

“WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN EMERGING DEMOCRACY – MY NAFDAC EXPERIENCE”

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I am highly honoured to be invited to this meeting to discuss the emergence of women in African social, political and economic leadership, with emphasis on how the previously endemic problem of fake drugs and other food and drug malpractices in Nigeria was transformed under my leadership.

Women in leadership positions, especially in developing countries, have the responsibility and the potential to influence their society through leadership, particularly when they are enabled. Enabled women are empowered to aspire, attain and perform well in leadership positions while still carrying out the home front roles. Women are enabled when they are educated, exposed and economically emancipated. Throughout the ages and in all countries, women in leadership positions have impacted positively on the society. The history of mankind is replete with such women. The last century saw the emergence of great women leaders in various spheres of human endeavours, notably among who are:

- **Mother Theresa of Calcutta**, a woman of total compassion and inner strength with the capacity to provide pure love to everyone. She opened orphanages, hospitals, and food centers to cater for the poorest of the poor. Her work is a perfect example of unpaid and invaluable work that changed the world. The love for this great saint, cuts across all religions and races. She is my role model.

In politics and governance we have had great and dynamic female presidents and prime ministers, past and present, and leaders in various capacities such as:

- ❖ Indira Gandhi – Prime Minister of India (1966 – 1977, 1980 -1984).
- ❖ Soong Ching Ling – Honorary President of the People’s Republic of China (1981).
- ❖ Sirimavo Bandaranaike – Prime Minister of Sri Lanka (1960 – 1965, 1970 – 1977, returned in 1994).
- ❖ Corazon Aquino – of the Philippines (1992 – 1996).
- ❖ Gloria Aroyo - of the Philippines (2001 till date).

- ❖ Megawati Soekarnoputri – President of Indonesia (2001 – 2003).
- ❖ Aun Sung Suu Kyi – Prime Minister of Maima, elected but not allowed to serve.
- ❖ Janet Jagan - President of Guyana (1997).
- ❖ Ertha Paschal Trouillot – President of Haiti (1991)
- ❖ Jennifer Smith – President of Bermuda (1998)
- ❖ Isabel Martinez de Peron – President of Argentina (1994 – 1996)
- ❖ Sylvie Kinigi – Prime Minister of Burundi – 1993
- ❖ Elizabeth Domitien – Prime Minister of The Central African Republic (1995 – 1996)
- ❖ Agathe Uwilingiyimana – Prime Minister of Rwanda (1993 – 1994)
- ❖ Ellien Johnson Salif – President of Liberia (2006 -)
- ❖ Benazir Bhutto – Prime Minister of Pakistan (1988 – 1990).

Despite Mrs. Bhutto's failure to meet people's expectations, it still calls for celebration for all women that we were given the opportunities to serve as president and prime minister in Indonesia and Pakistan respectively, countries which are Muslim-dominated. In some such countries, women are not even allowed to vote.

- ❖ Winnie Mandela relentlessly battled the apartheid regime in South Africa in spite of the fact that her husband was incarcerated at the time.
- ❖ Evita Peron's charitable work for the poor in Argentina endeared her to her people. Her leadership qualities and great popularity made it possible for her husband, Peron, to be re-elected as President in 1973. Evita Peron promoted Argentina's interest abroad and even after her death, her popularity continued to grow.
- ❖ Rigoberta Menchutum of Guatamala, was a human rights activist who won a Nobel Prize for peace in 1992.
- ❖ Shirin Ebodi, the 2003 Nobel Peace prize winner, a relentless human rights activist in Iran, has defied all odds to propagate the place of freedom and democratic governance in Islam.

In all developing countries, women leaders abound, not just in politics, but also in academia, private and public sector organizations.

NIGERIAN WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP ROLES

I will not want to bore you with the list of women leaders and achievers in Nigeria. Suffice it to say that the present Nigeria government has given more women opportunities to serve as leaders in various capacities than any other

previous administration. Women abound who blaze the trail in their various professions and continue to excel in their endeavours in areas such as medicine, pharmacy, public administration and other professions.

