

THE IMPACTS OF INCREASED WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENTS

**CWP Regional Sensitization Workshop in
Dar es salaam, Tanzania**

Dr Bilkisu Gana,

October 2022

Presentation Outline

1. The historical perspective of female's political participation around the world;
2. Female active legislation from the feminist perspectives
3. Impact of female in political circle or legislative representation
4. Challenges of Female Legislative participation and,
5. The Rise of Women Activism in Politics
6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Preamble

- Primarily, there was a constant call for female to occupy leadership and elective positions, especially because it is believed that female will be more compassionate, in Governance and also believed that they will bring it and its dividends to the grassroots.
- Beijing Platform for Action conference held in September 1995 came up with resolutions and Governments across the globe were tasked to ensure more participation of female in all levels, which will help champion equal participation, and leadership of female in public and political life.
- Female political participation is a human right issues that allows them to participate directly or through participation in conducting public affairs and government.
- Both 1948 universal declaration of human right and international convention on civil and political rights of female participation and later enshrined in the convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) adopted by UN in Beijing 1975.

Preamble contd.

- South Africa develop community (SADC) recommends gender policy and institutional frameworks, which led to the declaration on gender and development, adopted in November 1977 in Blantyre by SADC Heads of government.
- This led to the recognition of gender equality as a human right, and a commitment of 30% quota of female representation in decision making process in 2005.
- However, the commitment was just on paper as many countries are yet to implement it.

Part 1. The Historical Perspective of Female's Political Participation Around the World

- Historically, female in politics and leadership around the world varies from countries to another:
- In Afghan female's political participation has significantly improved with the proportion of seat held by female in the parliament, which rises from 4% in 1995 to 28% in 2018.
- in Australia female in politics ranked 50 out of 190 countries in terms of female in the lower house of parliament as at January 1st 2017.
- In 2003, Finland made a historical moment where all top leaders of the country were female and also represented different political parties;
- In Spain Pedro Sanchez, the leader of Spanish socialist party presented his cabinet which included 11 females and 6 males on June 6, 2018, making it the cabinet with highest proportion of female in the world at the time.

Part 1. The Historical Perspective of Female's Political Participation Around the World contd.

- Turkey in 2018, the number of female in parliament has been continually risen and female representation rate did not fall below 10% after the 2007 election.
- Over the last two decades, the rate of female representation in national parliaments globally has incrementally increased from 11.8% in 1998 to 23.5% in 2018.
- In Sub-Saharan – Africa, where in the last 20 years the number of female in parliaments has risen from 11—23.6% and in Arab states region has seen increase from 3.1 –17.5%.
- However, the total global female representation is still well below the 30% bench mark often identified as the necessary level of representation to achieve a “critical mass”.

Table 1: African Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians from 2016 – 2020
Source: CPA Africa Region, 2022

Ranking	Countries	Total Members	2016			2020		
			Male	Female	Female %	Male	Female	Female %
1	Rwanda	106	45	61	58	47	59	61
2	South Africa	454	267	187	42	250	204	45
3	Mozambique	250	151	99	40	144	106	43
4	Tanzania	372	236	136	37	227	145	39
5	Namibia	146	93	53	37	94	52	36
6	Uganda	386	251	135	35	226	160	42
7	Cameroon	280	204	76	28	193	87	32
8	Kenya	416	329	87	21	320	96	24
9	Malawi	192	160	32	17	148	44	23
10	Lesotho	153	112	41	27	118	35	23
11	Seychelles	32	18	14	44	24	8	25
12	Mauritius	69	61	8	12	55	14	21
13	Eswatini	95	81	14	15	76	19	20
	Zambia	150	100	50	33	100	50	33

Figure 1: African Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians from 2016 – 2020

- It shows that the total parliamentary reps risen from 1021 in 2016 to a total of 1143members in 2020 and total rise of 3% in the strengths of women parliamentary representation among African states from 26% participation in 2016 up to 29% in the year 2020 respectively;

