

Domesticating the Maputo Protocol: Violence and Women's Political Participation in Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) on 16 December 2004. Though, functionally dotted to advance equality and the expression of women's fundamental human right, the Maputo protocol has not been duly naturalized in Nigeria after 17 years. Similarly, despite its core mandate in addressing Violence Against Women (VAW) in Africa and its ground-breaking significance for African women's rights, women in public office or vying for political office have been subjected to various forms of violence, thereby limiting active political engagement in Nigeria. These VAW which could cause physical, sexual, psychological, and economic harm, including the threat to undertake such acts against women is grossly dissuading female prospects from participating in politics. Notwithstanding Nigeria's female population of about 49%, Nigeria's abysmally low position of 139 out of 156 countries, ranked by the global gender gap index in 2021 is worrisome. As it appears, the slow progress of implementing the Maputo protocol has emboldened Gender based violence (GBV) at the political realm, and by extension limiting female potential and impeding national development. In spite of the 'Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act' enacted by the Nigerian government in 2015, violence against women remains a major factor limiting women's political participation. Unlike the African Charter, the Maputo Protocol has not been directly incorporated into the domestic legal system in Nigeria, which is a core issue mitigating against women's political participation. Hence, the study raises questions on the factors inhibiting the smooth process of the Maputo framework in Nigeria and the effect of the Maputo protocol on women's political participation in Nigeria. Relying on secondary data, theoretical mode of analysis is adopted with a view to understanding the process of internalizing international treaties and protocols, as well as the effect of political violence on women's political participation. Premised on this, the study recommends that effective implementation of international treaties and protocols on women's right, will enhance better performance in women's political participation and national development in the long run.

Keywords: *Women, Political Participation, Maputo Protocol, Violence Against Women (VAW).*

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Article DOI: 10.48028/iiprds/ijarppads.v5.i1.08

Background to the Study

Nigeria ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) on 16 December 2004 (AU, 2019). The protocol although, functionally dotted to advance equality and the expression of women's fundamental human right has not been duly naturalized in Nigeria. Despite its core mandate in addressing Violence Against Women (VAW) in Africa and its groundbreaking significance for African women's rights, women in public office or vying for political office have been subjected to various forms of violence, thereby limiting active political participation. These VAW which could cause women physical, sexual, psychological, and economic harm, including the threat to undertake such acts against women is grossly dissuading female prospects from participating in politics (Krook, 2017).

Women's political representation in Nigeria's parliament within the global ranking remains at the bottom position, with a ranking of 180 out of 190 (IPU, 2019). Low female political participation, a gross social problem has been a constant barrier to human and national development. Although, the number of female political candidates have progressively increased, fewer women were elected, showing a push-back and erasing of gains made since Nigeria's return to civilian rule in 1999 after years of military rule. So far, violence against women have posed as a major factor limiting women's political aspirations. Though, *Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act* ('VAPP Act') was enacted by the Nigerian government in 2015, unlike the African Charter, the Maputo Protocol, has not enjoyed direct incorporation into the domestic legal system in Nigeria, which is a core issue mitigating against women's political participation. The slow progress of implementing the Maputo protocol has emboldened Gender based violence (GBV) at the political realm, by extension limiting female potential and impeding national development. As part of the Violence Affecting Women and Girls (VAWG) program, recent data shows that gender-based violence continuously rose in the pre-2015 Nigerian election period (Fund for Peace, 2015).

By global and regional standards, Nigeria ranks low in female representation in politics (Kelly, 2019). The statistics since return to democratic rule reflects the continuous low rating of women's political engagement, with slight increase between 1999 and 2007 (Kelly, 2019). After the 2015 general elections, Nigeria had 20 women out of 359 in its lower house (5.6%) and 7 out of 109 in its upper house (6.4%). By the 2019 elections, no woman was elected president or state governor.

