
Women and Elections in Uganda: Challenges and Opportunities for Gender Equality and Development

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Abstract

Elections, as one of the pillars of democracy, over the years have demonstrated practically the possibility to usher in good, responsible and accountable leadership in some countries in Africa. They have also demonstrated equality between men and women through political participation on the basis of one adult citizen, one vote.

This article examines women political participation in Uganda; the challenges they face and opportunities available to them in Uganda's electoral processes. This is important in finding out appropriate policies, legislations and action to enhance the level of women's participation in politics, within and beyond their political parties for equality and development.

Introduction

Political participation matters a great deal for women as a group and as individuals. Whether women work together to protest gender-based injustices or participate in non-gender-specific associations and struggles, the most important group benefit from political participation is their influence on decision-making to make public policies sensitive to the needs of the group in question. For groups, participation also builds social trust and capital, and provides a form of democratic apprenticeship. It also offers socialisation in the norms of reciprocity and cooperation, the capacity to gain broader perspectives on particular problems in order to develop a sense of the common good.

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For individuals, political participation builds civic skills, while successful lobbying can result in improvements in personal welfare and status. Explanations for the very slow progress women have made in gaining political office in Uganda have been multi-causal, including their lack of time for politics due to their domestic obligations; their lack of socialisation for politics, their lower social capital and weaker asset base than men owing to discrimination in schools and in the market; their under-representation in the jobs that favor political careers; their marginalisation within male-dominated parties; as well as their inability to overcome male and incumbent biases in certain types of electoral systems.

Women's political participation in a broader perspective

Worldwide, it is reported that over 95percent of the countries have granted women democratic rights to vote and to be voted (www.ideanet.com). In England it was through the war between the feudalists and capitalists that a continuous organised campaign of forty-eight years (1866-1914) that resulted in women's enfranchisement was born (Pateman 1989). In the United States, suffrage movements were led by upper and middle-class women which produced a reformist rather than a radical social agenda that led to the nineteenth equal rights amendment in the constitution. The right of women to vote and participate in political parties was eventually granted in 1920 (Louise 1990:151).

In Latin America, the wars of independence against Spain in the early nineteenth century to the guerrilla wars of the 1960s-1970s where women were active and joined political parties even before they had a right to vote (Jacquette 1994) led to women being granted the right to political participation. For example, Ecuador, a country known for its quasi-feudal social relations and not for its liberal democratic traditions, enfranchised women in 1929. Brazil, Uruguay and Cuba followed suit in the early 1930s; Peru and Mexico in the mid 1950s and Columbia in 1957 (Jacquette 1989). In France, elections existed since the 1789 French Revolution that was based on liberty, equality and fraternity (Odoobo 1999) and involved the institution

of representative, democratic forms of administration in political and economic spheres (Clegg 1971).

In the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) besides granting rights to inheritance, women were also granted rights to vote and to be elected in the years 1905-1920 (Osterberg and Hedman 1997). In both Germany and Italy, elections were started through the Unification process in which women gained franchise (Phillips 1993). Asian countries like India adopted constitutional amendments in 1993 that required that one-third of local council seats be reserved for women; hence Gandhi being elected the first woman president in the world. Similarly in Pakistan, the 2000 Devolution of Power Plan reserved 33 percent of local legislative seats for women (Dem-Group, 2001). However, there are other countries that still deny women the right to vote and to be voted as is reported in the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait (www.associatedpress.com).

In Africa, the demand for democratisation of countries, honest and efficient government and participation of the populace and women in particular have become a new phenomenon as Mc. Greal (1994:6) observes. As a result of democratisation, the nature of participation seems to be concerned with the increase in the number of women entering the public arena rather than issues that enhance their rights. The liberal forms of democracy re-introduced by this democratic wave narrowed the political space and assigned it to the privileged few leaving out the marginalised majority, most of whom are women (United Nations 1990). Electoral politics in Africa is different because of colonialism where women were not given the franchise. Anti-colonial movements demanded the contributions of everyone – women, children and youth, which, therefore became a passport for all of them to vote and to be voted for (Odoobo 1999). Even then the highly patriarchal colonialists ensured that they left power in the hands of men, which was enshrined in the constitutions that were imposed on the people.