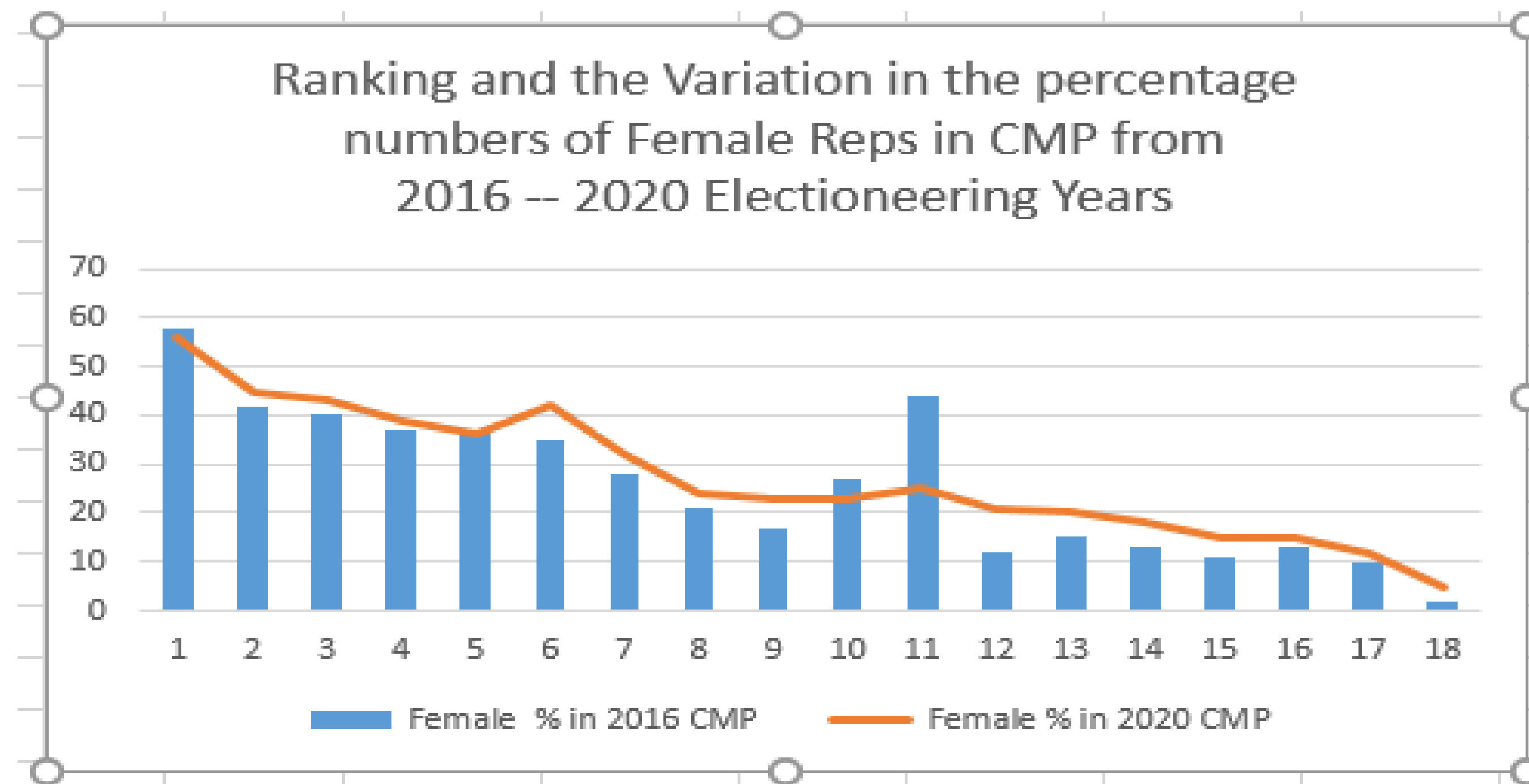


Figure 2: Gap between Men & Women Parliamentarians in 2016

The Gap between Male & Female