



**Ahfad University for Women**



**The Regional Institute of Gender, Diversity,  
Peace and Rights**

**Project Title: The Introduction of the Quota System in Sudan and its Impact in  
Enhancing Women's Political Engagement**

## **Annex II**

### **Research Finding Report**

***The Quota Debate:***

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**Balghis badri**

## Introduction:

The debate about the quota system is premised upon the right of political participation in all decision-making processes within a state for all citizens, regardless of their biological or gender differentiations. The nature of this participation is intended to avail all the said citizens the opportunity for direct and indirect influence in the nature, extent, quality and magnitude of political and other decisions, which impact on the general wellbeing of the society in question. Such a political participation is also intended to influence the general enjoyment of all political and civil rights in society for all human persons therein. These freedoms and rights include the right to be elected into, and to elect others into various political institutions as requested and provided for by the laws of the land. Such laws include all national and international laws which are meant to secure a just society imbued in the rule of law, constitutionalism and institutionalism.

The most prominent international instrument for the protection of equal right of participation of all women and men in a given society is the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)<sup>1</sup> 1966. The most important and relevant international instrument is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)<sup>2</sup> 1967. Therefore, given the elaborate and eloquent elucidation of the concept of positive discrimination as well as affirmative action by the CEDAW, the Quota system is one such remedy to create political spaces and opportunities for women in society, so that, they can positively contribute in the political processes which contribute to their comprehensive wellbeing and the general welfare of society. The said women's participation and contribution in the political sphere can be through their election into parliaments and other governance institutions, which can enable women to influence the gender mainstreaming of various polities, policies and politics of the nation, in which they constitute more than half of the human persons therein.

However, notwithstanding the availability of the Quota system as a positive discrimination and affirmative action instrument, there are many structural and other challenges and obstacles which frustrate the efficient and effective participation of women in various political processes in the society. These challenges and obstacles are made more ubiquitous in post conflict countries characterised by political cutthroat rivalry and competition for power and wealth by various socio-cultural, religious, economic/financial and political communities of interests. These rivalries and competitions undermine effective women participation in the political processes in society. Factors of conflict aside, the institution of patriarchy plays a major role in undermining women's political participation. Patriarchal ideology permeates all institutions of governance in

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<sup>1</sup> Article 3 of the ICCPR provides that, "The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all civil and political rights set forth in the present Covenant". Article 26, on the other hand; states that, "All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status".

<sup>2</sup> Article 4(1) of the CEDAW provides that, "Adoption by States Parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating *de facto* equality between men and women shall not be considered as discrimination as defined in the present Covenant, but shall in no way entail as a consequence the maintenance of unequal or separate standards; these measures shall be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved". Article 4(2) of the CEDAW also provides that, "Adoption by States Parties of special measures, including those measures contained in the present Covenant, aimed at protecting maternity shall not be considered discriminatory".

many Third World countries including the Sudan, and the most debilitating role of this ideology is played out via the agency of gender as a socio-cultural construct, for the ascription of societal roles, and even accesses to beneficial goods and services in society.

Notwithstanding the marginalisation of women and their exclusion in society in favour of men, women, through their various movements, have managed to harness their individual and group agencies for the positive amplification of their hitherto silent voices in society. Through such women's movements, various women groups succeeded in the articulation of their rights as human rights, and they also succeeded in the creation of their own political and other spaces in society. Social development via education has contributed to relative enjoyment of social and economic rights by a few women in various Third World countries; as well as their access to gainful labour markets and the private sector in general. These partial successes by women's movements, in the creation of political spaces for women have not overcome the fact that, in general, women of all ages and classes still fall behind men in general political participation<sup>3</sup>. It is for example posited that, universally, women represent only 17.2% of the general membership of members of various legislative institutions; notwithstanding that, most countries have heeded to the low representation of women in these legislative institutions, and have initiated various policies to guarantee the beneficial and effective participation of women in such institutions.

The 1995 Beijing Conference recommended that, 30% representation of women in various national parliaments is the critical mass most appropriate for effective women participation, if men domination of the political scene is to be productively counterbalanced, for general societal benefit. Notwithstanding the fact that there has been some improvement in women's participation in national parliaments, it is imperative to point out that, only 19 countries managed to increase women's representation to not more than 30% by 2007. This limited number of countries is due to the various structural and other patriarchal variables mentioned above, and which inherently undermine the global participation of women in these legislative institutions. It is worth mentioning that, the 1995 Beijing Conference acted as a pivotal catalyst in the promotion of the Quota system as the most effective instrument for the participation of women in various legislative institutions<sup>4</sup>.

There are various types of quotas<sup>5</sup>; however, the most prominent two are the voluntary party quota<sup>6</sup>, and the quota ordained by national constitution<sup>7</sup>. Experience in many countries has proven that, the implementation of any quota system is always preceded by exhaustive debate and consultation as among and between various political communities of interests; as between men and women of all ages and classes in society. These debates and consultations are always to convince societal decision-makers as to the benefit of the quota system, and these said political decision-makers are always men and concomitant patriarchs. The other prerequisites for effective and efficient implementation of the quota system is the political will of various political parties and their managers, as well as the availability of mechanisms and instruments for follow-up and accountability. The extent and quality of democratisation of governance, the electoral system, and the type of quota electoral list are all variables which inherently and comprehensively

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<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.ipu.org>

<sup>4</sup> See Krook (2009).

<sup>5</sup> Eritrea, Kenya, Uganda and Namibia used candidates' quota

<sup>6</sup> South Africa, and Mozambique.

<sup>7</sup> Rwanda is the best example.

contribute to the success or failure of the quota system. It is argued that, closed quota list with women's names on the top, and the availability of many candidates always become effective for women's success; however, these processes ought to be complemented with general awareness raising on issues of citizenship as well as gender as social construct<sup>8</sup>. In general, the quota system is not only for women representation, but, it contributes to comprehensive societal development, especially in those post conflict countries<sup>9</sup>. Countries such as Sweden, Norway, South Africa and Gambia have demonstrated the success of the quota system<sup>10</sup>.

### **Political participation of Sudanese Woman**

The metamorphoses of Sudanese women's political participation went through two stages. The first one was when the Sudanese patriarchs recognized the political role of women in a unilateral fashion without the women being privy to this act of patronizing recognition. The result is that, the Sudanese women never really played an effective role in this placating version of political participation. This political placation did not empower the Sudanese women to the extent that, they truly benefited from their political and other agencies. They still suffered from the encumbrances of patriarchal ideology which socio-cultural variables intrinsically inform this variant of one-sided political participation as instigated by men in not a truly political good faith as it were. The second stage was characterised and influenced by the labour trade union movement politics, as well as the emergence of variants of social and humanitarian organisations, and the opening of the public arenas for all men and women in society. Political participation became more genuine in that, women were able to openly participate as voters and candidates without restrictions, safe for those structural encumbrances embedded in socio-cultural traditions.

Even though the Sudanese women were now able to venture into various levels of political participation, they still felt handicapped by some various visible and invisible constraints. They needed more democratic institutions to be able to truly enjoy their participatory rights equal to men, without necessarily being confrontational in the discharging of their obligations and the enjoyment of rights and privilege same with their fellow male counterparts in the Sudanese society. Notwithstanding these various structural and other challenges end obstacles, it can be argued that, Sudanese women are in a better position than some of their sisters in some Arab and African countries. The Sudanese women were the first to win their rights to vote and be voted, as well as their right to participate in various constitutional, executive and judicial roles in the governance of society, compared to those other women in some of these said African and Arab countries. However, their political roles are still limited due to the fact that, their duties and obligations in the private sphere as homemakers, mothers and wives, reduce their temporal and other resources, for devotion in these political roles, expected of them, viable members of Sudanese society.

The acute deficit of various productive goods and services, as well as the acute lack of informative awareness campaigns and abject poverty, all these contributed to the unfavorable socio-political, cultural, economic and financial position that the Sudanese woman always find herself in. Her relative and absolute illiteracy compared to her male colleagues, as well as the

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<sup>8</sup> See Krook (2006).

<sup>9</sup> See Ballungton and Dahlerup (2006); and Rosselli (2008).

<sup>10</sup> See Krook (2009).

lack of targeted developmental programmes and projects; to better women empowerment and positive change; means that, the Sudanese woman is always disadvantaged when it comes to political decision-making processes, in issues that even concern her. It is therefore imperative that, she effectively participate in these political processes so that; she is also the author and owner of such decisions, in society, at parity; with her male colleagues and country folks, for general wellbeing of the Sudanese society.

Notwithstanding the discourse on the effectiveness of the quota system in the amelioration of various historical and contemporaneous inequities and marginalisations that Sudanese women suffered from, it can be argued that, the quota system is currently the most effective political remedy and an instrument, for the creation of political and other spaces for women to be able to effectively participate in the constructive development of the Sudanese society. The quota system may be a temporary remedy for these perennial issues of marginalisation of the Sudanese woman, however, it is envisaged that the Sudanese woman shall be able to influence various political and social processes in society, to enable her voice to be heard, as well as enabling her to effectively contribute in the development and creation of effective women carders in the political sphere and within various public domains to advance the woman course. This has led to ubiquitous emergence and influence of women voices and opinions within the remit of the search for peace in the Sudan, and thus women's constructive contributions in the cessations of hostilities and subsequent stoppage of war and the signing of the peace agreement.

After the conclusion of the peace agreement, the attention of the Sudanese women shifted to issues of effective political participation in post conflict Sudan. These efforts resulted in the political consensus around the formulation of the 2008 Electoral Law which legislated for the 25% quota for Sudanese women in various legislative institutions in the country. These are achievements worth documenting; in order eloquently elucidate the role of the quota system vis-à-vis women participation in Sudanese politics. The Regional Institute of Gender, Diversity, Peace and Rights (RIG/DPR), in the Ahfad University for Women (AUW), together with the International Research Centre for Development in Canada, undertook this documentation task during 2010-2012. Therefore, this report is on the documentation and analyses of the quota system within the framework of the 2008 Electoral Law and its effect on women political participation as well as the role of various political parties.

The second section is on the nature of women's political participation in the Sudan, the objectives, the research methodology and the conceptual framework applied in the research. Section three is on the analyses of the socio-economic framework within which, the quota system has been adopted and operationalised, with some concentration on the dynamism which characterised the roles of various political parties and the Sudanese women. Section four is on the exposition of the research results, which include concise presentation of the role of various actors within the remit and ambit of the adoption and implementation of the quota system in the Sudan. It shall also include the successes and failures of such actors as well as various advantages and disadvantages of their roles as it were. Section five presents and explains the effects of the quota system on political participation, especially on women candidates and the various political parties. Section six is the conclusion which includes the analyses of the results, beneficial lessons learnt and recommendations.

### **The general and specific objectives of the research**

### ***General objectives***

These include comprehensive presentation of the notion of Sudanese women political participation, and the various factors that influence this participation. Consideration is also had of various motivational variables which entuse the participation of youth in terms of young male and female adults respectively.

### ***Specific objectives***

These include:-

- i. General paradigm analyses, as well as the factors that affect and influence women's political participation;
- ii. The understanding of the synergies and interactions of various paradigms that produced the quota system, and the effect of the quota system on political participation of the Sudanese woman;
- iii. To study the effect of the quota system on political parties' structures as well as on their practices; and
- iv. To determine various political reasons and factors which positively and negatively influence and affect the political participation of female youth?

### **The research methodology**

The research methodology used is qualitative participatory analyses; in which, random interviews, discussion fora and workshops were complementarily used, to generate the dataset, deemed sufficient and appropriate, for the purposes of this research study.

- i. There were 34 interviews conducted with men and women, who had pivotal roles in the various quota processes such as the debates, campaigns and workshops. These men and women included civil society activists; academics; political parties' members; journalists; pioneers of women's movement and those involved in research and cultural institutions;
- ii. There were 18 interviews with male and female parliamentarians, government representatives from the Directorate of Woman and Family, within the Federal Ministry of Social Welfare and Security. This was the institutional instrument which led the drafting of the National Strategy for Woman Empowerment. Discussions were also had with representatives from the Federal Ministry of Justice, and representatives from the Election Commission;
- iii. There were 26 interviews done with female candidates from various political parties in which the criteria for their selection which was based on their roles and connections were discussed. Discussions were also had with the Speaker of the States' Assembly as well as female parliamentarians from both National and State's Parliaments; and
- iv. There were 10 interviews with representatives from various UN affiliated organisations, foreign embassies in the Sudan as well as donors organisations.

### **In terms of group discussions, the groups met include the following:-**

- i. Female activists and actors in various civil society organisations;
- ii. Female and male journalists;
- iii. Various home-makers from heterogeneous socio-economic backgrounds, chosen from different residential areas within Khartoum State;
- iv. Political youth from the National Congress Party (NCP), the Communist Party (CP), the National Umma Party (NUP) and the Baath Party (BP); and
- v. Various female members and candidates from various political parties.

### **Workshops**

In terms of the gathering of information via the organisation of workshops, there were a total of three (3) workshops held. In each of these workshops, there were between forty (40) male and female discussants, from various civil society organisations, the government and from various political parties. In these workshops, issues pertaining to historical political development in the Sudan, the effects of the quota system, political participation of women and various outputs of quota researches were discussed.

### **Secondary dataset**

This species of the dataset was generally dependent on the relevant literature review of the universal quota discourses. The experiences of various countries regionally, continentally and globally have been relied upon too, in addition to literature produced on the Sudanese experiences. This literature review constituted the intellectual baseline for the development of the conceptual framework for this research study; as well as for the comparative analyses of the effects of the quota within regional and global perspectives.

