

# Does the Gender of Ministers Matter? A Critical Analysis of the Appointment and Performance of Women Ministers under President Goodluck Jonathan's Administration in Nigeria, 2011-2015

Olu Awofeso, PhD

Department of Political Science

Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria

Akinola, Akinlolu E. (Corresponding author)

Department of Political Science

Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife, Nigeria

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## **Abstract**

In a presidential system of government, the executive arm is the highest organ of policy formulation and implementation. This, to a large extent, is complemented by the oversight and law making functions of the legislature for a functional governance. In addition to the President and the Vice President who are often elected, several appointees of the President make up the executive council, and are responsible to the President who takes stock of their performance and determine their continued relevance in office. Researches on gender studies often highlight the roles of these appointees, especially in respect to parity issues and the need for equal representation. Surprisingly, however, scholarly works on gender and politics in Nigeria often fails to study the activities of women ministers and their impact on policy. The Goodluck Jonathan administration is credited for mobilizing the highest proportion of women into ministerial positions since the dawn of the Fourth Republic. It then becomes imperative to ask if the performance of the women ministers, considering the influence they wield under the regime, portrays them as acting in the interest of women in the country. Drawing largely on secondary data. The study seeks to answer this question by profiling the women appointees and investigating the factors that influenced the unprecedented increase in the number of women ministers under President Jonathan's administration, with a view to

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assessing their impact on policy making especially with regard to women issues.

**Keywords:** Gender affinity, Class affiliation, Women ministers, Public policy

## 1. Introduction

The composition of government the world over, in terms of cabinet members and members of the legislature, is undergoing significant changes from what is obtained in the past. These changes, which can be visibly noticed from the increasing number of women elected and appointed into the legislative and executive arms of government, mark a fundamental departure from what was once the norm around the world. Today most cabinets include at least one woman as cabinet member, which is a reflection of the increasing role being played by women in politics (Krook & O'Brien, 2012).

Although it is now “fashionable” for governments across the world to appoint women as ministers, challenges confronting women’s participation and political representation persist. Female ministers are most likely to be allocated portfolio into ministry of low prestige (Krook et al., 2012; Borrelli, 2010), or “outer cabinet” ministries which the administration does not consider as key areas, and when appointed they are few in number. Therefore, the influence of women ministers on public policy making process is usually regarded as weak, since most women ministers are people with little or no “political capital” that can be deployed to control their departments. The token status of women in executive cabinet across the world, which may negatively affect their impact on public policy remains the focus of discussion in the literature, rather than their total absence in executive cabinet, which was the norm few generations ago.

The executive cabinet, the highest level of policy formulation and implementation, plays a leading role in the initiation and design of public policy, with role of legislatures in recent times limited to that of endorsing whatever that the executive put forward (Atchson, 2012), yet most scholarly works in gender and politics often neglect to study the activities of women in executive cabinet, especially the opportunity it offers women holding such position to influence policy. This situation is not different in Nigeria, where scholarly works have mostly focused on the underrepresentation of women in politics and where little or no attempts have been made to study the influence (if any) that women ministers have on the policy making process. One reason for this is as, Krook and O'Brien (2012) noted is that the number of women ministers have been “historically low” and when appointed are often marginalized, in that they are denied “juicy” portfolios, when compared to men.

The Goodluck Jonathan administration in Nigeria (2011-2015), remains perhaps the most celebrated, when it comes to the appointment of women into key ministries as ministers. Although the administration falls short of achieving gender parity in ministerial appointment, more women than ever before in the history of the country were appointed as cabinet members (Idike, 2014). Women were also appointed into key ministries such as Petroleum Resources, Aviation and Finance. Women constituted about 31% of ministers (13 of 42 ministers) in the administration (Idike, 2014). The significance of this number is better appreciated in light of the fact that it is more than the combined percentage of women in both the Federal House of Representatives, with 25 women (6.9%) and the Senate, with 7 women, (6.4%) (Awofeso & Odeyemi, 2014).

The paper against this background poses the following questions: is the gender of cabinet members a major determinant of their policy priorities? Do women ministers act upon or initiate policy in a way that portrays them as acting for women?

## 2. Women's Representation in Executive Cabinet in Nigeria: An Historical Overview of the Appointment of Women as Ministers

At the inception of the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan in 2011, 13 women were appointed as ministers out of the 42 ministers appointed (representing 31% of cabinet members). This remains the highest proportion of women ever to be appointed as cabinet members by any administration in the history of the country. Despite the unprecedented increase in the number of women appointed as ministers this period, many analysts were of the opinion that Nigerian women still suffer poor political representation both in the legislative and the executive arm of government and lags far behind other African countries (IPU, 2015).