Commonwealth African Women
Parliamentary in 2016

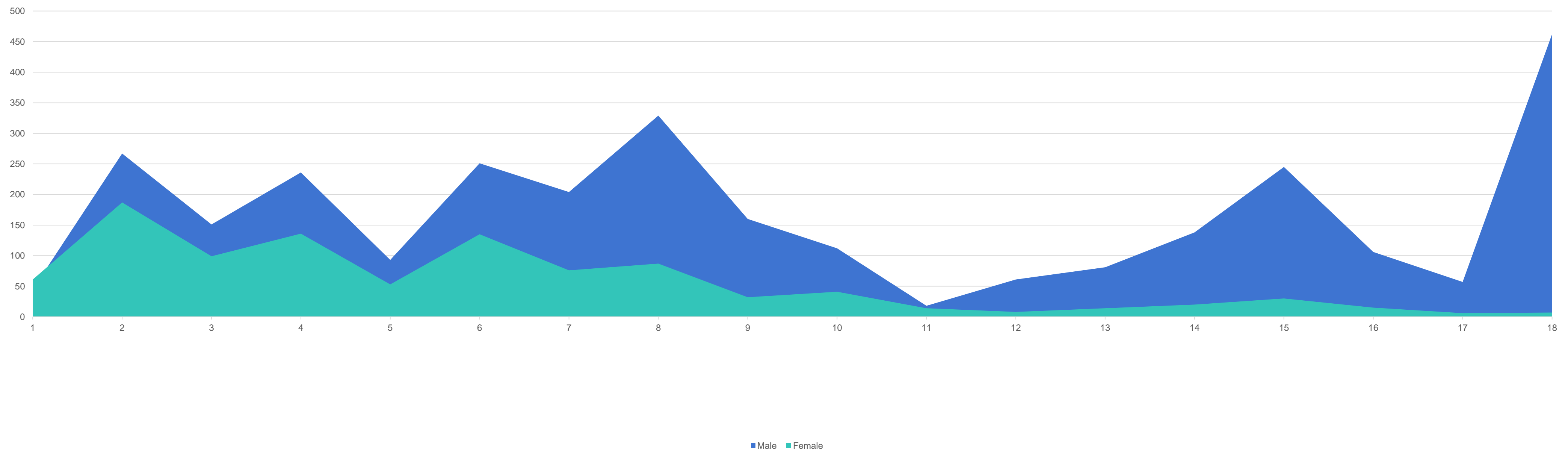
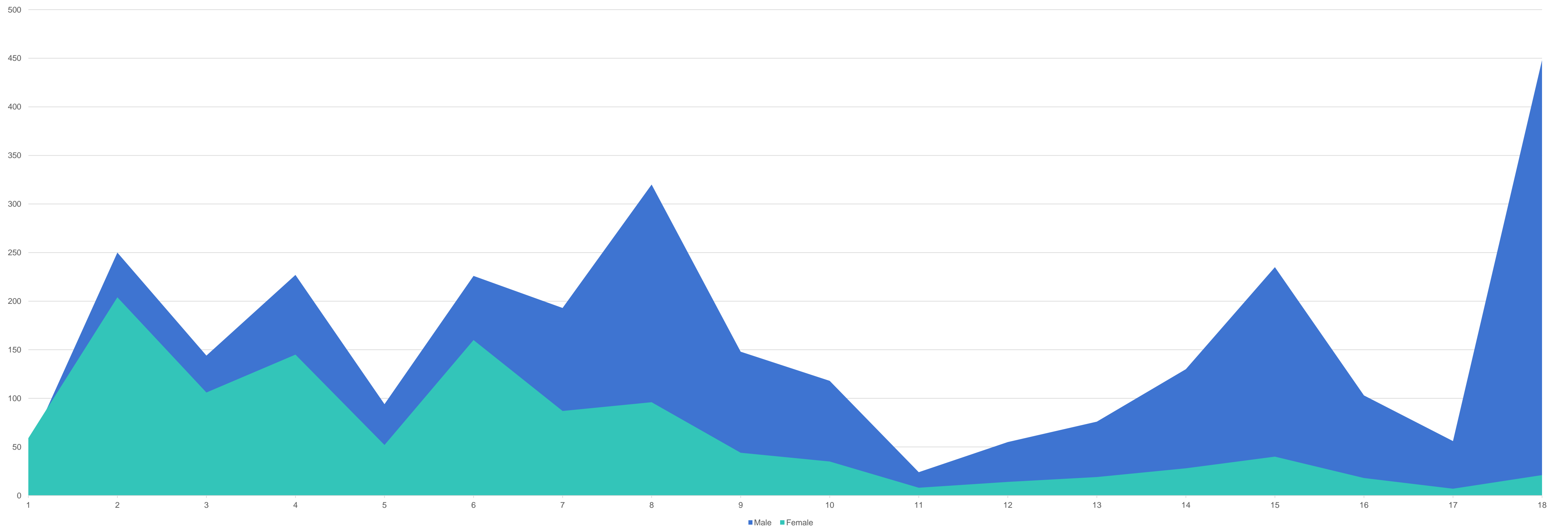