As countries gained independence, multiparty politics set in as part of the colonial reform that sought to stabilise and contain the situation made fluid by widespread popular struggles (Mamdani

1995). However, some countries have reformed the electoral process to promote women's participation. For example, in Rwanda, women occupy 48.8 percent of seats in the local council. Gambia, Swaziland, Burundi, Zimbabwe, Peru, Lesotho reformed electoral processes to enhance women's political participation through legislated party quotas that required that at least one-third of the electoral candidates be women (International Parliamentary Statistics report 2007). However countries like Mali had registered the lowest percentages worldwide in enhancing women's participation (Bratton et al. 1999).

Historical background of women participation in elections in Uganda

Under colonial rule, Uganda was governed by a system of indirect rule that restricted women's social and economic autonomy. Cash crop production was male dominated and there was little space for women to engage in gainful cash crop production. Although the position of the Buganda kingdom was unique as what some have described as a 'sub-imperialist' agent of British colonial interests (Roberts, 1965), the colonial legal system and structure of colonial rule in Uganda were similar to those of all British colonies in Africa. Driven by their discursive denial of African historicity, colonial administrators understood Africans' actions as manifestations of static customs rather than historical agency. With such an understanding, they attempted to codify African 'traditions' within a legal mode of control. In so doing, they actively invented static traditions using information provided by their male informants (Terrence 1963).

Colonial officials reproduced the sexism of their own societies by identifying men with authority and thus disregarding the voices of women. As a result, the codification of customary law reflected the political and economic interests of men, who often benefited from the restriction of women's mobility and political participation. As Tamale (1999) notes, 'Women's relationship to men was greatly influenced by women's and men's relationship to capital.' As the colonial state and colonial trading companies encouraged the cultivation of cash crops such as coffee, tea, sugar and tobacco, they needed an unpaid

labour source to subsidise the cheap production of these crops. Pre-colonial patriarchy intersected with the sexist practices of colonial officials to define women's work as (unpaid) domestic chores while men monopolised the control of cash crops. Colonial officials and African men conspired to create customary laws that limited women's mobility and prevented their access to the benefits of the market economy. With this commercialisation, customary law defined men as the owners of land, leaving their female relatives without legal claim to their own homes. The pre-colonial practice of bride-wealth, whereby the groom's family transferred livestock or other items to the bride's family, was commercialised and transformed into bride price, leading to the commoditisation of women in marital relationships and making it difficult for them to leave abusive husbands (Okot 1953). Clinging to colonial ideas of 'traditional custom', cultural nationalists and some Western feminists, although ideologically opposed, agreed that African 'tradition' is incompatible with women's emancipation. Feminist Katherine Frank as quoted in (Tamale 1999) wrote that, 'In order to be free and fulfilled as a woman [an African woman] must renounce her African identity because of the inherent sexism of traditional African culture. Similarly, Miria Matembe notes that 'Some Ugandans, both men and women, argue that women's emancipation is a foreign idea that has been brought here by others' (quoted in Nakanyike 1996). Such views are based on a static view of culture rooted in customary law, which denies African women's historical and political agency. Supporters of this view disregard the sexist colonial political context in which 'custom' was codified.

In the period following Uganda's independence attained in 1962, political, social and economic dynamics started to manifest as citizens developed interest in the country's political future. However, prior to independence, elections were not much valued. Uganda was plunged into civil war barely a decade after independence in 1962, with the military takeover in 1971 and the subsequent depredations of the Amin regime. The country collapsed into tyranny, anarchy and civil war for over two decades. This meant that there was no chance for women to contest in both national and local elections. Attempts in

1980s under the Uganda people's congress (UPC) regime did not yield much in terms of effective women participation in elections. The UPC as a ruling party appointed few women in positions of leadership rather than encourage them to contest power through competitive elections.