The emergence of democracy in Nigeria is a positive step, not just for Nigeria and Africa, but also for the world as a whole. With a population of 150 Million, Nigeria is the most populous black nation in the world and has from historical times produced women leaders and achievers. Democratic governance in Nigeria dates back to our independence in October 1, 1960. However, there have been interludes of civil war and intermittent military incursions into governance. These events put Nigeria into the league of emerging democracies when in fact, Nigeria should be a middle-aged democracy.

Democracy is supposed to accord equal opportunities, rights and privileges to all persons, irrespective of gender, race, religion, e.t.c. This therefore presupposes that there is a level and fair playing ground for emergence into public leadership positions.

CONSTRAINTS AGAINST WOMEN STRIVING TO BE LEADERS

In emerging democracies, there are some socio-cultural, stereotypical constraints against women striving to get to the top, some of which are:

- ❖ The traditional role of the women and the girl-child in carrying out household chores which often leave them with little or no time for formal education and self development.
- ❖ Early marriages among the less developed communities.
- ❖ Non extension of equal rights to all citizens, especially women.
- ❖ Crimes and corruption prevalent in emerging democracies do not provide conducive environment for women leaders.
- ❖ Women are less able to handle thuggery and rigging at the election polls.
- ❖ Excessive poverty and lack of access to the most basic amenities of life such as food, shelter and clothing.
- ❖ Ignorance on the path of many citizens with regards to their rights to aspire to and assume leadership or decide who should lead them, especially among women.
- ❖ Dehumanizing treatment of widows, wife-battery and other subjugate tendencies that can eventually make a woman to loss self confidence.
- ❖ Exclusion of girls from obtaining their share of family inheritance. (This is common in the South-East of Nigeria.)
- ❖ Discrimination against young married women in employment by some organizations especially in the banking sector.

- ❖ Denial of maternity leave to women in the work place.
- ❖ Denial of rights of some citizens to vote, especially women in some Muslim countries.
- ❖ Absence of a unified voice for the greater majority of citizens, especially women.
- ❖ Formal work environment that do not encourage the dual responsibilities of the woman as a home-maker and a leader in Public office.
- ❖ Wars and other forms of strife.

The above problems often contribute to infringe on the ability of many women in emerging democracies to acquire the knowledge, skills and confidence necessary for leadership positions. The situation is made even more difficult by the fact that the girl-child is usually prepared for a second place position right from the home where the focus of her training is on how to be a good wife, a good mother and a good home-maker. Consequently, she is hardly equipped with public leadership tools, especially in the areas of education and social exposure. Emergence into public leadership position by Nigerian women is just as tough in Nigeria as it is in any nation in the same league. The situation therefore calls for concerted efforts by countries, communities, women groups, individual women, as well as favourable government policies that enable women to explore their full potentials so as to be able to play leadership roles, and thereby contribute their bit to their countries' socio-economic development and nation building.

STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN LEADERSHIP

1. Favourable government policies:
 - Establishment of a ministry of Women Affairs will be most helpful
 - Mandatory and supported education for the girl-child and woman
 - According women full rights to vote and be voted for.
 - Policies that prevent violence, fear and intimidation, especially during elections
 - Conducive environment that promotes the employment of women
2. Determination on the part of women to assume leadership positions both in public and private sectors.
3. Acquisition of the right leadership skills, specially qualitative education.
4. Purposeful and positive role-modeling by women who have broken the mold.
5. Community action-based strategy some of which are:

- Breaking of negative cultural, religious and other gender barriers to women development.
- Greater attention to positive family values.
- Mutual support, teamwork and networking by women nationally and internationally, irrespective of race and religion.

Some of us who find ourselves in leadership positions are always conscious of the fact that our performances will influence government decisions to give women opportunities to assume leadership positions. People always view the appointment of women to sensitive positions in developing countries with skepticism. Consequently, we are constantly pressure to prove ourselves. Personally, I converted this pressure into positive drive to succeed.

ASSUMING THE LEADERSHIP OF A MORIBUND ORGANIZATION

I assumed the position of the Director General of National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) on April 12, 2001.