Figure 3: Gap between Men & Women Parliamentarians in 2020

The Gap between Male & Female Commonwealth African Women Parliamentary in 2020



Part 2: Female Active Legislation from the Feminist Perspectives

- A critical look at feminist theory, also known as feminism adds impetus to this impact of female participation analogy.
- The theorist in this school of thought believe that in the full economic, political, and social equality for Male and Female.
- Although all feminists strive for gender equality, there are various ways they approach their ideologies, including liberal feminism, socialist feminism, and radical feminism. Below are basic feminist ideas and various approaches to achieving gender equality:
- **Working to increase equality**: Feminist thought links ideas to action, insisting we should push for change toward gender equality and not just talk about it. Just as the author is currently doing at local, state and national levels.
- **Expanding human choice**: The theorists believed that both men and women should have the freedom to develop their human interests and talents, even if those interests and talents conflict with the status quo.

Part 2: Female Active Legislation from the Feminist Perspectives contd.

- **Eliminating gender stratification**: The author supported Feminists theory that oppose laws and cultural norms that limit income, education, and job opportunities for women;
- **Ending sexual violence & promoting sexual freedom**: Feminists feel that women should have control over their sexuality and reproduction.
- The analysis shows that integration of gender oppression with systems of inequality are based on race, class and sexuality.
- It is imperative to divulge on the impact of female legislation to create more awareness to encourage greater female participation in politics and leadership in the country.

Part 3: Impact of Female in political circle or legislative representation

- It is quite evident that females have enhanced their political participation and are often playing the role models in today's political landscape.
- However, its important to note that evidence gathered from the experiences and practices of female parliamentarians worldwide suggests that female political success and impact largely depends upon their links to civil society (Asiedu, Branstette & Gaekwad-Babulal, nd).
- In particular, female reps in their constituencies use their critical mass in parliament through effective networking across party lines and the society at large via lobbying, facilitating legislation and peace-building.
- Furthermore, the socio-political context in which female parliamentarians operate can have positive or negative effects (Asiedu, et al., nd).
- Some the lines of impacts include but not limited to:

Part 3: Impact of Female in political circle or legislative representation contd.

- ***Economic and political advancement.*** Economic and political circumstances, legislature's procedures rules, and background experiences are worthy qualities which often enhance capacity of these women to deliver.
- The big question is; why does the world need more involvement of female in all aspect of political process?
- Female political participation has resulted in tangible gains for democracy, including greater responsible to citizen needs, increased cooperation across party and ethic lines, and a more sustainable future (Karam & Lovenduski, 2005).
- Women participation in political space has been established to bring progress and development to the people especially at the grassroot,

Part 3: Impact of Female in political circle or legislative representation contd.

