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# THE EFFICACY OF THE AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICY AND WOMEN'S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT IN UGANDA

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# 1. ABSTRACT

Uganda currently holds 31st position on the United Nations Global Index on Women in Parliament, a position achieved by deliberate policy and legislative reforms espoused by Uganda over time. Political representation of women is reinforced by the country's commitment to international agreements, whose provisions inform national policy and legal frameworks. The legal and policy processes by the government to promote and increase women's political participation are termed as affirmative action in politics – which the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government is highly credited for. Despite the numerical increase of women in politics, the policy can no longer guarantee impact on the balance of political power and on development policy that can catalyze efforts to empower the average Ugandan woman to win political power. While proponents of affirmative action approve of the successes of the policy and strongly advocate for policy continuity, this paper posits that affirmative action in politics has served its numerical purpose, but it is yet to address issues like patriarchy, ideological emancipation and economic empowerment – and needs to be comprehensively reviewed. Such a review will bring to the fore recommendations that can sustain the current efforts and guarantee a balance of political power to impact on the public policy landscape in Uganda. Through data from Parliament, literature reviews and stakeholder interviews, this paper explores options beyond affirmative action quotas that are vital for creating political balance and include transitioning from the current presidential political system to the parliamentary political system; regulating funding to all political parties based on women nominations; the media providing a platform for women leaders; women networks that promote and sustain women in political spaces; and enacting laws that curb election violence against women.

## » 1.1

# Women's political participation – pre-1986

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The emergence of diverse women's associations reflects a rich history of women organising, which gave birth to the articulation of women's interests and female solidarity networks.”

Women's political participation in Uganda predates the colonial era. Women in organized pre-colonial societies (kingdoms and chiefdoms) played a significant political role. Between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, women in Acholi, Ankole, Buganda and Teso participated in positions of influence where they controlled their lineages (Tripp, 2000). For instance, in Buganda, the Namasole (Queen Mother) had political leverage because she controlled the king's ties with her relatives and the balance of power between clans (Dimock, 2017). The Lubuga (Chief Sister) and Nabagereka (Chief Wife) were special advisors to the Kabaka and played a key role in the selection of the next king at the demise of the reigning one. Between the '14<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, eras which played a central role in Uganda's state formation, women's participation underwent significant change and was sealed when Uganda became a British Protectorate in 1894' (Tripp, 2000, pp. 29-23). When the British came to comprehend the extent of the Namasole's political power and political significance, they stripped her of most of it. The Namasole, Lubuga and Nababagereka are just a few examples of women's participation in politics and the extent of this power. Consequently, the political positions that women occupied in the pre-colonial era were weakened or abolished as kingdoms, chiefdoms and indigenous societies were weakened by the British.

The colonial period is credited for inadvertently propelling the women's movement and participation in politics in Uganda by permitting voluntary associations and organizations, such as the Protestant Mothers' Union, the Catholic Women's Club of Uganda, the Women's League, the Uganda Council of Women, the Uganda Women's Emergency Organization and the Girl Guides, to operate. Most of these were 'birthed' by Christian missionaries and the wives of colonial administrators and businessmen, not with the intention of promoting political growth but as mere social organizations to facilitate civil relationships among the classes in society and to monitor activities (Tripp, 2000). Other hybrid organizations, such as the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) founded in 1952 and the Uganda Council of Women were conceptualized to tend to social challenges like high school drop-outs, shortage of leadership skills, limited citizen education, lack of women's rights etc. (Tripp, 2000). The emergence of diverse women's associations reflects a rich history of women organising, which gave birth to the articulation of women's interests and female solidarity networks. The dynamism of the 'new' clubs also allowed women

to participate beyond being good mothers, wives and Christians, but as meaningful contributors to policy development. Therefore, the social groupings and early organisations acted as a conduit for women's ascendance into the political sphere, not as mere spectators but as participants. In addition, the education programmes kick-started in the colonial period led to the proliferation of schools around the country and played a crucial role in introducing women to new careers and, subsequently, leadership.

