8

Gender and Developmental States: Botswana and Uganda

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This chapter asks the crucial question: are the benefits of developmental states gendered? Is there more gender equality, are women more able to access political and economic opportunities and institutions, are relations between the sexes more tolerant and flexible in developmental states? These are the questions that this chapter seeks to address. Each case (Botswana and Uganda) is interesting in its own right. However, a comparison is equally important, as it offers a means of thinking about the different ways that economic development may play out in regard to gender. The comparison reminds us of the importance of contextualising our analysis, and of restraining tendencies to anticipate general patterns without paying sufficient attention to the impact of history, culture and other factors that impinge on attitudes and practices regarding gender.

Both Uganda and Botswana joined many other African states at the end of the first United Nations Decade for Women (1975–1985), when they formally declared the importance of seeking avenues for the full integration of women in the development process. The establishment of state-sponsored women's ministries, the promulgation of laws addressing gender equality, and the rise of civil society activism in pursuit of gender equality, occurred in both Uganda and Botswana. The differences and similarities between these two cases raise important questions about how to understand existing gender practices, with all their limitations, as well as how advocates for gender equality can best effect meaningful change. First, we turn to the case of Botswana.

Botswana

The key economic activities among pre-capitalist Batswana included hunting and gathering, arable agriculture and animal husbandry. Historical and anthropological accounts (Schapera and Comaroff 1991; Tlou and Campbell 1984; Shillington 1985) indicate that pre-colonial social organisation was characterised by the complementarity of women's and men's roles assigned through gender divisions of labour. However, patriarchal beliefs and practices maintained gender stratification; much of the gender inequality revolved around access to and control of resources and political power.

Certainly the institution of chieftainship was male-centred, with succession being passed down to male descendants within the leadership lineage of each group. Matrilineal succession (the claiming of chieftainship through chief's sisters or daughters) was practised only among a few non-Tswana groups such as the Mbukushu (Schapera 1994). The accounts of Isaac Schapera (1955, 1994) and Shillington (1984) note that political office and debates were primarily male domains. Men made overall decisions pertaining to the social and economic welfare of their communities, and oversaw the administration of customary law.

With the coming of British colonial rule in 1889 and new developments in social, political and economic organisation, pre-colonial and Western patriarchal gender-systems merged to produce new gender relations. Women's subordination was effectively institutionalised through their dependence on male cash income earners, discriminatory legal practices and their exclusion from political office.

From the 1870s men from the Southern regions of present-day Botswana were recruited to work in the South African mines in Kimberley, and later the Witwatersrand. This ever-increasing male out-migration had marked implications for the gender division of labour and subsistence agricultural production as women, children and the elderly were left with the responsibilities that had been assumed by men.

As Western influences increased, many traditional practices such as initiation and polygamy were abolished. Consensual relations outside marriage began to lead to the emergence of the single mother family form that is prominent in contemporary Botswana society. At the same time, married women with limited subsistence opportunities relied on remittances from migrant husbands. Isaac Schapera described the situation of women in early to mid-20th century Botswana as follows:

> In tribal law women are treated as perpetual minors, being subject for life to the authority of male guardians; they are also excluded from political assemblies, and although a few have [recently] acted as regents during the minority of a chief, all political offices are normally confined to men (Schapera 1955: 37).

Some customary practices, such as among the Kgatla, permitted women to be allocated and inherit arable land in their own right, however, the productivity of such land was determined by the availability of capital and labour both of which women had limited access to. Among the Ngwaketse, women held temporary regency for their minor male children, however their occupation had no impact on the overall participation of women in political life (Schapera 1955).

But it has to be said that more women benefited from missionary education. By 1946, records showed that a total of 20.5 percent of all females in the Bechuanaland Protectorate could either read or write the vernacular compared to 19.9 percent of all men. The corresponding figures for English were 10.1 percent of females compared to 8.1 percent of men (Schapera 1955: 18). These gender differences were largely attributed to the fact that girls had more access to village-based missionary schools in the villages while boys were required to be resident at the cattle posts for long periods of time.