- ***Responsiveness to women and family Issues:*** Female legislators are highly responsive to constituent concerns.
- Research shows that women lawmakers tend to see “women’s” issues more broadly as social issues, possibly as a result of the traditional roles they played as mothers and caregivers in the communities, and that more women see government as a tool to help serve underrepresented or minority groups.
- Women lawmakers therefore have often been perceived as more sensitive to community concerns and more responsive to constituency needs.
- Indeed, there is high tendencies toward, consensus building, and issue specialization that help female lawmakers achieve increased legislative effectiveness.
- However, institutional circumstances can sometimes curb their impact. In my locality here in Nigeria, an example can be sighted of one our vibrant representative of the National assembly, a female

Part 3: Impact of Female in political circle or legislative representation contd.

- ***Corollary increase in policy making for Equity and Fairness:*** Female's participation in political landscapes help advance gender equality as it affects both the range of policy issues that get considered and the types of solutions they proposed therein.
- Female legislators have a distinct impact on the policy as more female are elected to leadership office, there is a corollary increase in policy making that emphasizes quality of life and reflects the priorities of families, female ethnic and racial minorities.
- According to National Democratic Institute (NDI) chair Madeleine Albright, female in power "can be counted on to raise sensitive issues that others overlook.
- The study of over 100 countries around the world, showed that more than male counterparts, females tend to work across party lines, be highly responsive to constituent concerns, help secure lasting peace, encourage citizen, confidence in democracy through their own participation and prioritize health as seen during the COVID- 19 pandemic, education and other key development indicators.
- Not every female elected would place female's issues or rights at the fore front of her own agenda (Karam & Lovenduski, 2005).

Part 3: Impact of Female in political circle or legislative representation contd.

- ***Inclusiveness, responsiveness and transparency***: Female representation in legislative functions is not the only factor, but its critical for the development of inclusiveness, responsiveness and transparent democratic principles.
- The positive impact of female in politics is undeniable. A particular reference to Kofi Annan assertion, has it that there is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of female in leadership.
- More so, no policy is as powerful in advancing education drive for the next generations than female active participations.
- Madeleine Albright has stated the world is wasting a precious resource in the dramatic underrepresentation of female position, often resulting in exclusion of females' talents and skills in political life.

Part 3: Impact of Female in political circle or legislative representation contd.

- **Team Work:** Male and female legislators most work together in order to solve the myriad of problems in their countries. In order to meet worldwide development goals and build strong, sustainable democracies, female must be encouraged, empowered, and supported in becoming strong political and community leaders.
- **Peace Building:** Women are deeply committed to peace building and post-conflict reconstruction and have a unique and powerful perspective to bring to the negotiating table. Women suffer disproportionately during armed conflict and often advocate most strongly for stabilization, reconstruction and the prevention of further conflict.
- Research shows that women's engagement in the transitional processes and post-conflict governments can increase the legitimacy of emerging institutions, decrease government corruption, broaden the political agenda, promote consultative policymaking and encourage collaboration across ideological lines and social sectors.

Part 3: Impact of Female in political circle or legislative representation contd.

- ***Prioritize women education, health & other key development indicators:*** When women are empowered as political leaders, countries experience higher standards of living, positive developments can be seen in education, infrastructure and health, and concrete steps are taken to help make democracy deliver.
- Using data from 19 OECD countries, researchers found that an increase in women legislators results in an increase in total educational advancement. OECD – for Economic Co-operation and Development (38 member countries)

Part 4: Challenges of Female Legislative participation

- Globally, there are a lot of obstacles ranging from level of socio-economic development, cultural, religious, ethnicity, educational, psychological, political party, male domination financial capacities, to lack of media support that were responsible for the side-lining of female in active politics, however, these barriers differ from countries to countries.
- **Societal Male domination:** Generally, the challenge here that women face when it comes to convincing men to allow them to come in and take some positions in politics is that of gender equality,
- Generally, female in Africa countries politics face a lot of violence in form of gender, sexual, and online harassment, abuse and intimidation.
- Gender inequality within the families, inequitable division of labour within households and cultural attitudes about gender roles further subjugate women and serve to limit their representation in public life.