Towards independence, the simultaneous emergence of independent women's associations meant that for the first time many women's movements could now elect their own leaders, set their own agendas, and were no longer tied to participation in the patronage network of male-dominated political organisations. New non-partisan organizations emerged to support women candidates and female political leadership (Tripp, 2001). A key milestone in the women's movement was the activism and advocacy around the political participation of women in general elections. Despite women's keen interest during the 1958 Legislative Council (LEGCO) elections, women were poorly represented – this caused the Uganda Council of Women (UCW) to rally behind female political participants and front themselves as worthy contenders (Tripp, 2000). It is a fact that the first women representatives in LEGCO were leaders of the UCW. Barbara Saben<sup>1</sup> and Alice Boase<sup>2</sup> were nominated as the first women representatives. Pumla Kisosonkole<sup>3</sup> was the first African woman representative in the LEGCO, which she joined in 1956. Subsequently, other women, namely Sarah Nyendohwa, Florence Lubega, Frances Akello, Joyce Masembe, Miriam Mitha and W.H.L. Gordon, served on the LEGCO (Tripp, 2000). In the pre-independence Buganda elections of February 1962, Sugra Visram, Florence Lubega and Ezeza Makumbi were elected to the Lukiiko. After the April 1962 elections, Visram and Lubega were nominated to the National Assembly while Makumbi served at the East African Legislative Assembly (Tripp, 2000).

The Parliament archives indicate that the only women who occupied elective seats between 1962 and 1986 were the two Buganda representatives, Sugra Visram, Florence Lubega and Rhoda Kalema<sup>4</sup>, Geraldine Bitamazire<sup>5</sup> and Thereza Odongo-Oduka<sup>6</sup>. It became hard for women to organize effectively and participate in politics during the Obote I and II and the Amin regimes because of the constant meddling and futile attempts to fully co-opt the women's movement. Their reluctance to join the sitting governments took a toll on women's effort to organize in Uganda. The Amin regime was particularly worse because in 1978, all women's organizations were banned in favor of the National Council of Women and their leaders were threatened with execution (Tripp, 2000).

- 1 Founder of UCW
- 2 President of UCW from 1953 to 1955
- 3 President of UCW from 1957 to 1960
- 4 1979-1980
- 5 1979-1980
- 6 1980-1985



**A key milestone in the women's movement was the activism and advocacy around the political participation of women in general elections. Despite women's keen interest during the 1958 Legislative Council (LEGCO) elections, women were poorly represented – this caused the Uganda Council of Women (UCW) to rally behind female political participants and front themselves as worthy contenders (Tripp, 2000).**





## 1.2

# Post-1986 and Gender Interest Legislation

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A renowned misconception exists that the women's movement in Uganda is a brain-child of the NRM (Nyago, 2011; Museveni, 2016) and that the movement would not be as strong as it is today if it was not solely for the paternalistic tendencies of the NRM regime or President Yoweri Museveni. The short history cited above renders this notion obsolete because the demands for equality with men in the formal political and economic spheres were generated by women themselves. However, it would be erroneous not to acknowledge the support that the NRM regime has given to the promotion of women's formal political participation in electoral politics. Museveni's government ensured women's political representation by establishing the position of Secretary for Women's Affairs at every level of the Resistance Council hierarchy (Tripp, 2000), supporting women interest legislation and appointing women into leadership positions.



**W**e should also be cognizant of the fact that until such a time when it was affirmed that women's endorsement was critical to the regime's legitimacy (Muhumuza, 2004; Tripp, 2001), women's political efforts were thwarted by the NRM leadership. Women's increased role in formal politics in Uganda was brought about by power-seeking politicians who were sympathetic to feminist issues because electoral strategies are severely limited by liberal political and economic values and politicians could secure support from women with relatively low-cost symbolic political initiatives (Ottemoeller, 1999). It is also important to note that there are many contradictions in the way the NRM has promoted women's political participation. Gopal and Salim (1998) note that the council women secretaries continue to be treated with prejudice and discrimination despite existing legislation. Karamagi (2017) argues that women MPs do not represent women in Parliament—they simply represent the State to the women since the state deliberately creates new districts in a bid to increase their number of seats.

Uganda is a signatory to several international agreements and protocols against the discrimination of women. Uganda ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1985; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1995; the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) in 1986; and, in July 2010, the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol). Uganda is also a signatory to the African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, to mention a few among others (United Nations Human Rights). Thus, Uganda is obliged to domesticate the provisions enshrined in the ratified frameworks and has variously domesticated some of the provisions.