In effect, at the national level women's political participation has remained low in both elective and appointive positions, with 6.7% below the global average of 22.5%, the African regional figure of 23.4%, and the West African sub-regional figure of 15% (Oloyede, 2015). So far, Nigeria's performance in closing the gender gap still remains poor with a global gender index ranking of 129 out of 153 countries (World Economic Forum, 2020). For instance, in 2003, in states like Oyo, Sokoto, Zamfara, Kano, Ebonyi, Jigawa, Katsina, Nassarawa, Kebbi, Cross River and Adamawa no woman was elected into any

seat (Agbalajobi, 2010). Also in the 2007 elections, a total of 1,532 seats were available with 1,200 women contesting, only 93 emerged winners including 6 Deputy Governors (Asaju and Adagba, 2013). Cumulatively for the positions of the Presidency, Senate, House of Reps, Governorship, Deputy Governorship and 36 State Houses of Assembly, between 1999 and 2011, women accounted for only 221 positions. Thus, for 1999, 2003, 2007, and 2011 Nigerian Elections, out of 1,532 positions to be filled for each election year, women only occupied 221 positions for the period (Oyekanmi and pogoson, 2021). Again, no woman has been elected as governor of a state either during the civilian or military era. Under the Buhari civilian administration, the women's account in political participation is made worse. For instance, women accounted for almost 40 million (47.14%) of the 84 million registered voters in the 2019 election in Nigeria, yet the number of women elected into the Nigerian Senate reduced from 7 in 2015 to 6 in 2019 (Ogunyinka, 2019)

This backward trend, in Nigeria's political journey reflects the unpleasant political environment against women, as female political aspirants often suffer threats or violence and hate speeches ((NCWD, 2016), which has great propensity to dissuade female aspirants in the future. Where hate speech appears impotent, gangs may be hired by politicians to dispel female aspirants (British Council Nigeria, 2012). A 2019 Peace Direct report succinctly states that 'Invariably, Nigerian women are targeted in both the private and public spheres to prevent them from participating in rallies, voting and/or running as candidates. Despite decreasing incidents of violence and improved transparency measures during elections, violence against women continues to be a significant threat to Nigeria's democracy' (Direct, 2019, p. 46). Although political violence, is a constant factor experienced by both genders, it however appears to have more negative effect on women than men. According to NDI (2021:12), the specific issue of violence against women in politics has three distinct characteristics:

1. It targets women because of their gender
2. In its very form it can be gendered, as exemplified by sexist threats and sexual violence
3. Its impact is to discourage women in particular from being or becoming politically active

In effect, violence against women goes beyond physical assault to intangible forms of cultural, economic and legal deprivations. On the rights of African women at the international level, the haphazard implementation of the Maputo protocol in Nigeria, which is the most detailed and convincing instrument addressing VAW in Africa, is critical to effective women's political participation in Nigeria. The protocol, explicitly defines VAW as acts which cause or could cause women's physical, sexual, psychological, and economic harm, including the threat to undertake such acts against the woman. According to an NDI (2015) report, the use of violence against women manifests in various forms as a targeted and destructive tool throughout electoral cycles to discourage women from participating as election administrators, voters, and candidates. The possibility that the 35% affirmative action envisioned by Nigeria is achievable is slim, considering that women are habitually subjected to violent conditions, because of their political choices.

The Maputo Protocol and Women's Right in Africa

Following its implementation in July 2003, the Maputo Protocol has been the leading framework for re-aligning women's human rights in Africa. It positions women above old stereotypes, placing them as full, effective and equal partners with men in the development of their environment. Presently ratified by 42 member countries of the African Union, it is to obligate State Parties to protect women from all forms of violence, particularly sexual and verbal violence (Equalitynow, 2021). Hence, placing obligation on African Union member states to adhere to the principles of the protocol. Among countries that have ratified the protocol, some countries have initiated legislative, policy, and institutional measures focused on VAW.

