin’)**

In Nigeria, women politicians are still considered an oddity; a rare breed. They are often viewed as daring, man-like, wayward, and in extreme cases, they are considered to be of low moral standing and alleged to carry on intimate relationships with male colleagues; especially male superiors. The assumption is that, invariably, any woman who attains a high position must have been favored by a man. Hence; many women who develop interest in politics consciously stifle it when confronted with the prevalent negative societal attitudes, perceptions and stereotypic images. Thus, training and provision of skills to the few women who do persevere, helps to increase their self-confidence and strengthen/sustain their sense of purpose. Nigerian women politicians come from diverse ethnic backgrounds and social classes. Hence, their interest in politics is aroused and nurtured by experiences as varied and as unique as the individual women who determine to make a career of politics, notwithstanding the innumerable obstacles.

“I got interested in politics when I saw the plight of the rural people, how they were being treated. Decisions were being taken on their behalf (for development projects) without the community itself being involved in the decision making processes. So, I got involved to be able to help the people, the rural community”

“When I started working in the civil service with the deputy premier of Western Region then in 1963 (Chief Fani Kayode), I saw many women around the House of Assembly. Men used them during election campaigns. But I never saw any of them emerge as women leaders. So I pondered within myself: ‘what happens to women? Why don’t we have women ministers?’ I could see male ministers without portfolio and they only used women... they spoke to them, mobilized them only for campaign purposes... then, I decided that one day, I will try to participate in politics... I looked forward to a situation when women will be elected to such posts as men...” —**Kehinde Ola-Oni**, (*Chairperson, Ibadan North Local Government 1991-1993; President/founder of NGO, Action Women of Nigeria, Ibadan*).



*Kehinde Ola-Oni.*

“I had to cover the 1979 elections for the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA). I was then a reporter/researcher and I was assigned to cover this particular place. And the way the politics was played, it was dirty but it was exciting. In fact we got to an area where we had to contend with native doctors; they brought out charms and because the candidate we had gone with was not their candidate, they felt aggrieved and came out with so many charms, and it was so fascinating the way the candidate went round them and won them to his side. I said to myself, one of these days, I will like to participate.” — **Biodun Christine Olujimi**, *journalist, contested and lost House of Assembly elections in Ogun State under National Center Party of Nigeria, December 1997.*

## 4. Funmi Olasehinde

### 'We have to fight for our rights'

*When I started, they thought I was insane, but later I made them realize that women have to partake; we have to fight for our rights.*



**Funmi Olasehinde,**  
*legislator, Osun State  
House of Assembly  
(1997- ) from Ile-Ife*

"..this is an ambition that I nursed since 1996. But that time I was a student so there was no way I could contest. I went to Yaba College of Technology, Lagos and Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) Ife. When I had the opportunity to contest last year, I seized the chance. And one of the reasons why I have been nursing this ambition is because I am interested in the legislature. I believe this is the main place in which I can

help the people in my own area and the women in the state. Firstly, my local government is at the extreme of the state. We lack so much! We don't have a post office, no General Hospital for the women; no maternity clinics. We don't even have good roads. I also realized that you don't find women in political office and even in political gatherings. You only see men. The belief is that any woman in politics is a useless and irresponsible women. They believe that all the men who associate with her, hold meetings with her are her lovers. The result is that you cannot find any woman contesting elections in that area. So I resolved that I was going to be the first woman to do so. Although we have had a woman commissioner, it was a political appointment, not an elective post.

When I started, they thought I was insane, but later I made them realize that women have to partake; we have to fight for our rights. For example, look at the House of Assembly; we have 26 seats, now I'm the only female...I contested under the United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP) and my friend sitting there [another participant at the Public Life Skills workshop] said she is interested. I said go ahead. I will back you. I have been trying to encourage other women. I told my friend that when I started I could not talk much. That's one of the things they taught us this morning (in a workshop session) - self esteem..."

## 5. Titilayo Ajanaku

### “I took up Awolowo’s challenge”

Chief (Mrs.) Titilayo Ajanaku, Otuyalori of Egba land is vying for the post of governor of Ogun State in the elections scheduled for July/ August 1998. She was the first elected woman chairperson of an urban local government area when she became Chairperson of Abeokuta Local Government Council (1987); also contested party primaries under Social Democratic Party (SDP) for position of governor of Ogun State in 1990. She is a member of the Governing Council of the Federal University of Technology, Owerri, South East, Nigeria. Ajanaku was a participant at the CEDPA-organized Public Life Skills workshop in Oshogbo

*I witnessed a lot of unnecessary, I would call it avoidable, high maternal and infant mortality rates.*

“I’m a nurse by profession, I retired as a midwife tutor and since then I’ve been in active politics. That was 21 years ago - 1977. As a midwife tutor and the principal at a missionary hospital, Wesley Guild in Ilesha, I was in charge of the maternity center as well as being the teacher. With the missionaries you were more or less a Jack of all trades. And because Wesley Guild was a referral hospital, we get a lot of cases from the neighbouring villages and towns.

**B**ecause of the taboos, the traditions and the ignorance that surrounds the healthcare delivery system in the country, I witnessed a lot of unnecessary, I would call it avoidable, high maternal and infant mortality rates. For example, you may have a young girl of 18 having her first pregnancy and being kept at home until labour develops complications. By the time she eventually delivers the baby (sometimes she may lose the baby) she ends up with this dreadful thing they call Vesico vaginal Fistula (VVF).

This kind of thing got to me and after many years, I decided



**Chief (Mrs.) Titilayo Ajanaku, Otuyalori of Egba land.**

This kind of thing got to me and after many years, I decided to pool resources together - with my colleagues and said 'look, most of these things are preventable, what can we do?' We then came up with a model of a mobile healthcare delivery service.