NAFDAC was established by Decree No. 15 of 1993 (as amended), to regulate and control the importation, exportation, manufacture, advertisement, distribution, sale and use of food, drugs, cosmetics, medical devices, chemicals/detergents and packaged water.

The scope of this mandate puts the responsibility of safeguarding public health on the Agency which by extension affect the life of every Nigerian.

Despite the global nature of fake drugs, the international community is not giving it adequate attention, evidenced by not having a harmonized definition of counterfeit drugs. The National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) has however identified the following types of counterfeit drugs:

- Drugs with no active ingredient(s)
- Drugs with insufficient active ingredients
- Drugs with active ingredient(s) different from what is labelled.
- Clones of fast moving drugs.
- Herbal preparations that are mixed with orthodox medicines.
- Expired drugs or drugs without expiry date, or re-labelled with the intention of extending their shelf-life.
- Drugs without full name and address of the manufacturer, and

- Drugs not registered by NAFDAC

Implications of Counterfeit Drugs

- Counterfeiting of medicines is a form of terrorism against public health and an act of economic sabotage. It is mass murder.
- The evil of fake drugs is worse than the combined scourge of malaria, HIV/AIDS and armed robbery, because malaria can be prevented, HIV/AIDS can be avoided, robbers may not kill but fake drugs kill en masse.
- The social problems posed by hard drugs cannot be compared with the damage done by fake drugs, because illicit drugs are taken out of choice, and by those that can afford them, but fake drugs are taken by all and anybody can be a victim.
- Counterfeit drugs cause treatment failures, drug resistance and death.

Scope of the Problem of Fake/Counterfeit Drugs in Nigeria Prior to 2001

- When the present management of NAFDAC came on board in April 2001, we were faced with an enormous task of reactivating a failed regulatory environment of over two decades.
- Fake/counterfeit drugs, substandard cosmetics, unwholesome food products and other regulated products were dumped in Nigeria.
- Nigeria was rated as one of the countries with the highest incidence of fake/counterfeit drugs. Consequently, drugs produced in Nigeria were officially unaccepted in other West African countries.
- Fake drugs embarrassed our health care providers and eroded the confidence of the public on our healthcare system.
- Due to unfair competition, local drug manufacturing became unattractive, and many multinational companies left Nigeria due to frustration.
- Estimates of the extent of counterfeit medicines in circulation in Nigeria ranged from 48% to 80% from various studies before 2001.
- Poole (1989) reported that 25% of drug samples studied were fake, 25% genuine and 50% inconclusive.
- Adeoye Lambo (1990) reported that 54% of drugs in Lagos were fake and that the figure would rise to 80% the following year.
- Taylor et al reported that 48% of drugs tested were substandard.

- In 2001, NAFDAC's study showed that 68% of drugs in circulation were unauthorized.
- The situation in Nigeria mirrored what obtained in most African countries.

Challenges Mitigating against Food and Drug Regulation

➤ **Corruption and Conflict Of Interests**

The first line of action by drug counterfeiters is to compromise regulators. When this fails, they resort to intimidation, harassment, blackmail, threats and physical attacks.

➤ **Insecure and Unfriendly Environment**

At some point, when all the other antics of drug counterfeiters failed, they resorted to physical attacks, vandalism, and arson against NAFDAC staff and facilities. This culminated in a shooting attack on my person on December 26, 2003 - Gunmen fired at my vehicle. The back windscreen was shattered by bullets which pierced through my head scarf and burnt my scalp. During the shooting, a commercial bus was riddled with bullets and the driver died instantly. Between 7th and 11th March 2004, there was a synchronized burning of NAFDAC's facilities across the country. My family members and NAFDAC staff remained constantly under threat. In addition to depositing fetish objects in my office in August 2001, six armed men invaded my residence in Abuja and waited for over two hours for me to return. Fortunately, unknown to them, I had earlier travelled out of town. On 29th August 2002, our laboratory in Lagos was vandalized and most of our sensitive equipment were destroyed, while portable ones and samples for testing were carted away.