There have been several national policy and legislative reforms to increase the number of women in politics and decision-making. In 1988, the National Resistance Council (NRC) passed a Constitutional Commission Statute, which created the Constitutional Commission that drafted the Constitution of 1995 (Parliament of Uganda). Miria Matembe and Mary Maitum were the only women on the CRC out of 21 members (Citizens Rights in Africa Initiative). The constitution, praised as forward-looking, embedded provisions that protected the rights of women in various spheres of life including politics. Legal reforms in relation to the rights of women were long overdue, because there existed systemic, social and other structural challenges that inhibited women's formal political participation. The commission issued an open call to interested delegates to contribute to the process, and of the 286 delegates, 52 were women. In relation to political participation, the memorandum recommended that 'the constitution ensures women's rights including equal opportunities in political, economic and social activities. It guaranteed reserved seats for groups marginalized for 'the purpose of redressing the imbalance

**1988,**

**The year which the National Resistance Council (NRC) passed a Constitutional Commission Statute, which created the Constitutional Commission that drafted the Constitution of 1995 (Parliament of Uganda).**

which existed against them...it allowed for one woman to run for parliament as a women's representative in each district. Women could also run for openly contested seats...' (FES, 2005). These recommendations resulted in Articles 32 and 78(1) of the Constitution.

The women's caucus was instrumental in the constitutional reform process. The non-partisan organization built consensus amongst women legislators, lobbied sympathetic male legislators, and ran a Constituent Assembly gender information center that provided support to women in debating the Constitution (FES, 1995). Women's organisations continued to lobby the government for inclusion in the political process. During a courtesy call on President Museveni, women's organizations presented requests and recommendations including, but not limited to, 'how to fill various leadership positions'. As a result, nine women ministers were appointed, the most prominent being Gertrude Njuba, Deputy Minister of Industry, Victoria Sekitoleko, Minister of Agriculture and Betty Bigombe, Deputy Minister, Prime Minister's Office (Tripp, 2000).

In the 1989 elections, 34 seats were reserved for women Members of Parliament (MPs), two women won constituency seats, and three women were nominated as historical(s) for their participation in the liberation war. Thus, 41 (17%) of all 270 seats in Parliament were occupied by women. In the 1994 cabinet reshuffle, women held six positions out of 51, with Dr Specioza Wandira Kazibwe being appointed as Uganda's first female vice president (Tripp, 2000).

Because of these concerted efforts, participation of women in politics has progressed steadily. At the national level, the current Parliament comprises 454 members, with 157 (34.9 %) women (Parliament Watch Uganda, 2017), an increase from the 31 % in the 8th Parliament, but still lower than the parity target set by section 29(3) of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (African Union, 2012). This shows that women have not yet broken through the barriers of competing with men for political positions.

The Local Government Act, 1997 is also key to the enhancement of women political participation at the local level. It operationalizes some of the gender interest provisions of the 1995 Constitution. It is a legal framework whose provisions attempt to redress several historical and gender-based injustices. During its drafting, there were some provisions that would perpetuate discrimination and close out the space for some women, such as clause 10(e) that required O and A level academic qualifications for one to run for Local Council III and V positions. Women legislators and organisations opposed the move because it was discriminatory against women who had relatively lower education levels than their male counterparts because of social and economic circumstances. The bill was assented to after the clause was deleted (Tripp, 2000). The Local Government Act, 1997 section 10(e) stipulates that women must occupy 30% of all positions in the local council structure while people with disabilities occupy 20% of these positions (a man or a woman).



## 2

# The contemporary context

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Uganda is currently seen as a model country in relation to women's numerical participation in politics (Ahikire, 2012). The statutory inclusion of women in local councils Article 180(b)1 and the reserving of a proportion of parliamentary seats exclusively for women in Article 78(b)2 has increased the number of women in mainstream politics and key government positions. In Uganda, affirmative action in politics operates as follows: There is a general county-based constituency seat for which both women and men can compete, although this contest tends to be dominated by men. The affirmative action seat for women is at district level, making its constituency three to four times larger than the general constituency seat. Aspirants to the general seats are referred to as Constituency MPs, while the aspirants to the affirmative action seats for women are referred to as Woman MPs (Ahikire 2012, p. 4). The election of these seats, even at the local government level takes place by adult suffrage.