Since attaining independence in 1966, the state has made great investments in social welfare services, particularly in the provision of education and health. While female access to education and health services has improved, their access to employment lags behind that of men. Botswana has made steady gains on increasing literacy rates, largely due to the goal of universal primary education, which stood at 92 percent in 2000 (Ministry of Finance 2003: 22). The following table indicates enrolment at Primary and Secondary levels from 1981 to 1995.

Enrolment at Primary and Secondary Levels 1981–1995

	1981	1991	1995
Primary			
Total	86.0	93.7	96.7
M	80.0	92.7	97.7
F	92.0	96.5	97.7
Junior Certificate			
Total	11.9	35.3	45.3
M	10.1	29.1	39.2
F	13.3	41.1	51.1
Senior Secondary			
Total	4.2	13.8	19.9
M	4.8	15.1	19.6
F	3.7	12.7	20.2

Source: Government of Botswana and UNDP (2000: 89-90).

While the goal of universal primary education has nearly been achieved, the provision of universal secondary school education lags behind. The above table points to the predominance of female enrolment at primary and junior secondary school levels. The proportion of females at senior secondary school level has increased exponentially due to measures taken by the Ministry of Education to enhance gender equality, such as challenging gender stereotyping in school curricula, and admitting teenage mothers re-entry to senior schools.

There are indications that women are making inroads into university education. It must be noted, however, that most of the females enrolled at university level tend to be in the education and humanities areas, while males dominate the science and technology fields. This has implications for women's employment opportunities within an increasingly technology-driven world.

The Botswana household income and expenditure survey of 1993/94 indicated that 50 percent of all female-headed households were either poor or very poor compared to 44 percent of male-headed households. Limited access to cash income (particularly unemployment) and higher income dependency ratios has been identified as a key cause of poverty – particularly among female-headed households (BIDPA 1997). Poverty among all households is increasingly being exacerbated by the deaths of breadwinners from AIDS.

While many gains have been made in the health sector, new challenges threaten progress, mostly due to the HIV and AIDS pandemic. The infant and under-five mortality increased between 1996 and 2000 from 38 to 57 per 1,000 and 48 to 75 per hundred. The overall life expectancy was reduced from 65.3 years in 1991 to 55.7 years in 2001. The national HIV and AIDS sentinel surveillance report of 2003 indicated the overall prevalence in the country was 37.4 percent. The highest age prevalence was among those aged 25–29 years and the HIV prevalence was higher among women—37.4 percent compared to 23.9 percent among men (National AIDS Coordinating Agency 2003: 62-63). Much of the literature on gender and HIV/AIDS in Botswana (e.g. Ditshwanelo and Datta, Khan and Alexander 1998; Preece 2001; Tlou, Rantona and Phaladze 2001) identify women's subordinate economic and cultural positions as mitigating against their ability to negotiate safe sex. This is further compounded by increases in incidents of sexual violence, particularly rape and incest (Department of Women's Affairs 1999; Maundeni 2001).

Women nurture Botswana's democracy as voters, but few make it into the corridors of power (Datta, Khan and Alexander 1998). Motsei Madisa (1991) attributed this situation to the lack of political education that identifies the structures of their subordination, and empowers them to challenge male dominance through political activity. From independence (1966) to the sixth election in 1989, Dr. Gaositwe Chiepe was the only female elected Member of Parliament, who also held several cabinet positions over the years. The number

of women MPs has steadily increased over the years. At the eve of the ninth general election (2004), the number of women MPs was 7 out of 44 (two were specially-elected). Of these, four held full cabinet positions, while one was an Assistant Minister. During the 2004 general elections, the number of women MPs was 6 out of 57 (two were specially elected). Of these, four held full cabinet positions, while one was an Assistant Minister. Only 74 women made up the 490 councillors (Botswana Press Agency, 2004). The proportion of women members of parliament (10 percent) falls far short of the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development of 1997 recommended that women occupy at least 30 percent of the positions in political and 1997 recommended that women occupy at least 30 percent of the positions in political and decision-making structures by the year 2005 (SARDC 1999)