Part 4: Challenges of Female Legislative participation contd.

- ***Ideological and psychological obstacle***: According to Shvedova (2005) in [Mlambo](#) and [Kapingura](#) (2019) ideological and psychological obstacles results from the traditional role of women in the society of being restricted to mothers or caretakers, forging an image of women being apolitical.
- Ideological and psychological obstacles are gender ideology, cultural patterns, predetermined social roles assigned to women and men, lack of confidence on the side of women to stand for election, women's perception of politics as a dirty game, and the mass media depictions of women.
- ***Financial Capacity***: most women are unable to afford money earmarked for obtaining election forms and financing election campaign, because of their financial constraints and lack of party support even if they are qualified for the position.
- Women are labelled electoral cattle because their organization networks are easily rallied for campaign rallies, balloting and for going to the polls in large numbers, they don't realize their political potentials.

Part 4: Challenges of Female Legislative participation contd.

- ***Culture and traditions:*** A woman is supposed to be a house wife or be a worker, thereby reducing her confidence in venturing in to politics. Politics is termed men and dirty game, not for women that are labelled as the weak sex. This is predicated as cultural patterns that predetermined social roles assigned to women and men ([Mlambo & Kapingura, 2019](#)).
- ***Ethnicity:*** here it's against some ethnic group to allow women venture into politics, they are only used as tools to gather their family to come out and vote.
- ***Religious brief:*** A lot of African countries prevent women to vouch for political positions under the pretence that women are subordinate to men; they are to be led but not to lead even if they have the capability and ability to do so.

Challenges Women Face in Nigerian Political Dispensation

- The challenges women face in politics in Nigeria, are not limited to environmental factors, unequal access to education, religious barriers, family challenges, culture, poverty, domestic responsibilities, men domination, socio political factors, gender and sexual violence, purdah, the above named challenges are mostly seen in the Northern part of Nigeria,
- In southern part of Nigeria women politicians face less of these challenges so they are more in parliament than their female counterparts from the north due to their being exposed to politics and western education earlier than their northern counterparts.

Factors responsible for the rise of women in Parliament in Nigeria.

- **National Council Of Women Society (NCWS).**
- **FOMWAN-** is an Islamic women religious organization that enlightens women on their religious rights to look for political post to enhance development,
- **Christian women Association-**This association is the umbrella of Christian women they organize a lot of activities that hinges on human development like engaging them in entrepreneurship skills to enhance their financial status.
- **Lawyers-** They have helped women in seeking redress and right, for those women that encountered sexual harassment, verbal assault and threat which the evidence are available or handy, the continuous standing up for women in the period of political oppression have helped the women to see the need to rise and seek for their right.
- **Academicians-** Been knowledgeable in the pros and cons of politics and better equipped on how to withstand challenges and obstacles bedeviling the political arena, stand a better chance of competing with their male counterparts.
- **Journalist-**

Female representation in Parliament in Nigeria.

- In Nigeria women are not equal to men in all sphere of life. The status of women in the society is very low compared to their male counterparts, this is because of the patriarchal and heterogeneous nature of the country, men are considered as leaders and they are the decision makers in the family, while women are relegated to the background to take care of domestic responsibilities.
- Political activities encompasses both men and women coming together to protect the rights and interest of its members through mutual understanding and consensus for political and economic growth of Nigeria.
- Miranda 2005 noted that every human being has the right to participate in decision making that define his/her life, this right is the foundation of the ideal of equal participation in decision makings among both genders.
- In 2021 Nigeria has a projected population of 196,651,048 in all, out of this the men populace is 99,579,686 which is (50.6%) and the women populace is 97,071,362 which is 49.4% correspondingly.