When the National Resistance Movement (NRM) came to power in 1986, it was primarily a guerrilla movement with an army loyal to its leaders. Some scholars have claimed that it did not have structures to inherit, nor any 'formal internal structure for electing leaders or debating policies' (Goetz, 2002: 567). However, there are documents that show that in the liberated zones where the NRM/NRA operated, elections were conducted to allow women participation in resistance councils (peoples committees for political participation). Following the takeover, the NRM suspended political parties and established an alternative system of political competition known as the no-party system, which came to be called a 'Movement system'. Political parties were suspended because they were viewed as a source of division and a major contributor to the civil unrest (Kwesiga 2002). The no-party system, therefore, officially removed structured political participation through particular party procedures, replacing it with a system of individual merit that formally allows any person willing to stand for office to declare his or her candidature. The key elements of the no-party system in Uganda were thus electoral politics, individual merit contests and restrictions on party activities (Carbone, 2001: 12). Legally, this meant that every aspirant stands and was voted for on the basis of personal merit, and any use of political party, tribal, religious or sectarian affiliation in canvassing support could lead to the disqualification of a candidate (Furley and Katarikawe 1999: 11).

The Movement system evolved from Resistance Councils established in war zones to mobilise popular support against state repression. In these councils, there was a degree of people's participation in addressing local and community problems. The council system (which operated from the village level to the national legislature called the National Resistance Council had an element of inclusiveness in that for the first time, social groups such as women, youth and disabled citizens

had mandatory spaces in the electoral mechanism. With regard to women, the affirmative action policy was put in place to ensure that there would be a female representative to the national legislature from each district (hence the term district woman Member of Parliament).

Affirmative action for women in Ugandan 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. In formal terms, the two seats have quite different terminologies. 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. Election for the general constituency seat takes place by adult suffrage. Election of district women representatives, on the other hand, is by Electoral College. These electoral colleges comprise Local Council Executive and Women Council committees, as well as local government structures known as Local Councils. These are drawn from the village level, the parish level and the sub-county level.

The number of women holding affirmative action seats at national level, therefore, corresponds to the number of districts in the country. In 1996, there were 45 districts and hence 45 seats for women district representatives in parliament. By 2001, the number of districts had increased to 56, with an automatic increase of women's seats in the legislature. The impact of this kind of affirmative action in terms of the numbers of women in the electoral process is tremendous. It places at least 112 women equivalent to the number of districts in 2011 in the electoral contest. The number of women who run for the general constituency seats is also increasing. For instance, in the 1996 parliamentary race, the number of women contesting constituency seats totaled 26, with 8 winning. In 2001, 32 women ran for the constituency seats, with 13 winning (Tripp 2002: 8-9). A similar situation of more females in position of leadership is reflected in local governments at sub-county and district levels. These resistance

councils which were ushered in by the NRM (promoting popular democracy) have now been transformed into more conventional local government units referred to as Local Councils (after formulation of the 1995 Constitution and the 1997 Local Government Act and subsequently the LGA CAP 243) that encompassed all people through electing their representatives (Liberal democracy) through a system of decentralisation (Makara et al, 2007). The National Resistance Movement introduced elections in local councils (Makara et al, 2007), enhanced affirmative action through enabling laws in the 1995 Constitution and the enactment of the Local Government Act 1997 which provided for a third of local government political seats to be reserved for women to enable their active involvement (Tamale, 1999; Tripp, 2000; Goetz, 2002; Kwesiga, 1995). However, few women seemed to utilise that opportunity to engage in local council elections. In Uganda, women's political participation is manifested through their actively contesting for the reserved seats at the national level. At the local council level, there is a lot of reluctance to the extent that some seats remain vacant because there is no aspiring candidate and a lot is yet to be done to enhance their active involvement as candidates (Electoral Commission District Status Report, 2006).

The mandatory inclusion of women, as well as the general societal awareness that this has generated, have certainly changed the general picture of public politics in Uganda. However, women's location in the electoral process, both as voters and candidates, is still circumscribed, both by mechanisms in the public arena and dynamics at the private and family level.

Women and elections in Uganda

The policy of affirmative action instituted in 1989 by the NRM and the subsequent constitutional allocation of seats to women in parliament and local government (1995) has been a mixed blessing. While the resulting numerical presence of women in formal politics has been a major advance, there remain questions concerning the legitimacy and respectability of women as candidates, politicians and public office-holders.