*...We appealed to the government. The significant thing was that, after taking Chief Awolowo through the process of mobile health and he had seen for himself what it was all about...*

**W**ell, we didn't do anything grand, but we put our financial resources together to build a mobile health clinic. I used my life's savings to travel abroad to buy necessary equipment. I started going from village to village to enlighten the villagers and heads of the families on the need to let pregnant women, whether young or old, come to hospital. We had the opportunity to teach environmental sanitation, diet, and other things. We also treated minor ailments. This was in 1977, just about the time (Gen.) Obasanjo's<sup>1</sup> regime then was into its transition program [transition-to-civil-rule] and Chief Awolowo<sup>2</sup> signified his intention to form a political party. I said wait a minute: 'this man has been the premier of the Western Region, and he was very good. He was interested in the welfare of the people. Why don't we approach him?'... We appealed to the government. The significant thing was that, after taking Chief Awolowo through the process of mobile health care and he had seen for himself what it was all about, it was the statements he made that day that convinced me to move on. He said: 'This programme is very good, if you have an idea and want that idea to materialise in time, it is better to be in the corridors of power. So you youngsters, I'll advise you to join me so that if we win then this your program will be part of the integrated rural development scheme. And from that day I took up the challenge and I've never looked back.'

*...if you have an idea and want that idea to materialize in time, it is better to be in the corridors of power.*

<sup>1</sup>General Olusegun Obasanjo (in detention since 1995 for alleged coup-plotting) was Head of State of Nigeria following the assassination of General Murtala Muhammed in 1976. Obasanjo's was the first military regime to hand over power successfully to a democratically elected civilian government in October 1979, thus, ushering in what became known as the Second Republic with Shehu Shagari as executive president. The Shagari administration was toppled by a military coup in December 1983.

<sup>2</sup>The Late Chief Obafemi Awolowo was one of the nationalists who led the struggle for Nigeria's independence from British rule. Under British rule, he was premier of former Western Region from 1956-1959. He became leader of opposition in the Nigerian parliament at Independence in 1960. He founded Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) in 1978 and contested for the presidency in 1979 but lost to Shehu Shagari.

## 6. Barriers to Women's Participation

**W**omen politicians in Nigeria confront a myriad of formidable barriers in their quest for political office. Though a vast majority of Nigerian women are in some kind of economic or income generation activity, the household is still basically considered the woman's domain. Even if she is permitted to work outside the home and be politically active, there are limits imposed by society. She may be allowed to vote but not vie for political office. This informs the attitude of male politicians and others towards women who aspire to political office. Perhaps, even greater than the sanctions imposed by society is the problem of lack of funds and ready cash to back up her political aspirations. The financial constraints are further compounded by the fact that, being quite new to the political scene, women have no access to the networks, "the old boys' clubs" which their male counterparts have benefited from and built up over the decades. Worse still, politics in Nigeria is still characterized by thuggery, intimidation, death threats and other forms of violence. Many women find they cannot cope with this degree of violence and may choose to opt out. For some other women, they find they have to return to their states of origin- to be accepted as politicians in their own right; in their husbands' home state where they live and work, they are considered 'outsiders'. In parts of Nigeria, interpretation of religious precepts intermingled with culture and tradition act as overwhelming barriers...

"..major problem, is finance. You find out that women are not economically self sufficient. And most of the time because we compete with the men they are not willing to fund us, they fund each other. The second problem is that the women are never together, not in terms of bringing groups together, but in terms of being able to sit down, set goals and set about actualizing the goals. They are not articulate enough. They just get involved because they believe there is a vacuum and they want to fill the vacuum. They are not focused. Those are the major problems we've had. And when you are focused they look at you as being too militant. They feel, ah, this one is too strong, she can't be a good mother. She can't be a good wife and she can't lead effectively. Those I think, have been the major problems of women. We don't know how to package ourselves. This is coupled with a myriad of other problems — women not loving each other enough, not believing in each other. Moreo-



**Biodun Christine  
Olujimi**

ver, the older ones have not imparted much to the younger ones. So you see everyone is on her own. When you get into it, you know you are on your own. You have no one to learn from.”

“I think the most basic problem is attitude. The attitude of women generally isn't yet what it should be in politics. I mean the ordinary woman, I am not talking about women who have attended several workshops or the few women who are already in politics. I am talking about the average Nigerian woman... In her mind, ...it's a game for men you know, tough men... You are a housewife, even if you are not, if you are a spinster you get into politics, you put an end to any ambition you have of getting married. So those cultural attitudes are there; they are not in favor of a woman going into politics. And then you discover that you cannot play politics without money. You know, you need money to really mobilize people, to produce publications; to get the press these days... a lot of things have been commercialized, you don't get free publicity without money.” — **Kande Daniel**, broadcast journalist and chairperson, Enugu State Chapter, Nigeria Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ).



**Kande Daniel**

“...I campaigned for Chief Awolowo's party and I campaigned for him as the presidential candidate (1978/ 1979). I worked for... the governorship candidate and he won, that was Chief Bola Ige<sup>3</sup>. Now the interesting thing about politics in this environment is that the man then put my name down for commissionership and of course he had to let the people of the area know - I'm not from the old Oyo State; I'm from

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<sup>3</sup> Chief Bola Ige was Governor of Old Oyo State under the Unity party of Nigeria from 1979-1983.