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**A**ffirmative action in politics is such that women are gradually empowered to compete favorably with their male counterparts. The argument in favor of encouraging female politicians to vie for direct parliamentary seats is premised on the theory that Woman MP seats were not meant to be a permanent feature of Uganda's politics, but an affirmative measure to facilitate women's involvement in politics so that once enough women can favorably challenge men, the window for Woman MPs is closed (Sserunjogi, 2016). Article 32(1) provides for 'affirmative action in favor of groups marginalized based on gender, age, disability or any other reason created by history, tradition or custom, for redressing imbalances which exist against them.'

However, close to 20 years down the road, more women are vying for Women MP seats, and fewer for the Constituency MP seats. The number of female MPs who won constituency seats fell from 16 in 2006 to 14 in 2011; and in 2016, out of the 288 Constituency MP seats only 19 were won by women; and, furthermore, of the 157 female MPs, 116 (and counting) are Women MPs (Parliament Watch Uganda, 2017). Mr. David Mpiima, a lecturer at the School of Gender and Women Studies, Makerere University, Uganda contends that the affirmative action seats are 'sleeping pills' and, sometimes, it is the end goal for women in political spaces and not a means to an end (constituency seat) (Mpiima, 2018). He added that the space becomes less and less competitive with time as the women occupying the seats become comfortable with the achievement. Mamdani has also argued that affirmative action in its current state has crippled women participation in the mainstream politics as every woman runs to contest as a woman MP and in the end, the measure of how much affirmative action has contributed to the general enhancement of woman participation in politics. Examples like Speaker of Parliament Rebecca Kadaga, who has represented Kamuli district since 1989, even though she has amassed the political capital to take part in the direct competition and beat any man. Another example is the Hon. Cecilia Ogwal, the veteran FDC politician, now Woman MP for Dokolo<sup>1</sup>, who embodies a sharp contrast from when she was MP for Lira municipality.

Women's presence in decision-making positions still falls short of national and international commitments, such as the gender balance envisaged by the African Union Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (Madanda, 2017). A report on gender and women's participation in the 2016 general elections in Uganda reveals that women's participation in active politics is low despite affirmative action. The report notes that even though women comprise 52% of the population of Uganda, their participation as candidates in the 2016 elections remained minimal, particularly those running for the Constituency MP seats. Out of the eight presidential candidates, only one was female, representing 12.5%, while out of the 1,306 candidates contesting the Constituency MP seats, only 83 (6.8%) were women, of whom 58% ran as independents. The situation at the level of LCV chairperson was worse, with only seven women (1.9%), as compared to 376 men (98.1%) (Women's Democracy group 2016). This observation is independent of the Woman MP dynamic, because it is reserved for women only. It is important to note that the increase in the number of women across the political structures correlates with the increase in the number of districts.

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ibid.

**Table 1: Female candidates nominated during the 2016 general elections**

Post	No. females	No. males	% age female in the race
President	1	7	12.5
General constituency	83	1,223	6.8
District/City chairperson	7	372	1.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>1,602</b>	

*Source: Electoral Commission records, 2016*

**Table 2: Women candidates for Member of Parliament by party affiliation**

Party	No. females	No. males	Party %age (F)	National % age (F)
NRM	24	267	8.2	1.4
FDC	4	196	2	0.2
DP	7	74	7	0.4
UFA	3	3	50	0.2
Independents	48	638	7	2.8
UPC		23	0	0
JEEMA		8	0	0
PPP		5	0	0
Others		12	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>1,223</b>		