### **Data analyses**

Individual separate memos and summaries for all interviews, workshops and discussion fora were written and categorised in order to determine the patterns therein. This was necessary to identify divergence and conformity with the literature thus reviewed. These patterns were then analytically compared with the socio-economic framework in order to determine those determining variables and factors. Being a participatory action research study in design, the various politicians and activists actively participated in an interactive fashion, the analyses, and in the determination of various explanatory and justification variables of the research.

### **Challenges and limitations of the research**

The acute deficit in relevant databases in all political parties constitutes one of such challenges and limitations of this research. This is in addition to the fact that, the processes of confidence building vis-à-vis the women participants proved to be time consuming and at times difficult to achieve especially in terms of critical discussion of internal political parties' structures as regards their efficiencies and deficiencies. The majority of these women are not used to such nature of organisational participation. However, with the availability of some experienced

women in the group, the process of confidence building was made more achievable, but, the downside was that, some of these experienced and confident women, tend to idealise the role of; and practices within their individual political parties, thus, defeating the spirit and letter of critical and frank interrogation of the roles of Sudanese political parties; vis-à-vis, the place of women in these political parties.

### **The conceptual framework of the research**

Comparative analyses of the literature on the quota system emanating from both developed and developing countries indicate that, the adoption and implementation of the quota system in these countries is determined and influenced by a number of factors within the remit of various political actors from heterogeneous backgrounds. Some of the most influential variables as regards the adoption of the quota system include the interests and benefits of political parties, the emergence of universal notion of equitable parliamentary representation, as well as the influence of women's movement and activism. On the other hand, positive effects of the quota system depend on the efficacy and details of specific quota legislation, the mode of its implementation and the electoral systems in operation, as well as the role of various political actors. It is worth mentioning that, some countries have confirmed the positive effects of the quota system vis-à-vis the increase in the number of women parliamentarians, as well as in the positive changes within the practices of political parties as regards the organisation of election and the preparation of candidates' lists and the associated criteria. However, the realisation of qualitative and democratic equality is a function of the women candidates, discharging their obligations as regards the women's agenda<sup>11</sup>.

### **The situation in the Sudan: developments and challenges**

The hitherto united Sudan attained its political independence from Great Britain in January 1956, as a result of the national movement which in fact consisted of combined and unified political efforts of various politicians, intellectuals, trade unions and civil society organisations. The Sudan became politically independent with a civil war already in progress in South Sudan, and this war continued unabated and destructively until March 1972 with the subsequent signature of the Addis Ababa Agreement which produced a political respite until 1983 when another civil war broke out until 2005 with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). It is therefore obvious that, the Sudan spent many decades fighting itself at the expense of comprehensive socio-economic, cultural, financial and technological development. It also means that, the Sudan only saw and experienced ineffectual very short and intermittent periods of nominal democracy, which did not contribute at all to socio-political positive development. The CPA ushered in some kind of political relieve and optimism because it ended this long protracted civil war; however, there were more civil wars going on Eastern and Western Sudan.

The CPA stipulated legal, institutional and constitutional reforms, and also the formation of the Government of National Unity (GoNU), between the NCP and the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement (SPLM) and other minor political parties from both the South and North of the Sudan, but with the NCP and the SPLM taking the lion-share of wealth and power within the remit of the GoNU. The GoNU failed to reform all the laws and such like, the prerequisite for the emergence of functional and inclusive democracy in the Sudan. The CPA was not also positively

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<sup>11</sup> See Krook (2006) and (2009).

implemented, and the political environment as between the NCP and the SPLM was saturated in political bad faith and absolute deficit of political and socio-cultural trust. Therefore, when the time came, for the implementation of the CPA article on self-determination; for the peoples of South Sudan; they chose to vote overwhelmingly for secession in 2011, and as a result, the NCP had the whole remaining Sudan to itself as a political party.

The political assumption in certain political quarters that with the secession of South Sudan, the remaining parts of the Sudan shall become tranquil did not materialize; in fact there ensued more political instability. The remaining fifteen (1) States in the Sudan after the secession of South Sudan were further increased for political appeasement and other political motives such as the tribalisation of politics in that part of the Sudan. The decentralization system is only nominal whereby, the centre continues to monopolise all power and wealth, and distribute them in accordance to political preferences; and as a result, some States became more developed than those others which became more underdeveloped. Notwithstanding the several political agreements signed with rebels in Darfur, the situation deteriorated as civil war broke out in Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan. Right from independence up to the secession of South Sudan, the Sudan was endowed with enormous natural resources in the form of fertile land, wildlife, livestock, minerals and woodland complete with forest products such as timber and gum Arabic.

The Sudan inherited an economy reliant on agriculture from the British colonialists, and it was even suggested that the Sudan would become the global breadbasket. However all these economic dreams, evaporated, into thin political air and the Sudan remained a poor country? This was due to acute deficit of democratic institutions; and the ubiquitous absence of constitutionalism. Not only that, but socio-economic inequality as a result of mismanagement of various resources and policies of marginalisation of other segments of population; created comprehensive instability in terms of governance. Matters were made more worst by the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) as always advanced and enforced by the World Bank (IBRD) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). More rural to urban migration took place as the rural folks attempt to ameliorate their abject poverty by moving to various urban centres specially Khartoum the capital city and the seat of government.

The entry of crude oil as the main source of foreign earnings in 1999 improved the nominal per capita income in the Sudan, to the extent that; by 2008, the annual rate of growth of the Sudanese economy reached some 8%. However, all these positive development in terms of economic and financial improvements were not passed on to the peoples of the Sudan in terms of beneficent goods and services. The wealth remained in a few hands, and the majority continued to live in abject poverty. The service sector experienced dramatic change in terms of investment, but, this did not trickle down to the populace who remained unemployed especially the youth, notwithstanding the fact that, there was a tremendous expansion in higher educational institutions, but without absorptive capacity in the economy. The privatization of the national economic institutions did not help as this wealth went into a few hands in the private sector which did not energize the national economy. Rural poverty became endemic and the levels of inequalities increased and deepen as regards various sectors in the economy and segments in the population.

Institutional underdevelopment was exacerbated by democratic deficit. There were few effective civil society organisations (CSOs) during the short periods of democratic governance in the Sudan, but, with the advent of the National Salvation Government (NSG), that is, the NCP

government currently in power in the Sudan, the number of these CSOs dwindled, and those in operation witnessed suffocating restriction in their work to the extent of rendering them ineffectual. There was an explosion of these CSOs immediately after the conclusion of the CPA, but with the same governmental restrictions still in place. The broad and sweeping definition of CSOs in the Sudan included various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as well as governmental institutions such as universities and such like. There were also many such NGOs which were in fact formed and purposely financed by the NSG in order to compete with the run-of-the-mill CSOs and NGOs as it were. The majority of these assortments of CSOs and NGOs are mostly found in the capital city Khartoum, but with a few others scattered in the States. It is worth mentioning that, the NSG created some kind of socio-economic differentiation of the Sudanese people into the rich and the poor, as well as into the Islamist and secularists with catastrophic consequences on national stability.

The Sudan is a multi-cultural, multi-racial and multi-ethnic society, in which, the dysfunctional socio-economic policies pursued by various governments in the Sudan, culminating with the NSG led to disharmonious coexistence as between these myriad of ethnicities and races in the Sudan. Issues of racial and ethnic marginalisation as well as discrimination have led to the culture of perpetual conflict and instability in the Sudan. However, the unifying common denominator among all these racial and ethnic groups is their subjugation of women in the Sudan. All cultural traditions and values in the Sudan contain all variables of subjugation against women. However, these patriarchal norms are being challenged as a result of widespread female education in the Sudan. The entrenched poverty in the Sudan has led to the ubiquitous presence of international relief organizations and they contributed positively in various efforts vis-à-vis women movement in the Sudan. The above narration has elucidated comprehensive socio-economic development in the Sudan and within which the political participation of Sudanese women is to be interrogated.

### **The women activism in the Sudan**

Women activism in the Sudan has been invigorated by historical women movement at both regional and international levels. The genesis of the Sudanese women movement dates back to 1907 with the admission of girls into primary education as well as the admission of women into teachers' training institute in 1924 respectively. The few women who managed to graduate as teachers had to live away from their families in residential hostels. These were women pioneers in terms of general awareness raising as regards the benefit of education for women in general. These women were the first opinion makers and leaders within the ambit of women movement in the Sudan. By then, the British colonial policy was against the participation of women in the work place in various urban centers. Not only that, but even in the rural areas, women were marginalised as they were not allocated any possessive rights in terms of agricultural land in the Sudan. Women were not allowed to participate in any trade union activities and all these restrictions undermined the effective participation of women in the development processes in the Sudan, and their positive contribution to societal development. However in South Sudan, notwithstanding the colonial restrictions in place, women there were able to participate in their subsistence production process, presumably equal to other remote areas in the rest of the Sudan.

General education contributed in the encouragement of women to take part in societal work processes. On the other hand, the gradual development of the nationalist movements in the Sudan and in other countries, as well as various global women liberation movements especially in the

Arab world, prompted some of the educated women in the Sudan, around 1947, to organize the formation of associations and cooperatives such as the Omdurman Girls' Cultural Association and the Omdurman Woman Development Cooperative. One of the most important developments in this period was the formation of the Mistresses' (female teachers) Union, which in 1951 was transformed into Trade Union proper. These associations, cooperatives and trade unions were the harbinger for women political awareness and which subsequently pave the way for their eventual participation in various political for a an levels in the Sudan. These were important developments taking into consideration the entrenched British colonial restrictions on the role and participation of women in public life in the Sudan. As mentioned earlier, these developments were also influenced by the international political environment including the nationalists movements, and thus, those women teachers involved in these works managed to enthused their female students and the their participation together with their teachers culminated in the formation of the Sudanese Women Union in 1952, in which some of these female students became members in the first steering committee of this union of Sudanese women on socio-cultural, economic, national and political issues.

This women union had many objectives and the most important one was awareness raising and their participation in voluntary altruistic works. The activities of the union were concentrated on illiteracy campaigns, skills imparting and women training, employment of women, the abolition of oppressive laws against women, maternal and child health and the combating of harmful traditional and customary practices. The women union also paid attention to issues of women rights in marital matters such as soliciting her consent and opinion about her own marriage. The union also concentrated on civil and political rights, and in working with other similar regional and international unions. The membership of this union was restricted only to the educated Sudanese women. This period also witnessed the emergence of women journalistic activism with the publication of the Bint al Wude Magazine in 1946 and the Sowt Al Maraa Magazine in 1955. The formation of the women union created various spaces and opportunities for Sudanese women in both public life and work as well as in the political sphere. Some of the publications and documentations by various women leaders indicated that, there were positive encouragements and acceptances from the leaders of the national movement, intellectuals, workers, students, farmers and the Sudanese Communist Party. However, there were also some voices which were against the participation of women in public life and notwithstanding the fact that, the women leaders have always been cautious in their public work not to undermine their traditional roles and the traditional and customary place of women in Sudanese society so as to win societal trust.

The major public political protest by some of the Sudanese women leaders was when they submitted a protest letter to the chairman of the international supervisory committee; for the national parliamentary elections in 1953. The electoral law then prohibited the participation of women, as voters and candidates, in these elections, and that, these were only men's political and civil rights. The educated women won partial remedy when they were allowed voting in graduate constituencies but not in geographical constituencies. This was a fundamental political breakthrough for it questioned the assumption that, political rights were the privy of Sudanese men only. It is worth mentioning that, prior to independence, the women union was operating in the capital Khartoum without effective branches in various localities within the capital, and its lack of concrete links with the regions meant that, the union lacked broad based membership as well as democratic organisational framework. After independence, the women union

monopolized all women political activities in the Sudan whereby, some of its members participated in the writing of the permanent constitution and participation in voting as mentioned earlier. In 1957, within the ambit of the women congress of that year, the union demanded full-blown political participation of women, equality in the workplace, in terms of equal pay for equal work and family protection. The majority of political parties endorsed all of the demands except the ones on political rights. However, the Sudanese Communist Party was the only political party which endorsed all the women's requests.

On the other hand, there is no specific information regarding the activities of some of the women associations and such like; such as the Women Solidarity of 1957, or the Popular Sudanese Women Association of 1959, or the Faithful Sudanese Women of 1961. However, the Muslim Sisterhood published a magazine, 'the Amanar', which advocated the opinions of the Muslim Sisters, which was in opposition to the ideas and political opinions of the women union. The Gafilla magazine published in 1957 only advocated for various women issues. A drastic historical political change occurred in 1958, in which, all political parties and trade unions were dissolved, and the women union was also dissolved in 1959. The union continued its underground work among women homemakers, and the membership continued to participate in the national resistance, despite the failed attempts of the military Junta to revive the work of the union via an alternative organisation in 1963. The union managed to claw back its political rights after the 1964 October revolution, and reaffirmed the enjoyment of women rights which other women in various developing countries were already enjoying. Some of the women leaders entered the 1964 parliament where they continued to advocate for the rights of women. The establishment of Ahfad University for Women (AUW) has been the most important achievement within the remit of emancipation. The AUW not only advances the educational and cultural development of Sudanese women, but it provides comprehensive leadership skills of the young women beneficiaries, preparing them for the variant societal challenges and this has always been the long term ambition of the women movement in the Sudan.