Ogun state, married to somebody in Ilesha, old Oyo state, now Osun state. It's then the people said: 'we know she is good, we know she's hardworking, we know she's done much for the party. But you can think of other positions. You know we also have our own sons to make commissioners...' That was how my name was dropped. So from that time on I thought: what's all this? Then I started playing politics at home [state of birth - Ogun State] as well as here [Osun State].”—Chief (Mrs.) Titilayo Ajanaku, *Otuyalori of Egba land, gubernatorial candidate for Ogun State (1998); Chairperson of Abeokuta Local Government Council (1987); also contested party primaries under Social Democratic Party (SDP) for position of governor in 1990.*

“Well, in the political field, it's a different thing altogether. In addition to non-acceptance as a woman vying for this level of political position, one has a financial handicap which is the major setback...”

—Nkechi Nwaogu, *banker, aspirant to the position of governor of Abia State under UNCP (1998).*

“First of all you have the problem of men, as regards religion and tradition. Most men don't think a good woman should be in politics. Even if your husband has given you permission to go and ... promises to give you all support a man can give his wife, the relatives are there. They don't want their daughter-in-law to go into politics because they believe that when she goes to meetings there will be a role reversal in the home and their son will be the one cooking and looking after the children and this doesn't go down well with them.” —Chief Alhaja Atinuke Oyawoye, *Osun State Chairperson, National Center Party of Nigeria (NCPN) and head, Market Women's Association.*



**Nkechi Nwaogu.**

“The main problem is with getting women involved in politics because I notice people look upon women in politics as irresponsible... Men don't like their wives or female relations to go into it because they believe it is dirty and rough...”

They won't have respect for her. So in all areas they believe women who are in politics are useless, but that is changing... Then the financial aspect, that is one of the main problems. In Nigeria, you cannot go into politics without having some money. No matter how intelligent you are, no matter how good you are, if you don't have money, you can never contest, even within your party..." — **Funmi Olaseinde**, *legislator, Osun State House of Assembly ( 1997- ) from Ile-Ife.*

"...They thought I was too young, I wasn't married...In fact the opposition with regard to my unmarried status came from a different level within the community; not necessarily the politicians...I was told then to produce a husband..."

— **Agatha Goma**, *contested and won State House of Assembly elections at age 26. Presently a caterer and mother. From present Bayelsa State.*



**Fatima Inno Attahiru.**

"I think the major problem is that a lot of women are not informed. They don't take their time to study. They know what they want but they don't know what it takes to get what they want. So, along the line they get stuck...A lot of women may talk about money... I know money is important in politics. But if you have the real facts, there are a lot of people you will be able to convince to help you."— **Ene Edeh**, *journalist/publisher The Woman Today newspaper, Abuja.*

"Sokoto State is Islam - dominated... women are not allowed to come out and mingle with males.

Women are in purdah. So, they cannot participate fully as far as politics is concerned."— **Fatima Inno Attahiru**, *Wurno Local Government Area, Sokoto and currently director, Personnel Management, Ministry of Commerce, Industries and Tourism. Contested chairmanship of same LGA under Zero party election 1996.*

"In my area, they are yet to accept that a woman can occupy a position of leadership... that was a problem..."

— **Lady Cecilia Ally**, *State secretary UNCP, contested and lost elections into the state House of Assembly. Member, Northern Cross River State Women Association (NCRWA) and has great interest in environment issues.*

## 7. Responding to the wind of the times

The trio of religion, tradition or culture deserve further emphasis here. Stubborn and unyielding as they are, they hardly favor women. Though Nigerian women politicians may often bend under the tripartite weight, nevertheless they remain resilient, unbroken, negotiating a bit of advantage whenever they can; and sometimes scoring what can be considered in the circumstances, remarkable successes

“...the Igwe (our chief ) in my town and the rest of them asked me to step down, that Aguata Local Government Area is not mature nor ripe enough to have a woman chairperson [of the Local Government Council]. So, I stepped down then because I recognized that they are the opinion leaders. I knew that if I disobeyed them, they may call the community and ask them not to vote for me... But the second time around when the Igwe asked me to step down for a man who also comes from our town, I said : ‘When I started this race, you people asked me to step down for a man the other time; and you are asking me again to step down for a man a second time but it is not possible this time’. He replied saying that there was no way a man could step down for a woman in Nigeria. He said I was supposed to know that . I told the chief that I cannot step down for a man; not again.”

—Azodo Eucharía Okwunna, *Master’s degree holder in Management Studies, she contested and won elections into the state House of Assembly in December 1997, representing Aguata Local Government Area of Anambra State.*



**Azodo Eucharía Okwunna.**

“When I was a commissioner; I happened to be the only woman commissioner, I was asked to move inside [stay in an adjoining room] because the traditional ruler was paying a courtesy call on the governor. I was told to go inside and wait. I said ‘why should I? I am a commissioner as the men

are and none of the men were asked to go and stay inside'. Then they laughed over it and I sat down there and received the traditional ruler"— **Hannatu Ibrahim** (*President, Planned Parenthood Federation of Nigeria. First woman to fill the Positions of Commissioner for Home Affairs and later of Information in the then Bauchi State of Nigeria now split into Bauchi and Gombe States.*)



“The women were out to support me but the men turned around and used religion to block me from winning. They went to the extent of going to the mosques to campaign that I cannot be a leader and that it is a great sin to elect a woman as leader. You know, once it touches on the matter of religion, people get scared; everybody wants to go to heaven. Nobody wants to go to hell fire... I am scared now of running [for elective office]... women need to be more educated... As far as I know, and I have heard and learnt, there is no place in any religion that says I cannot come out and vote and be voted for. But not all women know that...” — **Hauwa Lawal ATK**, *contested for position of Local Government Chairperson of Kaduna South Local Government Area of Kaduna State under the umbrella of National Center Party of Nigeria (NCPN) and lost in 1997.*

## 8. Agatha Goma

### 'I saw myself as capable'

“After my national youth service I taught for one year but soon after I lost interest in teaching because there were really no incentives. That was about the time women were being encouraged to become involved in politics. I was quite young; I wasn't married then. I knew I had limitations but I didn't think of those limitations then. I just saw myself as a capable individual and based on that, I took up the challenge and came out to run for the State Assembly elections in Rivers State under the Social Democratic Party and I won.