With 2020 as the year of the universal ratification, domestication and implementation of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, much is yet to be achieved. Marking 18 years of its establishment on July 11, 2021, the Maputo protocol is yet to be ratified by 13 countries. Out of 55 countries in the African Union, 42 countries have ratified the protocol, with pockets of reservation impeding state level implementation. Thus, the AU's aspirations for universal ratification of the Protocol by all 55 Member States by the end of 2020, was unachievable (Equalitynow, 2021). Major factors inhibiting the ratification, domestication, implementation and reporting on the Maputo Protocol in Africa, stems from; " issues of conservative governments and populations; pluralistic legal systems; resistance from strong faith-based groups; absence of, or lack of clarity on ratification procedures; the prioritization of peace and reconciliation in countries in active or emerging from civil strife; concerns with reproductive rights provisions and the provisions on rights related to marriage- age of marriage; separation, divorce, matrimonial property, among other challenges highlighted" (AU, 2020: para 6).

Expressly, the Maputo Protocol seeks to guarantees the rights and equality of women on the continent in tandem with global treaties and laws on violence against women. The protocol contains articles on a wide array of concerns across social, economic, cultural, and political spheres. Articles that cover violence against women in politics in Africa are;

1. Article 2: Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, which commits all states to combat all forms of discrimination against women through appropriate legislative, institutional and other measures
2. Article 3: Right to Dignity, which commits states to adopt and implement appropriate measures to prohibit exploitation or degradation of women and ensure the protection of every woman's right to respect for her dignity and protection of women from all forms of violence.
3. Article 4: The Rights to Life, Integrity and Security of the Person, which commits states to identify the causes and consequences of violence against women and take appropriate measures to prevent, eliminate and punish such violence.
4. Article 8: Access to Justice and Equal Protection before the Law, which affirms that women and men are equal before the law and shall have the right to equal protection and benefit of the law.

5. Article 9: Right to Participation in the Political and Decision-Making Process, which commits states to promoting equal participation of women in political life through affirmative action, enabling national legislation and other measures.
6. Article 10: Right to Peace, which affirms that women have the right to a peaceful existence and to participate in the promotion and maintenance of peace.
7. Article 11: Protection of Women in Armed Conflicts, which commits states to respect and ensure respect for the rules of international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflict situations that affect the population, particularly women (ACHPR, 2003)

Nonetheless, the Maputo Protocol couches its framework on existing international human rights instruments, like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), etc. the protocol seeks to address the unique human rights challenges experienced by women and girls in Africa (Omondi, Waweru, 2018).

Since its adoption, especially at the national level, the Maputo protocol has led to the declaration of equally innovative and progressive legislation, policies and other institutional mechanisms to advance women's human rights. A major step in actualizing the Maputo declaration in Africa was the adoption of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA) in 2004. By this declaration, nation-states within the African Union committed to ratify the Maputo Protocol so as to pave the way for the domestication and implementation of the Protocol alongside other national, regional and international instruments on gender equality and women's empowerment (AU, 2020). By way of domesticating the Maputo protocol in Africa, the protocol has advanced women's rights politically. In Kenya for instance, a case was filed by eight survivors with support from non-governmental organizations who were seeking accountability and redress from cases of sexual and gender-based violence that happened during the post-election violence of 2007. In December 2020, the High Court of Kenya found the Government of Kenya liable for failure to investigate and prosecute the case as well as in violation of several human rights instruments including the Maputo Protocol and ordered the government to pay compensation to four of the survivors amounting to KSH 4 million (approximately 40,000 USD) per survivor. Similarly, in Egypt, four women were physically and sexually assaulted in 2005 during a demonstration organized by the Egyptian Movement of Change to challenge the Egyptian Constitution to allow for multiple candidates during presidential elections. The African Commission, in finding Egypt to be in violation of the rights enshrined in the African Charter, referred to the violence against women under Article 1 of the Maputo Protocol and also urged the Egyptian government to ratify the Maputo Protocol (EqualityNow, 2021).

Howbeit, accountability and progress report on implementation of these commitments has been a major challenge thus far. Few countries like Cameroun, South Africa, Kenya, Namibia etc. have made reservations on some issues on the protocol. Among such

reservations are that; Rights of Women in Africa should in no way be construed as endorsement, encouragement or promotion of homosexuality, abortion (except therapeutic abortions), a marriage be recorded in writing and registered in accordance with national laws in order to be legally recognized, Article 10(3) and Article 14(2)(c) which is inconsistent with the provisions of the Laws of some states on health and reproductive rights and so on (Asuagbor, 2016). Beyond being a progressive legal instrument providing a comprehensive set of human rights for African women, the Protocol expresses Africa's commitment to promote the development and empowerment of women and girls in Africa.