Methodology for example, instances of experienced women district councillors withdrawing from parliamentary elections, for a number of reasons. It became clear during the 2001 elections that such contest citizen participation in local council elections in Uganda district. The study sample was 367 voters which was generated using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) cited in Anhalt (2005) formula. Sample size = $X^2 NP / (1 - X^2)$ where X = A constant value of 90/725 (resources). Moreover, in popular discourse a woman who contests a general seat is invariably and overly described as 'standing against a man' (rather than another candidate), and this makes the contest more burdensome.

The very nature of the affirmative action seat itself also presents problems. Because it is necessarily a contest between women, women in the same constituency find themselves pitted against their own friends and colleagues. Furthermore, according to the NGO Election Monitoring Group-Uganda (NEMGROUP-U), there are a number of procedural flaws in the process of electing women leaders: all members of the selected communities had equal opportunities of being included in the sample; the sub counties were stratified for the electoral colleges (which vote for women candidates) are of no according to counties while participating parishes/wards were equally stratified according to sub counties/divisions.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher. The time allocated for campaigning for women's seats is much shorter than that for mainstream constituency seats, and the display of registers for the former lasts only seven days compared to 21 days for the latter.

In Uganda, the level of political participation by women is relatively high, due to constitutional provisions for affirmative action. The

validity of the questionnaire was established after adopting corrections and modifications made representative by parliament, research and social sciences and applied statistics, by using an outcome from each local council to be reserved for women. Under this system, 70% of the inter-council coefficient validity average for the five years was 0.78 (above 0.60). According to Anhalt (2005) for any instrument Furthermore, out of 35 seats allocated for Special Interest Groups at least five must be held by women (DEMorgan, 2011).

As in 2006, there was one female candidate running for the reserved office (76.7%) to institute reliability tests and the total reliability was 0.72. The questionnaire was given a significant response in the number of items and the number of reserved seats by the researcher himself in

in Katsina, Kogi, Kwara, Lagos, Oyo, and Zambezi states. The study also examined the role of women candidates in a significant number of women's district constituencies and in four of the 112 districts NRM (the ruling party) candidates were subjected to a Spearman's correlation coefficient, a Spearman's zero-order correlation, Regression matrix, Frequency table, and Chi-Square test.

Results of the preliminary study indicated that a large number of registered women candidates have not been participating in local council elections. The fact that women constitute 30 percent of 8,789 of basic and sub-constituencies, 44.1 percent of 7,769 (for constituencies) constituencies, and 39.2 percent of 735,384 (for constituencies) constituencies participating in the practice of local elections in 2006, secondly, the two states have not yet had equal opportunities to participate in local council elections. Thirdly, voters of varying economic status have not been having equal opportunities to elect their representatives. Fourthly, voters of varying economic status have not been having equal opportunities to elect their representatives. Such as not being allowed to participate in local council elections where male candidates are allowed to participate. And, some voters are still being on different religious sects when electing their representatives in the same local council elections.

The study also indicated that the number of women candidates in the constituencies was very low. This was evident that many issues still hindered the total number of participations in local council elections.

One of the main reasons for this was that, across the political spectrum, political parties do not provide equal opportunities for women to take up leadership positions. Women's activities were approached from the magnitude of citizen participation in local council elections in the district. The five variables were approached from the same political position as MPs representing regular constituencies. Generally women candidates were low-key parliamentary contestants compared to their male counterparts. Very few women were able to campaign individually and instead participated in the campaign activities of male party members running for the non-affirmative seats in the constituency on constituencies in their district (DEM group 2011).

A quarter of Presiding officers and party agents were women and an Election Day just under half of polling assistants were women. Observers reported that women Returning officers (ROs) though few

in such positions around the country were considered professional and impartial. A common reason for less number perhaps was the fact that they tend to be less well educated than men and, therefore, fail to comply with the legal requirements for these positions.