There were no women candidates during the 1968 general elections due to abolition of the graduates' constituencies, however, many women were able to participate as voters due to the increase of women registration as voters and this gave them the opportunity to demonstrate their critical and important role in the political parliamentary and electoral processes in the Sudan. The military take over of government in May 1969 led to the dissolution of the women union. However the political rivalry which led to the split of the Communist Party which engineered the take over, also led to the split within the leadership of the women union, whereby, some of them together with women from the already divided Communist Party joined together as Sudanese Socialist Union (SSU) formed by the May 1969 regime; and which ruled the Sudan up to 1985 when it was in turn overthrown by the popular uprising of the Sudanese peoples. The women leaders within the SSU managed to form the SSU Women Secretariat which became the political conduit for the advancement of women political and civil demands in terms of employment, equal pay and maternity and child health which were then incorporated into the labour law. During this period, the electoral law was also changed to specifically allocate specified quota for women and other syndicated organisations; as well as the promulgation of SSU law which obligated various Popular Committees in the Sudan to allocate 10% of their seats for women. It is worth mentioning that, all these legal and political arrangements did not result in positive political participation of women in the political process. The political parties were abolished, and the leadership of the SSU Popular Committees were not keen to involve women and allow them

to benefit from the so allocated 10% seats. Even within various governmental institutions where membership and participation was by political appointments, it was ubiquitously clear that, women were marginalised and excluded. The only explanation can be found within the culture and ideology of patriarchy which permeates and inform the various decisions taken by the men in charge of these political and other institutions in the Sudan.

In our objective evaluation, the period of 1951-1971 was characterised by effective contribution of feminine civil society activism in which institutional and legalistic reforms and changes took place in favour of comprehensive women rights. All these occurred within political equanimity such that, there were no semblances of socio-cultural threats to societal structural norms. The women leaders acquiesced to their culturally subordinate positions with all the concomitant socio-political consequences, a move which paradoxically led to the loosening and opening up of hitherto closed political doors to women participation in politics, public life and in general work place and environment. It has also won over some intellectual and educated men to side with women and advocate for their human and political rights. This was a victory for women movement in the Sudan. The 1970s witnessed the formation of institutional instrument for women development; within the Ministry of Social Welfare.

In 1979, some selected organizations were allowed to operate outside the remit of the Sudanese Women Union. The role of these organisations included campaigns against the exorbitant dowries, marital issues and the teaching of the Quran. The Babikr Badri Scientific Association for Scientific Studies was registered for the sole purposes of awareness raising among rural women and others on issues of illiteracy, capacity building, health issues, and these were all carried out through the various subsidiary organisations set up by the Association as its agents. The Association operated in both Eastern and Western Sudan respectively, and its other concerns included the training of women on income savings as well as issues of female genital mutilation. The Association also succeeded in setting up an official registration of the women Diplomatic Association for both Sudanese and foreign women. The participation of women in the April 1985 Uprising facilitated their beneficial use of the democratic environment by establishing various women organisation to the tune of sixteen (16) organisations, which invariably operated within the realm of women issues and development. The most important achievement during the democratic period of 1985-1989; was the formation of women's sectors, within various political parties, and their participation in several leadership positions in the government.

The 1980s witnessed the mushrooming of the feminist movement and thought among women academics and this was reflected in the taught courses in the Department of Sociology at the University of Khartoum; as well as courses and research work at the Ahfad University for Women in 1980. These developments led to the graduation of youthful, conscious and active women feminists to advocate for women development issues. This period also witnessed the general conscientisation of women in government ministries such as the ministries of agriculture and finance on issues of women development. Subsequential to the International Woman Conference in Nairobi, in 1985, there ensued a dialogue in the Sudan, around the formation of a council or any other institutional instrument, outside the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Social Welfare, to cater for Women and Child Welfare. The democratic period availed valuable opportunities to various political parties and the women movement to rebuild their organisational and ideological foundations, notwithstanding the existence of new challenges commensurate with the socio-political exigencies prevailing then, as well as the various lessons learnt from the

restrictive policies of the past. However, the democratic period was too short to carry out any tangible reforms; and other legal and institutional changes, vis-à-vis the oppressive September Islamic Laws. The period was also characterised by the political movement of various Islamic groups, in their quest to polarise society into Islamists and secularists.

### ***Sudanese Feminist Movement 1989-2005***

The political period between 1989-2005; started with a military takeover; and was characterised by an Islamic orientation, established by the Islamists who supported the military takeover of government in 1989. The Islamist in government instituted various economic, cultural, political and social reforms which negatively affected the position of women in the Sudan, and on their various feminists and other movements and developments in the Sudan. The Islamists' government policies curtailed various women's freedoms and rights; in terms of their movement, conscience, association, work, dress code, culturally as well as politically. The Islamists abolished all political parties, safe for those with Islamic orientations, and they then formed organisations which propagate their policies and objectives. The only women allowed to politically participate were those who belong to Islamist political party and commensurate organisations. This situation continued up to 1995, whence the official re-registrations of some organisations such the Babekir Badri Scientific Association and some cooperative societies. After the Beijing International Women Conference of 1995, the government allowed the formation of the Women Peace Network, and some other organisations<sup>12</sup>. This work was spearheaded by some of those organisations working in this field, the number of these non-governmental organisations increased gradually, until the total number of organisation working in the field of women issues increased up to thirty seven (37)<sup>13</sup> by 2003, including some other national and regional organisations. It is worth mentioning that, women working in various institutions and organizations such as political parties, universities, trade unions and youth organisations were instrumental in these various registered organizations.

It is worth emphasizing that, some of the Islamic organisations which were operating under the auspices of the NCP were magnet points for the mobilization of rural women under the umbrella

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<sup>12</sup> The most important achievement was the Sudanese Women Empowerment for Peace (SUWEP), which came to fruition by efforts exerted by the Babekir Badri Scientific Association, in collaboration with the Dutch Embassy in Khartoum whereby, a number of organisations including the Sudanese Environmental Protection Association were invited, where the peace initiative was discussed and how various women organisations in both Northern and Southern Sudan could dialogue together for the formulation of the women agenda as a peace catalyst and women participation in the peace process as well as influencing the SPLM and the Sudanese government within the remit of peace agreement. The consultative dialogue between the northern and southern women in the Sudan arrived at a consensus whereby, the Dutch Embassy undertook the responsibility of formulating a comprehensive program of action for all women organisations in and outside the Sudan. The women organisations in the Sudan were then divided into five working groups which included:- (1) women in political parties; (2) Nuba Mountains women; (3) South Sudan Women; (4) Women in Sudan Government; and (5) Women in NGOs. These groups are to constitute the SUWEP. Opinion solicitation was carried out among women in IDP camps, and as a result, some awareness and conscientisation campaign were conducted in these camps, to train and enlighten the women therein on conflict resolution technique and the building of peace culture. A general women conference was organised in Poland in 2000, in which women groups from northern and southern Sudan attended, with the SPLM boycotting the event. The conference came out with resolutions which include the representation of women by not less than 30% in the executive branch, the legislative assemblies, leadership positions and the peace negotiation delegations. The importance of the Quota system was eloquently elucidated by the Women in the SUWEP, so that, women can effectively participate in various decision-making positions within political and executive institutions. The SUWEP women also participated in the peace negotiation at Naivasha in 2004, where as, the official negotiating teams only included one woman representing the SPLM. The SUWEP women emphasized the importance of self-determination for south Sudan, the cessation of hostilities and the separation of religion from the state. SUWEP was a vital and pivotal social interaction tool among all the groups therein.

<sup>13</sup> Badri (2006)

of the ruling political party in the Sudan. The other non-Islamic and secular organisations concentrated on peace issues and the importance of the ratification of the CEDAW by the Sudanese State, as well as the Beijing Program of Action. These organisations also campaigned against abject poverty, women genital mutilation, for women rights, the constitution and against all oppressive laws undermining individual and group freedoms, as well as for issues of gender within democratic governance. These secular organisations has partnership and cooperation experiences which came out clearly in their discussion of the citizenship law, child law, the transitional constitution, the Machakos Protocol as well as the governor's decree which prohibited women working in some essential economic spheres in 2000, as well as women contribution in the preparation for the peace agreement and the woman agenda which was discussed in Oslo in 2005.

Notwithstanding the ideological and religious differences between the Islamic women groups and those other women groups belonging to the SUWEP and other secular organisations, it was discernible that, these groups found common ground and relative consensus on issues such as the citizenship law and the governor's decree. However, these Islamic women groups did not openly criticized nor opposed the Public Law or the blatant suppression of political freedoms. These political activism and mobilisation was not limited only to Sudanese women inside the Sudan, but, those other Sudanese women in Diaspora also contributed enormously to the same cause, especially those women who left the country as political opposition activists. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) organised a conference in Asmara in between the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June, in 1995, under the slogan, "Contemporaneous Issues", this conference was attended by various military, political, trade union leaderships as well as prominent national figures, and who belong in the NDA. The prominent political groupings included the SPLM/A, Union of Sudanese African Parties (USAP), the Communist Party (CP), Trade Unions, the UMMA Party, and the Beja Conference. The discussants deliberated on various national issues, and including the inalienable rights of the Sudanese woman as an equal citizen. The Sudanese opposition women in Diaspora proposed changes to Article 5 of the Declaration, which read, "the NDA shall abide by the upholding of the dignity of the Sudanese woman, and reaffirm her role in the Sudanese national movement, and recognize her rights and duties as included in international covenants and which do not conflict with religion".

There was ubiquitous flourishing of feminist and women work in some universities, where there was marked expansion in courses on gender and feminism such as in the Ahfad University, the University of Sudan, Al Zeaem Al Azhari University, and the Gezira University. The period also witnessed the Islamic Studies Centres on women issues. The period between 1995-2005 witnessed some institutional changes in the public sector. The preparation for Beijing Plus; and Beijing Plus 10, as well as the role of some regional and international women activists, compelled the Sudanese government to increase women units and sectors in various governmental institutions, as a result, the government benefited financially from the international community, in its capacity building for women in these public institutions. The effectiveness of these various women was rejuvenated regionally and internationally in their quest to interrogate CEDAW, but their voices were crowded out by the majority voices of those against the various international covenants and conventions which preach human rights especially issues of women rights as human rights.

The reactivation of political parties' work from inside the Sudan in 2002 had dramatic positive effects on various women activism and movement respectively. The political parties increased in number and with that, the increase of women participation in the said political parties. The increase of party political women in the various decision-making processes in these parties and their various internal organs and structures contributed in the constructive shifting of hitherto oppressive cultural variables vis-à-vis women's political and societal positive participation. These ideological and cultural breakthroughs were limited to specific political parties. In the majority of the political parties the permeating patriarchal ideology still reign supreme and women in these parties could not succeed in shifting the entrenched patriarchal foundations and structural variables which continued to undermine women's political and cultural positive participation in the Sudanese society. After the 2005 peace agreement, an important development occurred within the remit of the women group working in various governmental institutions. These women contributed positively in various dialogues concerning legal reform and in the revision of the child law, in which they included the participation of various civil society organizations in these dialogues. A centre for women human rights was established within the federal ministry of social welfare, and it embarked upon the revision of all laws from gender perspective. This centre produced some recommendations but they never made it through to the legislative councils, and this demonstrates the limitations experienced by Islamic women groups where they operate within set political ceilings that they cannot bypass. There were similar efforts exerted for legal reforms but from different non theological perspective. Their reforms recommendations are worth comparing and contrasting with those of the Islamic organisations.

As mentioned earlier, the period between 1989 to 2005 was characterised by contradictions in terms of myriad of conflicting opinions as regards the position of woman in the Sudanese society. Within the remit of institutional changes that occurred, there were a number of political and ideological currents which favoured the emancipation and empowerment of women in the Sudanese society, however some Islamic organisations adopted the same methodology but only for economic empowerment and the entrenchment of patriarchal ideology in the Sudan. It is worth mentioning that, during the Islamic Salvation regime, women movements fell into various parallel ideological trajectories. There were Islamic and non-Islamic secular organizations operating within the auspices of the same regime in the Sudan. The General Women Union was able to form various branches in all states in the Sudan and at all levels; and well endowed with varying resources bases. The Union is mainly focused on the economic empowerment of women. The operational space was thus availed for various Islamic associations with varying outlooks to operate in the given limited arenas. There were other organisations with more economic and financial resources which concentrated on the provision of various goods and services, as well as the emergence of various research centres on Islamic women studies. Notwithstanding the fact that all the Islamic organisations are united by their Islamic text and context as regards women issues, there are some variations that are discernible among and between them. There is the Salafi orientation which is opposed to women right from Western perspective as well as against gender equality; there is another orientation which works for gender equality but within the remit of patriarchal ideology; and an enlightened orientation which works for women rights, gender equality and justice and it operates within the framework of international arena but without rocking the political boat and concomitantly the ruling political party in the Sudan. As for the other secular organisations and groups, they are also characterised by some variations, but they are united by their common stand as regards the emancipation of women in the Sudan. They call for gender equality, women freedom, justice, and non discrimination against women as well as

the fight against violence targeted at women in the Sudan. With these given similarities of objectives, they differ in their approach and strategies in the achievement of the said objectives. These organizations and groups cooperate in various fora and campaigns, and they cooperate with various political parties on the interrogations of contemporaneous political issues as well as women issues within the remit of gender equality. Some universities and women activists participated in the training of political parties and various capacity building activities as preparatory work for the national general elections.