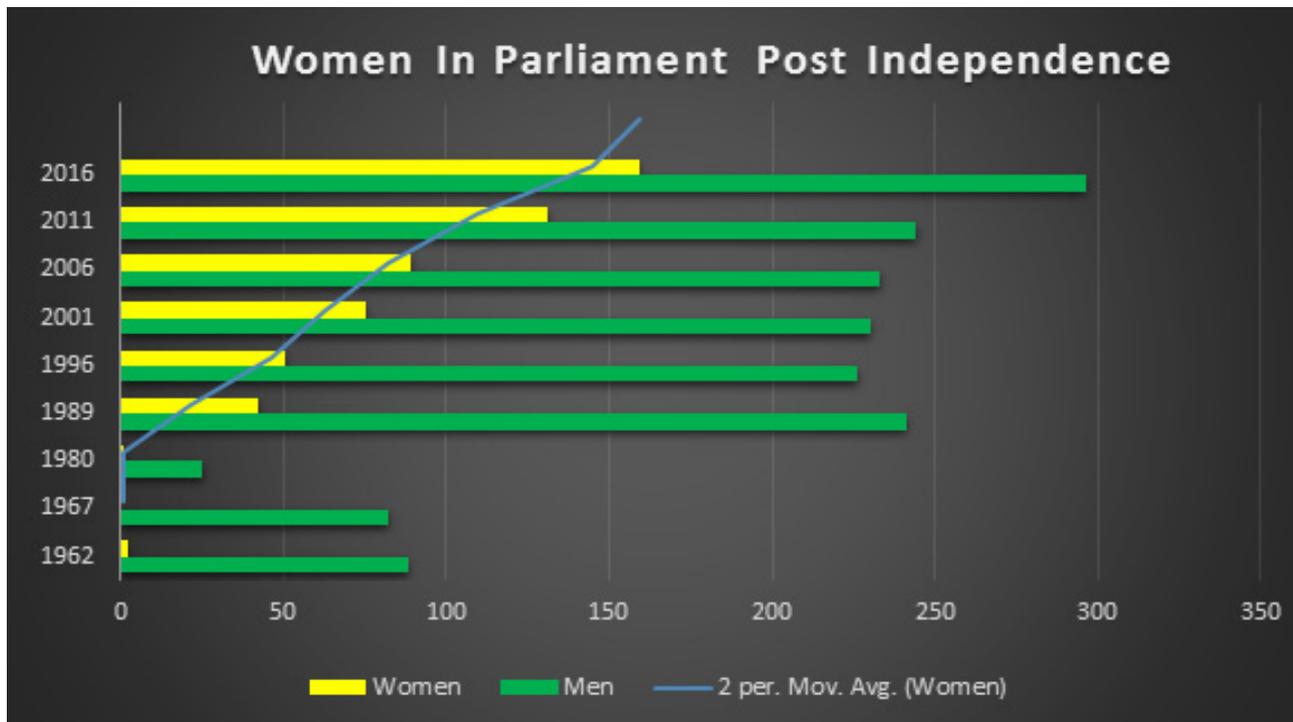
*Source: Electoral Commission: List of nominated candidates, 2016*

The table above represents the miniscule level of female participation in politics. The prominent parties still exude wanting scenarios, and the other parties, such as Uganda People's Congress (UPC), the Justice Forum (JEEMA) and People's Progressive Party (PPP) did not have female representation altogether. There is, however, an observable increment in the numbers of women attending campaign rallies in comparison to previous elections, attributed to the sensitization about the importance of their participation in politics by various women's organizations (The Women's Democracy Group, 2016).

A gender lens applied to affirmative action reveals that the Woman MP seat is viewed as politically inferior or irrelevant when compared to the general Constituency MP seat (Ahikire, 2012, p. 8). In her book, *When Hens Begin to Crow*, Sylvia Tamale contends that 'affirmative action seems to have been imposed in such a way that the victims of structural imbalances have to prove themselves based on the very yardsticks that marginalize them and it is no longer a question of redressing historical imbalances, but rather of reinforcing the gender ideology that women are less qualified for the political arena' (Tamale, 1999). Women who have won constituency seats are referred to in terms such as 'iron lady', 'gallant', 'almost men' etc.

As mentioned earlier, Parliament currently has a total of 454 members. Of these, 157 are women, of whom 19 are on constituency seats.

Figure 1: Women legislators since independence



Source: Parliament Watch Uganda4444

According to the Rules of Procedure, women must occupy a minimum of 40% of the leadership positions on committees (Kadaga, 2018). Accordingly, 46% of committee chairpersons are women, 43% are vice chairpersons, both the Speaker and the Leader of Opposition in Parliament are women, and 50% of all the commissioners and Party Chief Whips are women (Parliament Watch Uganda, 2018).