➤ **Discriminatory Regulation By Exporting Countries**

- Some countries have strong regulations for drugs consumed internally and little or no regulation for drugs meant for export.
- Discriminatory regulation informed our decision to prohibit the importation of products marked "**FOR EXPORT ONLY.**"
 - Any product that could not be used in the country of manufacture is officially unacceptable in Nigeria.
- Presently, we have 92 pharmaceutical companies producing about 30% of Nigeria's drug needs while the rest are imported.
- Most of the counterfeit drugs in Nigeria are imported from India and China.

- From 2001 till date, we have banned thirty Indian and Chinese companies and one Pakistani company confirmed to be counterfeit drug producers from exporting drugs into Nigeria.

➤ **Sophistication In Drug Manufacture**

Sophistication in drug production has made it difficult for brand owners to tell the difference between their brands and counterfeits.

➤ **Lack of or Inadequate Legislation**

In many countries, laws against drug counterfeiting are very weak. Consequently, criminals are shifting from smuggling of narcotics and running of weapons to counterfeiting of drugs because it is financially lucrative and of relatively low risk.

- The penalties for importing, producing or distributing fake and counterfeit drugs in Nigeria range from imprisonment for between three months and five years with option of fine of USD70 - USD3600.
- In the interim, we have strengthened our regulatory processes by instituting some administrative guidelines within the law.
- We also use the press to disgrace identified drug counterfeiters.

➤ **False Declaration by Importers**

Some counterfeit drug importers make false declarations about the contents of their containers and employ unimaginable concealment methods, like stacking drugs in the inner parts of containers of other items like clothings, motor spare parts or household goods, or wrapping the drugs inside clothings.

We have made seizures of drugs concealed inside t-shirts and baby wears.

➤ **Chaotic Drug Distribution System**

Drug distribution in Nigeria was very chaotic, with drugs marketed like any other commodity of trade. Drugs were sold in open markets, buses, ferries, and were hawked on the streets.

Strategies Employed by NAFDAC to Combat Drug Counterfeiting

➤ **Public Enlightenment Campaign**

- This is our most effective strategy involving dialogue, education and persuasion.
- It is sustained by using:
 - Print and electronic media such as jingles, alert notices, billboards, **publication of the differences between identified fake and genuine products in the national dailies**, etc.

- We have also produced many other publications, fliers, leaflets and posters, in English and the major Nigeria languages.
- Workshops, seminars and meetings have been conducted for most stakeholders.
- Mobilization campaigns for rural dwellers is on- going.
- In 2002, NAFDAC instituted an annual essay competition for Nigerian high school children for which cash prizes were given to the winners and computers and televisions were donated to their schools at state, zonal and national levels. We also established consumer safety clubs in the schools as a platform for interacting with and educating the students for the establishment of a culture of quality consciousness in Nigeria.

➤ **Stopping the Importation of Counterfeit Medicines and Other Substandard Products at Source**

To achieve this, NAFDAC has put in place some administrative guidelines which include:

- NAFDAC officials must inspect factories anywhere in the world before we register or renew registration for their drugs, cosmetics, food and other regulated products, to ensure Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) compliance.
- NAFDAC has appointed analysts in India, China and Egypt who re-certify drugs before exportation to Nigeria.
- NAFDAC requires mandatory pre-shipment information to be provided by all importers before the arrival of their drugs.
- On NAFDAC's instance, Nigerian banks insist on NAFDAC's clearance before processing financial documents for drug importers.

➤ **Beefing Up of Surveillance At All Ports Of Entry**

- NAFDAC has re-enforced the two new directorates of Ports Inspection and Enforcement for more effective surveillance at all ports of entry, and better enforcement activities respectively.
- Hitherto, land and sea borders were major routes of importation. The Agency, considerably intensified surveillance at all the borders. Drug counterfeiters then resorted to using airlines. Consequently, NAFDAC issued a guideline that any aircraft that carries drugs to Nigeria without obtaining NAFDAC's authorization from their clients would be impounded.