I was in the State Assembly for 18 months. As a woman in the Assembly, it was a bit strange (considering the part of the country I come from) for a woman to run for such a position. It was not necessarily because there was anything wrong with it traditionally; they were not just used to the idea of a woman participating in politics. In my case, I tried to put across the fact that I am a person, an individual, so it makes no difference that I am a woman; I am still capable of delivering the goods. Besides, they thought I was too young and I wasn't married... but I had an answer for every point being raised... Yes, you have to answer directly and in some cases, you have to be very diplomatic... In my own case, they were also scared that I was educated - been to the university- that was such a big deal to them. They thought to themselves, 'if this one goes through, how do we link up with her?' These were some of the fears expressed. So, I had to also come down to that level and reason with them.” —**Agatha Goma**, *contested and won State House of Assembly elections at age 26. Presently a caterer and mother. From present Bayelsa State (formerly Rivers State)*



**Agatha Goma.**

## 9. Alhaja S. Oyawoye

### **On being a Muslim woman and a politician**

Alhaja S. Oyawoye is Osun State Chairperson of the National Center Party of Nigeria and leader of the market women in addition to being a businesswoman.



**Alhaja S. Oyawoye**

“You know as a mother, thank God that the children are all grown up, the smallest one can take care of herself. If I’m going to travel, I make proper and adequate provision for the home and I keep my husband informed about what I am doing. You know, so he can get involved. If you are going to meetings tell him you are going to meetings. Tell him when you are going to start the meeting. If you know the topic of discussion for the meeting, tell him, ‘we have a problem in the party and this is what we are trying to resolve.’ When you return and you have given him food and everything, report back so that he can be aware of what problems you face. You know, he can assist you in some ways. He can advise you at home and be there for you because he has given you his

permission and he can see that you are trying all your possible best to carry him along. Let him know that you are not just wasting your time or fooling around. You are doing something worthwhile, so that he can be proud of you also...”

“... the way we were brought up, it’s only the man who has a right to speak; a woman is voiceless. As a muslim woman, many people come to me and say ‘Alhaja, what is this now?’

You know you are a Muslim'. This worries me. You know, you don't want something to come between you and your God just because you want to be a woman in politics. So what did I do? I went to a Muslim leader whom I respect a lot. I said, 'Excuse me, please I have a problem'. So he said, 'Hajia what's your problem?' I said, 'I'm into politics and a lot of people are saying that I should come out of it because of my religion. What does Islam say about a woman being in politics?' He said, 'Islam says that you are a human being just like a man, and you have a right like a man. If a man can be in politics then you have the right to be in politics. As a matter of fact, if you succeed in politics then you will be making the Muslims proud.'

I have scrupulously and jealously guarded my behaviour in public life so that other women may see me leading by example. You lead by example. If you are good, the men will allow their wives to come. I guard the women in my party... you know, this is my room, now [hotel room during the public life skills workshop in Osogbo]. I received women who support me from the state, from my party, here yesterday. I 'm sure they will be here today too. We don't mind sitting on the rug or anything . I just want to make sure that they behave properly so that when they get home, their husbands will not be able to say, 'you cannot go out, you cannot do this or that'. If they make it in life, the husband will be proud of them. You know husbands, they don't want you to go into politics. You know you may be commissioner or council chairman, but it is their daughters they want to reach that height; even to be the president. Men want their daughters to be commissioners but they don't want their wives to be same.

Also, I try to improve the economic well being of my women members by giving financial assistance when possible to reduce financial dependence on husbands. I advise them on investment and business opportunities. I also arrange support and discussion groups for women in politics"

*I have scrupulously and jealously guarded my behavior in public life so that other women may see me leading by example.*

## 10. Limited Cash - the stumbling block

(Seeking creative solutions to funding problems)

Every single one of the women politicians interviewed, without exception, cited financial constraints as the one major drawback for women politicians. They noted that male colleagues generally have more ready cash and other support than women and because they can spend extravagantly, they tend to win the voters to their side. Of course, this can be linked to the ever increasing levels of poverty in the country. Many are forced by the gravity of their needs to sell their vote to the highest bidder. Women politicians who participated in CEDPA-organized Public Life Skills workshops countrywide proffered creative solutions to this problem. Activities such as those implemented by the Democracy and Governance program were cited as being important for enlightenment and awareness-raising.



