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**Understanding Women, Youths and
Other Marginalised Groups in Political
Party Activities in Nigeria**

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Centre for Democracy and Development



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Introduction

Democracy as a system of government provides equal opportunity platform for political participation and fairness in such competition. Political participation is an essential ingredient of democracy as much as a number of other human rights like freedom of expression, association, right to free flow of communication, right to influence decision-making process and right to social justice, health services, better working condition and opportunity for franchise. Any claim to democratic regime or state must essentially embrace a high degree of competitive choice, openness, and enjoyment of civil and political liberties and popular participation that embraces all groups of the society.

The existence of political parties is based on the principle of promotion of political mobilization across all sections of the citizenry in a democratic society. Open, competitive and fair participation within a framework of legitimate, credible institutions enable citizens and groups to defend their interests, to act on issues they care about, and to hold officials responsible and accountable for their decisions and actions. Institutions such as political parties built on connections with socially rooted interests can moderate conflict, aggregate demands into public policy backed by a working consensus and can earn legitimacy for the state.

In Nigeria, change, ushered in by the global wave of democratization gave birth to the 4th Republic in 1999. The Nigerian peculiar political environment since then, has been marked with a proliferation of political parties, which rose to as high as 60 in 2011 (Yagboyaju, 2012), since the dawn of the Fourth Republic. These political parties are expected to provide platforms for political participation for all Nigerians, especially the hitherto marginalized groups like women, the youths (Pogoso, 2012) and people living with disabilities. Yet, despite the numerous political parties that exist in the Nigerian political space, cries of marginalization of these groups still reverberate the entire political system. It is against this background that this paper investigates the extent and pattern of political parties' inclusion of women, youths and other 'marginalised groups in their activities.

Conceptual and Theoretical Issues

The central organizing concepts of this paper include political parties, women, youths and 'marginalised groups.

Political parties

A political party is an organized group of people with at least roughly similar political ideas and philosophy that seek to democratically get or retain political power by presenting candidates for election into public offices (Osumah, 2009; Wilson, 1992:138). The basic functions of political parties include: identifying and training leaders, developing policy platforms;

presenting the best aspirant and candidates for office; regulating office holders; conducting research on party and political development; encouraging public discourses; and committing openly to the sustenance of democracy in every regard (Ihonvbere, 2009).

The importance of political parties in the functioning of liberal democracy cannot be over-emphasized. Political parties are meant to create more open political environment in which citizens can actively participate in the democratic process. In this way political parties become more open and representative organizations. Parties do not just contest elections but also mobilize and organize the social forces that energize democracy. Parties connect leaders to followers and simplify political choices, framing them in terms of citizens' own interests. Women

A woman is operationally discussed as an adult female person, a grown up female as distinguished from a man or a child. Women constitute at least half of the world's population. They make important and largely unacknowledged contributions to economic life and play crucial roles in all spheres of society. Despite the fact that women constitute a significant percentage of the world's population, they are discriminated against in the political process. Women's rights around the world are an important indicator to understand global well-being. Yet, despite many successes in empowering women, numerous issues still exist in all areas of life, ranging from the cultural, political to the economic. For example, women often work more than men, yet are paid less; gender discrimination affects girls and women throughout their lifetime; and women and girls are often the ones that suffer the most poverty (<http://www.globalissues.org/article/166/womens-rights>).

Youths

The concept of youth has been subjected to diverse interpretations and flexible usage. Nigeria has a population of one hundred and forty million people (NPC 2006) which makes her the most populated nation in Africa. One third of her population is young people between the ages of 10 to 24 years. The Nigerian National Youth policy (2001:2), defines youth as comprising all young persons between the ages 18 and 35 years who are citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (<http://nigeria.unfpa.org/youngpeople.html>). Increasingly, youth identity in contemporary Africa has become synonymous with unemployment and poverty, in which young people continue to depend on their parents or relatives; making them in many respect "adults youths" (Obi, 2006). It also explains why such youths are available to be exploited by older people to act as perpetrators and victims of the political of violence. Referring to this social category as extended youths, Gore and Pratten (2003: 216) perceive them as being defined irrespective of actual age, through economic and social circumstance and little prospect for future advancement. At another level, the youth may also be categorized as the younger generation associated with protests, social revolutions or violent change. In this case, the youth become associated with energy, activism, sacrifice and ever ready to work for social transformation as a guarantee for a better and secure future (Obi, 2006: 6).