➤ Mopping Up Counterfeit Drugs Already In Circulation

- Cognizance of our many porous borders, NAFDAC embarks on planned, continuous and sustained surveillance at all markets and retail outlets for drugs.
- This in the past has led to closure of 2 major drug markets for 3 –6 months.
To achieve high level of success with our mopping up exercise, NAFDAC has put in place the following administrative guidelines:
 - Confiscation and subsequent destruction of drugs from sellers who fail to provide proper invoices of purchase with full names and addresses.
 - This is to enable us trace the big time importers and distributors of fake drugs.
- Faced with the frustrations of evacuating many lorry loads of fake drugs from warehouses on tip off without anybody accepting ownership, NAFDAC notified the public that whenever the importer could not be traced, **the landlord of the premises used for the storage of fake drugs would be arrested, to force the Landlord to reveal the fake drug importer.**
 - On one occasion, it was only after the landlord of the warehouse was arrested that the fake drugs' owner surfaced.
- Raids are regularly carried out on drug hawkers, and their drugs are confiscated and destroyed.
- We also trace fake drug dealers through reports from health professionals or victims and constant tip-off from the public.
- We carry out routine sampling, checking and testing of all NAFDAC registered drugs in circulation.
 - In 2003, Nigerian journalists sensitized the Agency about the death of three children after open-heart surgery. NAFDAC's investigations revealed medication related problems. The muscle relaxant (suxamethonium) used was of low potency, the cardiac stimulant (adrenaline) was fake and some of the infusions were contaminated.
 - In 2004, infusions and water for injection were sampled from all over the country. Our results confirmed that some batches of infusions produced by 4 indicted companies were contaminated with microorganisms.

- 147 of the 149 brands of water for injection screened were also not sterile.

➤ **Monitoring GMP of Local Manufacturers**

- NAFDAC monitors local manufacturers of drugs routinely.
- Compliance directives are issued and enforced to the letter when lapses are observed.
- Prosecution is carried out as a last resort when necessary.

➤ **Streamlining and Strict Enforcement of Registration Guidelines**

NAFDAC has strengthened its registration processes with some administrative guidelines:

- All drugs must comply with laboratory standards and inspection requirements before they are registered.
- Renewal of registration of drugs is every five years, while herbal medicine is yearly.
- NAFDAC insists on fixing of **NAFDAC REGISTRATION NUMBER** on the labels of all products to enable the public identify authorized drugs.
- Drugs can be imported for only ten years, after which the importer must start local production.

Other Interventions

- We established National Pharmacovigilance Centre and was admitted as 74th member of WHO Drug Safety Monitoring Programme.
- In 2002, we proposed the establishment of an international convention on counterfeiting of pharmaceuticals at the International Conference of Drug Regulatory Agencies (ICDRA) meeting in Hong Kong. We have since continued with the campaign for this important convention in other International fora.
- NAFDAC is currently enforcing access to ethical drugs strictly on prescription. Previously, any drug could be purchased in Nigeria without doctor's prescription.

Government Support

- We enjoy tremendous support from government under the able leadership of President Olusegun Obasanjo.
- Nigerian government banned importation of drugs through land borders and designated two airports and two seaports for drug importation.

- Recently, government also banned 17 drugs that local manufacturers have capacity for.

Some of the Achievements and Gains Recorded

- We have sanitized the food and drug industry and created a reasonably well regulated environment which have saved the lives of millions of Nigerians and boosted our economy by encouraging local industries, genuine importers and foreign investors.
- Immense public awareness resulted in the participation of all stakeholders in the promotion of food and drug regulation in Nigeria, and awakened the international consciousness that Nigeria is no longer a dumping ground for fake drugs.
- The incidence of fake drugs has been reduced by about 90% from what it was in 2001.
- The production capacities of local pharmaceutical industries have increased tremendously, and 22 new drug manufacturing outfits were established in the last 5 years.
- The confidence of investors in the pharmaceutical industry has been reinforced as evidenced by the continuous upward movement in the share prices of the pharmaceutical companies quoted in the Nigerian stock exchange.
- Ban on made-in-Nigeria drugs has been lifted by other West African countries.
- Many Multinational Drug Companies are coming back to Nigeria due to improved regulatory environment.
- Cheering reports of declining death rates in our hospitals.
 - We are working in concert with all government hospitals in Nigeria, by compiling the number of deaths on monthly basis in order to establish trends.
- From April 2001 to January 2006, NAFDAC carried out over 100 destruction exercises of counterfeit and substandard products valued at about **₦14 billion**.
- From 2001 to July 2005, over 1,000 raids were carried out on distribution outlets of fake drugs.
- We have secured 45 convictions in respect of counterfeit-drug related cases, and over 56 cases are pending in courts.