The underlying environment in which the discourse on the Quota system started, influenced the nature and context of women participation in the political sphere. Women participation in the pre peace agreement legislative assemblies was via political appointments, and the representation was not more than 10%. After the peace agreement, women participation in the legislative assemblies was again via political appointment, and the representation was only 18%, which is indicative of the fact that, the patriarchal ideology cannot see the political logic for equitable women participation various legislative assemblies, that is why the politicians in the two partnership; the SPLM and the NCP, could not even increase the representation of women in these legislative assemblies to 25%. This is notwithstanding the placating political text which always reaffirms these political parties' commitment to gender equality and how keen they are in empowering women to become equal political partners, but, their actions do not correspond to their political rhetoric.

### *Political parties*

Political parties are the institutional crucibles and conduits through which the Quota system can be effectively implemented. It is through these political parties that, party political women can be elected into various parliaments and legislative assemblies. It is through these political parties that, the true spirit and letter of the Quota system can find their operationalisation on the political ground. Therefore, in the research conceptual framework, the success of the Quota system is inherently linked to the various transformative dynamism within the remit of the political text of these myriad of political parties which are the frontline political players in the Sudan. Historically, the institutions of political parties started in the 1940s within the ambit of the nationalist movement, spearheaded and led by the Graduates' Congress. Subsequential to political schism which fractured the Graduate congress, over the issues of strategies for the attainment of the Sudanese independence; there emerged the Al Ashiqua Political Party in 1943, and this was the nucleus for the Unionist Democratic Party which was formed in 1952 under the leadership of Ali Al Merghani.

The UMMA Party was formed in 1945 under the leadership of Abdal Rahman Al Mahdi, both political parties have religious foundations. The two political parties basically preoccupied with the political future and independence of the Sudan. They were not bothered and concern with the total socio-cultural and economic positive transformation of the Sudan. This led to the emergence of a more radical group of political activists who were concerned with the structural transformation of the Sudan within the remit of all its socio-economic, political and religious paradigms. This new political radical movement was led by trade union activists, students' activists and women activists. One of the most hitherto radical groups was the Sudanese Movement for National Liberation, which later became the Sudanese Communist Party (SCP) after 1949. Even within the other political parties, there were political radicals who believed that, political liberation and independence does not end with the formation of governmental

institutions only. They believed that, there was a profound need for total realignment of all socio-cultural and economic paradigms within this movement to truly attain national independence. This period of national resistance witnessed the formation of Islamic political parties, whereby, the Islamic Front Party was formed in 1949, and the Republican Brothers Party was formed in the 1950s, with its fundamental call for religious reformation for the attainment of justice and mercy. Notwithstanding the schisms within the national movement, it managed at the end, to liberate the nation from the colonialists in 1956. However, the political dynamism of the period between 1956 to 1969 indicates that, the various political parties were devoid of concrete political, social and economic national programmes. These political parties were dependent on the inherited political structures, from the colonialists, and which they used for ruling the country, with minor adjustments, which failed to address the core national issues, and which led to endemic instabilities, which exposed the country to contradictory transformative policies. These political parties conducted national general elections in 1953, but the economic and political situation of the country was appalling coupled with the already inflammable situation in southern Sudan.

The democratic experimentation did not last long, for in 1958, the military took over the reign of power in the Sudan, and they were in turn overthrown by the popular uprising of October 1964, which led to the formation of a transitional government in which all the political parties, including the South Sudan political parties participated. Early elections were called in 1965 in which several political parties and corporations participated, and in which, for the first time ever, graduates and geographical seats were allocated. It is argued that, the allocation of the graduates seats was the first practice of the notion of the Quota system in Sudanese elections. It is also considered that, the period between 1965 to 1968; is the worst democratic experience in the Sudanese modern political history. The period was awash with weak, corrupt and fractured governance, whereby, deep political divisions coupled with contradictory policies and practices, and the absence of clear political vision led to the military takeover of the government in 1969. One of the most important political developments of the 1965-1968 period was the emergence of regional and ethnically based political parties in the Nuba Mountains, Darfur and the Beja region., and these developments have their political role in various events post 1965. After October 1964, some of the Islamic groupings organised themselves into the Islamic Front under the leadership of Hassan Al Turabi, and he SCP succeeded in expanding its political base post October 1964, and after the dissolution of the SCP by the military regime in 1958; but, the SCP was subsequently expelled from parliament.

The military rule of 1969-1985 was a critical period for those political parties which contradicted their stand towards the regime. The SCP openly supported the regime, but, political differences with the regime led to the execution of the SCP Chairman and the subsequent division of the SCP into pro-regime and anti-regime members of the SCP. Those with the regime proceeded to form the Sudanese Socialist Union (SSU) as the political wing of the military regime, and they also put the trade unions under the disposal of the regime. The May regime was militarily resisted via several attempted military take over, under the leadership of some political parties. Students, the Islamists and the Communists all organised protests against the May regime. After the military attempt to overthrow the regime in 1976, there ensued some political dialogue which ended in the national reconciliation with the other political parties. The UMMA Party and the National Islamic Front signed the national reconciliation document, but the Unionist Democratic Party of Ali Al Merghani refused to sign.

In South Sudan, the political scenario was different. The two main political parties there were the SANU and the Southern Front. The situation worsened in South Sudan to the extent that, a rebellion broke out in 1983 and the formation of the SPLM/A. In 1984, in North Sudan, the trade unions and students started political moves which constituted the political nucleus for the popular April 1985 Uprising, which overthrew the military regime and the advent of democracy. With the exception of the Muslim Brothers, the trade unions, the political parties and the Islamic Front formed a united front in 1985. They made up the national salvation and formed the national transitional government. The period from 1985 to 1989 was important for political democracy, whereby, the number of political parties reached forty (40) political parties with varying political orientations, ranging from revolutionary socialism to Islamic in nature. These various political parties contested the 1986 general elections, and another coalition government was formed in 1988. This coalition did not last, and in early 1989, the army, trade unions, and other political forces demanded the formation of a representative government. There ensued a coalition between the UMMA Party, the Democratic Unionist Party, the Southern Political Parties and the trade unions; but the Islamic Front refused to join the coalition. The 1988 coalition government undertook to sign a peace agreement with the SPLM/A and to stop the civil war in the country. However, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 1989, the Islamic Front masterminded a military takeover of the government and it proceeded to abolish all political parties and remain ruling on its own up to date.

The Islamic Front military takeover of the government created many changes in the Sudanese society. The Islamic Front came with its own ideology for the socio-cultural and political restructuring of the Sudan. Since 1989, the Sudan has been led by a totalitarian regime under the leadership of an Islamic Party the NCP, after the schism in the Islamic Front which led to the formation of the Popular Congress Party (PCP). The NCP only shared in ruling the Sudan with the SPLM/A between 2005 to 2011, otherwise, the NCP has always been a hegemonic ruler of the Sudan since 1989. It is worth mentioning that, during the 1990s, various political parties went underground inside the Sudan, and others operated outside the Sudan. In 1998, the regime issued a new constitution in which political freedom was allowed but under suffocating political and security supervision. Some political parties registered but some other refused to work under such repressive political conditions. The NDA embarked on the achievement of a comprehensive peace as a strategy to resolve all outstanding political problems in the Sudan. The Machakos Protocol was signed in 2000 as a harbinger for peace in the Sudan.

All the political parties welcomed the comprehensive peace agreement (CPA) of 2005, whereby the various CPA articles included issues of democratic transformation, legal and constitutional reforms which freedom for political parties to embark on political work and their participation in transparent elections. The most important political event that took place in this period was the dramatic fracturing of major and traditional political parties into more different political parties sharing the same historical names but with more or less different political agenda and leadership. There was the emergence of regional ethnically based political parties, and the number of political parties reached up to 82 political parties which were registered by 2008. Many of these political parties lacked financial and other viable resources. These parties cooperated with and dialogued the NCP regime on issues of political parties' law and the electoral law respectively; but, all the political conversations were dictated by the NCP as the ruler of the Sudan. All the attempted legal reforms were therefore to take place within the interest of the NCP. The other political parties were unable to reform and amend all those laws which undermined various

rights and freedoms in the country since the NCP controlled all the branches of governance in the Sudan. The political parties were hoping against hope that, this repressive political environment was going to end with the conclusion of the 2010 general elections. This was not to be, the NCP continued to monopolise the reign of power and resources and suppressed genuine political participation by the other political parties. This led to many political parties boycotting the 2010 general elections. There were massive irregularities in the electoral register, the census, the allocation of constituencies, the use of public resources by the NCP for its own party political benefits therefore, unequal and unfair advantage over the other political parties. It is therefore, obvious that, the political metamorphoses in the Sudan entailed massive political and other challenges for the myriad of political parties that aspired to participate in the Sudanese political development. There are myriad of questions that beg answers vis-à-vis the role of Sudanese women in the said political metamorphoses in the Sudan. Therefore, to what extent did Sudanese feminist and women movement influenced or affected the various political parties, in terms of their political principles, policies and structures?

### ***The history of women quota in the Sudan***

On the bases of various socio-economic, political and cultural developments, it is obvious that, the notion of women quota is historically known in the realm of political work in the Sudan. However, various empirical evidences on hand, do not demonstrate conclusive research based evidence as to the application of the said quota in congruence with the meant women quota as understood in this current research work. Others in the Sudan maintain that, the graduate seats were kinds of quota, but, these were syndicated seats and professional in nature as opposed to quota system based on positive discrimination or affirmative action as known today in general and in this research work in particular. One of the opinion makers argued that the reserving of quota for women in the Sudan started with the May regime (1969-1985).

*The quota system in the legislative assemblies during the 1970 was as follows:-*

Seats reserved for syndicated and popular organizations which included women; youth; workers; national capitalist, reporters; and rural organisation committees. Those eligible to vote for these representatives include the officially registered members of these organisations.

- i. The syndicated seats for engineers, administrators, teachers, medical doctors and farmers;
- ii. Women seats in the nine Sudanese provinces in both North and South Sudan, and the voters include all those officially registered women in the Sudanese Women Union;
- iii. 10% of the seats appointed by the President include women and men, besides the geographical seats opened for both men and women;
- iv. Peoples local councils, whereby, they were arranged hierarchically such that, they started with the neighbourhood council, sectional council, area council, and provincial council;
- v. 25% quota for women in all base committees in peoples local councils, besides the right of a woman to compete in the 75% of the remaining seats, it so happened, in the Karari council all the 11 seats were taken by women; and
- vi. The 25% quota was abolished after the passage of the regional government act of 1981.

The regional government Act 1981 established six regions in Sudan during the May regime, and these included, Northern Region; Central Region; Eastern Region; Southern Region; the Capital Khartoum; Darfur Region; and Kordofan Region. The Southern Region enjoyed self rule since 1972 as a result of the Addis Ababa Agreement of March 1972, which stopped the first civil war in the Sudan between 1955-1972. Each region had its own people's regional assembly, and for each assembly there was quota system as explained above, whereby, each member elect for the categories mentioned above, in addition to the geographical seats, and the President appoints the 10% of the membership of each assembly. During the 1947 administrative Conference, it was recommended that, areas with relative political and intellectual awareness were to have more representatives as opposed to those rural and relatively socially undeveloped areas of the Sudan. Therefore, population density was not the basis for the allocation of electoral constituencies. Other criteria for the allocation of constituencies' seats also included the amount of taxes revenue paid by an area, the level of development, the number of elementary schools and such like. The 1948 elections were conducted on these bases. The same criteria were also used in the 1953 general elections. This means that, urban areas such as Khartoum were to have more seats than densely populated rural areas in the country. In 1958, the graduates seats were abolished, and they were brought back in the 1965 elections, only to be abolished in 1968 elections and to be brought back again in 1986 general elections.

The 1953 general elections were governed by the 1952 self rule act which stipulated that, the election committee is the body that supervises and writes the by-laws for elections. This means that, the quota was through the regulations and by-laws written by this committee. The 1958 general elections was governed by the electoral law passed in 1957, as well as regulations for the electoral committee also passed in 1957, but there was no quota. For the 1969 elections, there was an electoral law passed in 1965, as for the 1968 elections, the election committee issues its regulation in 1967, but there was no quota. As for the 1986 elections, the electoral law was passed in 1986, and there were twenty six (26) graduates' seats. Therefore, the issue of quota or reservation in the Sudanese electoral laws has been applied historically.

### ***The actors in the quota process***

In all the countries that implemented the quota system, there have been various activists both men and women who contributed enormously to its success. There would always be various international and regional as well as national governmental and non-governmental organisations that contributed to the success of the same. The respondents and various participations in this research were asked to elaborate on the contribution of their organizations for which they work in the implementation of the quota system in the Sudan. These various research participants emanated from various organisations which included universities, governmental institutions, NGOs, political parties and other civil society organisations. These various efforts interacted positively until the quota system was finally endorsed within the remit of the electoral law of 2008.

### ***Civil society organisations (CSOs)***

SUWEP is one of those instrumental organizations which played a crucial role in the implementation of the quota system in the Sudan, and one of its 2002 demands was the implementation 30% quota system for women in both executive and legislative institutions in the Sudan.

### ***The Gender Centre***

Since 2004, this centre contributed in the formulation of the conceptual framework document on the understanding of the quota system in the Sudan; and the document was among those presented in the Arab Conference for the formulation of the institutional and legal framework for the quota system in the Arab world<sup>14</sup>. The document was also used in various consultative meetings and dialogue with various actors in the realm of the quota system in the Sudan. The centre also conducted various discussion sessions on how the nature of the quota system and its legal implications. The center also participated with the Women forum in Political Parties in organising up to seventeen (17) fora; for consultative discussion on the roles of political parties and to understand their point of views on the quota system and how best it could included in the proposed electoral law. The various recommendations were coordinated and presented the Constitutional Review Commission, by an elected women committee who participated in the 2006 workshop for the discussion of the inclusion of the quota system in the electoral law.