Marginalised groups

It would be impractical for the purpose of this presentation to go into every detail of every practical, social, ethical and legal consideration of all marginalized groups. Every situation is different, and individuals are different in the scope of their needs and abilities. Also, there are

individuals and groups whose experience of vulnerability can be temporary and circumstantial. However, marginalized populations include the economically disadvantaged, racial and ethnic minorities, Persons living with disabilities, low-income children, the elderly, the homeless, those with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), and those with other chronic health conditions, including severe mental illness. The vulnerability of these individuals is enhanced by race, ethnicity, age, sex, and factors such as income, insurance coverage (or lack thereof), and absence of a usual source of care. (See <http://www.ajmc.com/publications/supplement/2006/2006-11-vol12-n13suppl/Nov06-2390ps348-s352#sthash.rgFPc0di.dpuf>)

A Marginalized Group refers to a group of people who had been relegated to the lower echelons, or outer edges, of society based on gender, education, genealogy, culture, nationality, race, or economic status. The vulnerable peoples of Nigeria include: children, many forced into child labour, out of school due to no fault of theirs, denied the innocence of their youth; the old age people who should be enjoying a pension or some form of social security but are denied these by the excessively greedy politicians at all levels, at a time they were supposed to enjoy the remaining part of their lives; and persons living with disabilities persons who are among the most marginalized groups in the society and encounter various challenges.

Political Parties, Women, Youths and Other Marginalised Group.

Political parties are essential instruments for the representation of political constituencies and interests, aggregating demands and preferences, recruiting and socializing candidates for public offices, setting policy agendas, crafting policy alternatives, forming effective governments and integrating groups and individuals into the democratic process, breeding consensus, providing alternative world views and political communication among others (Diamond, 1997). For political parties to lay claims to being democratic, they must demonstrate inclusiveness and representativeness of the various segments of their society.

Political parties must show interests and advance policies that reflect the conglomerate of interests (including those of women, youths and marginalized groups) in the society. Some Nigerian political parties have provisions in their party manifestoes and programmes for women, youths and other marginalized groups. These political parties reflect in their constitutions and manifestoes objectives and policy that on the surface seem to be committed to promoting policies that advance the welfare and rights of women, youths and marginalized groups in society. But unfortunately, in most political parties, this simply remains an ideal. Most political parties have thus far not implemented those ideals.

Political Parties and Women

The low level of political and civic participation of women in Nigeria is alarming and disturbing. This hinders women from contributing their quota to the development and consolidation of democracy in Nigeria. Empirical observations have shown that Nigerian women in positions of responsibilities are noted to be hard-working and firm in decision-making and have contributed in no small measure to the development of the country (International Women's Democratic Network, 2012). Despite their enormous contributions in economic and social spheres; they have been marginalized in civic and political participation.

In contemporary Nigeria women play multiple roles within the family, community and the society

at large, but there is still a lot of gender discrimination in the public sphere where women are marginalized in the electoral process and where they are still under-represented in key sectors of the economy, politics and social institutions.

Since the inception of the current democratic governance in Nigeria in 1999, concerted efforts have been made by women's groups, women advocates and activists, civil society organizations, Nigerian government and International agencies and donor community to increase women's participation in both political and public life; however statistics reveal a very low and disproportionate representation of women in governance. This situation falls way below the recommended 30% of the Beijing Platform of Action and 35% recommendation of National Policy on Women adopted in July 2000.

TABLES ILLUSTRATING FEMALE REPRESENTATION FROM 1999-2011

Table 1: Women Elected to Public Office in Nigeria 1999-2011.

Office	1999		2003		2007		2011	
	Seat Available	Women	Seat Available	Women	Seat Available	Women	Seat Available	Women
President	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Senate	109	3 (2.8)	109	4(3.7)	109	9(8.3)	109	7(6.4)
House of Reps	360	7(1.9)	360	21(5.8)	360	27(7.5)	360	25(6.9)
Governor	36	0	36	0	36	0	36	0
State of Assembly (SHA)	990	24(2.4)	990	40(3.9)	990	57(5.8)	990	68(6.9)
SHA Committees Chairpersons	829	18(2.2)	881	32(3.6)	887	52(5.9)	887	-
LGA Chairpersons	710	13(1.8)	774	15(1.9)	740	27(3.6)	740	-
Councillors	6368	69(1.1)	6368	267(42)	6368	235(3.7)	6368	-