According to the Gender and Development Directorate in collaboration with the Gender, Peace and Security Programme of the AUC Peace and Security Department and the Solidarity for African Women's Rights (2020), a number of countries have enacted laws against sexual and gender-based violence as well as harmful cultural practices while others have established dedicated national machineries to promote and protect the rights of women. Of the 42 States that have ratified the Protocol, only 15 States have reported on the Maputo Protocol. Article 26 of the Maputo Protocol obligates Member States to report every two years to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) on the legislative, judicial, administrative and other measures undertaken towards the full realization of the rights enshrined in the Protocol, in accordance with Article 62 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. As it stands, majority of Member States only submits reports on the African Charter without "Part B" on the Maputo Protocol. Similarly, a study conducted by the network alumni of the Centre for Human Rights in 2011, revealed the lack of awareness and implementation of the jurisprudence of the African Commission, African Charter and the Maputo Protocol as the main drivers minimizing the impact of the African Charter and the Maputo Protocol in selected states (Ayeni. et al, 2016).

Having grave consequences on the lives of women and girls in Africa, particularly in conflict-ridden countries like Nigeria, where the lack of implementation of the Maputo Protocol has created conditions for violence, abuses and sufferings for women in political squares.

Violence Against Women's Political Participation in Nigeria

Violence against women in politics and public space is a global menace. In a country where women are almost half the population, 28% of all women having experienced physical violence is a substantial national challenge (NPC, 2013). This is more worrisome, when emotional and psychological abuses of women in political and public spaces, which have no systematic data is added to the list.

Considering Nigeria's status as an independent state, and member of the global community, Nigeria is signatory to several treaties and ratified protocols endeared towards the end of violence against women. On December 16, 2004, Nigeria signed and ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights

of Women in Africa, also known as the Maputo Protocol, with the sole aim of upholding the rights of women and girls in Nigeria. Bearing in mind that the full and equitable participation of women in decision making arena, is not only essential in building vibrant democracies but also promoting development, the proper actualization of the Maputo protocol is critical to this objective. With women accounting for 49.4% of Nigeria's population (countrymeters, 2021). and occupying barely 6.7% of elective and appointive positions nationally (Oloyede, 2015), it is evident that the ratification of the Maputo protocol has not taken its full course in the Nigeria's political system.

The level of violence against women in politics, particularly in the fourth republic is alarming. This VAW, is rooted in the prevailing patriarchal culture of anti-female discriminatory norms and practices in Nigeria and Africa at large (Para-Mallam, 2015). Since a return to democracy in 1999, there has been the steady rise of violence against women (Agbalajobi, 2010; Fundforpeace, 2015). Significantly female politicians have been subjected to humiliating sexist remark in gendered ways, and in some cases, this harassment has escalated into physical violence. In some other cases, this violence can take the form of psychological threats, sexual harassment, physical abuse, economic and semiotic abuses (Krook and Sanín, 2020), which is inimical to women exercising their political rights. VAW in politics may take a third-party dimension. Women related or connected to political office holders or aspirants have also been harassed. "Apart from female politicians, the wives and family members of male political candidates have also experienced heightened levels of gender-based hate speech, and in some cases, been directly targeted by thugs and criminals for physical violence, including sexual abuse" (Safir and Alam, 2015:3). This anomaly against women in politics has endured for decades, with a sense of invisibility or unconscious acceptability. This is largely because violence has been attributed to politics, hence women are constantly informed that abuses, harassment and assault are the outcome of doing politics (NDI,2021).