### ***Salma Centre for Women Studies***

Via its campaign in front of the National assembly, Salma Centre firmly stood against the notion and practice of separate candidates' list for women. When its efforts failed, it continued to work with women candidates to formulate a manifesto for their election purposes. The Salma Centre also conducted a series of studies on the role of women in elections, as well as awareness raising campaigns via audio-visual aid instruments, for women, on how to vote and positively conduct themselves in elections environment. These training and awareness raising sessions targeted women and youth. The Centre also assisted in the professional documentation for fifty (50) women candidates.

### ***Babikr Badri Association for Women Studies***

In 2004, during the convening of the African Union in Khartoum, the Association organised a campaign workshop, for the ratification of the African Protocol for Women Rights by the Sudan. A paper on women's' rights was presented in the workshop, and which among other demands, petition the authorities in the Sudan, for the ratification of the said protocol; which included the issue of the quota system, and which was already ratified by some other African countries. The Association also conducted several workshops and discussions fora for various groups, in order to enlighten them about the importance of the quota system for women, and its effect on the political life of Sudanese women. The Association also published all the various discussions and publication on the issue of the quota system, in some specially dedicated editions of the Woman's Magazine<sup>15</sup>. The association also undertook the various task of capacity building for women and youth to enable them participate constructively in the political process.

### ***The Sudanese Women General Union***

The Union invited several political parties for the discussion of the quota system for Sudanese women. The leadership of the Union also advocated for the quota system for the Sudanese women within the remit of the ruling NCP political party in the Sudan.

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<sup>14</sup> Neimat Kuku (2008).

<sup>15</sup> The Woman's Magazine (2008) and (2010) Issues Vols. 24 and 27 respectively.

### ***The Nuba Mountains Women Organisation***

This is an offshoot of the SUWEP. It participated in several discussion fora within and without the Sudan on the quota system for Sudanese women. It also participated in the Asmara discussions of 2004. It firmly stood for 35% women quota and it is to be included in the constitution.

### ***Women Union***

It contributed in various dialogues and discussion with various NGOs and CSOs; on the issues of the minimum women agenda, the elections, as well as the quota system for Sudanese women.

### ***Women Initiative Group***

The membership of this group participated in various discussion sessions on issues of the quota system for Sudanese women, with various NGOs, CSOs; and it also carried out various awareness raising campaigns.

### ***The Sudanese Organisation for Research and Development***

It participated in several discussion sessions on the quota system, and it also carried out training sessions for various women candidates.

### ***The Ahfad University for Women (AUW)***

The AUW is among the first universities in the Sudan to shed light on various women's issues in the Sudan, by purposely designing, offering and compulsorily teaching a course on women studies in 1986. The AUW also participated in many important international conferences, one of which is the Beijing 1995 in which it sent representatives from the AUW to attend the preparatory conference for the African continent in Accra. It also participated in other international conferences on women issues such as in Denmark in 1980, Nairobi in 1985 and Beijing in 1995. In 2002, the AUW convened a seminar in which it invited a Spanish Parliamentarian, to come and share her knowledge and experience on the implementation of the Quota System, and how they managed to get many women parliamentarians into the Spanish parliament. That was the harbinger conference for the adoption of the quota system by AUW leadership. The AUW Centre for Gender and Development organised a women's conference in 2004, whereby, comprehensive women issues were discussed, in the field of general development, political participation, civil service, work, laws, education, peace, religious work, NGOs work, women networking and women empowerment. The outputs of this conference included two books in which the one was on the ***Recommendation of the Conference 2004***; and the other on ***The Sudanese Woman between the Present and the Future 2006***. The demand for the quota system for Sudanese women was amplified and it was for 30% quota system. The Centre also organised another workshop which included all the participants in the Oslo donor conference of 2005. In this workshop, the AUW presented a number of papers on labour, health, education, political participation, law, peace, women participation in voluntary work, as well as in the executive branch. The workshop also formulated the Joint Agenda for Sudanese Women., and it included the quota system for women at 30%. This agenda was discussed at the Oslo conference and it influenced the final adoption by the SPLM/A of the 25% quota system. The

centre participated in numerous constructive and fruitful conferences and events; which at end, contributed to the implementation of the quota system in the Sudan.

In 2005, the Centre participated in a workshop for evaluation of the CPA. It also participated in the constitutional workshop in 2005, in which it presented a paper on how to engender the constitution, and the inclusion of an article in the constitution on the quota system of not less than 30%. The Center also trained political parties' women using a grant by the UNDP. The IDEA also funded two training workshops conducted by the Centre in which a total of forty four (44) political parties participated.

### ***The University of Khartoum: Gender and Development Unit ( GDU at U of K)***

Since the early 1990s, the Woman and Development Unit; in the Institute for Research and Development Studies, in the U of K, conducted awareness raising campaigns on women's rights and their participation in societal affairs. It offered organised courses for various governmental personnel as well as organisations. The GDU at the U of K participated in the mobilisation for electoral law, with emphasis on gender via various training workshops, preparatory discussions fora, as well as effective participation in various coalition such as :-

- i. In 2007, the Institute participated with eight (8) women from various political parties, universities, and civil society organisations; on training programme on elections and the role of civil society in Germany;
- ii. In 2008, the GDU at the U of K organised a workshops on voters education from gender perspective;
- iii. Some women activists were sent to Germany in 2008, to learn from the German quota system experience and women's political participation;
- iv. The Unit invited twelve (12) Academic Institutes from the West, East, the North and Centre, for a workshop on gender and election enlightenment and a paper on electoral law and the quota system in the Sudan was written;
- v. The Institute participated in workshop on the electoral law project, organised by South Sudan Women Solidarity Organisation for Peace and Development, in partnership in 2006; and
- vi. In 2008, the GDU at the U of K supported the "alliance of Sudanese women", on their work on how positively influence the electoral process in the best interests of Sudanese women.

### ***The University of Juba (now Bahri)***

Its various women groups participated in various discussion sessions on the issues of quota for women in the Sudan.

### ***Religious groups***

The Ansar religious sect has shown an interest in issues of women rights. In 2005, it organised a workshop to discuss the CEDAW; and enlightened people about it, while expressing their

reservation on Article 16 of the same covenant. In 2009, it organised a workshop in Omdurman on the issues of the quota system on which it has also shown great interest. The other religious groups did not show any clear interest on the issue of the quota, notwithstanding the fact that, some of these groups are associated in one way or another with the regime.

### ***Governmental institutions***

The official governmental focal point for the comprehensive interrogation of the quota system, at both regional and international levels, is the Directorate for Woman and Family, within the Federal Ministry of Social Welfare and Security. It has adopted the Beijing recommendations for the 30% quota for women. In 2006, the relevant minister in the said ministry formed a study committee to scrutinize various women's issues and their wellbeing, and the committee recommended the adoption of the quota system for women. The directorate activated all its sub-departments for the conscientisation campaign to enlighten women on their political roles and rights via various fora in all parts of the Sudan.

### ***The National Electoral Commission***

This commission is mandated by the constitution but it took some times before it was established by 2008. It is made up of eight (8) commissioners, two of whom are women. A gender specialist has been appointed onto the commission, with the fund provided by the UN in order to make the commission gender sensitive.

### ***Political Parties***

Based on the research dataset, it is discernible that, various political parties hold divergent opinions as regards issues of positive discrimination and affirmative action within the quota system parlance. For example the UMMA Party claims that it already uses a kind of quota system within its party political structures, and that, it has discussed issues pertaining to the quota system at various national levels. One of the women leaders within the UMMA Party maintained that, "the Sector for Women Development within the party organised a workshop in 2001, to produce a strategy for women development. It was recommended that, women ought to be represented by a given parentages thoghout all governmental sectors. A congress was held before the UMMA Party congress of 2003 in which, it was agreed that, women ought to be represented by 40% within all the party's hierarchies and in the State, but the UMMA Party only endorsed 20%. In 2004, the UMMA Party lobbied all political organisations to agree on a declaration in which women shall be represented by 30% in all governmental institutions. With the commencement of the negotiations for the electoral law, political opinion among the party women vacillated between the 30% and those other who taught that we should stick with the most discussed parentage which is the 25% within the political communities. At the end, the 25% had the day, at any rate, the UMMA Party as a political party is for the quota system for the effective representation of women"

For both the NCP and the PCP, the two of them, during the last two decades, have succeeded in building sufficient women leaders and carders throughout the national and regional levels in the Sudan. The PCP is formulating polices for the representation of women throughout its party leadership positions. On the other hand, the Unionist Democratic Party is not historically enthusiastic about issues of women participation, the women secretariat within the party came

into existence on personal initiative basis, and their number is very limited. However, the party has got women who are politically active in the political arena and within the civil society communities. The Sudanese communist Party (SCP) is of the conviction that, women as a group are capable to exert and make their political presence felt without the need for the quota system. A leading member of SCP said that, “we are the first political party to undertake political work among female students and we care about women’s issues. We are also the first political party to have elected a woman to its central committee in 1964. By then, we did not know anything about the quota system for women. On their own industry, these women achieved what they aimed for, and they got listed to these leadership position. We in the party do not operate on the basis of the quota, but rather on the basis of political struggle...the party issued a decision that: - all areas are free to nominate their candidates without direct interference from the central committee. This decision has been followed since 1953. This is a more democratic approach for people’s representation”. The Haq Party had one woman in its leadership, and several women membership. The Baath Party is one of those political parties which are very concern with the political participation of women. However, the majority of the political parties which mostly appeared in the 1990s, had limited women membership, and some of whom participated in the advocacy for the quota system for women.

The role of the myriad of the political parties in the advocacy for the quota system is rather intersectional with that of the civil society organisations. The role of various political parties vis-à-vis the quota debate; came to surface by proxy, via the various women political activists, who have membership in these said political parties. These women engaged continuously and interactively with various CSOs and the international community and as a result the presence of these political parties were then gradually felt. However, the most effective participation of the political parties was through the Political Parties Women Forum. With their acquired skills, through their continuous contacts and interactions with the CSOs. These Forum women have been able to work from within their various political parties to the extent that, they were then able to change the political ethos and outlooks of these political parties from within as regards the quota debate. The efforts of the Forum and that of the various CSOs as well as universities bore fruition, when they have been able to influence the political parties to support the quota system for women in the Sudan in various discussion and dialogue fora. The influence has been most important as regards the engagement of these political parties with the Constitutional Commission around issues of the electoral law. Notwithstanding the obvious variations of opinions, as between various political parties concerning the quota percentages, it can be succinctly argued that, these same political parties differed and agreed around issues such as:-

- i. The source of the proposed 30% quota is the constitution Chapter Two Article 27 (3), which also takes into consideration all the international human right covenants ratified by the Sudan;
- ii. The quota system can therefore by entrenched in the Constitution without any contradiction and conflict with the Transitional Constitution which guarantee the woman all her civil and political rights in parity with men articles 5; 32; and 41 respectively;
- iii. The Unionist Democratic Party declared its support of the quota system without however, specifying its preferred percentage;
- iv. The SPLM supported the quota system with 25% women representation;

- v. The Darfur Liberation Army supported the quota with 25% women representation;
- vi. The United Unionist Party supported the quota system with 33% representation of women;
- vii. The NCP supported the quota system with 25% women representation.

One of the UMMA Party women leaders explained that, “when the memo from the Constitutional Commission was received by the Party, our reply was that, 30% ought to be the level of women representation akin with the 2008 electoral law. South Sudanese confirmed that their constitution offers 25%, and they said that, raising it to 30% level of representation will conflict with their constitution. It was finally agreed that 25% to be the level of representation and that was then communicated to the Commission, and where it agreed that, 50% of the election to be geographical and 50% proportional representation. An agreement was reached between the NCP and the SPLM in which they agreed that 60% to be geographical representation and the other 40% proportional representation, with 25% separate list for women, 15% national list, this was passed by the national Assembly which was controlled by the NCP and the SPLM respectively. The other political parties had to toe the line. The 2005 parliament was constituted in such a fashion that, the SPLM had 28%, the NCP had 52%, 14% alliance political parties and 6% Eastern Political parties”.

One member from the Sudanese National Party maintained that, “the quota system debate had occupied much of their time, and that the 25% level of representation for women was very low, because the we as women could achieve more and this is a very low level of representation”. Another member from the NCP said tht, “our party believes in the participation of women in the political process a fundamental right to contribute in societal development. The reason why many women are not seen in the political arena is due to the fact that, women do not vote for men and vice-versa. However, the 25% level of representation in our party is based on our basic law”. A member from the SPLM explained that, their party stood for a combined national list of both men and women in the proportional representation percentage. To push that through we took part in a political demonstration in front of the National Assembly. The NCP won the day with the approval of the separate for men and women. Does the NCP actually support the quota system?

### ***The International Community***

The actors within the remit of the international community include the foreign embassies in the Sudan, some other international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and the Donors who are always indirect actors via their continuous support for relevant programs and projects.