- Sanctions on erring manufacturers and importers are increasing steadily. 2,226 in 2002; 3,178 in 2003; and 3,460 in 2004 and 4,132 in 2005.
- Sanitization of table water and sachet water production has greatly reduced cholera and other water borne disease outbreaks, which used to be rampant in the country.
- NAFDAC monitors salt iodization in Nigeria and in this regard, UNICEF rated **Nigeria as the first country in Africa to achieve universal salt iodization**. We are currently working to achieve the same feat in vitamin A fortification.

MY ADVICE TO WOMEN OCCUPYING LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

Women should always work extra hard to be accorded their recognition and to debunk the general feeling by skeptics that some jobs could not be done by women because we are neither strong nor serious minded enough.

Women in leadership positions should first and foremost shun corruption because it engenders compromise and poor performance on the job. They should also ensure that incorruptibility permeates the system under their control from the highest to the lowest levels of authority. Women can only do this through leadership by example. We should exhibit forthrightness with our clients and staff without fear or favour.

Corrupt practices and laxity must be severely sanctioned while hardwork and integrity are adequately compensated. When hard work and transparency are not recognized and compensated, laxity and corruption are promoted and perpetrated.

For the women who have made it to the top, it is not enough to be role models, you have to take the young ones under your motherly wings and nurture them to full maturity so that when we leave, there will be no vacuum. For those aspiring to leadership positions, the fact is that to get to the top, you work hard. To stay on top without toppling, you work even harder. Women must remain focused, determined and hardworking with utmost transparency and resolve never to be intimidated.

CONCLUSION

In Nigeria, the number of women assuming leadership positions is on the increase, even though we are still far from the 30% stipulated for employment of women and occupation of top public offices. We consider the present political will demonstrated by the Nigeria government to give more leadership positions to women as a step in the positive direction. There is no doubt that

women in leadership roles have impacted positively in various sectors of every economy, just as they have done in Nigeria. More women are emerging as leaders of international and national agencies, governments at various levels, as well as a host of industries and enterprises the world over.

Women over the years have proved that when given the opportunity, they can justify the saying that **'the best man for the job is a woman'**. God endowed women with some innate qualities, which are fundamental for good leadership.

Non-equipment of the girl-child for leadership denies the society of true leaders. Women's leadership has been acclaimed by the Nigerian journalist to be better than that of men. Perhaps this is because women tend to be less corrupt and better focused. In a research done in eight countries in central and Eastern Africa, it was reported that women leaders were seen by the populace as less corrupt and more caring about the basic needs of the communities compared to their male counterpart. They are more sensitive to development issues which affect the overall community. There is no doubt that with more women in leadership positions and participating in decision making, there will be a better world with greater promotion of common good-

Women as wives, mothers, sisters or daughters can wield a lot of positive influence over members of the community, and this ability makes them excellent choices for leadership.

I strongly believe that there are many Mother Theresa's, Indira Ghandi's, Sirimavo Bandaranaike's and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's out there waiting to change the course of history in emerging democracies if only they could be given the chance. My experience as the head of food and drug regulation in Nigeria has taught me that the sky is the limit for any woman willing to work hard and seek leadership position, no matter how male-dominated the society is. Those people who were not favourable disposed towards me when I was first appointed have now become my biggest fans.

Thank you for inviting me to this gathering of most illustrious men and women, and for taking the time to listen to my story.