However, a comparison of women representation during this period and from 1960 till 2011 will reveal that the country has made progress (albeit slowly) at involving more women in the governance of the country. While analysts and scholars spoke of low women representation in both the executive and legislative arms of government, in 1960 there was no woman at both the Federal Executive Council (as minister) and the Federal House of Representatives (as law maker) (Mama, 1995). The only exception was Mrs. Wuraola Esan, who was appointed as Senator from the House of Assembly of the defunct Western region to represent the region in the Senate. The near obscurity of women in the political life of the country at independence could be attributed to the colonial patriarchal stance and legacy of marginalization of women in politics (Gberevbie & Oviasogie, 2012; Awofeso & Odeyemi, 2014; Agbalajobi, 2010; Okpaloaka, 2015; Lewu, 2004

Awofeso and Odeyemi (2014) have observed that, two major colonial policies helped to entrench patriarchy in Nigeria politics. First is the colonial administrators, who were influenced by the Victoria model of gender roles in their society which considered only men to be active in the public sphere. Secondly, educational assistance programmes were made available for only African males who were later recruited into the civil service and merchant houses. This gave African male gender undue advantage (both during and after colonial period) over women and this set the pace for the genesis of women underrepresentation in government. This view was also supported by Ikpe (cited in Gberevbie & Oviasogie, 2012) who posited that:

Colonialism itself as experienced in Nigeria was male dominated as all colonial officers were male. The era of colonial rule witnesses the abolition of kingdoms, *that allows females as queen* and the removal of dual system of government that allows male and female kings to rule side by side. Also women chiefs in various kingdoms before colonialism lost their power to rule and were no longer called upon in the decision making process... colonial rule enforced the dominance of men in politics to the extent that when new chiefs were to be appointed, colonial agents did not see women as capable of performing the role of such office.

Women's political representation in politics in Nigeria, particularly in executive cabinets (as ministers) continue to suffer major setback with the incursion of the military into politics of the country. The first thirteen years of military rule in Nigeria reveals the total marginalization of women at the highest level of policy and decision making by the Supreme Military Council (SMC), a body of senior army generals who were predominately men. It is worth mentioning that the various military governments mandated their state military

governors to appoint at least one woman as commissioner at the state level usually to advice on social welfare issues and education (Mama, 1995). The SMC remains the highest policy making organ, leaving women appointed as commissioners at the state level with little policy influence and impacts.

The very first set of women to be appointed as ministers came up during the Second Republic (1979-1983) almost two decades after independence. They include: Mrs. Oyagbola Egun (Minister of National Planning, who is regarded as first woman minister in Nigeria because she was the first among the women to be confirmed by the Senate as a minister), and Chief Akinriade Janet (Internal Affairs). The appointment of women as ministers receives a boost with the return to democratic rule in 1999. The table below captures the histography of the appointment of women as ministers in Nigeria since independence.

Table 1. Women representation in the Cabinet under successive administration from 1960 till 2015

<b>Regime /Administration</b>	<b>No of Women Ministers</b>	<b>Names</b>	<b>Office/ Portfolio</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Year of Appointment</b>
Tafawa Balewa (1960 -1966)	0	--	-		-
Aguiyi Ironsi (1966)	0	-	-		-
Yakubu Gowon (1966 – 1975)	0	-	-		-
Muritala/ Obasanjo (1975 -1979)	0	-	-		-
Shehu Shagari (1979 -1983)	2	Mrs. Janet Akinriade	Internal Affairs	Senior Minister	1979
		Mrs. Egun Oyabola	National Planning	Senior Minister	1979
Buhari/Idiagbon( 1983-1985)	0	-	-	-	-
Ibrahim Babangida (1985-1993)	0	-	-	-	-
Sanni Abacha (1993 – 1998)	0	-	-	-	-
Abdusalam Abubakar (1998).	0	-	-	-	-
Olusegun Obasanjo	4	Mrs. Kema Chinwe	Transport	Senior Minister	1999

(1999-2003)		Aisha Ismail	Women affairs	Senior Minister	1999
		Mrs. Dupe Adelaja	Defence	Junior Minister	1999
		Pauline Tallen	Science and Technology	Junior Minister	1999
Olusegun Obasanjo (2003-2007)	10	Okonjo Iwela	Finance	Senior Minister	2003
		Rita Akpan	Women affairs	Senior Minister	2003
		Usman Nneadi	Finance	Junior Minister	2003
		Mobolaji Osomo	Housing and Urban Development	Senior Minister	2003
		Hajia Binta Musa	Education	Junior Minister	2003
		Mariam Ciroma	Women affairs	Senior Minister	2005
		Obiageli Ezekwuesili	Solid Minerals	Senior Minister	2005
			Education	Senior Minister	2006
		Helen Esuene	Health	Junior Minister	2005
		Chinwe Obaji	Education	Senior Minister	2005
		Joy Ogwu	Foreign Affairs	Senior Minister	2006
		Musa Yar' Adua (2007 – 2011)	8	Adenike Grange	Health
Saudatu Usman Bungudu	Women Affairs			Senior Minister	2007
Halima Tayo Alao	Environment and Housing			Senior Minister	2007
Fidelia Akuabata Njeze	Defence			Junior Minister	2007
Aishatu Jubril Dukku	Education			Junior Minister	2007

		Fatima Balarebe	Power	Junior Minister	2007
		Dora Akuyili	Information	Senior Minister	2008
		Diezani Alison-Madueke	Transport	Senior Minister	2007
Goodluck Jonathan (2011-2015)	13	Stella Odua	Aviation	Senior Minister	2011
		Rukayat Rufai	Education	Senior Minister	2011
		Omobola Johnson	Communication	Senior Minister	2011
		Zainab Maina	Women Affairs	Senior Minister	2011
		Diezani Alison-Madueke	Petroleum	Senior Minister	2011
		Okonjo Iweala	Finance	Senior Minister	2011
		Hadiza Mailafia	Environment	Senior Minister	2011
		Sarah Ochepeke	Water Resources	Senior Minister	2011
		Ama Pepple	Housing and Urban Development	Senior Minister	2011
		Erelu Obada	Defence	Junior Minister	2011
		Viola Owuleri	Foreign Affairs	Junior Minister	2011
		Olajumoke Akindele	FCT	Junior Minister	2011
		Zainab Ibrahim Kuchi	Niger Delta Affairs	Junior Minister	2011
Josephine Tagun	Commerce & Industry	Junior Minister	2011		

Source: The authors.