A recent attempt by Parliament to even out the leadership of committees to feature both women and men has been lauded. Whereas this is a progressive step, women leaders in Parliament must contend with the disproportionate number of males on committees; where committee democracy and the tyranny of numbers take the day. At this level, women's leadership at committee level is impactful only to the extent that they can overcome their male counterparts' interests (Wamajji, 2018).

Currently, the Ugandan cabinet comprises 28 female ministers out of 80, representing 35 % of the total number – 11 full ministers and 17 state ministers (Parliament Watch Uganda, 2018). Uganda set an important precedent for Africa by providing for one-third female representation in local councils. However, gender parity levels are yet to be achieved at these levels of government.

Table 3: Women in political party decision-making positions

Party	Body	No. of leaders	Female	Percentage (%)	Heads of Electoral Commission
DP	NEC	44	8	18	Male
FDC	NEC	147	34	23	Male
JEEMA	NEC	19	4	21	Male
NRM	CEC	22	7	32	Male
PPP	NEC	15	8	53	Male
UPC	NEC	19	4	21	Male
<b>Total</b>		<b>266</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>24</b>	

Source:

UWONET et al (2015), The Women's Manifesto 2016-2021: 19-20, as quoted by Madanda (2017)



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## What next for affirmative action?

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Some African countries are, in fact, trailblazers in the promotion of women's leadership. Rwanda, for example, has the highest female representation in the world: 61% of its MPs are women. South Africa has well over 40% parliamentary representation by women, Uganda ranks 31st out of 195 countries globally, with 34% of our MPs being women (UN Women, 2017). Burundi and Tanzania have 30.7% female representation in their national parliaments, respectively. Kenya is, however, a whole different case. As of February 2010, female representation was estimated at 9.98%; globally, Kenya was ranked 102, a far cry from the rankings of its East African neighbors (Ouma).

**A**ffirmative action provides a means of addressing the gender imbalance in decision-making and has resulted in the numerical presence of women in formal politics, which is a major advance – however, the practice often lacks support from important political actors or meets opposition in societies that have strong patriarchal traditions. Much like the debate around affirmative action, those opposed to gender quota systems contend that the policy discriminates against men (Mutume, 2004). There remain questions concerning the legitimacy and respectability of women as candidates, politicians and public office-holders (Ahikire, 2012, p. 7).

The question as to whether the increase in numbers of women has significantly resulted in policy and legislative reform that improves on the wellbeing of women continues to linger. Whether or not this question holds water, the question is directed towards women as a political hegemony and discredits efforts by women in political positions. The irony is that the men in the same positions are often not subjected to the same kind of scrutiny as women and is problematic due to the underlying misogynistic inferences. Professor Ahikire argues that women have been central to pushing for gender-sensitive legislation and policies that impact positively on women's lives. The professor also argues that the tendency to collectivize women's failures and individualize their successes as opposed to men in Parliament waters down the efforts of the women legislators. Since 1986, women legislators have taken the lead in the enactment of critical laws, such as the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (2009), the Domestic Violence Act (2010) and the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation (2010) and have sustained the debates on issues that infringe on the security of women. During the process of legislation, women leaders have been key to mobilization, moving motions and doing research to support legislation. These laws marked a significant advancement in laws governing human dignity and domestic relations. In other instances, women MPs also raised a red flag on many cases of sexual abuse against girls in schools and maternal deaths as urgent issues of national concern. At the local council levels, the women councilors have emphasized legislation on gender-based violence (GBV) and the delivery of services for livelihood enhancement (Oywa, 2016). These achievements can only be appreciated within the patriarchal context of law making in Uganda.

Through affirmative action, attitudes towards women's participation in politics and the ability to govern has improved, paving the way for young women who intend to do so to vie for public office. However, there are still major structural, societal and institutional barriers that women face in their pursuit of political power. It is true that when women decide to try for or become political representatives they face major and, in some cases, insurmountable barriers, including violence, in exerting influence on policymaking, mostly stemming from patriarchy. Patriarchy<sup>1</sup> and gatekeeping<sup>2</sup> are responsible for confining women to affirmative action positions in politics. Gatekeepers are often authority figures or community leaders who intend to improve their community, from their perspective, and to make it more respectable according to mainstream norms.