**Catherine Wayas.**

Formation of **100 Women Groups** is one of the strategies deployed by CEDPA/Nigeria towards achieving the objectives of the D&G program — increasing women's political participation/ empowerment and also strengthening civil society and democratic participation. Mobilizing and organizing women into dynamic and pro-active groups capable of identifying and addressing women's development issues at the community, local government and state levels, has given rise to a pool

of about 7 million (January 1998 figures) politically conscious and mobilized women nationwide. In addition, the 100 Women Group strategy provides linkages between emerging women leaders and their constituency. **Catherine Wayas**, one time aspirant for the post of President of Nigeria under option A4<sup>4</sup> (1992) and who more recently has

<sup>4</sup> Option A4, an electoral system for presidential elections evolved during the transition-to-civil-rule program from 1992 - 1993 implemented by the military regime of Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida. Under Option A4, a candidate for the post of president must win party primaries, first at the ward, local government, and state levels before the candidate can qualify to compete at the national level.

gone full-time into developing women programs, has the following to say about the 100 Women Groups as a support group and latent constituency for able women politicians:

“Yes, we will work with the 100 Women Group because we see them as a very powerful lobbying force and a powerful force that can mobilize within the local setting and we believe they will be a very useful tool in bringing women into public office...In fact, they are the main conduit into any local government you walk into. You go into a place and you find the 100 Group: they are there, you meet with them, they are on the ground. They know who is where and what is happening. So, the information they have and the power they have in terms of numerical strength is something we need to tap into...”

The little the women are doing, that is, forming women groups, coming together like this workshop [Public Life Skills workshop] helps to educate the poor or the illiterate at the grass-roots”

—**Folashade Folayan**, *Supervisory Councillor for Health, Odo-Otin Local Government Area, Oyo State ; first chairperson, Osun State Commission for Women (1992-1993) ex-Social Secretary, Oyo State branch of People's Front of Nigeria*



**Folashade Folayan.**

“My first suggestion... is that ...with the government interest in women empowerment, they should make the five political parties give concessions to women contestants. For example, we were talking last night [during the public life skills workshop with other politicians] I learnt that to collect a governorship form in UNCP you will have to pay N1.2 million [app. US\$ 14,600], non refundable. In DPN N250,000 [US\$3,000] and because we have been crying out about this

in my party, DPN, it has gone a step further than the others, by giving nomination forms free to women who are interested in the governorship election. We are going to ensure that my other sister [another workshop participant] gets her's free from UNCP.”

—**Chief (Mrs.) Titilayo Ajanaku**, *Otuyalori of Egba land, gubernatorial candidate for Ogun State (1998); Chairperson of Abeokuta Local Government Council (1987); also contested party primaries under Social Democratic Party (SDP) for position of governor in 1990.*

“We can form a pressure group right now, just those of us here [participants at the Public Life Skills workshop in Osogbo] and start fund raising in various States and levels in very many cost-effective ways for our women contestants; and we won't fund any frivolous candidate. You see, most people get up without really knowing what they are going in for...they don't have a focus. All they want is to just make a noise and attract some kind of publicity...If we can get women in various small groups to even bring up as little as N20 (app. 25 cents), each woman from each local government, we will be able to keep much money in trust for whoever is coming. And if one is transparent and accountable, more women will be willing to support the cause..”

—**Biodun Christine Olujimi**, *journalist, contested and lost House of Assembly elections in Ogun State, December 1997.*

“If women were to come together as a united entity, they can put up a formidable fight by asking every woman in Nigeria to contribute at least N20 – N100 (25 cents - \$1.25) to have a central fund properly organized and managed. One thing is to establish a fund, another thing is to have it properly organized. It can be called a central political fund for women. So, if it becomes obvious that in any State, a woman has emerged and she is acceptable, considered fit and is seen to be able to deliver the goods on election into office, such a woman will be funded from the central fund” — **Eunice Aguomba**, *chief registrar of the court of appeal, Umuohia, Abia State and woman activist.*

“We have many women who have had exposure and experience in and outside Nigeria. And we have courageous women who are determined to help other women. I think that if we cooperate and put our heads together, we can make it. With the men, somebody may contest an office but he may not have a kobo [a dime] and an Alhaji may sponsor him... If women can adopt that system... Maybe you are a millionaire and maybe I have the zeal and I am competent, why can't you sponsor me?” — **Fatima Inno Attahiru**, *Wurno Local Government Area, Sokoto and currently director, personnel management, Ministry of Commerce, Industries and Tourism. Contested chairmanship of same LGA under Zero party election 1996.*

## 11. 'Never enough time to perform'

On the surface, Sa'adatu Kande Balarabe appears to have been luckier than most other women politicians interviewed. During her political career which started in 1982, she has contested and won elections into the House of Representatives as well as the Constituent Assembly. This is in addition to holding the positions of Director General and Local Government chairperson in Kano State. But for Balarabe the sweetness of victory has been soured by a fact of Nigeria's political history — incessant military coups. Yet, in her own words, her greatest desire is to be given the chance to serve long enough "to leave a legacy"



**Sa'adatu Kande  
Balarabe**

maintain myself. I believe I have been in politics ever since I was in school but I never considered that to be politics. I thought politics meant contesting for a position in parliament. But when you are in school, when you hold positions such as the students' union leadership, you are popular among the people; you take part in demonstrations — these are all political tendencies but then I did not fully realize that I possessed these..”

“...Well, one never takes politics as a full time profession. So, professionally, I am staff nurse / midwife and worked at Murtala Muhammed Hospital. I qualified in the United Kingdom. I resigned in 1982 into active politics. I was then in my late twenties. Since then I have not gone back to work as a nurse..I have been involved in small businesses to

The first political, elective office I held was in 1983 when I contested for the House of Representatives and I won; but it was shortlived. It lasted just three months<sup>6</sup>.. So, they did not give us time to perform and do what we should have for the electorate. After that I contested again during Babangida's regime<sup>7</sup> when there was this transition-to-civil-rule program so we had to have the constitution amended. So before going to the assembly [constituent assembly] you had to contest from your local government. I contested again and won that election which enabled me to be a member of the constituent assembly. That was in 1987...In 1991/1992, I was made Director General of the Women's Commission in Kano State.