State and civil society in Botswana

The establishment of the Women's Affairs Unit in 1981 was regarded by local women's rights activists and in the international arena as a sign of the political will by the government of Botswana towards the achievement of gender equality. Influences in the policy arena have progressed at a snail's pace as illustrated by the development and ultimate adoption of the Policy on Women and Development. While vast resources have been expended in promoting gender sensitisation, the political will on the part of the State could be best described as questionable. This comes at a time when civil society mobilisation is increasingly facing challenges of financial sustainability and internal transformation.

At its establishment, the Women's Affairs Unit had the broad mandate of integrating women in development. Broadly following the WID approach, the key means to achieving change in development policies and programmes lay in assessing the status of women through research, and sensitising the public and government ministries to the subordinate status of women in Botswana. This was facilitated through the Women's Development Planning and Advisory Committee (WODPLAC) which drew membership from all ministries, as well as representation from women's organisations. In its early years, the Women's Affairs Unit focused on the subordinate economic status of women, particularly with respect to their concentration in economic activities (such as subsistence agriculture and small businesses) that brought low financial returns. Other key areas that were addressed included women's subordinate status under the law, their limited access to education and health facilities. Much of the input in the initial seven years of the existence of the Women's Affairs Unit was at programme level until the drafting of the Policy on Women in Development in 1988. The overall objective of this policy was:

> To address [the] identified women in development issues in a comprehensive and holistic manner and in line with the planning principles of rapid economic

> growth, economic independence, sustained development and social justice… (Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs 1995: 3)

The policy spells out principles necessary to facilitate improvements in the status of Batswana women namely, that all policies of the government should recognise that women and men are guaranteed equality before the law, and that all policies of government should recognise women and men as equally important human resources for economic, social and political development. In addition the policy aims at the promotion of women's health, education and the elimination of poverty among women, particularly female-headed households (Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs 1995). Since the initial draft in 1988, the policy was returned for numerous amendments until its final approval by cabinet in July 1996. The government of Botswana and the UNDP also drew up the National Gender Programme in 1997, which aimed to shift focus from the 'women and development' to the 'gender and development' approach. This was to be achieved through institutional strengthening of the Department of Women's Affairs, as well as expediting gender mainstreaming across all government ministries and NGOs.

However, efforts at gender mainstreaming have had limited effect in Botswana. This is clearly illustrated in the national development planning process. National Development Plan No. 9 (2003/4–2008/09) displays little evidence of gender-sensitivity. Most sectoral chapters neither contain gender disaggregated data nor gendered analysis of development challenges and plans. The only direct mention of gender and development for the planning period appears on one page, containing a brief update of the international conventions that have been signed by the government of Botswana. Rather than providing some insight into progress (or challenges) with respect to gender mainstreaming, the section serves as an outline of plans and activities of the Department of Women's Affairs Section.[1]

While some achievements have been made towards the empowerment of women, much remains to be done. The experiences of the women's machinery point to the rhetorical stance of the state and political leadership towards the promotion and achievement of gender equality in Botswana. Gender activists and researchers (Datta, Alexander and Khan 1998) pointed to the delays in the adoption and implementation of the Policy on Women in Development as illustrating a lack of political will on the part of the government officials and politicians.

Having said that, one can discern a relatively close relationship between the state and civil society organisations with respect to gender issues. While much emphasis has been placed on the importance of women's organisations as partners in the achievement of development goals (Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs 1988; 1997), the close relationship between the two however often leads to over-reliance on state support, which may in turn limit the ability of NGOs to operate

from positions of autonomy. While women's organisations have played a major role in criticising government policies and programmes, the consistency of their advocacy has been hampered by limited access to resources and over-reliance on state resources, as well as organisational impediments.