Challenges to women's participation in Uganda's elections

Economic challenges

There is a link between economic status and women's participation. The gender gap in earning is registered world over with the women's average wage equal to 75 percent of men's average wage. This, according to the UNDP Report (1990), indicates the risk of poverty for women becomes higher, hindering their participation as they are preoccupied with making ends meet. Survival becomes their pre-occupation, leaving them with no time for activities like political participation (Mikkel 1997:428). In an UNCTAD study carried out in Uganda, as was the case with many developing countries in Africa, it was established that most female-headed households in the rural areas were the poorest of the poor. In 1995, it was further established that 54 percent of women were classified as economically inactive compared to 37 percent of men. This in one way hindered women's participation (*www.unctad report*).

Ssali and Atoo (2007) reveal that access to finances is a great challenge to women's participation in elections in Uganda. Money is required to finance campaigns and sometimes to buy voters (Kapampara 2002), which is the case with most elections in Uganda. It is also noted that many who attempt to stand as independents, having lost in their party primaries, cite limited funding from their parties which bar would-be contestants in the local council elections (UWONET 2007). Candidates contesting for the different posts have to pay a non-refundable nomination fee. Some potentially good leaders are prevented from standing because they cannot raise this fee (Electoral Commission Report 2008). However, the assumption that having access to finances automatically means one would be victorious in the elections, does not hold, especially in enlightened societies.

Social-cultural challenges

Culture (in particular male supremacy) still influences the Ugandan political setting. Women exclude themselves from participating in politics because of the oppressive culture which makes them to be convinced that politics and leadership are for men. Bonepath and Stoper (1988:11) identify women's gender roles as a challenge and argue that lack of political recognition of women's reproductive and labour roles make it difficult for them to campaign because they are busy washing dishes, dispensing cough syrups to children and cleaning the house. More so Mahatma Gandhi, in his writings was a believer in harmonising and equalising productive roles of men and women which were referred to as so called women's Jobs. Joshi: 1986) quotes Gandhi, 'More often than not, a woman's time is taken up, not only by the performance of essential domestic duties, but in catering for the egoistic pleasures of her remnant of barbarism. It is high time that our woman kind freed from this incubus.'

In Uganda, religion too hinders women participation in elections. Religion is featured as a hindrance where some newspaper headlines cannot be ignored, like, 'Tabliqs will not support Miria Obote', this implies that the responsibility of leadership goes only to men (*Daily Monitor*, 29 December 2005). It was reported that the Tabliq Muslim sect leader, Sheikh Suleiman Kakeeto, declared that Tabliq Muslims would not support the UPC presidential candidate, Mrs. Miria Obote, because she was female. Accordingly, they would not back any female candidate seeking political power because it contravened Islamic teachings. Supporting a woman to attain political power, therefore, is a breach of God's law. Such religious attachments, therefore, make women vulnerable to religious fundamentalism.

Culture and gender stereotyping in politics, coupled with lack of self-confidence and skills to operate in the public sphere, further hinder women's participation in Uganda. Appeals to change the culture are met by stereotypical people who claim that Africa is entitled to her cultural heritage; consequently women are subjected to various forms of human rights violation in the name of culture. In Uganda, culture and patriarchy are still deeply entrenched in many

societies; the achievements noted so far in women's participation are seen as a 'gift' from the National Resistance Movement government rather than a right, which undermines the respect they have earned in their own right to be elected to positions of leadership. Although it is under NRM regime where women have made strides, gender equality and women's empowerment should be treasured beyond a particular regime and political party.

Affirmative action is still a 'ceiling' rather than a stepping-stone, thereby constraining women's participation for directly elected seats. In many places, women are still perceived as subordinate to men. For instance, married women often find it difficult to find a constituency to compete in. If they contest in the constituency where they were born, they are told to go to the constituency where they are married. When they contest in their husbands' constituencies, they are told, 'You came here to marry not to rule.' Women candidates have to project an image of absolute devotion to their husbands and families and of being good wives, mothers to a degree not expected their male counterparts who engaged in electoral contests. In other words the electorate demand more from women , a disadvantage during elections.