I may appear to have been rather successful in my political endeavours but I don't think so. There were a lot of interventions that did not allow me do all I wanted. There have been a lot of military interventions... that is it. Winning, yes I have been a success but implementing what I should to help my people, this was not so. But still I am struggling. I want that power, that position, and the opportunity to stay longer and leave a legacy ... do something. That is why I am still struggling...

*I want that power, that position, and the opportunity to stay longer and leave a legacy ... do something. That is why I am still struggling...*

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<sup>6</sup> Another military coup took place

<sup>7</sup> Popularly known as IBB, Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida was military ruler of Nigeria from 1985 to 1993 when he was ousted in yet another military coup

## 12. Facilitating Factors

**W**hile many women politicians acknowledged the presence of formidable barriers and huge stumbling blocks on the path to political office, most also acknowledged that without the support and love of immediate family — spouses, children, parents, and friends, the agonies would be much more pronounced and, perhaps, many would not dare take the risk. They also acknowledge that it is easier for a woman to become politically involved after the children have attained a certain degree of maturity. This is while recognizing the fact that within our societies, women are held solely responsible for child rearing and nurturing. Thus, while society would see nothing wrong with a male who is both active politician and father of a toddler, a woman in the same position would be considered irresponsible.

“... You see, a woman is free to go into politics, better in politics when she has no small kids. Like me now, I have no small kids; my last born child is in the university. So, I’m free to be in politics. Even then, I was free to be in politics...my husband was a very, very strong supporter of my cause.”

— **Folashade Folayan**, *Supervisory Councillor for Health Odo-Otin LGA, Oyo State and, ex-Social Secretary, Oyo State branch of People’s Front of Nigeria.*

“My husband has been very supportive. He encourages me to excel and when I come back, I play my role as the wife because we have to accept our roles as women”

— **Hannatu Ibrahim**, *President, Planned Parenthood Federation of Nigeria. First woman to fill the positions of Commissioner for Home Affairs and later of Information in the then Bauchi State of Nigeria (now split into Bauchi and Gombe States.)*

## 13. Comfort Aiyepeku

### “If I’m governor...”

**C**hief (Mrs.) Comfort Aiyepeku, the Iyalaje of Ijumaland and the Iyalode of Ekirin-Adeland is vying for the post of governor of Kogi State in the elections scheduled for July/August 1998. She was the first woman Director General of the Women Commission in Kogi State (1992). Aiyepeku was a participant at CEDPA- organized Public Life Skills workshop in Oshogbo

“ ... 1979, when the ban on politics was lifted and I was in Kwara state then, and they were encouraging womens to participate. That was the National Party of Nigeria (NPN). Luckily for me, they approached me and I said why not? Every human being is a political animal... I have not looked back ever since because I find in politics you are able to help people and I love helping people... I was made the Director General, the first woman DG in the state and I was given the Women Commission to run...

Later, I then moved to a parastatal, that is the Kogi Travellers. I was put in charge to improve the transportation industry in my state. Luckily, that was the time they were giving buses to some companies in Nigeria. My state was one of the eight states given the recovery vans worth more than N9 million free of charge from the government. We then proceeded to get more vehicles for our fleet. And I was lucky I was able to get nine big buses and mini buses in the fleet from Mass Urban Corporation, Abuja. Today, I am very proud that the fleet of buses is still on the road. The parastatal is buying more buses.



**Chief (Mrs.)  
Comfort Aiyepeku.**

his time around, I'm praying that God will actualize my dream of becoming governor of Kogi State because there is a lot I will be able to do for people when I'm governor of the state. For example, the Widow's Scheme I started when I was the DG, but which was later scrapped. If I'm a governor, I will put it back in place for the women. In my area, when a husband dies, the children suffer... You can't imagine the dilapidated place the widow and the children will live in... their standard of living will suddenly fall. If I'm in charge, I believe, I will be able to put a lot of things in place for the benefit of the mothers and their children. Also I've been sponsoring sports for years; that is trying to keep the children busy, to keep the young ones busy. By so doing, they will not have any time for mischief, for drugs or gangs.

“... I was lucky that 1979 when I was going into active politics, my last baby was over 12 years old. So I wasn't leaving an infant around. Again, I was lucky to have a husband who is very understanding. Up till now he's given me all the support So, it was very easy for me. They call now and then to ask, 'mummy, how far have you gone?' You know I am also a grandmother.”

## 14. Hannatu Ibrahim

**H**annatu Ibrahim, first woman president, Planned Parenthood Federation of Nigeria was also the first woman to fill the positions of Commissioner for Home Affairs and Information in the then Bauchi State of Nigeria; now Bauchi and Gombe States



**Hannatu Ibrahim.**

“I come from Gombe State, from a local government called Balanga. It’s one of the most remote rural areas in this country because you cannot get there during the rainy season, even up till now. I work now as the national president of the Planned Parenthood Federation of Nigeria. I’m a professional broadcaster and I did some radio and television production as well as working in the Ministry of Home affairs and Information in Bauchi State. I believe in the mobilization of people in the rural areas; especially women and children who are the disadvantaged groups. I started various women groups in the then Bauchi State, comprising the present Gombe and Bauchi States. I started the National Council of Women’s Societies there, the Planned Parenthood Federation of Nigeria,

and I’m an adviser on youth activities in the state

...because of my work with the rural communities, the government at that time appointed me commissioner in charge of the ministry of rural development and cooperatives (1979 - 1980) and later redeployed me to the ministry of Home Affairs and Information (1980-1985) to be the image maker of the government. I became a chairperson of the Hotels Board, Bauchi State and later became the chairperson, Women in Development which started the program of Better Life. After some years there was change of Government and I was transferred and appointed commissioner at the Teachers’ Service

## Commission in charge of recruitment of teachers in the State

I am also a great believer in family planning which was why I introduced the Planned Parenthood Federation of Nigeria to my State. As holder of a public office, I knew that family planning was of great benefit to me and brought it to my state in order to tell the women that this is useful. If you want to become empowered, you need to plan your family; you need to space the children so that they can grow in a healthy atmosphere, so you can have time for your husband. Because I have practised it and it works for me, I feel I should tell others...People should also know about sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV/AIDS. The population of this country is expanding. If you have such a large population and you cannot plan, you are heading for danger...”