### ***The IDEA role***

In 2008, the IDEA funded an eighteen (18) months project in the Sudan through the UNDP for the promotion of positive work by various political parties. This was via building their capacities in order to enhance principles of accountable, democratic and transparent governance in the Sudan. The project also endeavored to train the political parties on issues of political gender mainstreaming in their internal political party structures as well as in he public sphere. The

political parties were instructed how to device gender sensitive political projects and policies at all levels within and without the political parties structures. The political parties were also trained how to supervise and manage electoral processes on accountable, democratic and transparent basis. Several workshops were held to enlighten the political parties on issues of gender equality an issues of women political and other aspects of human rights. Some 300 candidates from 30 political parties and other media outlets were trained on political issues within the remit of the MDGs.

#### *The Frederich Ebert Foundation*

In 2006, the organisation sponsored six individuals; five men and one woman, representing various CSOs, academic institutions and various media outlets to go to Germany in order to gain more insight on issues of quota system for women as practiced there. The trip was beneficial and upon their return, the group was able to hold many training and enlightening workshop for various political parties. These workshops influenced the political parties into the adoption of the notion of the quota system and its inclusion in the electoral law within the ambit of both geographical constituencies and the proportional representation. In 2006 a workshop was conduced on the quota system which was only discussed fruitfully within the limited circles of academic institutions, the CSOs and the political parties. The workshop resolved the formation of a committee of six women representing the academia, and the CSOs. The main objective was to advocate for the quota system so that it was included in the electoral law. The committee prepared a comprehensive document on the quota system and it met the official concern in the NCP for the purposes of its inclusion and adoption as the template for the quota system for women in the Sudan. The NCP declined to accept the proposal presented by the committee. The next step was to present the proposal to the Centre for Peace Research at the University of Khartoum, because they have previously dealt with the Constitutional Review Commission and had gained its respect. The Centre agreed to deal with the issue.

This German organization did a lot in the way of training and enlightenment workshop with the sole purpose of creating a sound intellectual and knowledge environment and resources to be used in the debate on the quota system and it can come into fruition or the beneficial participation of women in the political process at all levels within and without various political parties. It also gave various Sudanese actors valuable chances and opportunities to engage positively with the international community to learn from their experiences and how best to implement the quota system in the Sudan. The Sudanese CSOs and others also benefited a great deal from the assistance of this organisation within the remit of the quota discourse and processes for its implementation. The organisation also influenced our work to the extent that, there was formed clear vision as to what was in fact needed for the constructive application of the quota system in the Sudan which included issues like:-

- i. The application of a quota system in the formation of the various electoral commissions and committees, and the electoral law to clearly determine the quota representation of 30%;
- ii. The quota percentages and system in all political parties' list for both national and states lists not be less than 30%;

- iii. The law had to clearly direct names arrangement in the candidates list so that women do not appear only at the tail end of these lists, for example that, women should appear in the first 50% of the names, or the names have to alternate from the first name on the list; and
- iv. The allocation of rewards and punishments for those political parties that do not comply with the demand for putting women in the first 50% of their combined lists.

#### *The Dutch Embassy in Khartoum*

The first involvement of the Dutch Embassy in women issues in the Sudan was in 1983, when it teamed up with the University of Khartoum in a two years project, to document the women movement in the Sudan. The Embassy has always been a strong supporter the myriad of CSOs as well as various national NGOs in the Sudan such as the SUWEP.

#### *The UNDP*

The UNDP first got involved through its funding in 2004 of the Good Governance Unit. The success of this experiment led to the proper formulation of the project for Good Governance and the Participation of the Political woman. This project aimed to empower as well as build the capacity of women in various political parties, the public sphere, CSOs and various NGOs. It also endeavored to empower and build the political capacities of various youth groups both girls and boys as well as young adult female and men respectively.

#### *The UN Women*

The UN Women is strongly concerned about the positive and beneficial participation of Sudanese political women in the comprehensive political processes in the Sudan. It has been continuously involved in training and capacity building of parliamentarians and various women political leaders as well as youth leaders and other women segments within the remit of the political process in the Sudan. Together with the Political Parties' Council, the UN Women organised a conference under the rubric, "elect her and support her", and it took place during 23<sup>rd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> of March 2010. The conference was attended by 300 women candidates from 78 political parties. The most important issues raised during the conference include:-

- i. The general principles of the electoral laws, with concentration on the voting procedures and processes such as how to use the list for voting purposes;
- ii. The quota system and how to benefit from it;
- iii. The third MDGs objective;
- iv. The common agenda and various women issues in political parties' programmes;
- v. The necessities of electoral honesty declarations;
- vi. How to manage the campaigns processes for various women candidates;
- vii. How to supervise the elections; and
- viii. Electoral violence.

It is discernible that, the list of the above actors within the remit of the quota debate and discourse, within the Sudanese political landscape and paradigms, has demonstrated the importance of the quota system as regards various communities of interests. These interests are found within various CSOs, universities, the civil service, foreign embassies, religious groups, as well as individuals. It is also clear that, the discerning Sudanese actors have understood the importance of the quota system, notwithstanding their various motives for such understanding and obvious support of the quota system. Within the political parties for example, there are those who supported the quota system or genuine reasons for the involvement of women in positive political participation in the political processes within and without political parties' structures. There are those political parties which gave in under societal political pressures; and other political considerations such as the winning of women votes in the electoral processes which are always translated into seats in various legislative assemblies and leadership and constitutional positions within the executive to even the formation of the government of the day should democracy win.

On the other hand, there are various reasons why many women groups within political parties and outside of them, such as in various CSOs and NGOs support the quota system. For the majority of these women, whether as a temporary or permanent measure, the quota system is deemed as the remedy for the entrenched historical and contemporaneous marginalisation that they endure in society. The quota system is seen as the institutional and political as well as social conduit through which they can get genuinely involved in the political processes in the country. Through these involvements at all levels, they hope to be able to influence various decisions that impact negatively on their comprehensive wellbeing. On the other hand, there are those religious women who find it unacceptable to implement all the requirements of the quota system even within the regime of various human rights norms due to the fact that, some of these rights conflict with their moralistic religious believes. However, within the remit of all these indeterminate reasons for their heterogenous support of the quota system, there are general common foundations which appear to sum up the nature of the content of the political and other text that inform these myriad of opinions vis-a-vis the said communities of actors. These can be summed up as indicating the aggregate normative paradigms:-

- i. All the women participants in the research agreed that, the patriarchal ideology still inform and control the mindset of various leadership of the various political parties;
- ii. Historically, political parties have used various women secretariats in their party structures to only attract and recruit women, except the SCP which believes that, women are capable of achieving without the need for the quota system;
- iii. Various political parties have gradually recognized the importance of women voting powers in terms of their numbers in the general population, this is coupled with the fact that, the very low political awareness and ignorance of women did not help them in benefiting from various political and other opportunities in society;
- iv. The difficulties of presenting women as candidates in geographical constituencies due to the fact that, the majority of political parties' grassroots do not think highly of women candidates in these geographical seas, and thus the aggregate fear of losing those seats by various political parties; and

- v. There are political parties which have recognized and supported the quota system in their party political structures such as the UMMA Party with 25% for women, and the PCP with 20% for women.

### *The advocacy campaigns for women quota*

From the outset, the political enthusiasm about the quota system in the Sudan is a function of socio-political and cultural positive developments that occurred in the Sudan since its political independence from the British in 1956. The various women leaders as individuals; and through women groups and women movement, throughout the epochs have definitely contributed to the inertia that characterized the Sudanese quota discourse. The Sudanese women movement, and together with various sympathetic men and various CSOs, NGOs both national and international, universities and other socio-cultural organizations as already elucidated above; have profound impact on the acceptance of the concept and notion of political and other quotas for women. The operationalisation of political wishes and aspiration as regards the implementation of the quota system in the Sudan was also brought about via the relentless meetings, debates, dialogues, workshops, training sessions, brainstorming among women groups inside and outside the Sudan, as well as the international community partners, all have contributed in these massive awareness and educational campaigns, in order to empower and build the capacities of various women and other groups for the sole aim of realizing the objective of the implementation of the quota system in the Sudan; to allow women to have a positive and constructive say; in the political administration and management of their country.

### *Types of Advocacies by the CSOs as covered by various newspapers in the Sudan*

The various efforts exerted by the CSOs in their contribution towards the realisation of the quota system for women in the Sudan included:-

- i. Workshop by the Sudanese Women Union, titled “The Deletions and the role of Women”, the workshop was to educationally explained the notion and practice of the quota system to the public and to emphasis that 30% ought to be the level of representation (the Midan Newspaper 10/7/2007);
- ii. The Centre for Gender Research and Studies (CGRS) conducted a consultative workshop on “The Woman, the elections and the Quota system”, ( Al Ayaam Newspaper 5/12/2007);
- iii. The CGRS in collaboration with the Women Forum and the Sudani Newspaper organized a workshop where it was emphasized that the quota ought to be included in both the electoral and political parties’ laws respectively, and the 30% representation to be the quota. The workshop also demanded for a unified list for both men and women, (Al Sudani Newspaper, 12/4/2007);
- iv. Workshop organised by the Women Initiative Group on women’s rights in elections, (Al Sudani Newspaper, 25/3/2008);
- v. The Centre for Sudanese Studies (CSS) in collaboration with Frederick Albert Foundation organised a workshop on the role of women in political development, (Al Ahdath Newspaper, 21/8/2008);

- vi. The CGRS in collaboration with the UNDP organised a workshop on “the media campaigns and their advocacy on women candidacy”, (Al Ayaam Newspaper, 1/4/2010);
- vii. The CGRS organised a workshop on “the elections and legal law reform and gender issues”, (Al Ahdath Newspaper, 7/4/2010); and
- viii. A training workshop organised in collaboration between the UN Fund for Women Development and the Sudanese Organisation for Research and Development for women candidates from eleven (11) political parties in the Gezira State, to enlighten and educate them on issues pertaining to the elections processes, gender issues, social marginalisation and all issues that concern them as politician women.

### ***The conceptual schism and divergence of opinions on quota in the Sudan***

All the various human and legal actors in the Sudan; are not agreed on the inherent and intrinsic meanings and semantics of the quota, as a socio-political and economic tool, within the framework of Sudanese political paradigms and governance issues, as well as the effective representation and political participation of women in public life. These divergent opinions can be summed up as follows:-

- i. The human right approach which used all given and existing international and regional human rights instruments as evidence of the fact that, the Sudanese woman have rights, freedoms and obligations just like her male counterpart within the Sudanese society. Therefore, the Sudanese woman has all the rights to partake in all major decision-making processes in all spheres of Sudanese public and private life at parity with men. She has the right to be represented in the executive, legislative and judicial branches of governance with equal fore and influence and integrity as her male counterpart;
- ii. The religious approach and text in which, in accordance with the teachings of Islam and the Holy Quran; women are not to be negatively discriminative upon in favour of men. This has been made clear in various fora;
- iii. The Sudanese political heritage approach in which, the historical experiences in the Sudanese political journey from 1956 to date, to produce evidentiary material fact that, the quota discourse is not new in Sudanese political life. The May regime (1969-1985) is also used as a classical proof of the role of political quota for women in the Sudan in various legislative and executive leadership positions in the Sudan;
- iv. The legislative approach in which, the role of the Sudanese woman in Parliament is crucial in terms of various legal and socio-cultural reforms. It is argued that, with her inherent consensual approach to dispute resolution, the presence of the Sudanese woman in Parliament shall facilitate legal reforms on issues such as land ownership, peace, justice, social welfare, inheritance, child welfare, family and issues to do with general women health and her position in both the public and private sphere in the Sudan;
- v. The societal structural approach; whereby, it is argued that, the quota system is the most appropriate means of creating a seamless socio-cultural change in the Sudanese society, given the predominance of the suffocating ideology of patriarchy, which does not allow

and give positive and constructive chances for women; to fruitfully use their natural productive and reproductive agencies, for societal comprehensive benefits;

- vi. The political text approach, which is rather male-centric in that, it emphasis the service delivery capacity of women, in which they are appreciate as voters and mobilizers of other voters during election campaigns, and the performance of other tasks within the political parties which are deemed as feminine;
- vii. The public interest approach, in which the participations of women via the quota system is seen as one way of assuring the realization of some form of social equality in society; and
- viii. The gender equality approach whereby, it is argued that, women alone can truly interrogate and positively elucidate their lived experiences within the remit of their women agencies in society. Their historical group and individual experiences; give them a better standpoint approach, to their narratives of life, within the remit of society as a whole, and therefore, the quota system is that opportunity that shall avail them this chance; to speak for themselves, about their lives; and their own life chances and wellbeing.

### ***The achievements of the quota system in the Sudan***

Notwithstanding the fact that the majority of those who took quality and practicable interest in the quota system for women in the Sudan are not overwhelmingly contented, it could nevertheless be argued that, the quota system has fulfilled some of the women wishes. The work so far done is a positive ideological and political achievement for posterities of generations to come. It has created positive awareness about issues of gender equality in the Sudan, as well as the creation of the awareness of the fact that, there are structural issues which operate against women as groups and as individuals within the heterogeneous Sudanese society as it were. The work on the quota has created networks of constructive alliances between various individuals, groups and organisation which were hitherto operating at individual and isolated basis. It also brought the international community into intimate contacts with various actors without the framework of Sudanese political paradigms. Some of the most glaring achievements of the quota system is the dramatic increase in the number of women candidates which reached 2778 women and 112 of them about 25% in the national assembly out of 450 sitting members. The 25% members is historically the highest number reached in terms of women parliamentarians in the Sudan. In terms of the Arab world, it is the highest in the region, whereas, in terms of the African countries south of the Sahara, it the 10<sup>th</sup> on the list which a respectable position to be in terms of women participation in the political processes of a nation.