### *2.1 Factors Responsible for the Unprecedented Increase in the Number of Women Ministers in President Jonathan's Cabinet (2011 -2015)*

Historically, the appointment of women as ministers worldwide have been dramatically low and when appointed, it is often into cabinet with low level of prestige, such that women ministers will be unable to effectively influence public policy (Wiliarty, 2004; Dube, 2013; Krook & O'Brien, 2012; and Curtin, Kerby, & Dowding, 2014). However, in recent time a steady increase in the number of women ministers worldwide have been recorded (WEDO, 2014).

Existing literature on women in executive cabinet have attributed this development to a host of factors among which are; changing cultural pattern and favorable attitude to the idea of women in public office (Inglehart & Norris, 2005); improvement in the socioeconomic status of women which has empowered women to venture into the political arena and the control of government by left wing political parties (Reynolds, 1999; Escobar-Lemmon & Taylor-Robinson, 2005; Krook & O'Brien, 2012; Ariola & Johnson, 2015); increase in the numbers of women elected into the legislature (Moon & Fountain, 1997; Wilarty, 2014); numbers of daughter the Head of State parents! (Maviasakalyan, 2012) the increasing influence being wield by Women NGOs and international treaties such as the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); as well as the roles of international actors and armed conflicts (Paxton & Hughes, 2007).

Most of these identified factors for the increase in the number of women ministers worldwide though valid in other countries in Europe and Latin America, fail to explain the unprecedented increase in the number of women ministers in President Goodluck Jonathan's cabinet. For example, the socio-economic status of women in 2011, when President Jonathan appointed his ministers was not fundamentally different from what it was just four years earlier when President Yar'Adua in 2007 inaugurated his cabinet. Hence, the increase in the number of women that served as ministers in President Jonathan's cabinet cannot be attributed to the improvement in the socio-economic status of the Nigerian women during this period. Also, the ideological leaning of President Jonathan's party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), is vague and by the analyses of its manifesto and policies, it is far from a leftist party. It is therefore necessary to uncover the factors that are unique to Nigeria (particularly the Goodluck Jonathan's administration) with regards to the increase in the numbers of women ministers, which is not fully captured in the literature. Be that as it may, we consider the following sub-headings as the major factors responsible for the unprecedented increase in the number of women appointed as ministers during President Goodluck Jonathan's administration.

### **3. The Method of Selection Employed by the President**

The president's method of selecting ministerial nominees which to a large extent reflects his liberal disposition (Adeniran & Ajayi, 2013; and Idike, 2014), is a significant factor for the high proportion of women that make up his cabinet. President Goodluck Jonathan did not exercise absolute control over the process that produced his ministers as President Obasanjo did between 1999 and 2003. Although the list for ministerial nominees usually come from sources other than the Presidency (such as the State Governors, party leaders, political godfathers, etc), the president



has the power to appoint people he deemed qualified as ministers and to reject such list. Since 2007, the PDP Governors have played a significant role in the nomination of ministers. In state without a PDP Governor, party leaders are typically expected to nominate (Ogunlesi, 2015). President Goodluck Jonathan, like his predecessor Musa Yar'Adua, did not directly appoint many of his ministers for most of them were nominated by State Governors and political stakeholders in his party.

For this reason, women ministers benefitted immensely from this method of cabinet selection. Consequently, not less than 6 of the 12 women appointed by President Goodluck Jonathan were nominated by State Governors and party stake holders in the PDP. Adeniran and Ajayi's work (2013) on the comparative analysis of the cabinets of Presidents Obasanjo and Goodluck Jonathan led credence to this assertion. In their work, it was reported that Mrs. Viola Owuliri (Minister of state for Foreign Affairs) who was the running mate of former Governor Ikedi Ohakim in the 2011 gubernatorial election in Imo state was nominated as minister to the president by the ex-governor (Ikedi Ohakim). The same could be said of the minister of education, Prof. Ruquayyah and Minister for Housing, Land and Urban Development, Ms. Ama Pepple, who were nominated as ministers by their state governors Sule Lamido and Rotimi Amachi of Jigawa and Rivers States respectively. Similarly, the appointments of Mrs. Olajumoke Akinjide as minister of state for Federal Capital Territory (FCT) was attributed to the influence of her father, a respected party chieftain from Oyo state who submitted her name for consideration as minister. Also, Erelu Obada, Minister of state for Defense and former Deputy Governor of Osun State, was nominated by Prince Oyinlola (former Governor of Osun State and party chieftain of the PDP) while Mrs. Sarah Ochepeke (Water Resources) was the anointed candidate of Governor Jonah Jang of Plateau state.