Table 2: Women Elected to Political Office by Zones

2011	Governor	Senate	House of Reps	State House of Assembly
North-Central	0	1	2	15
North-East	0	1	4	4
North-West	0	1	1	2
South-East	0	2	6	21
South-South	0	1	4	12
South-West	0	1	8	15

Table 3: Participation by Gender in Elections by April 2011

Office Contested	Gender		Total
	Female Candidates	Male Candidates	
2011			
President	1(0)	19(1)	20
Vice President	3(0)	17(1)	20
Governor	13(0)	340(36)	353
Deputy Governor	58(1)	289(35)	347
House of Reps	220(19)	2,188(341)	2408
Senatorial	90(7)	800(102)	890

The numbers in bracket represent elected candidates.

Source: British Council Report (2012) "Gender in Nigeria Report 2012: Improving Lives of Girls and Women in Nigeria". [Online] Available: <http://www.britishcouncil.org/Africa-ng-gender-report-2012>

The position of women's participation in the executive arm of government is alarming, no woman president and no woman governor from 1980 to 2011. The April 2011 elections in Nigeria led to the election of 32 women to the National Assembly, a short fall from 2007 performance. The best women have enjoyed so far is four deputy governors in Ekiti, Ogun, Osun and Anambra states. An overview of the four elections demonstrate that the Senate had 2.8% women representation in 1999, 3.7% in 2003, 8.3% in 2007 and 6.4% in 2011. The House of Representatives had 3.3%, 6.1%, 7.2% and 6.7% respectively. Also, 2.8%, 5.6% and 16.7% women were deputy governors between 1999 and 2007. The percentage dropped to 5.6% in the 2011 elections. At the four elections, the states Houses of Assembly had 1.2%, 3.5%, 5.25% and 7.0% women representation respectively. Also of significance is the increase in the number and percentage of women elected to the State Houses of Assemblies in the 2011 elections to 7%.

The performance of women in terms of entry into political offices as reflected in the results of the elections fall below the expectation of the United Nations' and civil society groups' mandate that advocate 30% representation (Pogoson, 2005). Women's performance in politics is still far behind that of men as well as the 30% international benchmark. Moreover, the marginal increase reported in the respective elective positions was as a result of the growing political consciousness of women and the activities of women organizations and civil society organizations. It was not in any way due to any deliberate government policy geared towards enhancing women participation in electoral politics, under former President Obasanjo¹. Power and decision making has been a major problem because Nigerian women have not even gone beyond the political level they were under the military. There has not been any significant improvement. Nigerian women remain underrepresented in the current democratic governance. They constitute less than 8% in elective positions at all levels of Governance. The few that contested did so under unpopular parties as the major political parties discriminated against the candidacy of women (Luka, 2011). One of the impediments preventing women from active participation in politics and governance are patriarchal dominance in political parties, god-fatherism, indigeneship, intra-party rigging, political violence, thuggery and high level intimidation. This very character of the Nigerian politics forecloses the door of participation from the women. Money politics, high cost of financing political parties and campaigns are big obstacles to women's active and effective participation in politics. Also, political party formation in Nigeria evolved from club and informal meetings initiated by male friends and business partners; women are usually contacted at a much later stage when party structures are already in place for membership. Therefore women are excluded from the formation stage of political parties thus denying them the benefits accruing to foundation membership and collective ownership of the parties. The non-inclusion of women in top party hierarchy and structure leads to the absence of women in the mainstream political parties. Also, non adoption/implementation of affirmative action in the constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria, constitution and manifestos of political parties has further widened the gap between women and men's participation in politics.

¹ Iloh, E.C .and M. A. Ikenna. 2009. 'Electoral Process and Gender Discrimination in Nigeria: A Case Study of 2003 And 2007 General Elections', *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa* Volume 10, No.4

Party involvement of youths

Youths are not adequately represented in formal political institutions and processes such as parliaments, political parties, elections, and public administrations. The situation is even more difficult for both young women as well as women at mid-level and decision-making/leadership positions. Yet, before independence in 1960 a type of organization that was more pointedly political in Nigerian politics was the youth or student group, which became the vehicle of intellectuals and professionals. They were the most politically conscious segment of the population and stood in the vanguard of the nationalist movement (<http://countrystudies.us/nigeria/20.htm>).