A study conducted between March 21 and 30, 2011 by the Coalition of Civil Society Organization, revealed higher incidence of violence against women. According to the report, 75% of the field monitors reporting on violence, were targeted specifically at women, with the largest number of these incidents reportedly occurring during political campaigns or rallies, while others occurred at political party events. For instance, Salome Abuh, the People's Democratic Party women leader of Ochadamu Ward in Ofu Local Government Area in Kogi state, was burnt to death, when political thugs set her building ablaze (Ogundipe, 2019). Also, 26-year-old Zainab Sulaiman Umar, vying for a seat in Kano state House of Assembly was attacked at a campaign rally by thugs and her brother was almost stabbed. In what looks like semiotic and psychological violence, Anna (2019), reports that some candidates, particularly in the north have been violently abused in the following ways. Telling a female aspirant from Zamfara state in the north, that her photo couldn't be on the same campaign poster as the governor because she is not his wife; asking political candidates the status or whereabouts of their husbands etc.

Hence, given the prevalence of violence in Nigerian politics, the high costs of running a campaign, and a climate of sociocultural and religious conservatism, women are dissuaded or prevented from entering formal politics (Nwokedi, 2015). More so, the slow progress of implementing the Maputo protocol has emboldened Gender based violence (GBV) at the political realm, by extension limiting female potentials in governance and impeding national development. The National Gender Policy, established in 2006, which intended to promote gender parity through development and economic growth in Nigeria appears to be on a snail-walk. Its mandate to increase women in elected and appointed positions to 35 per cent has not yielded. In many other African states, unlike Nigeria, formal quota systems are established, serving as mechanisms to increase women's political participation (Safir and Alam, 2015). Despite the fact that there are more female registered voters (and those that actually vote) than male voters in Nigeria, it is dolorous that women remain under represented from the local level up to the national level. The spiking violence against women in politics exacerbated by cultural trends of male domination in Africa appears significant. To this end, the Maputo Protocol, a holistic binding legal document on the rights of African women must be exhaustively domesticated to achieve its principal objective in the continent.

Domesticating the Maputo Protocol in Nigeria: A Recourse for VAW in Politics

Generally, Nigeria's political system is bedeviled with extreme violence, thuggery, maiming, and Killings. This is even made worse considering its adverse effect on the female gender, embodied in gross intimidation, harassment and marginalization of women in politics. The Maputo Protocol, an international human rights instrument under the African Union, which came into law in 2005, is billed to ensure the comprehensive rights of women medically, socially, economically and politically. Howbeit, the Maputo Protocol unlike the Africa charter rights has not been effectively implemented in Nigeria which manifests as a male dominated political space.

Like all other external relations, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is empowered by law to oversee negotiations and ratifications of international treaties (Egbede, 2007). While the National Assembly is empowered to domesticate international treaties duly ratified (Sec 12 of the Constitution), it has no competence to ratify treaties between Nigeria and other countries (Akinbuwa, 2009). Following Section 12 of the 1999 Constitution, international treaties cannot be enforced into Nigerian law, except such treaty has been enacted into law by the National Assembly. Nonetheless, undomesticated treaties, can be enforced into Nigeria's laws through the constitution Act of 2011. For instance, international human rights instruments governing any aspect of labour, employment, workplace and industrial relations may be enforced directly before an industrial court in Nigeria. In this wise, applying the Maputo Protocol as it relates to gender equality and the prohibition of sexual harassment in organizations may be innovatively applied with or without domestication in Nigeria. This legal innovation has not been duly operational in mitigating violence against women in politics. In other words, the indirect incorporation of the Maputo protocol, through other sister human rights treaties targeted at gender equality and violence against women can be legally potent without direct domestication of the treaty in Nigeria.

So far, international laws and treaties on human rights hinged on its universality has spurred the expansion of several national policies geared towards promoting the rights of all persons. These international treaties are interrelated and interdependent in achieving a collective objective of universal human rights in enabling a peaceful world. Nigeria is signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa etc. which are all international laws on human rights that are reflective simultaneously.