The method of allowing state governors and party stakeholders a say in the nomination was greatly responsible for the increase in the number of women ministers in the cabinet. One reason for this is the desire on the part of the state governor to nominate only people who they considered loyal, and would not turn back on them by using the resources from the federal government upturn their influence in their respective states. Women ministers usually with weak or no political base meet this "qualification" and benefitted immensely

### *3.1 Campaign Promises Made by the President*

During the electioneering period in 2011, President Goodluck in an effort to secure women's vote (seen as the largest voting bloc) promised to uphold the 35% affirmative action principle on the appointments of women at both ministerial and ambassadorial levels if elected. In one of his campaign held in Jos, President Jonathan promised to have more women appointed in his government as ministers and ambassadors. The president was quoted to have said that: "I promise we will work with the party and give women 35% ministerial and ambassadorial postings, vote for us, mobilize women and we can guarantee you this." (Vanguard, December 8, 2012). Although his appointment of women ministers falls short of the 35% affirmative action promised, he appointed more women as ministers than any President before him. Appointing more women as ministers was a way of fulfilling his campaign promise and complying with the international demands for 35% affirmative action for women in governance.

### *3.2 The Poor Electoral Performance of Women in 2011*

Women's electoral showing since the return to democratic rule in 1999 has always been poor, as only less than 10% of women has been elected into both the Senate and the House of Representatives in any election year. Also, no woman has been elected Governor of her state. However, a steady increase in women's representation had been recorded before 2011. For instance, while only three women were elected as Senators in 1999, the figure increased to 4 (representing 3.7 women Senators) and later to 9 (representing 8.3% of women Senators) in 2003 and 2007 respectively. The election of women into the House of Representatives followed the same pattern as only 12 (3.3%) women were elected into the green chamber in 1999, which later increased to 21 (5.8%) and then to 26 (7.2) in 2003 and 2007 respectively.

In the 2011 polls, the number of women in elective positions dropped. Only 7 (6.4%) women (compared to 9 in 2007) were elected as Senators and 25 (6.9%) women were elected into the House of Representatives. It can be posited that the 2011 General Election saw women lost some of the gains made in 2007. Since President Goodluck Jonathan's campaign was hinged on improving the number of women in politics, one way to remedy the poor showing of women at the polls was to increase the number of women in appointive positions. It may therefore be argued that the poor showing of women in elective positions in 2011 gave the president an opportunity to fulfill his campaign promise of increasing the number of women in government by offering an unprecedented number of them appointive positions as ministers and ambassadors.

### *3.3 Gender Desegregation or Integration in the Executive Cabinet: An Analysis of the Gender Profile of President Jonathan's Cabinet*

Gender "desegregation" is a practice whereby women are appointed as members of cabinet, but are considered good enough to manage "pink", "soft" or less prestigious ministries like Women Affairs, Environment, etc. while their male counterparts are considered for "harder" and more prestigious ministries of Economic Planning, Finance, Defense, Internal Affairs etc (Linda & Tremblay, 2005; Escobar-Lemmon & Taylor-Robinson, 2005; 2009; Krook & O'Brien, 2012; Dube, 2013; Wiliathy, 2014; Curtin, Kerby, & Dowding, 2014; Arriola & Johnson, 2015).

The concept explains that the marginalization of women in cabinet position continues despite the increase in the numbers of women appointed as ministers. According to Borelli (2010):

Gender desegregation occurs when women are admitted to, but then marginalized within a formerly all men organization, few in number and easily identifiable, the women encountered close scrutiny. Though women are in a gender desegregated cabinet, men still wield its powers and authority... in a gender desegregated cabinet few women are appointed as members and their appointments is used by the president to demonstrate his commitment to women's interest. In such cabinet women are likely to be nominated as "policy outsiders"- people that lack expert knowledge in the ministry that they head or appointed into ministries with little resources or policy influence.

Gender integration" on the other hand, explains the practice whereby women are not only

appointed as members of the executive cabinet, but are also considered worthy and capable of managing “hard” ministries which are traditionally reserved for men. In gender-integrative cabinet more women are appointed into position that were once considered as masculine (Defence, Finance, Foreign Affairs) which men are traditionally appointed to manage. It must be noted that a gender integrated cabinet is not the same as gender parity cabinet where equal numbers of women and men constitute the cabinet.

It is imperative at this juncture to analyze President Jonathan’s cabinet on the two scale of gender integration and gender- desegregation for us to know the direction the administration tilts towards, despite its unprecedented 31% women representation in the cabinet from 2011 to 2015. In order to effectively address this issue, tables 2 and 3 below unveil the portfolio distribution under president Jonathan on the basis of the prestige of the ministry and the ministerial positions (whether senior or junior ministers) women and men were assigned.

Table 2. Portfolio distribution by ministerial position in president Goodluck Jonathan’s Cabinet

<b>Ministerial Category</b>	<b>Men Ministers</b>	<b>Women Ministers</b>	<b>Total</b>
Senior Ministers	21 (70%)	9 (30%)	30
Junior Ministers <i>Minsters of State</i>	8 (67%)	4 (33%)	12
<b>Total</b>	29 (69%)	13(31%)	42

Source: The Authors.

Of the 42 ministers initially appointed by President Jonathan in 2011, 30 were senior ministers and 12 in junior ministries (ministers of state). Of the 30 senior ministers, 21 (70%) were men while 9 (30%) were women. For the junior ministerial positions (minister of state), 8 out of 12 (67%) were men and 4 (33%) women. In all, the portfolio distribution by men and women shows that there were more men than women in both the senior and junior ministries. However, the proportionate representation of women in both ministerial categories shows that women were fairly represented at both senior and junior ministries.