Currently, most political parties have youth wings for instance, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) National Youth Vanguard is a forum for all PDP Youths with "the mandate of re-enforcing, defending, upholding and sustaining the ideology and directions of the leadership of the Party" whilst the All Progressives Congress Party's (APC) Youth Forum, seeks to "engage the leadership and followership of the party in defining a quality yardstick for democratic values and governance through various policy engagements". Besides being members of the youth wings, the youths seem not to be involved in the day to day activities of the party. <http://www.thenewtimespress.com/node/457>

Indeed, the youths in Nigeria are mainly the visible actors in the politics of thuggery and snatching of ballot boxes. Being largely unemployed, they are really tools in the hands of politicians. They are the ones that get killed, maimed or arrested and prosecuted while the sponsors remain untouchable and go ahead to recruit other youths when the foot soldiers are caught. Evidence from the 2003 and 2007 general elections in Rivers state reveals how the state government subverted the electoral process by exploiting the youths. In particular, the state government through the People's Democratic Party (PDP) allegedly used violence as a strategy by arming the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) led by Asari Dokubo and the Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV) led by Ateke Tom. Ateke Tom for example acknowledged the role he played in the 2003 elections in an interview by the Human Rights Watch when he noted: "Governor Odili had promised cash and jobs in great quantities for me and my boys and in return any place he sent me I conquered for him" (HRW, 2007:81). Ahead of 2003 polls in Gombe state, political parties mobilized large numbers of young men ostensibly to protect their votes from attempts at rigging by rival parties. However, according to community leaders, civil society activists and other residents of the state interviewed by the HRW (2007), those youths were used to help rig the parties to victory that year by stealing and stuffing ballot boxes, chasing away voters and intimidating the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) officials. This was the origin of a continuing wave of violence that had by the time of Nigeria's 2011 polls gotten entirely out of control.

Political Parties and Marginalised Groups

A significant population of marginalised groups includes persons living with disabilities. A disability is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. Thus, disability is a complex phenomenon, reflecting an interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society in which he or she lives (<http://www.who.int/topics/disabilities/en/>).

Obstacles reside in Nigeria as in some countries that result in persons with disabilities being

sidelined from the electoral process. According to the Chairman of the Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities' committee to ensure the participation of its members in the electoral process towards 2015- the association had observed "During the 2011 general elections, a lot of persons with disabilities were disenfranchised," He noted that "When they went to the polling booths, so many of them were told that their names were not on the list of registered voters, while their names were there; some of them were asked why they were at the polling booths; some were even asked who told them to go to the polling booths just they were seen to have disabilities" The committee aimed to sensitize the local governments, state governors, the president and the legislature to involve persons with disabilities in the 2015 general elections."(<http://globalaccessibilitynews.com/2013/02/25/nigerian-with-disabilities-seek-participation-in-electoral-process/>).

Strengthening Women, Youths and Marginalised Groups in Political Parties : Best Practises From Other Countries

Political Parties, Women's Representation and Experiences

The Nordic countries for decades had the highest political representation of women in the world until recently. Contrary to common perceptions, no constitutional clause or law demands a high representation of women in Scandinavia. For the most part the increase can be attributed to sustained pressure by women's groups within parties as well as the women's movement in general. Women mobilized and organized to ensure that the political parties increased their number of women candidates, that is to say, women candidates who had a fair chance of winning. In post-conflict societies, the international community has put strong pressure on the actors of reconstruction to take effective measures to include women. Thus we see gender quotas of 25-35 percent being introduced in strongly patriarchal cultures where very few women were represented earlier, for example, in the post-conflict societies of Afghanistan and Iraq. Quota provisions have also been introduced in the Balkans following strong pressure from the local women's movements in alliance with the international community.

Across sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) the use of electoral gender quotas has also transformed national legislatures in the space of just two decades. Since 2003, Rwanda has led the world in women's representation in a single or lower house of parliament and, following the 2013 election, Rwanda has 63.8% women in its Chamber of Deputies. This even surpassed the feted (38.7 per cent) average in Scandinavian countries. Article 76 of the Rwanda Constitution plays an important role in this, establishing a quota system for women. The Rwanda case demonstrates an electoral system that compels the parties to field women in mainstream seats. In South Africa the issue of women's quotas was articulated amidst concerns about the risks of entrenching women's status as a marginalized social group confined to and protected through specialized forms of representation. Therefore while the country's constitution does not mandate quotas, its PR list system allowed the parties (in particular the ruling African National Congress (ANC) to address issues of equity in representation, not only for women but also for other minorities. The ANC pledged its own quota system, currently promoting a policy of a 50/50 split representation for women and men. This has had an impact on some of the opposition parties, which have also pledged to increase women's representation in their structures.

