

FACTSHEET

CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT BILL TO CREATE ADDITIONAL NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND STATE ASSEMBLY SEATS FOR WOMEN



With a ranking of **184 out of 187 countries**, Nigeria has one of the lowest records for women in parliaments worldwide. It has the lowest number of female legislators in the West African region and is lumped with Eritrea and Somalia in the bottom three in the African continent. This record is expected to worsen without urgent intervention.

The Specific Seats Bill

This is a Constitution Alteration Bill that seeks to remedy the low representation of women in Legislative Houses by providing for the creation of an additional number of legislative seats to be contested and filled only by women in the National Assembly and State Houses of Assembly as a **temporary measure** to boost the numbers of women in decision making.

The Bill **does not reserve** any of the existing seats or constituencies for women. The current seats of 109 Senators and 360 Representatives remain and can be contested by men or women. Bill creates as a temporary measure, women constituencies to add to existing seats and to be contested by women only. It has a **sunset clause** which means that it will be abolished after a period of 16 years or 4 election cycles.

Implications if passed as proposed

- ◆ Amendment to **Section 48: 37 additional Women Senators (one per State & FCT)**
- ◆ Amendment to **Section 49: 74 additional Women Representatives (two per State & FCT)**
- ◆ Amendment to **Section 91: 108 additional Women in the State Houses of Assembly nationwide (three per State)**
- ◆ The bill does not create a superior or inferior legislative status for the women seats as women occupying such seats would have same privileges and responsibilities as existing members.

Quick Fact

The 1979 Constitution of the Second Republic provided for **5 Senators per State** and for **450 House of Representatives members**. This is more than the current total of 469 for both chambers in the 1999 constitution.

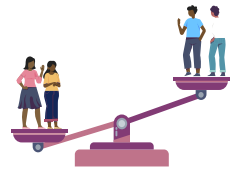
Current Facts

- 8** Number of Women in the 9th Senate
- 13** Number of Women in the 9th House of Representatives
- 45** Number of women currently in the 36 State Houses of Assembly of 990 seats
- 15*** State Houses of Assembly with no female legislator.

* **Abia, Bauchi, Borno, Edo, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Sokoto, Taraba, Yobe and Zamfara.**

Why this Particular Proposal?

To correct historical imbalances in electoral politics



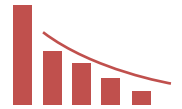
Voting rights for men and women attained at different times = 1922 for men vs. 1979 for all women, a difference of 57 years (shortly before 1979 only women in the old eastern and western regions could vote).

Resistance to other affirmative action options



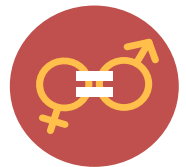
Efforts to reserve seats for women from existing seats have not worked in the past because it will require replacing men with women.

Poor Global Ranking



- ◆ **184 out of 187 countries** on the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) ranking of women in national parliaments
- ◆ **149 out of 187** on the Global Gender Gap Index (GGI) 2021 by the World Economic Forum

Global best practice



- ◆ **132 countries** worldwide use one form of gender or electoral quota to elect women or appoint them to political structures. This includes Saudi Arabia, which as of 2015, was the last country to grant women voting rights.
- ◆ The additional seats proposal is a measure in use by other African countries such as Uganda and Tanzania and it is proven to work.

Best-Fit with Nigeria's Electoral System



Nigeria's first-past-the post/plurality electoral system is widely known to be **unfavorable to women candidates** because each party nominates only one candidate per constituency, thus, political parties tend to go for male incumbents who are seen as the safest and most broadly accepted candidate. Challenging a male candidate with a female candidate can create resistance within the party. In essence, there is little incentive for political parties operating in this system to disrupt the status quo. To avoid this, first-past-the-post countries use seat reservations in the form of specific or additional seats for female candidates only.

Contrast this with the Proportional Representation (PR) Electoral System

More women are elected in countries with Proportional Representation (PR) electoral system where political parties win legislative seats in accordance with the proportion of votes they receive at elections.. Such countries can also nominate a group of Legislators to represent one constituency thus making it easier to nominate a mix of men and women and share seats accordingly.

Why Legislate? Why Not Leave Political Parties To Decide?

Constitutional or legislated quotas are the **fastest and most effective way** of achieving increased female representation. Political parties in Nigeria often promise voluntary quotas i.e., numeric targets for underrepresented groups such as women, youths or persons with disabilities in their party constitutions and manifestoes, but they are never implemented. Country experiences show that to ensure that affirmative action targets/quotas are applied, they need to be legally binding via Legislation.

Quick Facts

- ◆ The lowest representation of women parliamentarians and councillors in African countries is in First-Past-The-Post countries with no special measures or quotas. E.g., Nigeria
- ◆ The **top 10** countries in the African ranking of women in parliament use special measures/gender quotas.
- ◆ Women constitute **34% of parliamentarians and 30% of councillors** in African countries with the PR system.

Quick Fact

The 2008 Uwais Electoral Reform Panel Report recommended the creation of **108 additional legislative seats** to be filled on a proportional representation basis, 30% of which would be for women.



41 African Countries using Special Measures to Elect Female Legislators

41 out of 54 African countries have constitutional, legislated or voluntary party quotas.

Algeria, Angola, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Republic of the Congo (Brazzaville), Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zimbabwe.

Won't this Increase the Cost of Governance?

PLAC conducted a study on the cost and benefits of the special seats bill. Our finding reveals that the **cost of the additional members in the National Assembly being sought will amount to less than 1% increase in the annual national budget**. Savings from duplications in the national budget and reduction of wastages can jointly cover the additional cost. Moreover, it is a temporary measure that will be ended after a period. Also, the benefits of women inclusion far outweigh the costs as they bring in unquantifiable **value and benefits**.



OUR REQUEST TO LEGISLATORS

Please support this proposal.
Vote “Yes” to the Additional Seats for Women Bill!

Empowering Women is Smart Economics

There is an economic cost to women exclusion. Higher levels of discrimination are associated with lower levels of national income. **Nigerian women could help transform the economy if given the chance.**

- \$340bn** — Regional income loss in sub-saharan Africa from gender-based discriminatory social institutions. (OECD)
- \$95bn** — Yearly economic loss in sub-saharan Africa due to gender gaps in the workforce (UNDP)
- \$229bn** — Projected overall economic gain if Nigeria reduces gender inequality by 2025 (McKinsey Global Institute).
- 23%** — Projected overall growth in GDP if Nigeria increases women's participation in the economy by 2025. (McKinsey Global Institute).

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