In all, there were 29 men and 13 women appointed into 42 different ministerial portfolios (30 senior and 12 junior portfolios) in a proportion of 3:1 (i.e., 21:9) for senior ministries and 2:1 (i.e., 8:4) for junior ministries. The fact that for every 3 men appointed as senior minister one woman was also appointed, and for every 2 men appointed as junior minister, one woman was also appointed, is an indication that President Jonathan’s administration operated gender-integrated cabinet in which male ministers did not over dominate the senior ministerial positions. This assertion becomes even more meaningful if we compare this figure (i.e. 13 or 31% women ministers) with women representation in the National Assembly (elective positions), which has 7 out of 109 members (representing 6.4%) in the Upper House and 25 out of 360 members (representing 6.9%) in the Lower House, during the same period. This represents a mere 6.8% or 32 elected women out of 469 members of the National

Assembly.

Table 3. Portfolio distribution by prestige in president Jonathan's Cabinet

<b>Ministerial Category</b>	<b>Men Ministers</b>	<b>Women Ministers</b>	<b>Total</b>
High Prestige	6 (29%)	2 (22.%)	8
Medium Prestige	11 (52%)	4 (45.%)	15
Low Prestige	4 (19.%)	3 (33.%)	7
Total	21 (100)	9 (100)	30

Source: The authors.

In table 3 above, only senior ministers (30) appointed into the original 30 ministries were considered for analysis. This is based on the view that senior ministers play more roles at influencing public policy than their junior counterparts. Also, classification of ministries into High, Low and Medium prestige is based on Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson's (2005) classification which classify the prestige of ministries based on the budgetary transfer (to the ministry), size and resources of the ministry, public visibility, as well as the opportunity the ministry offers the ministers to sustain political clientele, finance election and to meet the distributive needs of constituents.

Applying this classification model to Nigeria, High prestige ministries are Defence, Finance, Foreign Affairs, Works, Interior, Power, Petroleum, and Justice. The Medium prestige portfolios are, Agriculture, Aviation, Communication and Technology, Education, Health, Information and Communication, Lands and Housing, Mines and Steel, National Planning, Niger Delta Affairs, Police Affairs, Trade and Investment, Labour and Productivity, Commerce and Industry, and Transport. The Low prestige ministries are, Youth Development, Sport, Water Resources, Women Affairs, Environment, Science and Technology, Culture and Tourism.

Out of the 21 male Senior ministers in President Jonathan's cabinet, 6 were appointed into 8 of the High prestige ministries, 11 into 15 of the Medium prestige ministries, and 4 into 7 of the Low prestige ministries. on the other hand, of the 9 female Senior ministers in President Jonathan's cabinet, 2 were assigned 8 of the High prestige ministries, 4 assigned 15 of the Medium Prestige ministries, and 3 assigned 7 of the Low prestige ministries.

The distribution of male and female senior ministers into the 3 categories reveals that male ministers were more in all the 3 categories. This is to be expected because, the number of male senior ministers (21) is more than that of their female (9) counterparts by more than half of the female senior ministers. However, an analyses of table 3 shows elements of both gender segregation and integration. Firstly, the appointments of women and men ministers into High and Medium prestige ministries were not of similar proportion, for men were overrepresented in these ministries. For instance, 29% and 52% of senior male ministers were appointed into the High and Medium prestige ministries respectively. On the other hand,

22% and 45% of female senior ministers were appointed into the High and Medium prestige ministries respectively. Also more women (33%) than men (19%) were considered for appointment into low prestige ministries. All these point to a gender desegregated cabinet, but the appointment of two women (representing 22% of women senior ministers) into the highly prestigious ministries is significant. For more women ministers than ever before were appointed to lead the highly prestigious ministries.

Although an unprecedented number of women were appointed as senior ministers during the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan, the cabinet was far from being a gender-integrated cabinet. A high proportion of the ministers in the high and medium prestige portfolios were men. More women (than men) were appointed to lead the low prestige ministries. This shows that the cabinet was gender-desegregated with elements of gender-integration, for few women cabinet members lead the ministries considered important to the president's transformation agenda.

#### **4. Performance Analysis of Women Ministers in President Jonathan's Cabinet**

This section examines the policy impact of female ministers in President Jonathan's cabinet and analyses the extent to which female ministers were involved in addressing the specific needs and challenges faced by women and girls through public policy formulation. The four policies of Gender Responsive Budgeting (G-WIN), Narrowing Gender Gaps in the ICT, The Girl Child Education Project and Rural Women Energy Security Initiative (RUWES) were selected for analyses.

##### *4.1 Gender Responsive Budgeting (G-WIN).*

Gender Responsive Budgeting, otherwise referred to as Growing Women and Girls in Nigeria (G-WIN) by the former Minister of Finance, Dr (Mrs) Okonjo Iweala, is a tool to ensure that gender equality commitments are reflected and realized in public budgets. As part of the mechanism for gender mainstreaming, it brings together two issues that are uncommonly related: gender equality and public financial management (Bosnic, 2015). Gender Responsive Budgeting, advocates for gender equality principles to be incorporated into all stages of the budgeting process. Gender budgeting is used by countries that implement it to assess the impact of government expenditure on citizens, women and men, and to transform budget programmes to target the achievement of MDG3 and close gender gaps. A truly gender sensitive and inclusive budget therefore should seek to address the marginalization of target groups by focusing both on increasing incomes and improving access to resources and services. The most obvious outcome of gender budget initiatives is improving women's economic equality.