Consequently, these international treaties alike have resulted in the establishment of national policies poised towards actualizing international legal frameworks on nation-states human rights. The National Action Plan (NAP) for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in Nigeria first developed in 2006 shows significant influence of the African Charter, the Federal Government also adopted the National Gender Policy (NGP) in 2006 targeting non – discrimination, equality of rights, participation, individual autonomy and non-violence, the Violence against Persons (Prohibition) Act, signed into law on 25 May 2015, the Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill 2010/13, and the Violence against Women Bill in 2013 which are still in progress, presents platforms for domesticating international treaties on human rights and VAW in politics and at large. The NGP contains at least four references to the Maputo Protocol. The Policy reinforces article 2(d) of the Maputo Protocol by adopting a 35 per cent affirmative action policy for women.

Assuaging from some human rights experts, “article 18(3) makes CEDAW for instance applicable to all state parties to the African Charter irrespective of their ratification status under CEDAW’ (Viljoen, 2002). Hence, the Maputo Protocol may be considered part of the African Charter under this condition (Viljoen, 2004). This ostensibly, will empower domestic courts to invoke the provisions of the Maputo Protocol through article 18(3) of the African Charter without a formal domestication of the Protocol.

Conclusion/Recommendation

The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol), was established as a wholesale framework for upholding the rights of women and girls in Africa. 18 years after, its ratification by most member states has not translated into a force birthing equal rights for women in Africa. Out of 55 member states of the African Union, 42 countries including Nigeria have ratified the treaty with 13 yet to ratify it. Although violence against women's right are global in form, the peculiarity of the African continent becomes glaring considering women's population size and active participation in small scale enterprises, which drives African economy. Howbeit, most women are left out of politics and decision-making spaces, factored by violence against women in politics. Over the years, the extreme nature of violence in African politics, with intentional attack on the female gender has cowed many women off politics.

In Nigeria, the scenario is quite precarious. Nigeria is yet to attain 10% of women's representation in politics since 1999. Again, Nigeria appears to be sliding back, with the recent abysmally low outing of women in the Mohammed Buhari's administration, despite being a signatory to the Maputo Protocol.

The undated violence over recorded violence against women in politics appears more. Women have been name-shamed, economically deprived, bullied and violently and emotionally abused, when vying for public office. This has generously hampered women's potential in politics. Although the Maputo protocol, and many other international treaties which Nigeria is signatory to, is explicit against violence against women generally, the reality is off the norm. As it stands, Nigeria currently has disparate pieces of legislation, which do not address violence against women or gender-based violence uniformly across the country. The domestication of the protocol has taken a haphazard form, with political gimmicks playing to the gallery. For instance, as Onyemelukwe (2015), avers most of the existing legislation in Nigeria is outdated, not sufficiently comprehensive, not specifically directed and not adequately enforced to address this grave problem. More so, critical issues like economic abuse, a predominant kind of gender-based violence have not received the deserving attention under Nigerian law.

Hence, the lack of implementation of the Maputo protocol has grossly enhanced violence against women, which hampers gender equality and sustainable development. The study therefore recommends that; the protocol should be incorporated in Nigeria's domestic law in order to be implemented at a national level. While the Maputo Protocol may not be implemented wholesale, issues of reservations as tendered by some other African countries should be raised by the Nigerian government and modified to suit national laws promoting gender equality and prohibition against any act of violence against women. The Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act 2015 though, passed at the National level which is yet to be domesticated in most states in the Federation, should be enforced at all levels of government. More so, the Gender and Equal Opportunity (GEO) bill 2016, which is an amalgamation of the principles and provisions of CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol, poised toward specific prohibition against all forms of discrimination, should be expedited. Similarly, injustices against women can be further mitigated by upholding the Nigerian Constitution and the Electoral Act as amended, which supports equal representation of both women and men in decision making. The National Gender Policy of 2006 which provides 35% Affirmative action in favour of women, must be enforced at all levels of government and political parties, with emphasis on violence against women at these platforms as a recourse to strengthening women's political participation and sustainable development in Nigeria

Although the Maputo protocol is not a stand-alone instrument in the promotion of equal rights in Nigeria, but by virtue of section 12 (1), (2), (3) of the 1999 constitution, the protocol without domestication in Nigeria, has been limited in many ways. Howbeit, basing the Maputo Protocol on basic universal laws on human rights, legal frameworks could be drawn, in activating the Maputo protocol and by extension enhancing women's participation in politics.

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