Furthermore, in some parts in Uganda, some husbands prohibit their wives from participating in elections. Others coerce them into supporting candidates of their (husbands') choice. Those who go against their husbands' wishes are always threatened with separation. In other instances, those that are lucky to participate in the women council elections are prohibited by their husbands from taking part in local government council elections. Husbands tell their wives that their elections are over (women councils) so there is no need to vote or contest again in the local government councils (UWONET 1998).

Lack of support from fellow women due to cultural beliefs regarding the place of women in society is another hindrance. The so-called PHD - 'Pull Her Down' syndrome, a phenomenon which prevents women from supporting fellow women is prevalent in Ugandan politics. Victims of this tendency are mostly the highly educated, rich

women contestants. In a research by UWONET in Pallisa district in 2008, a woman voter was quoted as saying, 'Why should I vote for a woman who will not remember me after getting her wealth? I would rather vote for men who are in most cases generous with wealth.' Male candidates easily bribe voters, a practice very expensive to female contenders. Voters, therefore, resort to booing women contestants in an effort to intimidate them out of the race.

Low levels of literacy

The Uganda National Household survey 1999-2000 put the literacy rate for women at 51percent compared to 77percent for men; indicating that only 30percent of the Ugandan women can exercise control over decision-making as well as national policies. In relation to strategic decision-making, women constitute only 39 percent of the over 17,000 persons in prominent positions, showing 44 percent compared to the non-political one (12 percent) (MGLSD 2000).

Women's social status

In Uganda women are discriminated against based on their marital status - whether married, single, separated, divorced or widowed (Tamale 1999). Married women contestants are accused of neglecting their husbands and families, while those who are single are accused of being prostitutes (Tamale 1999). To her, women were considered as 'trespassers' in the political arena. Those outside their parent tribe are labeled as 'outsiders' and told to go back and represent areas where their husbands come from. The 'tribal ticket' is played more against women than men; even fellow women promote this kind of discrimination (Kawamara 1998). For example, a woman candidate in Kampala against whom a tribal ticket was played in the 2011 elections lamented her loss, saying, 'As women we do not belong to any tribe. Once one is married, you are expected to belong to your husband's tribe and yet your in-laws will never accept you wholeheartedly' (*Daily Monitor*, 29 March, 2011).

The media as a hindrance

The media at times does not adequately inform the public about the rights and roles of women in society and, if they do, the publications done are written in English, leaving the illiterate with no idea about what is going on. UWONET (2006) reported that the media did more of what it always did to women, less coverage, negotiations and trivialisation. The overall analysis of the media's performance, especially during the elections, is that it gives prominence to the male candidates (especially presidential). Media coverage for women in the elections is much less and when it occurs, it mainly looks out for weaknesses. It is noted that the media concentrate on personal attacks such as whether a woman is beautiful, married, divorced or otherwise (UWONET 2006).

Political challenges

There are limited numbers of women in politics. The fewer they are, the more difficult it becomes for them to push for women's issues. In a country like Uganda where the majority numbers of the leaders are male, lobbying becomes very difficult. Drude (1997), a political scientist, in an extensive research on women's participation quoted a respondent saying, 'Do not expect us to make much difference as long as we are only a few in politics. It takes a critical mass of women to make a fundamental change in politics.' Political instability, especially in the northern and Karamoja regions, affects elections especially the voters. It is difficult for voters to move freely to the polling centres to cast their vote (UWONET 2008).

Intimidation by security agencies

Though the 2006 and 2011 elections were relatively peaceful compared to the 2001 one where security agencies, including the army, were largely involved in perpetrating overt violence (UWONET, 2007), on the whole, the 2006 and 2011 elections witnessed a shift to more structural forms of violence. The involvement of security agencies in the electoral process created an environment characterised by fear and

uncertainty, which largely undermined the principles of transparency, free and fair electoral process. The Commonwealth Observer Group (2006) noted that, 'There was widespread use of intimidation and harassment tactics by the security forces and some armed NRM-O supporters against the opposition party executives, supporters and district representatives at national and district level. The security environment worsened as polling day approached. The air was filled with charges and counter-charges that had the effect of increasing the feeling of insecurity among the population.' Hence many women decided to stay at home than participate in the exercise as voters, for fear of violence and death. The 2011 general election however, showed a remarkable progress in terms of security,