### ***The disadvantages in the quota system***

The feedback from the various discussions had with various research participants indicated that, there are a number of issues which could be considered as disadvantages of the quota system in terms of the procedures undertaken to implement it and these include the following:-

- i. Legal disadvantages in which, the processes of dividing the seats as 25% and 15% for both geographic and proportional representation, in practice produced an outcome as if the whole election was bad on geographical constituencies;

- ii. The quota has been included in the constitution at the cost of too much time wasted, time which ought to have been used in training and other capacity building exercises;
- iii. The majority of women in the various residential areas were not knowledgeable of the whole quota system. They could not explain to themselves and to other the benefits inherent in the quota system as presented to them and used during the election. They just when to vote as ordinary voters and nothing more;
- iv. The acute lack of enlightenment meant that, huge opportunities were lost and women as a group did not benefit from the quota system as used in the last election. The withdrawal of many political parties left the political space for the NCP and that was and still is a loss to the Sudanese political community;
- v. The Sudanese women elites suffered from some intellectual vacuum. It was later discovered that, the presumption that those women in relatively wealthy residential areas were relatively literate and thus do not need much enlightenment were false presumptions. These women suffered from ignorance as well as their counterparts in the poor residential areas, this was a loss;
- vi. There was no beneficial communication between the voters and the parliamentarians. The grassroots complained of neglect by the parliamentarians and this seem to explain the lack of enthusiasm from the base as regards the role of quota in resolving their historical problems of marginalisation; and
- vii. The lack of viable opportunities for local women to stand as candidates in their own localities.

### ***Challenges in the implementation of the quota system in the Sudan***

- i. Many political parties refused to put forward women candidates in many geographical constituencies. Others found difficulties in the preparation of their candidates' lists due to lack of candidates or due suitability issues of both;
- ii. Some of those opposed to the quota system argued that, the system is contradictory to all international conventions in terms of equality in access to goods and services. Others argued that, the system undermine the humanity of the woman, and presents her as a human being who needs to be helped by being in an advantageous position not consistent with her abilities. They argued that, women are capable of competing in equal footing with men;
- iii. Others argued that, it is debatable if women could even succeed in implementing the minimum agenda within the remit of their own political parties. Therefore, if they could so that in their parties, to imagine that they can do so at the national level is also debatable;
- i. The electoral law as well as the commission both jointly undermined various women political agencies in pushing forward political changes within the electoral process;

- ii. Some of the challenges faced by the political parties was the lack of interaction with their grassroots due to absence of democracy for a very long time, however, this was not a problem for the NCP which found a lot of support from other political parties allied with it, from the popular committees, the women union, students, youth union and various NGOs;
- iii. Some political parties did not adhere to the 25% level of quota representation and others did not even present women list in some of the States;
- iv. The role of the CSOs in terms of the enlightenment of the populace was more effective than that of the political parties, therefore, there is a need for the political parties to be more proactive regards women participation and the achievement of gender equality; and
- v. There is a real challenge in the preparation of a women only coalition list at the level of some of the states composed of prominent and capable women who could actually win elections, however, the law does not allow such coalition outside of political parties apparatus.

### ***The effect of the quota system on the political parties***

As pointed out in the conceptual formwork of this research document, the quota system has created some institutional changes within the remit of political parties' structures notwithstanding the fact that, the majority of the political parties are still structurally managed on the basis of the patriarchal ideology. However, the role of the women movement and various political dynamisms as regards the quota system made some of these political parties to response positively in terms of their support and implementation of the quota system. These political parties recognized the political capabilities of various political women and allowed them to participate in the party political structures on the basis of their political agencies and effectiveness. At any rate, the quota system's contribution within the various political parties' structures can be summarized as being:-

- i. There are obvious positive concerns demonstrated by various leadership of the political parties towards the quota system for women, as a result, they took part in genuine discussion in support of the quota system in many fora;
- ii. There were many internal enlightenment discussions in many political parties such as the PCP, for both their male and female membership, in order to create positive awareness in them about the quota system; and
- iii. Each individual political party showed special consideration and concern for women separate lists, and some political parties even tried to recruit women in order to complete such lists, and some political parties even formed coalition for such purposes.

Therefore, these transformative effects; brought about by the quota system within the remit of internal political parties structures is very fundamental enough due to the fact that, many political parties boycotted the elections and this negatively affected the continuation of the women

activism within such political parties for the sole purposes of effecting a positive change in the attitudes of political parties' leadership vis-à-vis their saturation with and in the patriarchal ideology. There was also obvious lack of will and resources for the effective creation of awareness among men as regards issues of gender quality and the participation of women at equal basis with men. On the other hand, there was no positive steps taken to train women in order to prepare them for the challenging work in the political parties' structures so that they can progress through the hierarchy of such political parties into senior positions that could have allowed them to positively affect policy for the best interests of women and society at large from within the remit of such political parties. Therefore, notwithstanding the participation of various political women in political parties<sup>16</sup>, this participation did not achieve the expected results due to permeation of the patriarchal ideology in the political and social psychics men in these political parties, which did allow them to develop the human capacities to appreciate the role of women as being as effective as that of men in societal development. This could have been due to:-

- i. The theoretical believe of some political parties in the principles of democracy, human rights, good governance, gender equality, and the reflection of these believes in their party's manifestos;
- ii. Very few political parties included the notion of gender equality in their political parties founding documents;
- iii. The NCP maintains that it protects and maintains the believe in the rights of the family an safe motherhood;
- iv. The NCP is the only political party which is keen on the application of the Islamic Sharia and the linkage of religion and societal structures;
- v. There are no clear gender mainstreaming policies in the political parties, aimed at devising gender sensitive policies for the proper inclusion of women in productive political work and participation in these parties. Women in these political parties are not given the opportunities to be train and get empowered with knowledge and skills to upgrade their capacities and such like. This is due to the patriarchal ideology which doe not appreciate women capabilities and their productive agencies in society; and
- vi. None of all the women interviewed for this research ever hinted the lack of the availability of various initiative within their political parties' structures meant for women development and for their productive inclusion in the political parties' hierarchies and structures by changing the patriarchal ideology percepts in political parties work and orientation. There is no evidence that there have ever been some resignations by men or women in protestation against the absolute lack of concern in these political parties about issues of gender equality and the right of women for equal participation at parity with men in these political parties.

### ***The effect of the quota system on the women candidates***

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<sup>16</sup> Badri (2006)

The literature and conceptual framework on the quota system indicates that, the quota system does have some effects on the women candidates. It is therefore imperative that, some light is shed on the personal characteristics of these women candidates to be able to understand the effect of the quota system on them. It is worth mentioning that, the majority of the political parties lack updated data bases on their membership with detail information on their various members as individuals. However, based on what have been gathered about these women candidates as a result of the field work, the following can be presented as some of the salient features of these women:-

#### *Candidates' age*

The majority of the women candidates fell between the age category of 35-45 years of age. There were some women above the age of 70 years, and who are seasoned political workers and politicians respectively; and there were young adults in their 20s. Age is a crucial variable in the quota system to the extent that, a political party shall not risk fielding, or putting up a women candidate, in her 20s, in a geographical constituency due to her young age, and the concomitant presumption of lack of political experience. There is an increase in the political participation of young women in their 20s, but, the political parties lack the effective evaluation tools for assessing the effectiveness of such young politicians.

#### *Education*

The majority of the women candidates are university graduates, and some others with higher university degrees. This is attributed to the expansion in the higher education infrastructures in all the states of the Sudan and this availed the hitherto unavailable opportunities to these women to access such higher educational qualifications. There are some women candidates who are secondary school leavers especially in the Eastern region of the Sudan, and there are some women who only attended religious schools or the “Khalwas”.

#### *Religious heterogeneity*

There is a noticeable religious variation among the various women candidates. There are both Muslim and Christians in various political parties' list, even in geographical constituencies, a phenomenon which would have been difficult to contemplate in absence of the quota system. This is good for equality of participation of these various religious groups in such an important national event such as an election. It is worth mentioning that, there is evidence of tangible interrogation of issues of interest for the Christian minority in parliament notwithstanding the fact that, they are also represented in the group, in parliament.

#### *The economic activities*

The majority of the women candidates are civil servants<sup>17</sup>, while some of the women are in the private sector such as business or advocacy, while some other are homemakers, some just represent religious or ethnic groups. Some of the women possess long experiences in voluntary work, earned during the long period of absence of political parties when they were abolished by the regime.

### *Work Experience*

There are women in various political parties with enviable and illustrious political careers and experience some totaling up to 25 years of continuous party political work. Some women are in their 60s, and working continuously in their respective political parties, but, paradoxically, such women continued to be passed over, in terms of promotion to higher echelon of political party structures, by their younger and junior male counterparts, notwithstanding their experiences, just because they are women. This is patriarchal ideology in operation. The only work that most of these women do in their political parties' structures is within the remit of the women secretariat. If such experienced human capital in women are not even allowed to participate effectively within their political parties' structures, how could they penetrate through such concrete walls of patriarchal barriers into the more public roles in society?

### *Political skills and capabilities*

Many of the interviewed women have accumulated, and therefore, endowed with immense negotiation, interactive and oratory skills and capabilities; especially when they are dealing with other fellow women audiences. Some of the women parliamentarians, especially those from the NCP have got huge political experiences accumulated during the last two decades of their parliamentary work in the Sudan. On the other hand, the international community, and since 2004, have effectively and enormously contribute in the effective political capacity building of Sudanese women, and this has come out clearly in these women's work within the remit of the quota debate. Some of the women have also attained their experiences from working with international organisations for considerable period of time and this has endowed them with practicable and beneficial experiences which are constructively applied in their political work in the Sudan.

### *Public and voluntary work experiences*

It is already elaborated above that, a considerable number of these women politicians possess some illustrious career paths within the remit of public work. However, the majority of them also lack intricate political experiences which could not in fact allow them to navigate their narrow political paths within and without their various political parties and associations respectively. It is obvious that, there are some similarities between those women candidates who stood for the 2010 elections and those who stood for the 1965 and 1986 elections respectively. The salient

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<sup>17</sup> Badri, L. (2009).

differences between them is that, those women who stood for the 1965 and 1986 general elections, have got obvious political weight in their respective political parties, and the confidence of their male colleagues in them, helped to propel them further, to higher political levels to the extent of standing for geographical constituencies and winning such seats; without the help of an affirmative action; or positive discrimination of any kind, a feature which is lacking in the 2010 women candidates generally. On the other hand, the experience of those women who stood for the 2010 elections is characterised by their work in the NGOs sector, and it did cover experiences which include work in the field of legal and institutional reforms; violence against women; rape; peace and IDPs issues.

#### *The increase in the number of women candidates*

Table (1) below shows that, the total numbers of women candidates for the 2010 national elections, for both national and states assemblies was 2778 women candidates. The table shows that, but for the quota system, there would not have been geographical women candidates for states such as Northern and Gezira states respectively. The higher number of candidates in Khartoum state in comparison to the other states is due to the fact that, some of the parties do not have candidates in the states and due to the high population density in Khartoum. The table also shows high numbers of candidates for the Eastern state which is known for its conservative vis-à-vis women participation in public life, but the quota system made it to demand representation for its women.

It is also discernible that, even some of those communities that hitherto frowned upon women's participation in public life have decided to use the quota system for other motives which include the access of employment opportunities for their women for purely economic and financial reasons. It may not have anything really to do with the intrinsic issue of gender equality and the general concern about effective women political participation in public life and institutions, to engender public life. Whatever the reason for their participation, in this public and governance connected event, via the quota system, it can be argued that, this high participation of women in some of those rather economically and socially underdevelopment parts of the Sudan is a good trajectory in terms of socio-economic development of the rural areas of the Sudan. It can also be argued that, the cardinal objective of the quota system is to effectively bring women out from the private sphere of societal life in which they have cocooned for centuries.

The quota system has thus availed these women the chance to come into contact with the other sectors of the society, and at the same time, it has given these women to undergo the feeling of lived experiences in terms of them, being able also to have a say, albeit nominally for the start, about issues which concern their lives. Even for those women who went into politics for financial reasons, it is a good opportunity to allow them feel the power that they can have with the new financial resources that they can generate as a result of them being members of parliament and thus among those with the highest income in the Sudan. This is also an

educational and empowering process for these Sudanese women. It is also a confidence building and empowering for hitherto subaltern women with suppressed human agencies.

The State	Women in the quota list		Women in geographical constituency		Women in party list	
	National assembly	State assembly	National assembly	State assembly	National assembly	State assembly
Khartoum	206	423	36	14	15	21
Gezira	110	0	2	0	1	0
S. Darfur	111	131	3	3	3	3
Red Sea	38	156	3	2	3	9
Blue Nile	15	90	0	3	3	0
White Nile	51	110	10	10	2	1
Gadaref	46	149	0	3	0	2
Northern	13	77	0	0	0	0
N. Darfur	44	108	3	88	0	4
Sennar	37	4	2	32	0	19
S. Kordofan	34	110	3	1	1	2
Nile River	8	12	0	1	0	1
Kassala	46	139	0	2	0	11
W. Darfur	34	115	3	3	0	2
N. Kordofan	57	118	3	0	0	0
Total	847	1753	68	53	23	80

Table (1): Number of women candidates for the National and State Assemblies in Separate List.  
Source: Election Commission 2010

### *The process of candidate selection*

The women participants in the research divulged information which indicates that, the quota system had had some structural and administrative effects in the fashion in which political parties historically selected their candidates for election purposes, within the party structures and for national election purpose. With passage of the electoral law of 2008, and with the quota system acquiring some quasi legal effigy, various political parties felt more than ethically obliged to consult various women groups and members within the party structures and at the grassroots levels, through the women secretariats, to propose women names for fielding as candidates. Even though some political parties dragged their political feet, it was commendable that they did in fact toe the public political opinion line even if for political expediency seek.