The Botswana Council of Women (BCW) and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) are two of the oldest women's organisations in Botswana. Both are nationally-based organisations that were formed before independence. Much of the earlier work of these organisations revolved around facilitating education and training around women's domestic responsibilities as mothers, wives and other stereotypical roles. Mannathoko (1992: 74) has noted that the BCW serves 'as the forum through which the ruling party obtained political support from women' and the leadership of this organisation was comprised of the wives of ministers and prominent politicians.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s the area of women's legal rights gained a lot of prominence. This owed to the emergence of issues that gave rise to civil society groups such as Emang Basadi[2] and the Women in Law Southern Africa Research Project (WLSA).[3] Both of these organisations were instrumental in laying the foundation for the landmark amendment of the Citizenship Act of 1984. The judgement (1995) of the well-publicised test case *Attorney General vs. Unity Dow* afforded married female citizens of Botswana the opportunity to pass on their citizenship to their children just like their male counterparts.

Women's organisations such as Emang Basadi, WLSA, Women Against Rape and Metlhaetsile Women's Information Centre successfully lobbied for the amendment rape laws, broadening the definition of rape and increasing sentences. Despite this, the number of reported rape cases continues to rise. Women and girls do not get sufficient assistance and relief from the police and courts. In addition, the hidden nature of rape and other forms of violence in domestic settings hampers efforts to address this problem.

Most of the women's organisations have relied on funding from donor agencies to implement their activities (Government of Botswana and UNDP 1997). While Botswana's good democratic governance record provided the basis for financial support from international agencies in the past, many donor agencies ceased to provide funding citing Botswana's privileged status as a middle-income country as the basis of their actions. The dwindling of funding sources has had a negative impact on many organisations' ability to conduct programmes that include education and training, research, legal advocacy, political education and refuge for victims of domestic violence. Most organisations have had to scale down their activities substantially due to their inability to meet their running costs.

Re-conceptualising gender in Botswana

A number of challenges still exist in Botswana's quest to address gender issues. Gender issues continue to be viewed as 'women's issues' in Botswana. Currently, both government and civil organisations target their interventions at women, largely leaving men out of the equation. While there are ongoing debates internationally, that focus on the missing male in gender and development discourses, (Cornwall and White 2000; Chant 2000; Greig, Kimmel and Lang 2000; Morrell 2001), these are relatively new within the context of Botswana. Two areas that are prime examples of this marginalisation of men are in the fields of HIV/AIDS programmes and gender-based violence. Certainly, increasing rates of gender-based violence and the spread of HIV/AIDS are hampering development efforts. The rapid spread of HIV/AIDS in Botswana has generated a lot of research on sexual practices and behavioural change, but while much of this research rightly tries to take gender into consideration, the focus has tended to be on women as it is recognised that culturally-entrenched patriarchal practices prevent women from negotiating safe sexual practices. Yet, men, male sexuality and male gender identities have not been adequately addressed. Only a limited number of pilot studies have targeted men like the 'The Men, Sex and AIDS Pilot Study' (see Ministry of Health 1998).

Police statistics and research conducted by women's organisations point to an increase in the rate of male violence against women (Botswana Police Service 1999; Department of Women's Affairs 1999). Much of this violence can be attributed to cultural beliefs of domination, particularly with respect to sexual relationships. Violence is also a manifestation of uncertainty in gender roles and relations as rapid changes in educational status and profile of women are regarded as challenges to men's authority (Mookodi 2004).