Political Parties and Youths

Young people have been organized by political parties in established democracies into youth organizations or youth wings from around the start of the 20th century. In the 1960s and 1970s, when parties acted more like 'mass parties', youth wings could offer their members access to benefits such as jobs and social activities, whilst the involvement of young people was seen as essential to ensuring party longevity (Abrams and Little 1965, Hooghe et al. 2004, Russell 2005, Cross and Young 2008 cited in Fiona Mary Robertson (2009). However, as the structure and nature of parties changed, youth wings have also experienced significant alterations. Reports show that youth wing membership numbers in some established democracies have fallen, sometimes dramatically, over recent decades. This is to be a consequence of not only organizational changes in parties themselves but also a product of social trends leading to the increasing disillusionment with political agents amongst young people (Henn et al. 2005, Sloam 2007 cited in Fiona Mary Robertson (2009).

Despite shrinking membership and related changes in the activities of many party youth wings across established democracies coupled with increased societal distrust towards parties, most European political parties support ancillary youth organizations. This is because they retain a number of important functions for the party. These include acting as a recruitment source for future politicians, offering legitimacy for the party and providing a labour force for party activities (Scarrow 1996, Hooghe et al. 2004 cited in Fiona Mary Robertson (2009). Young members therefore are seen as providing a vital link between the party and wider society. Interventions with marginalized groups

Programmes that target marginalized groups have been initiated by some countries and states. For instance, the Government of Bangladesh maintains a variety of social safety net programmes designed to meet the immediate food needs of 'marginalised groups in high food insecure urban and rural areas. (<http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/26/5/1220.full>). Also, Sierra Leone's Community Reintegration and Rehabilitation Project (CRRP)/National Social Action Project reaches Ex-Combatants, Internally Displaced and Returning Refugees who are willing to return to their communities of origin following a Civil War Refugees and ex-combatants, from all sides, who have put down their arms and seek to reintegrate into society and the economy. The project targeted the neediest population groups : female headed households with young children; physically disabled; people still living as refugees or internally displaced; orphans and other vulnerable children; ex-combatants and other unemployed youth (high risk group which should not remain "idle" as they can cause civil unrest); and people traumatized by war (http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTSF/Resources/395669-1124228420001/1563161-1127938262697/Sierra_Leone_SF_Vuln.pdf). Others are Malawi's Social Action Fund Reaching to orphans, the disabled, malnourished, HIV/AIDS infected and/or affected people, the elderly and widows. The project raised awareness about the targeted marginalised groups through sensitization and orientation of the general public by senior politicians. (http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTSF/Resources/395669-1124228420001/1563161-1127938262697/Case_Study_MASAF2.pdf).

Regarding Persons living with Disabilities, a number of laws in Canada have established equality rights for persons with disabilities including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and human rights codes across federal, provincial and territorial jurisdictions. In 2005, all parties of the Ontario Legislature passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) that

provides for the setting of regulatory standards. The Government has since enacted AODA standards for customer service, and most recently for information and communications, transportation and employment. Ontario's Election Act and Municipal Elections Act have a number of provisions for accessible voting. At the same time, the Election Finances Act excludes disability related costs from the definition of campaign expenses, which makes these costs ineligible under the criteria for partial reimbursement of election expenses. (<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/re-ohchr-thematic-study-participation-persons-disabilities-political-and-public-life#sthash.I9PIBPQm.dpuf>)

The rights of persons with disabilities in Uganda are enshrined in national legislation and internationally legally binding instruments enacted and or ratified over the last 20 years. In terms of practice disability is accorded affirmative action. There are five seats in Parliament reserved for persons with disabilities, while sign language and Braille are now recognized as official languages through which business can be transacted in Parliament, courts of law, printing of official documents, etc. (http://www.norad.no/no/evaluating/publikasjoner/publikasjon/_attachment/389766%3F_download%3Dtru).