A common fallacy exists that women can only contest on the women's special seat and not the constituency seat, and this is perpetuated by male contestants and their supporters. This is in addition to other kinds of election violence meted out to women. In elections, the pattern of violence against women has changed and violence has intensified, leading to the coining of new acronyms like EAW (Election Violence against Women) (2005) and VAWIP (Violence against Women in Politics) (2006).

1 Patriarchy is a social system in which males hold primary power and predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property

2 Gatekeeping is the process by which individuals or (sub-)communities are excluded from or policed by the broader community to which they belong owing to intersectional discrimination, horizontal oppression and respectability politics



Hitherto, during the 2016 general elections, women were attacked both physically and psychologically, mainly within the family domain, for plenty of reasons. For example, they were attacked for not supporting their husbands' political bids or their individual choices of candidates or for even daring to venture into politics, which is a 'male-oriented' field. Now the violence has extended into the public sphere, perpetrated by the very institutions meant to protect women, to both deter participation and to demean or humiliate (Nakijoba, 2017). Although the policy has contributed to the increase of women numbers in Parliament, it makes them feel like they owe allegiance to someone who has reserved them a seat and, therefore, cannot effectively deliberate on issues affecting them

Numerous policy instruments have appreciated the need for women to occupy meaningful political positions to ensure development. The government has realized that the issues of women's low and subordinate status are some of the major causes of poverty in the country. The Uganda National Development Plan (UNDP) II points to the limited political and economic participation of women as a major factor contributing to the persistence of violence and discrimination against women, which, in turn, 'negatively impacts Uganda's development'. Such limited participation 'leads to the formulation and passing of policies and laws which do not protect women's rights' (International Federation for Human Rights, 2012).

From the perspective of the global and the national women's movements, the emphasis is on achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in leadership and decision-making since it provides a balanced development framework and more accurately reflects the composition of society; strengthens democracy and promotes proper functioning of systems and structures. In this sense, women's equal participation in governance and decision-making does not only equal a demand for justice but is also a necessary condition for gender equality and ensuring that the present institutional culture is deconstructed to take women's interests into account (Oywa, 2016).

The Global Leadership Forecast 2014-2015 concluded that 'gender diversity in the leadership pool means greater diversity of thought, which, in turn, leads to improved problem solving and greater business benefits'. In the same study, when researchers asked leaders what would help increase their effectiveness, they answered 'my organization needs to start creating more transparency, more attention to promoting women in leadership roles, and an atmosphere in which everyone has a chance to be a leader'

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Gender affirmative action has provided a platform for women representatives to occupy positions of decision-making which they would otherwise not have owing to the pre-existing patriarchal norms that define the political space. However, it is important not to be content with the progress made because it emphasizes numerical political participation and ignores the innate plight of women trying to break the political barriers, as well as issues such as election violence, marginalization and harassment. It is important to operationalize affirmative action alongside other options to comprehensively nudge women to participate actively in politics while also encouraging the creation of an environment that accepts women as viable contenders for political power. There is an ardent need to explore options beyond the quotas statutorily set by the government in political affirmative action.

Quotas are not a solution for every country, nor are they guaranteed to increase women's meaningful and effective participation in governance. However, a diversity of measures creates a wide array of solutions and the engagement of a variety of actors, which can be pursued to enhance women's formal political representation.