## Strategies for Advancement -the way forward

**P**erhaps more than any other sphere of life, politics involves competition, going for the highest stakes and therefore involves big money. Thus, Planning, strategizing must take first place in any political agenda. Most of the women interviewed were certainly aware of the importance of strategizing while the Public Life Skills workshops enabled them share strategies which had proved to be very useful in the past...

“You have to be consistent, you have to be as honest as possible. And you have to forget about what people will say. Just believe in what you are doing. Don’t look at the men... don’t be antagonistic towards them. ... let your yes be yes. Let them know where you stand” — **Sa’adatu Kande Balarabe**, *trained as staff nurse/ midwife, went into active politics in 1982. In 1993, contested elections into the House of Representatives and won. Was Director General Women Commission 1991/92 and member of constituent assembly 1987.*

“Well, the strategies I used were... I started with visiting the big-wigs, the title holders, telling them that there’s need for a change. I said : ‘we’ve got so many male representatives, but they have not done enough; there’s need for a change’ and we all know there is need for a change...During my campaigns, I visited a lot of women groups. — Catholic women’s organizations, Anglican women’s organizations — a lot of them. I met women cooperative societies and addressed them on the importance of having a change. But I also realized that I was not representing the women alone, so I went to the men later on. But I first visited women’s organizations”

— **A Master’s degree holder in Management Studies, Azodo Eucharia Okwunna**, *contested and won House of Assembly elections held on December 6, 1997 representing Aguata Local Government Area of Anambra State.*

“Because of the peculiarity of the Nigerian society, the royal blessings of various traditional rulers ought to be sought and obtained. In my case, I sought and received that of the Ooni of Ife, the Orangun of Ila, the Ataoja of Osogbo and the Iyaolode. Without this, I believe my success would have been limited...Also you need to seek the cooperation of women and youth. “ — **Alhaja S. Oyawoye** *Osun State Chairperson of the National Center Party of Nigeria/ leader of the market women and businesswoman.*

## APPENDIX 1

### Facilitating Women's Participation

One of the strategies for increasing women's participation in public life is to offer women the skills, information, knowledge and support necessary to enable them compete favorably with men who by a combination of factors, both economic and social, have had decades of experience and therefore, the advantage.

#### CEDPA Training : 'Women In Public Life Skills' Model (Focus on the Kano workshop)

The Kano 'Women in Public Life Skills' workshop was held at Durbar Hotel, Kano from February 25 to 27, 1997 and had as its theme – Promoting Women's Role in Public Life. The 20 women participants at the workshop were politicians/decision makers drawn from 7 of the northern states of Nigeria, and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The opening ceremony was attended by the Commissioner for Women Affairs for Kano State, Hajiya Hawa Sule Gaya who in a brief speech stressed: "I am appealing to all women,

children and men to strive for more knowledge. I am very happy with this organisation known as CEDPA", she said, adding "I am highly impressed with their work on the empowerment of women".

The opening ceremony was also attended by the Resident Advisor of CEDPA/Nigeria, Dr. Enyantu Ifenne, men and women drawn from both the public and private sectors and the mass media. There were two major presenta-

tions: "Transparency in Public Life" by General Ishola Williams (rt.) of Transparency in Nigeria, a non-governmental organization. General Williams defined transparency as involving "conduct or action



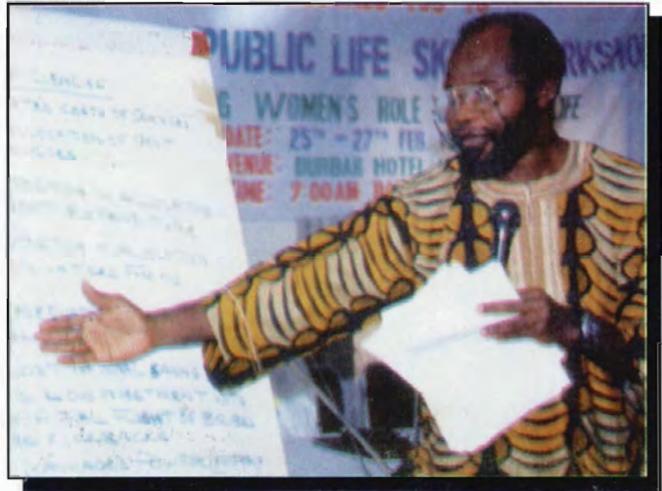
by a government or public official etc., whose exercise of legitimate power is open, clear, not in doubt and easily understood”.

The second presentation was by the guest speaker, Prof. Dahiru Yahaya, titled - “The role of Women in Public Life” which touched on the unnecessary burdens that tradition imposes on women in northern Nigeria, and called on women to challenge those that infringe on their rights.

Immediately after the opening ceremonies, the 20 workshop participants reconvened for workshop sessions facilitated by consultants NkoyoToyo and Bilkisu Yusuf. One of the major objectives of the three-day, intensive workshop was to explore practices and strategies by which women have expanded their role in public life and leadership.