These state/governmental interventions are examples that Nigerian political parties can learn from.

CONCLUSION

Political parties have been a focus of debate in the recent past because they have a critical role to play in virtually all political systems around the world. They structure national political processes and political contestation, engage in competitive electoral politics, nominate prospective public representatives and political leaders, and compete to run institutions of government. Yet there are still debates about whether or not political parties are tools of democracy or sources of tyranny and repression¹. From some feminist perspectives, political parties are often viewed as principal instruments of patriarchy, marginalizing women in politics and government (Pogoson, 2014). This is because political parties are generally spaces for male dominance, where women continue to face serious obstacles. Nonetheless, political parties remain necessary; women, youths and other marginalized groups have to devise ways to engage effectively and strategically from within them in order to transform them and maximize their chances for greater political influence over policy processes and decisions to improve their position in society, politics and government.

In order to respond to the needs of women, youths and other marginalized groups especially persons living with disabilities, and to guarantee that their rights are recognized and enforced, the active and meaningful participation of these groups in their societies and in democratic practices and processes is of crucial importance. There is need to promote inclusive democracy, to strengthen governance by reducing electoral malpractices and corruption, and to reduce human rights violations against women and other vulnerable sections of society. Meaningful participation by these groups requires that youth and women organizations have opportunities, capacities and benefit from an enabling environment. This is vital to ensure of internationally agreed development goals. Involvement of women, youths and marginalized groups in party activities will boost their confidence in their ability as citizens to participate meaningfully in public life. This can be done through building interparty and intraparty strategic communication and cooperation among women, young groups and various marginalized groups in different political parties to give a voice to them in politics, and ensure that their activities at all levels within a party structure have

input into decisions.

Recommendations

Women

- a. Build the capacity of women to reach across partisan, socio-economic, ethnic, gender, and age boundaries through mentorship programmes; on-the-job experience; study visits; exposure and any other strategies for enhancing the confidence and competence of women in public office.
- b. Provide highly effective core skills training, dissemination of critical materials, and confidence-building for women interested in politics;
- c. Provide support and opportunities that enhance women's capacity to work together and exchange knowledge and resources.
- d. Raise the awareness of male party leaders about the need to increase women's political participation and leadership as both the right and the politically advantageous thing to do
- e. Infuse new energy into the political landscape through youth programs that will drive women into leadership positions.
- f. Adopt and implement voluntary quotas for women's representation (whether or not these are required by law).
- g. Promote a gender sensitive culture in the way that that business is conducted, for example meeting times; language used etc.
- h. Give women visibility in public events, campaign materials and in the media.
- i. Provide women candidates with the necessary support (human, financial, material).

Youths

- a. Allow the young people in carrying out certain functions of the party that are deemed necessary such as planning, goal setting, organising, implementing, and controlling.
- b. Develop and promote clearly articulated organizational and ideological policies for the young people mainstreaming.
- c. Provide mechanisms, through their party Constitution or manifesto, for leadership grooming recruitment among the young people.
- d. Develop and implement strategies and programmes for promotion of formal and civic education for the young people.
- e. Delegate some challenging tasks to the youth wing or caucus of their parties. This will be a cornerstone for inclusive growth and a driver towards achieving sustainable development and deepening democratic values and institutions.

Marginalized groups (particularly persons living with disabilities)

- a. Training of elected representatives on disability issues (for example, parliamentarians, local council members).
- b. Capacity building among disabled people's organizations to enhance their role in public decision-making processes of all types.
- c. Disability awareness campaigns.
- d. Outreach campaigns highlighting the right of persons with disabilities to vote and be elected.
- e. Public forums with political parties to present a unified disability platform.

- f. Development of an election access task force to work with election officials and national election commissions on access issues.
- g. Inclusion of the voice and image of persons with disabilities in civil and voter education materials.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- a. Why is women's participation in decision-making important?
- b. Highlight the priorities for countries to increase women's participation and better represent women's concerns
- c. What barriers do women face in their quest to participate in politics and decision-making?
- d. How can the voices of youth be heard in parliament and government?
- e. Identify and address context-specific barriers to youth participation in party politics
- f. Are there any restrictions on the right of persons with disabilities to vote and be elected? If so, what are these restrictions?
- g. What activities do your party carry out to support disability issues and disabled people?
- h. How best can political parties work with disabled people?

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