1. Uganda should strive to achieve gender parity at national level decision-making, i.e. in the legislature and in each district with only two representatives, of either sex. This is because, despite the special constituency of woman district representative, women still must contend with men in the pre-existing direct seats even when a level playing field has not yet been achieved. This argument has been fronted by several women political actors and groups but has received a lot of pushback from the gatekeepers. Despite being a radical solution, it is a viable one that ought to be embraced to even out political power between men and women. Uganda can transition to the parliamentary system of government as opposed to the presidential system of government that Uganda currently practices. Such a system cuts down on the powers of the president and can be leveraged to incorporate more women using the alternate lists that are age-, gender- and ethnically-sensitive (Mpiima, 2017). Alternatively, the political positions can be held on a rotation basis by gender. This would warrant the abolition of affirmative action in politics as we know it.
2. It is not the lack of laws in Uganda but the blatant disregard of the rule of law by both those in power and those who give the power. There is eminent need to strengthen the electoral laws against electoral violence, with specific attention being paid to the peculiar challenges that women encounter when running for and/or holding political office. The range of laws should include provisions against physical, sexual and psychological harm or suffering, with the intention of spurring women's political participation within political parties, across political parties, at the level of the state, as well as within a woman's own family. Election violence is not meted out solely to women; however, it is hard to ignore the fact that a lot of the violence during elections is gendered. Bolivia passed a groundbreaking law against harassment and political violence against women in 2012 (Krook & Norris, 2014) and, unsurprisingly, it is one of the two countries that have surpassed the halfway mark at 63% of women representation in Parliament (Madanda, 2017). Candidates and all political parties must commit to having violence-free elections perpetrated through language and actions.

3. Campaign financing for women leaders goes a long way in encouraging political participation. Women have previously refrained from actively participating in the political process owing to the prohibitive cost of running for elective office. Women MPs generally have a bigger constituency (close to 15-20 sub-counties) than those vying for the general constituency seat (1-5 sub-counties) and, therefore, must spend colossal sums of money during a campaign. This notwithstanding, there was an increase in the nomination fee to 3,000,000 Uganda shillings, up from 200,000 Uganda shillings, for MPs ahead of the 2016 general elections. This affected several women, who are more likely than their male counterparts to raise that amount of money as women dominate the extreme poverty demographic.
4. Political parties can be a medium through which women's political equality can be concretized. In countries where parties are publicly funded, regulating how these funds are used can be an effective way of promoting women's participation. Here, parties risk losing a share of funding if they do not nominate a certain percentage of female candidates (Childs, 2013). In addition, a review of the Political Parties and Organisations Act should be pushed for to include provisions that mandatorily require political parties to financially support women political candidates using funds advanced to political parties from the consolidated fund.
5. Civic education focused on the role and importance of women's equal participation in political campaigns and its implications for Uganda's progress must be strengthened by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC), the Electoral Commission, the media and various civil society organisations (CSOs) that work towards reducing the gender gap in women's participation in politics and public life. This calls for the provision of increased resources by the government and donors to all stakeholders, especially women and men-headed organisations focused on gender and women's rights (The Women's Democracy Group, 2016).
6. Networks of support for female candidates can significantly strengthen the effectiveness of quotas. Emphasis ought to be put on the capacity-building toolkit for women leaders starting from lower levels, such as student leaders. During the constitution-making process of 1995, the women's caucus played a vital role in supporting female legislators and recorded high success rates from lobbying.
7. The media should strive to increase female voices as a source of information, according to the findings of a report by Uganda Media Women's Association (UMWA). Out of the 2,624 election-related stories published between December 2015 and February 2016, women featured as news subjects in only 20 % of the stories while men dominated, taking up the remaining 80%. In addition, coverage of women and men followed the pattern of gender roles in society, with women being preponderant in areas associated with motherhood and caregiving while men were overwhelmingly represented in high-status occupations and positions of power (Uganda Media Women's Association, 2016). Elections can provide the best possible opportunity to ensure that women's voices are heard, their concerns are addressed, and their potential contributions to peace and democracy are maximized.



8. The Electoral Commission and the Uganda Police Force (UPF) should continue to build public confidence in the institutions to increase public access to information and usage for filing complaints and resolution through established structures. In addition, cases reported to the police and the Electoral Commission on election-related matters should be fast-tracked. The police and other stakeholders should provide a conducive environment for women's participation in politics, particularly those who support the opposition.
  
9. Civil society organisations and the media should continue to interrogate candidates' campaign messages and educate citizens on the feasibility of their promises to enhance accountability prior to and after elections. Civil society can also work with women leaders across the political chain – those who aspire, those nominated and those standing for political office.

It is important to note that while these alternatives constitute a crucial mechanism for jump-starting progress of women's political participation, they do not exhaust the list of options available for recasting the political recruitment process to motivate more women to consider a political career, encourage political parties to select more female candidates, or enhance women's prospects for electoral success.

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