The Growing Girls and Women in Nigeria – G-WIN (as a form of gender mainstreaming, through budgeting) is an innovative programme, through which the Federal Government of Nigeria allocates funds to projects that specifically support the needs of marginalized girls and women (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, 2013). The G-WIN functioned as the mechanism of the government to provide additional budgetary support for Federal ministries who are able to show concrete spending commitments to

women and girls per fiscal year (The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, 2014) The programme which was conceived by Dr. Okonjo Iweala (as the Minister of Finance) was coordinated by the Federal Ministry of Finance. The pilot phrase of the programme, which was majorly funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), was implemented in five ministries: Agriculture, Communications, Technology, Health, Water Resources and Works.

The G-WIN as gender budgeting initiative provides funds through budgetary allocation to the five selected ministries and mandate them to direct such funds to the achievement of concrete results for marginalized girls and women in Nigeria. The aim just like most gender mainstreaming policies was to promote gender equality and women empowerment by using public policies to address women needs. Speaking on the G-WIN at a public event the former Minister of Finance, Okonjo Iweala was quoted to have said that:

The G-WIN programme will provide structured training and skill acquisition to girls and women in the country, especially those from disadvantage background in order to equip them to better contribute to the overall growth and development of the country ([www.gwin.org.ng](http://www.gwin.org.ng))

The G-WIN programme as a gender budgeting initiative made it possible for ministries headed by male ministers to be incorporated into the programme to address problems confronting women through the policies formulated. Such ministries as Agriculture, Health and Public Works with male ministers pinpointed the goals of improving the lives of disadvantage girls and women as means of addressing gender equality. Prior to the launching of the G-WIN programme, Nigeria has the highest rate of women with fistulas in the world, with about half of all cases worldwide (Stosky, Kolovoch, & Kebhaj, 2016). Under the G-WIN project the Ministry of Health through the funds made available, allocated resources to train and to recruit additional doctors to perform necessary surgery for correcting fistulas. The Ministry of Health was able to increase the number of reparative surgeries it provided to women living with fistulas. About 3000 women were estimated to have been treated in 2013 ([www.gwin.org.ng](http://www.gwin.org.ng)) although extensive backlog cases still remain.

The fight against Maternal mortality, which claims the lives of thousands of women during child birth annually in the country, received a boost under the G-WIN project. The Ministry of Health launched the “Save One Million Lives” (SOML) initiative in 2012 to save the lives of more than 900, 000 women and children who die every year in Nigeria from largely preventable cause (World Bank, 2015). The Ministry of health through the GWIN project received a grant of \$500 million from the World Bank in April 2015 to bring down maternal and infant mortality by 40% at the end of the year.

Through the GWIN programme the Ministry of Agriculture designed policies aimed at supporting women in developing agricultural business. The Ministry’s GWIN projects focused on two key areas namely (i) training and empowering young women in areas such as bee-keeping, poultry farming and fisheries and (ii) empowering women to set up agricultural enterprise in priority value chains. One major roadblock for female farmers as identified by the Ministry of Agriculture was access to finance because this hindered the women’s capacity

to buy seeds and fertilizers. Under the G-WIN initiative two million female farmers received cell phones to improve access to information on the availability of fertilizer and other agricultural equipment from the government. The cell phones enabled women to use an e-wallet system to facilitate mobile money purchases of agricultural inputs (Tijani, 2016). Women were also trained in the production and processing of rice and were also provided with processing equipment. In all, 1,120 women were empowered to set up agricultural enterprise in priority value chains, including technical, group formation, business training and provision of linkages to financial institutions and mentors ([www.gwin.org.ng](http://www.gwin.org.ng)).

The Ministry of Public Works under the G-WIN project began to train women as sub-contractors in order to increase the likelihood of more women winning procurement bids. About 55 women were trained in procurement and 100 women trained and formed into gender road maintenance clubs. Although, unlike other ministries, the Ministry of Public Works did not train enough numbers of women in procurement bids, the small number of women trained contributed to narrowing the gender gaps in public works. The comments attributed to one of the beneficiary of the programme Ms. Talatu Mohammed as quoted by Voices4Change (2015), best explains the impact of the project in the Ministry of Works. According to her; “we used to think that road construction and maintenance were for men only. Now I not only sew reflective jackets for those maintaining the road I also carry out road repairs.”

The G-WIN project in the Ministry of Water Resources focused on supporting women in managing water resources and also creating business opportunities for women in the water and sanitation sector. Through the scheme 520 rural girls and women were trained on water scheme operation and maintenance. A programme providing grants and peer learning for women entrepreneurs (You WIN WOMAN) was launched under G-WIN initiative. 1,200 women entrepreneurs were given grants to enable them to either strengthen or set up their own business (Premium Times, 2013). The achievements recorded by the G-WIN initiative conceived by Dr. (Mrs.) Okonjo Iweala proves that mainstreaming gender into policies can work in Africa if there is the political will to do so.

#### *4.2 Narrowing Gender Gaps in the ICT Sector*

Much has been said on the impact that new technology can make in creating equal opportunity for both women and men, however a persistent gender gap exists, both in the number of women working in the information and communication technology (ICT) sector and in their use of mobile devices. Closing the digital gender gaps remains a pressing issue for there are more than 200 million fewer women online than men (ITU News Editorial, 2016). According to the ITU recently released 2016 *Facts and Figures*:

The global internet user gender gap grew from 11% in 2013 to 12% in 2016 the gap remains large in the world’s Least Developed Countries (LDC) – at 31% in 2016, the regional gender gap is largest in Africa (23%) and smallest in the Americas (2%) (Web Foundation, 2016).