Topics discussed covered a wide variety of public life skills including: Campaign, lobbying, advocacy and mobilization skills. Attention was paid to areas such as dealing with the media, public speaking, building up self confidence/self-esteem while touching on the salient aspects of democratic rule and good governance/leadership. Gender training was also a key focus area.

The mood was one of frankness and openness in spite of the sensitive nature of some of the topics covered. More experienced politicians shared their experiences with others even as they learnt and became aware of issues they never took notice of previously. Some politicians took interest in the 100 Women Group structure and made known their intention to work with these groups or spearhead the formation of such groups in their individual stations.



## APPENDIX 2

### Impact of CEDPA's Public Life Skills Training

Participants were able to discover issues of common interest even though many of them were meeting for the first time. During the short duration of the workshop, some of the politicians met for long hours into the wee hours of the morning, building coalitions and laying the foundation for future networking activities to address issues/problems of common interest to women politicians. Party loyalties did not affect the commitment of participants.

“ I have gained a lot of things from this workshop; the media aspect for instance. Before now, I had not known how to approach the media. In fact, the thought never occurred to me that I could go to the

media and try to publicize what I stood for. But after this workshop, I can now go to the media. Frankly, this is the second time in my life that I have accepted to be interviewed. The first time was when I contested the elections. Because I was very shy, I had to invite them [the journalists] to my house so as to have more confidence. However, with the skills I have acquired at this workshop, I believe that in future I will even be the one to address the media on behalf of my organization”

— Lady Cecilia Ally, State secretary UNCP, contested and lost elections into the state House of Assembly. Member, Northern Cross River State Women Association (NCRWA) and has great interest in environment issues.



Lady Cecilia Ally.

“In fact, everything I learnt here is exciting... Is it mobilization skills? All the knowledge will help me a lot when I assume office as a law maker...I must be truthful to myself, I didn't know most of these things. But with this type of workshop, I have learnt a lot. I can now

discuss policy matters better.”

“Women need workshops like this to share experiences...especially the calibre of women I have seen at this workshop. They are actually the women who work with the people at the grassroots. The problem with some of the other workshops is that they bring women who are not actually working with other women at the grassroots...This is what we need to share ideas”

“...I can now define gender, sex, woman... I now know what they mean...What has really struck me is the gender question... For a public office holder, there arises the need to analyze policies. We used to take these things for granted, overlook them. But now, I know better. As I go back now, even within the party, before we take a decision I shall ask the questions : ‘If we take this decision, how are women going to feel? How is it going to affect them? How is it going to affect them politically, economically and otherwise?’”

— Margaret Endang Ebokpo, retired nurse tutor, final year law student, businesswoman, treasurer NCRWA and Cross River State vice chairman of UNCP. Contested and lost recently concluded state House of Assembly elections, December 1997..



“I have acquired a knowledge of networking with other women and how to mobilize women and plan strategies. I was impressed... when I arrived in Kano (for the Women in Public Life Skills workshop), for the first time I saw posters of women participating in politics. Honestly, I had never thought that any north-

Margaret Endang  
Ebokpo.

ern state could produce a woman to participate fully in politics. If not for this workshop I wouldn't have seen this.” — Fatima Inno Attahiru, Wurno Local Government Area, Sokoto and currently director, personnel management, Ministry of Commerce, Industries and Tourism. Contested chairmanship of Wurno LGA in the Zero party election 1996.



Ene Edeh.

“It’s so real, so objective for applying to daily life. I have not only benefited, but I will be happy to transfer this knowledge to other women. The most amazing part is this advocacy and lobbying. A lot of us misunderstand lobbying. We have seen the positive aspects of lobbying and how effective it can be for us women especially... and advocacy too.” — Ene Edeh, journalist/publisher *The Woman Today* newspaper, Abuja.

## Moving On...

A year ago (1997), CEDPA/Nigeria published *Women on the move*, the first in a series of publications meant to document women development issues in Nigeria as gleaned through the activities and words of the thousands of women (and men) involved as participants, coordinators or beneficiaries of CEDPA -funded development projects throughout Nigeria. *Women on the Move* focused on the impact of projects activities on the lives of women especially, and the excitement generated by the new and expanding roles that women play in their communities as a result of their involvement in development projects.

*Women Politicians on the Move* is the second in the series and deals with the peculiar problems, and successes, of Nigerian women who have chosen to make a career of politics even though it is largely designated a MEN ONLY area. It captures their thoughts, feelings and experiences while exploring the strategies deployed by the women who have 'dared' to compete with men. It is, thus, a valuable resource book capable of inspiring and providing crucial information for younger women politicians.

*Women Politicians on the Move* and, the earlier publication, *Women on the Move*, are ready ammunition for the popular and age-old myth that women are not good leaders and cannot work together. Indeed, women possess leadership qualities and can work together on several levels and across cultural, ethnic, class and political divides. Given space, women have in the past excelled in leadership positions and still do so today. Women can successfully work together, and with men, to improve their individual well-being as well as that of their families and communities.

As women become more involved in activities with other women and men, their levels of awareness increase accord-

ingly. They begin to network, forge alliances and set the agenda for development which can adequately respond to their needs and those of their communities. As women work individually and collectively to actualize their goals; as they grapple with the forces which seek to shape them; as they face new challenges and by so doing triumph; as they MOVE ON with their daily life and struggles, more inspiring stories take shape...

**The Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA)** is a women-focused international organization founded in 1975. Its mission is to empower women at all levels of society to be full partners in development.



**The Centre for Development and Population Activities  
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