Election management challenges

Inadequate voter education

A research by UWONET (2008) on the 2006 elections revealed that the Electoral Commission failed to fulfill its obligation to conduct civic and voter education in time. Another UWONET (2011) study acknowledged that civic education was generally inadequate during the February 2011 elections. People particularly from rural populations are principally left in the dark in terms of the transition and politicians only transmit information that favours them, like 'vote me'. Lack of information affects women more due to time constraints and other gender-related factors. For instance, during the February 2011 election in some areas, there was no civic education; the information that spread is that anyone going against the NRM party was going against the national interest. This rumour machine undermines voter turnout as some people fear being seen to be against the ruling party.

The move from electoral colleges to universal adult suffrage

Voices from women on elections show that Adult Suffrage discourages many would-be aspirants and favours incumbents. Considering the use of resources, multiparty politics has proved to be more expensive than the no-party campaigns before practiced in Uganda. Women

have to spend both during their party the primary elections and in the actual general elections. Given the large coverage of some districts (constituencies), the issue of finances for women campaigns is more crucial in multiparty politics. Missing names on the voters' register hinder participation of voters especially women. Creation of new polling stations from voters exceeding over 700 and merging those with less than 200 voters, (voters' names are posted to new polling stations than the previous ones where they originally registered as voters) affects women more than men. Gender roles prevent some women from checking their names during the display of the voters' register; they only turn up on polling day to find their names missing. A report by international observers revealed that election officers (presiding officers) deny possibly hundreds of thousands of registered voters, especially women, the right to vote because they are allegedly not on the voters' registers. For example, during the February 2011 elections, carrying a voter's card was not enough to be allowed to vote until your name was found on the register (Makara et al, 2011). Both domestic and international observers remarked that the significant number of names missing from the register affected the fairness of the elections, but they appeared to have regarded this as a problem of capacity rather than intent on the part of the Electoral Commission (EU, 2011; DEM Group, 2011).

The opportunities available for women to effectively participate in elections, for gender equality and development

A United Nations Report (2001) recommends institutional changes to establish gender equality in basic rights as the cornerstone of greater equality in political participation and voice. Similarly, policies and programmes that promote equality in education and access to information (including legal literacy) can strengthen women's urgency and their capacity to participate in the political arena and development.

Internationally and nationally, there are legal frameworks that provide opportunities for women to struggle for women's

empowerment gender equality and development. The legal framework CEDAW to which Uganda is a member through Article 7 (a) and (b) and the strategic objective (GI) of the Beijing platform of action are geared toward effective participation of women in politics. In Uganda, through the 1995 Constitution where Articles 32(1), 33(2), 22(3), 33(4), 33(5), 78 (1) (b) all of which encompass affirmative action seats for women provide opportunities for greater participation. More so the National Objectives and principles of state policy XV and VI in the constitution provides space for gender equality. The establishment of the equal opportunities commission and Act too provide hope for more women participation in politics. Similarly the The Local Government Act CAP 243 has the potential to strengthen women's participation in Local Government decision-making. The Electoral Commission Act 1997, which mandates the commission to organise elections and cater for women's quotas, the Political Parties and Organisations Act 2005, the Press and Journalists Act and the Electronic Media Act where stigmatisation of women that stand for political posts is prohibited. These legislations when implemented fully, hopefully should enhance women's active involvement in electoral politics, governance and development. Women's organisations like UWONET, in a bid to enhance women's participation, drafted the 2006 women's manifesto and tried to implement it with some other organisations. For instance FIDA, supported women financially to participate as candidates during the 2006 general elections (UWONET Report, 2007). This experience show that civil society organisations can play a crucial role in promoting women participation in electoral process, a practice many CSOs should emulate.

The involvement of CSOs in empowering women in Uganda has made women issues public issues which are mirrored from the household, workplace and community in general. The emergence of multiparty politics in Uganda has also opened space for women in the political arena where there are increasing levels of participation. The women therefore should take advantage of opened space under multi party dispensation to scale up their participation not only in electoral politics but in the governance and development of their country.