In order to address the challenges of the digital gender divide, the Ministry of

Communication and Technology, under the leadership of Mrs. Omobola Johnson initiates policies and programmes that promote girls and women's digital empowerment. Closing the gender digital divide in order to promote inclusive growth became a policy priority for the Ministry. Speaking at the GEM-TECH awards in 2014 for initiating policies and programmes empowering girls and women via ICTs, the Minister noted that:

With the under representation of women and girls in ICTs, especially in emerging economies like Nigeria and the growing importance of ICTs for national socio economic development, closing the digital divide has now become a development priority for Nigeria...We are committed to getting more women and girls into ICTs. We want to ensure that Nigerian women and girls are encouraged and empowered to embrace ICTs. It is critical to get our girls to adopt ICTs so that they are not left behind in the digital revolution changing communities and nations across the globe ([www. Commtech.gov.ng](http://www.Commtech.gov.ng))

As a way of achieving the objectives of closing the digital gender gap, the Ministry of Communication came up with three ICT intervention initiatives aimed at the digital empowerment of girls and women in order to reduce the gender divide in the ICT sector of the country. The three flagship initiatives are the Digital Girls Club, Huawei 1000 ICT Girls Training Programme and the Smart Woman Nigeria Project.

The Digital Girls Club as an interventionist policy initiative aimed to get more girls to develop an early interest in computers and the field of ICT, including considering a career in ICT. The pilot phase of the programme was launched in March 2014, in 12 Federal Government Girls Schools in Nigeria across the six geo political zones. The 1000 Girls ICT Training Programme was geared towards the digital empowerment of young women with ICT skills to make them employable and increase their chances of occupying vacant IT jobs in the country ([www.commtech.gov.ng](http://www.commtech.gov.ng)). 1000 young women were trained under the scheme with the best 200 of the 1000 young women trained placed in full time employment as Data Centre Administrators (Federal Ministry of Communication and Technology, 2015).

#### *4.3 Girl's Education Project*

The Ministry of Education, under the leadership of Prof. Ruquyyat Rufai, adopted the Girl's Education Project as a demonstration of Nigeria's commitment to the realization of the Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals of achieving the objective of providing quality basic education for all children, boys and girls (Ruquyyat, 2011).

The Girls Education Project was developed to address the socio cultural practices in the North that negates girl's education in the North, inadequate number of female teachers, and poor infrastructure that is not conducive for girls. Under this programme, special Female Teacher Training Scholarship Scheme (FTSS) was launched by the ministry. The scheme was meant to address the acute shortages of female teachers in rural communities in the North by encouraging the recruitment of female teachers from rural areas through the granting of scholarship for indigent girls from these areas to study education and become teachers in their community so that they can become role models for young female pupils. The impact of



the project according to the minister has resulted into increase in the number of girls' enrolment in schools and completion of basic education by girls in rural areas in the North (Rufai, 2013).

#### *4.4 Rural Women Energy Security Initiative (RUWES)*

The Ministry of Environment (headed by Mrs. Hadiza Malafia) initiated and developed the Rural Women Energy and Security Initiative (RUWES) to build on the Millennium Development Goals and President Goodluck Jonathan's Transformation Agenda to empower women and to provide clean and affordable energy for sustainable development (Federal Ministry of Environment, 2015). The RUWES initiative was targeted to meet the energy needs of women living in rural areas, which are usually off grid, energy poor and has the highest incidence of health issues from harmful energy practices.

The initiative has three components; the National Clean Cooking Scheme, Rural Energy Access Scheme and the Training Schools. The National Clean Cooking Scheme (NCCS) aimed to encourage and foster the adoption of clean cooking through the adoption of cleaner cook stoves. The NCCS is a part of the strategies to address the danger of the use of fuel wood and kerosene on the environment by involving rural women in the use of clean energy. The Rural Energy Access Project (REAP) represents the lighting component of RUWES, designed to address the need to source for and deploy alternative and sustainable clean and renewable energy sources for lighting and heating purposes which will impact positively on income, health and environment, as well as create sustainable livelihood for the rural poor and those most affected by the shortage of electricity and energy supply in the country. With the RUWES Training, school partnership is made with technology providers to establish skills acquisition centres to train rural women on the assembling of solar lanterns, cooking stoves, as well as the repairs, maintenance and sales of energy product.

### **5. Women Ministers and Gender Mainstreaming**

From the discussion above, it is clear that the women ministers during President Goodluck Jonathan's administration influence the making and the implementation of public policies in ways that demonstrated women in the executive cabinet were not marginalized and were allowed to carry out policy initiatives. This is largely due to the disposition and commitment of the President to women which can be seen in the unprecedented number of women he appointed as ministers.

Although most of the women ministers played prominent role in the formation of policies relevant to the President's Transformation Agenda, with many of them unilaterally promoting policies that address women concern, there is a noticeable difference in the nature of the women ministers and the type of policy influence they exert in the ministry they head. Women ministers with expert knowledge (Technocrat or Specialist) in the ministry they head initiate more policies than women ministers lacking expert knowledge in their ministries (Generalists or Politicians). This can be attributed not only to the educational and professional background of the technocrats, which qualify them to lead the ministry they head but also due to the fact that they are mostly appointed by the President to address issues

concerning the department they head. The generalists often lack the expert knowledge of the ministry they lead and their appointment is largely due to political considerations. This hinders the generalists from playing prominent roles in the formulation and implementation of policies.