Female representation in Parliament in Nigeria contd.

- Hon. **Zainab Gimba** formally a Commissioner of some ministries in Borno state which include poverty alleviation.
- Senator **Abiodun Olujimi** representing Ekiti South Senatorial District, before then she served in various positions which includes deputy Governor Ekiti State in 2005, been in politics since 1977.
- She's known for her crave to drive good Governance to the grassroots through advocacy for right politics and action before and now while in senate.
- She fought effortlessly for the 35% quota for the female ministers on the floor of the house though did not scale through in addition plan to re-present the bill.

Part 5: The Rise of Women Activism in Politics

- The relationship between political participation, gender equality and democratic process is interdependent since the implementation of each depends on each other
- According to the United Nations, gender equality means that women and men have equal opportunities and conditions for realizing their full potential in economic, social, cultural, and political development.
- **Externally-** under gender quotas these bodies of international background like CEDAW, ECOWAS African Union, SADC in their conventions, increased women awareness on their importance in influencing politics and their aspirations and challenging the structure that causes their under-representation.
- These women movements transcend- religious, cultural, political and ethnic diversity to overcome negative perceptions of representation of women in legislature rejecting beliefs that limits women's role in society balancing private family and political life, gaining support from political parties and security campaign funding.

Part 5: The Rise of Women Activism in Politics contd.

- **Gender quotas**— This is a positive measurement instrument used for accelerating the achievement of gender balance, participation and representation by establishing a defined percentage or number of seats to be filled by or allocated to women, or men generally under certain rules or criteria.
- Gender quotas requires that women must constitute a certain number of percent of the members of a body whether a candidate lists, parliamentary or government. In Africa gender quotas are not new.
- Ghana was the first country to start it in 1960 according to Trip 2006, others are Tanzania (1975), Egypt (1976) Senegal (1982) and Uganda 1989.
- Gender quotas can also set a limit on the representation of both gender hence, no sexes will have a greater representation in the decision making bodies.
- Quotas have been useful in gaining support and opportunities when achieving sits of power although it is seen by many as wrong doings.

Part 6: Conclusion and Recommendations of Female in Parliamentary Representation

- There is growing recognition of the untapped capacity and talents of female and female's leadership. A considerable minority of all legislator with significant impact, rather than a token few individuals of female's representation in the world's population.
- The full and equitable perception of female participating in public life is essential to building and sustaining strong, vibrant democracies.
- Accordingly, the meaningful participation of female in national, local and community leadership roles has become an important focus on global, development policy, still some ask what does it matter if female hold political offices as leaders, elected policy makers or civil society activist.
- In developed countries, higher female representation has not affected public policies as measured by spending patterns.
- However, evidences have shown that female representation brought about changes in parliamentary deliberations and specific policy choices for example, maternal and child health care, increase in female representation has reduce corruption, rent extraction by those in authority thereby improving institutional quality.

Part 6: Conclusion and Recommendations of Female in Parliamentary Representation contd.

- Politics, as in many spheres of life is still very much a male enclave. From the local government unit up to the national level, the parliamentary inclusive, are dominated by Men.
- In fact, equality between men and women in all aspects of life cannot be achieved if there is no equality in the area of governance and political representation.
- Indeed, the women's movement and rising levels of women's political participation have increased the pressure on parties to send more women to parliament.
- Thus, in this paper, it is strongly recommended for all stakeholders to ensure that certain party characteristics are evolved to encourage more female representation in the legislative functions for peace, progress and development.
- High levels of institutionalization, a localized level of candidate nomination, and leftist and post materialist values all individually enable parties to increase the representation of women.

THANK YOU!