### *Changes in the roles of women candidates*

The decision by any woman, to contest an election is a fundamental decision with broad and deep socio-economic, cultural, religious, economic and financial as well as psychological ramifications for her and for all those around her including her children. She has not only undertaken to challenge entrenched structural and socio-cultural variables, but, she has also undertaken upon herself, to challenge political institutions and establishments, which have not been used to seeing a woman getting involved, in very powerful political decision-making processes, in collaboration with other women, in the same power position. This may seem unsettling and threatening to the entrenched patriarchal ideology and its gatekeepers as it were. At the immediate family level, those women who are habitual political party politicians and officials, their decision to contest the elections have not come as a surprise and a threat to family stability. The members of their immediate extended and nuclear family have already been used to her prolonged absence from home on various assignments or participations on political fora and such like. Therefore, their becoming parliamentarians were accepted as being along the line of their habitual political work.

However, the story is different for those women who are first timers vis-à-vis becoming or attempting to become parliamentarians, and especially when the decision to contest came as a directive from party bosses or from some religious leaders. Such women faced strong and hostile reactions from their extended and immediate nuclear family members. In such situations, these women find themselves torn between allegiance to their comprehensive families and the allegiance to their party political work and /or to their religious leaders, and their religious group objectives and obligations. However, such hostilities can be overcome, have been overcome by clam and persistence explanation to those significant others that, political work, or work in general public sphere is not limited to, or reserved for men only. Women as daughters, wives, aunts and such like; can also do such work, and can at times do them better than men. It can be summed up that, notwithstanding the patriarchal ideology, in a patrilineal society in the Sudan; the quota system has started the ball rolling within the process of socio-cultural incremental and gradual change for the better, in terms of issues of women participation and general gender equality.

### ***Relations with international civil society organizations (ISCOs)***

There are a good number of women politicians who have background in working with various ISCOs in the Sudan and outside the Sudan, and some of these women have confided that, they do still have intimate connections with such and other NGOs that they have known before they became members of parliament. Some women also confided that, they still carry on working in some institutions which are in fact to and with the executive branch in the government of the Sudan. This brings into the equation issues of conflict of interests as between the legislative and the other branches of governance in the Sudan. It can therefore be argued that, for those women who have been in contact with the various ISCOs, and who presumably known through their work in these organisations that, for the purposes of good governance, the legislative branch is supposed to exercise its oversight role without involving in the work of the executive branch for

example. It is the case that, the majority these women did not have proper orientation and training about their new found roles as parliamentarians. Some also argue that, the voices of these women parliamentarians are not heard out in society, that is, they are no influential as regards many of the issues that concern women such as female genital mutilation; the child law, issues of micro finance and legal reform. However some of the women candidates did interacted with the various women groups for the purposes of the preparation of the new constitution.

### ***Challenges faced by the women candidates especially within party political structures***

There are many institutional and structural challenges which have to be overcome by various women candidates and these include:-

- i. Suppression of freedom and monopoly of resources and the media outlets by the ruling NCP which undermine their work and their general interaction with the public;
- ii. The freezing of democratic life in the country did not help in the development of agile and democratic political party structures;
- iii. The political parties' internal structures are saturated with politically and administratively suffocating patriarchal ideology which does not allow any genuine personal and group development for women in these political parties;
- iv. The comprehensive absence of gender equality in some political parties creates cutthroat resistance against women, especially those influential women in the party;
- v. It is difficult for a woman to attempt to contest for an election in a society in which the general consciousness and appreciation of issues of human rights and women freedoms is limited or absent;
- vi. The political parties are riddled with financial poverty and acute lack of economic resources which render these political parties ransom in the hands of those few with financial resources and thus control the decision-making processes in the party including the nomination of women for example;
- vii. Young political women within various political parties do not stand the chance of being nominated to stand through the party hierarchies;
- viii. Young unmarried political women also find strong objections from their immediate family members to their prolonged absence and late return home, after political meetings or rallies, this does not allow for political progress for these women;
- ix. Religious and ethnic as well as racial intolerance do not promote seamless progress of religious and such ethnic and racial minorities within such political parties;
- x. For those women who did not face intrinsic obstacles on their journey to the top within party political hierarchies, however, such women also sacrifice personal freedom, as well as career development in order to remain in such positions; and
- xi. Political work also endows the person with psychological satisfaction; fame and material resources especially those belonging to the ruling party.

### ***Lessons learnt from the sample of women studied***

- i. The individual must continue to build her capacity via the acquisition of knowledge and relevant skills if the candidate aspires to have a fruitful and effective parliamentary and political role in the future;
- ii. The political woman ought to clearly demarcate her political visions and missions as well as objectives with self confidence necessary to allow her to achieve those personal targets;
- iii. The candidate has to be active within the political party's hierarchies to change those wrong and negative conviction regarding women political participation; and
- iv. The candidate has to continue with her network of political relationship at the level of the state with the party grassroots supporter.

### ***Challenges around the quota system and its implementation***

- i. Is the quota system a political conduit to convey women to parliament only? Or is it just for women representation in parliament? Or is it to convey women to parliament to interrogate women issues and advocate for their realisation?;
- ii. Political parties did not present special political programs with the women list during their political campaigns;
- iii. The endemic fracturing of political parties into major and minor political parties did not help in the presentation of a unified women list;
- iv. Acute lack of financial resources did not help in women candidates pursuing their political goals into parliament;
- v. The marginalisation of the women only list within all political parties;
- vi. The dwindling number of women in political parties especially at the higher echelon of the party;
- vii. There are no targeted training programs for capacity building and empowerment for women in various political parties. There is acute lack of enlightenment program for the male members on issues of gender equality, in fact, the political parties are but socio-cultural extension of the general society saturated with patriarchal ideology;
- viii. The quota system had become a vacuous slogan with no objective content, since the environment is offensively undemocratic. There is no intimate correlation between the text of the feminist agenda and the quota system; what is supposed to be the future political text and context for those women who aspire to contest for future elections; if the legal environment remains the same with no objective legal and legislative reform?
- ix. The difficulties surrounding the implementation of the quota system are but, functions of the undemocratic environment in which it was delivered into;
- x. The individual; as opposed to the group utilizations of the posters in the audio-visual and print media was also downside;
- xi. The law prohibited independent women from contesting the elections notwithstanding their political agilities and abilities to win votes;
- xii. No adequate training, women within the same political list resorted to cutthroat competition among themselves thus generating animosities in the party;
- xiii. The list contained women very good political experiences and others with very poor political experiences;

- xiv. Some of the selection criteria in some political parties were subjected to, and based on family background and name other than to individual capabilities of the candidates in question;
- xv. The mismanagement of religious and ethnic minorities within the remit of women solidarity did not help in the quota process;
- xvi. The women were loyal towards the political parties, but the political parties were disloyal to these honest women;
- xvii. The political parties were not efficiently prepared for the quota system, in terms of prequalification, capacity building and other skills imparting;
- xviii. The quota system is a bold step towards decision-making processes, but it was handled in a rather politically offhand manner so speak;
- xix. Some political parties had dual methodologies for selection for men and women respectively;
- xx. The political parties did not abide by the criteria laid down by the women committees in some instances, and instead, chose to use different criteria to appease specific interest groups within the party at the expense of the criteria consistent with the letter and spirit of the quo system;
- xxi. The absence of democracy and the curtailment of civil and political rights, and general human rights of both men and women negatively affected the conduct of the elections;
- xxii. The weakness and even absence of functional print and audio-visual especially for women candidates did not help their success in the election;
- xxiii. The law decreed the presentation of separate party lists for women, which is in essence the continuation of marginalization. Notwithstanding that, many women made it to parliament, but it turned out that, the most effective women voices were crowded out by the loyal party voices of the NCP women; who were in parliament for party interest, instead of the interest of women as human group;
- xxiv. Women capacity building was only limited to Khartoum state only, and the rest of the country was not covered by such instrumental service within the remit of human capital; and
- xxv. The dataset produced after the elections on gender was treated with some degree of sensitivity and the report on the progress of the election was also sloppy, and he commission never rendered any analytical report whatever. All the information to gotten was on raw dataset form.

### ***Conclusion***

There are some important conclusions that can drawn from the quota debate within the ambit of the electoral law of 2008 and which was implemented in the 2010 general elections. The realisation of the quota system is due to acts and reactions of various political actors including the women movement and their respective activism since the decade of 1995-2004, which reached its climax during 2005-2008. The political environment which characterised the CPA and which included the conduct of the 2010 election had some direct bearings on the

implementation of the quota system in the Sudan. The prevailing international climate which facilitated the generous assistance from the intentional community, including various regional and international experiences in the use of the quota as well as national Sudanese experience on the quota in terms of previous parliamentary experiences, all these factors also positively contributed to the implementation of the quota system in the manner it has been done in the Sudan.

Some of the successes of the quota system are attributed to the various alliances and solidarities built in the processes of reliable networking as between various SCOs, national NGOs, INGOs, Sudanese universities, foreign embassies in Khartoum international various UN Treaty and Charter organisations and individuals all contribute to the implementation of the quota system in the Sudan during the period mentioned above. The Sudanese women movement and various Sudanese women organisations such as the SUWEP played crucial roles in the implementation the quota system. The human right approach used in the interrogation of the quota system in its various phases has succeeded in enlightening the Sudanese political communities including the Sudanese political parties on the importance of gender issues within the remit of gender mainstreaming as well as gender sensitive policies formulation in order to achieve gender equality in general, and gender parity in governmental institutions as well as in the enjoyment of all goods services by all men and women in the Sudan. The implementation of the quota system led to the increase of women parliamentarians by 25%, that is, 112 women out of the total number of 450 parliamentarians in the national assembly; and between 40-60 women parliamentarians in all the 15 states' parliaments throughout northern Sudan. The quota system has definitely reduced the political male hegemony of the legislative assemblies in the Sudan.

The quota system has led to many women taking part in the electoral process as candidates within various political parties and also as activists throughout the Sudan due to the fact that; the elections were all over the Sudan. The quota system also allowed young women from religious minorities to enter parliament albeit in small number, but that is important because it affirms the fact that, the quota system is an effective remedy to hitherto oppressive electoral systems. There were also women parliamentarians who entered the parliament straight from their homes as homemakers without previous political experiences. Notwithstanding this glaring success, in terms of women numbers in parliament, it is worth mentioning that, the quota system did not achieve much of the legal reforms that have been expected from the women parliamentarians efforts in parliament. However, at the individual level, some women were appointed into the judiciary and the commissions. The expected formulation of policies for women empowerment and the various reforms did not actually occur. Nothing was done about the endemic poverty in society, nor did the budgetary allocation for equality in education, or for solving the problem of maternal mortality or instruments for family planning and such like never happened. In fact, all the brilliant women agenda issues formulated before the election for implementation never saw the light of implementation at all. This means that, mere increase in women parliamentarians in undemocratic environment shall never in fact achieve all the policies conducive for gender mainstreaming and for the formulation and implementation of gender sensitive and comprehensive policies in the country.

### ***The way forward***

This includes the following:-

1. Formation of an independent committee based on international criteria and standards for drafting new electoral laws;
2. The quota to be implemented via unified list within proportional system of representation;
3. Coordinative joint CSOs efforts in all residential areas and neighbourhoods for the purposes of setting up cultural centres and clubs as well women associations, for continuous interaction with these women at their localities;
4. All political parties to abide by 30% representations of women, and, all political parties must abide by nominating and fielding women candidates in all geographical constituencies;
5. More geographical constituencies to be vacated for women to compete in;
6. The quota system is to benefit all women including farmers; homemakers; and food vendors to take care of actual heterogeneity within the remit of women issues;
7. The necessity of for all states' assemblies to enact local government electoral laws such that, such local councils have 25% quota for women. Therefore, the current electoral law ought to delegate legislative powers to all state assemblies to enact such laws;
8. The establishment of a parallel parliament as an oversight legislative instrument;
9. The reservation of closed geographical constituencies for women at the level of localities by 30% quota;
10. The encouragement of women to contest in geographical constituencies at all states and localities levels, for women in political parties or as independent candidates. There is to be established a fund this purpose, as well as provision of media coverage during election campaigns;
11. The state is to contribute in funding of media campaigns cost for women candidates;
12. There a necessity for more solid women solidarity by creating viable network of women party politicians;
13. For proper interaction with the public, there ought to be a properly devised media policy in collaboration with various universities, the CSOs and various NGOs;
14. Seasonal programs for women political participation ought to become permanent. The political parties have to work in tandem to reach an agreement that, political shall only be allowed to register once they have provided a proof of 25% quota for women as being viable;
15. The political opposition political text has to be modified because he current text is more of a reaction than a constructive presentation of alternative policies;

16. Special training facilities for women candidates in the states. There is a profound need for the provision of reliable data base on various women candidates which can access by all universities and other organisations for effective advocacy work; and
17. Conduct of training workshop. More debate on societal issues in collaboration universities and other CSOs.

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