The difference between women ministers who are technocrats and those that are generalists in the executive cabinet of President Goodluck Jonathan's administration help to reveal that not all women ministers initiate policies that seek to address specific issues and challenges faced by women. This observation (of the women ministers in the cabinet of President Goodluck Jonathan) challenge the view common in the literature that women ministers (whether generalists or technocrats) are likely to pursue policies that favour women (Mavisakalyan, 2012)

Table 4. Classifying the nine senior women ministers in president Goodluck Jonathan's Cabinet into Generalists and Technocrats

<b>Generalists</b>	<b>Technocrats</b>
Mrs. Stella Odua <i>Ministry of Aviation</i>	Dr. (Mrs) Okonjo Iweala <i>Ministry of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy</i>
Mrs. Ama Peple <i>Ministry of Housing and Urban Development</i>	Dr. Omobola Johnson <i>Ministry of Communication and Technology</i>
Hadiza Mailafia <i>Ministry of Environment</i>	Mrs. Diezani – Alison Madueke <i>Ministry of Petroleum Resource</i>
Mrs. Sarah Reng Ochepeke <i>Ministry of Water Resources</i>	Zainab Maina <i>Ministry of Women Affairs</i>
	Prof. (Mrs) Ruquyyat Rufai <i>Ministry of Education.</i>

Source: The authors.

The technocrats not only make more policies than the generalists (as highlighted in the preceding sections) but are more likely than the generalists to mainstream gender issues into policies. For example, Mrs. Diezani Madueke (Ministry of Petroleum) was the only minister among the five technocrats, not to formulate policy that seeks to address specific problems faced by women. The women ministers who are generalists fared poorly at putting gender issues as the policy priority of their ministries. Although the Ministries of Water Resources and Environment, under the leadership of Mrs. Sarah Ochepeke and Mrs. Hadiza Mailafai, who are generalists, did claim to initiate and implement gender policies, they were not the originator of these policies. The ministry of Water Resources benefited from the G-WIN initiative of the Minister of Finance, which included the ministry in the pilot phrase of the programme. The RUWES initiative of the ministry of Environment was in fulfilment of Nigeria's obligation to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) - a signatory to the Kyoto

Protocol and as part of Nigeria's strategy on voluntary emission reduction.

Another factor that determines the likelihood of female ministers to initiate policies that are designed to address women issues is the background of the minister as a gender activist or as someone known before their appointment as a “feminist” or a “defender of women’s interest”. All the women ministers with similar background as “women’s right campaigners” or as head of women’s organization initiate women friendly policies in their ministries. Table 5 below confirms this assertion.

Table 5. Women ministers with history of gender activism

<b>Minister</b>	<b>History of Gender Activism</b>
DR. (Mrs) Okonjo Iweala <i>Ministry of Finance</i>	As the Managing Director of the World Bank, she was at the fore front of the idea of using fiscal policy to promote women’s economic empowerment.
Dr.(Mrs) Omobola Johnson <i>Ministry of Communication and Technology</i>	Co- founded the Women in Management, Business and Public Service (WIMBIZ) in 2001, a non-profitable organisation for Nigerian women in business.
Mrs. Sarah Ochepeke <i>Ministry of Water Resources</i>	Prior to her appointment as minister, she worked as the state coordinator (Plateau state) of Action Aid, a civil society organization, devoted to fighting poverty affecting women and girls in Nigeria.
Mrs. Zainab Maina <i>Ministry of Women Affairs</i>	She founded the Women for Peace Nigeria Initiative (WOPI), a Non-governmental Organisation investing in girls and women to accelerate socio-economic and political development through peaceful and equitable means.

Source: The authors.

It can be argued therefore, that the presence of more women in executive cabinet as ministers does not alone guarantee that policies made by women ministers will be along the direction of ensuring gender equality and women’s empowerment. We have established that the appointment of more women with background as “gender activist” as ministers will most likely lead to the formulation and implementation of public policies that favour women. This is true of the gender mainstreaming policies made by the women ministers during the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan. The women friendly policies (a consequence of gender mainstreaming) made by the government can largely be attributed to the women ministers with expert knowledge of the Ministry they head and those with history of gender activism, who use their position as public office holders to promote gender issues from within.

## 6. Conclusion

President Goodluck Jonathan’s administration demonstrates the relationship between increase proportion of women ministers and women friendly policies. Having more women in the

executive cabinet is directly linked to the initiation of women friendly policies which are important for addressing the challenges faced by girls and women.

Although a Nigerian President is not constitutionally mandated to ensure gender parity in the composition of his cabinet, the roles played by the women ministers during President Goodluck Jonathan's administration shows that gender criteria do matter when appointing ministers. This is because women cabinet members are likely to influence the formulation and implementation of policies that seek to address the problems faced by girls and women than male cabinet members.

However, the study noted that using gender criteria alone to appoint ministers does not guarantee the formulation of policies that are gender friendly. For as President Goodluck Jonathan's administration demonstrates, not all the women ministers carry out policies seeking to address the challenges faced by women and eliminating gender gaps. It is therefore necessary for Nigerian president to consider the background of the women to be appointed as ministers. This is because only women ministers with history of gender "activism" or with a clear feminist ideology are likely to promote the initiation and implementation of policies that are in the interest of women, than women ministers with no background in activism.

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approve-to achieve-maternal-and-child-health

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