Conclusion

Conclusively, inaccessibility to education, food, shelter and self determination by women due to poverty, culture and other reasons, is a source of violation of their democratic rights to equally participate in elections in Uganda. In politics, women face repression because the dominant image of political actors in Uganda is male . Therefore the Government, CSOs and other stakeholders should deliberately support women's efforts in cultivating gender equality and women's empowerment that is critical for democratic governance and development. The national parliament should scrutinise the existing policies and legislations and remove such loopholes that undermine the efforts of those who work for fair contestation, inclusive participation and respect of civil liberties for all. More studies should be carried out in those countries where gender equality and women emancipation has reached acceptable levels. Such good practices when identified can be emulated and scaled up in Uganda's democratisation process and development.

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parish. All the previous Local Council Chairpersons were drawn from either the Anglican or the Catholic faiths, depending on how much a particular candidate appealed to the opposite audience during the campaigns. For instance, he argued, Kidompa and Munteme parishes were predominantly Catholic and so they often determined the subsequent chairperson during 1996 and 2002 local elections respectively. He pointed out that there was an alliance during 2006 elections between the Anglicans and the Catholic against the candidate who was aligned to the *Bisaka-cult*. The case of Ntungiro District, *Working*

The decision of the Anglican and the Catholic believers to cooperate during the 2006 local council elections seemed unthinkable, but it is easier to understand it from the religious factor. The same alliance arguably facilitated by the fact that the two religious sects at that point felt more threatened by the expanding political support of the *Bisaka-cult* candidate than them fighting separately. Nonetheless, the decision to cooperate between the two religious sects generated a lot of controversy. At one point, it was reported that there was a deep split at Munteme Catholic Church parish leadership which led to an internal conflict. Although there were some internal conflicts within the Church, the parish leadership according to the head of Caritas development organisation under Hoima Diocese, continued with its mission and supported the Anglican candidate who was more likely to lose to the one aligned to *Bisaka-cult*. In addition, that cooperation turned out to be less stable shortly after the 2006 local elections, making the Catholic followers to mobilise for their own Catholic candidate who emerged victor during the 2011 local council elections.

To sum up, respondents in Hoima District insisted that the religious factor played an essential role in winning voters during local council elections. Furthermore, they argued religion could not be characterised as anything that had emerged as a notable success during local elections in Hoima. To them, religion had emerged as one of the most outstanding factors in local councils and the majority of voters (53 percent) were still aligned to their religion. Moreover, winning a considerable stake of the votes in local council elections, religious leaders had been involved in voter mobilisation according to the study

respondents. The local officials in the district mainly the appointed
argued that the continuity of local governance in Hoima District
stood out as remarkable if one treated religion as a representation of a
considerable share in the voter's mind during local council elections.

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Justifications for low citizen participation in local council elections

and Hedman, (1997), 'Women in Political Struggle in Uganda', In Jill
Through the findings of the study, several reasons were reportedly
critical for low citizen participation during local council elections.

However, the researcher did not separate them basing on the rural-
urban divide; in fact thought to be weighting slightly low. The reasons
highlighted during the study were: (a) education, voter motivation
(councillors' conduct, selfish councillors and electoral process) and
voter intimidation (government-opposition relations, security forces
and patraparty relations).

Civic education Towards effective participation in the electoral process: A review of the Ugandan experience

According to the study, political parties along with other organisations
had a responsibility to mobilise and educate the people allowed to vote
concerning the embodiment of local council elections. The district
registers argued that political parties were required to make sure that
all eligible voters not only register with their relevant parties and the
electoral commission, but turned up at every local council election to
make their choice. Unfortunately, most political parties (65 percent)
reported that they were only five years (by the time of this study)
under a renewed strategy of multi-party democratic system and had
only mobilised little resources at their disposal to make a country wide
voter (or civic) education. Other respondents (35 percent) argued that
the ruling party was using state resources to intimidate the opposition
even when in some cases, they pledged to conduct civic education.
This impression was described by respondents, especially those from
opposition parties, as a demotivation in the direction of civic education
whose consequences indicated that voters never participated during
local council elections. The factor of civic education was in part
responsible for the low voter turnouts during local council elections.

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