Uganda

The National Resistance Movement (NRM) triumph in 1986 was a watershed for women in Uganda. Supportive government policies, a gender-sensitive constitution and encouragement for the women's movement have raised the status of women in the country and increased efforts towards attaining gender balance. For example, the level of women representation in Parliament has increased from 18.8 percent in 1996–2000 to 26 percent in 2001–2005. The ratio of primary school enrolment for girls/boys has gone up from 94.5:100 in 1992 to 99.3:100 in 2000. The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) has gone up to 0.598 for parliamentary representation, 0.428 for legislators and senior managers, 0.827 for professional and technical workers and 0.627 for economic participation. The GEM of 0.417 for 2001 has improved compared to GEM of 0.390 in 1996 (Uganda Human Development Report 2002, p.3). As in the above section on Botswana however, it is necessary to look at the context within which such achievements occurred.

Women and gender in pre-NRM Uganda

Women in Uganda before and during the colonial period were principally valued for their roles as mothers and producers within the household. A high fertility rate of 7.3 live births (Tripp and Kwesiga 2002), early marriage and multiple wives (seen as a marker of status for powerful men), reflected this attitude. This is not to say that the centrality of women's economic activity went unrecognised, only that this role was taken for granted and undervalued.

During the colonial period, men controlled most of the cash-based economy. Women who earned cash often handed it over to their husbands, and whereas men were generally paid in cash, women were usually paid in kind with items like salt, food or soap (World Bank 1993: 29). Women's exclusion from the cash economy had far-reaching repercussions as the value of both men and women to society tends to be measured in relation to their contribution to the monetised economy. The difference between women's and men's access to money, thus reinforced gender inequalities. A man who earned cash was highly regarded even if he could not buy food for his family, whereas a woman who was merely a subsistence producer was undervalued, even if she fed her family.

Furthermore, during the colonial and even post-colonial period, most women were regarded as having no place in politics. Those who managed to get involved were often the daughters of indigenous rulers. In Buganda for instance, the Queen *(Nabagereka)* and the Princess *(Omumbejja)* had considerable influence, but largely as relatives of powerful men (Tripp 2000).

Even after independence, customary law and practice reinforced discrimination against women, who were essentially regarded as minors, without adult legal status. Customary law defined women's and men's rights in matters such as divorce, inheritance, property rights, and the definition and compensation for adultery. Moreover, since women were not their husbands' automatic heirs, they did not have custody of their children. Uganda's divorce laws during the post-independence era for example, stipulated that if a woman committed adultery this was enough ground for divorce, whereas for the men, the law was silent. When a man died, customary laws about inheritance gave first priority to the children with little regard for the wife of the deceased. Clearly women were greatly disadvantaged.

Limited access to education and negative attitudes towards women's employment funnelled the few professional women into jobs in primary school teaching, nursing and secretarial work in the post-independence period (ACFODE 1988). Ugandan women were also not very active as far as fighting for their rights before and after independence. From the time of independence in 1962, women's organisations such as the Uganda Council of Women (UCW) and later the Uganda Association of Women's Organisation (UAWO) came under pressure from the ruling Uganda People's Congress (UPC) president, Milton Obote. While the Obote

government did little to address women's concerns, women were nevertheless expected to demonstrate their allegiance to the UPC government. After 1966, when Uganda became a one-party state, women's organisations operated within the context of political instability, suppression of party activities and banning of large meetings, which made it difficult to press for their demands. For the most part, members of women's organisations were reduced to the role of social hostesses at UPC functions.

The problems of an already weak Uganda women's movement were further compounded when Idi Amin came to power in 1971. He set about banning mini-skirts, wigs, perfumes and deodorants and embarked on clearing the streets of unmarried women, all of whom he regarded as 'prostitutes'. The army attacked women and violated women's rights on the pretext of maintaining law and order; rape was a frequent terror tactic. Amin suppressed all independent women's organisations and set up the National Council of Women (NCW).

The early constitutions paid no attention to women's emancipation and women's issues. This is not surprising as no women attended the London meeting that set up the first constitution in 1962. Later constitutions in 1966 and 1967 also ignored women's concerns. The latter was debated in parliament, but there was no woman parliamentarian at the time. At independence, the ratio of female to male members of parliament was 2:88 but by 1967 there were no women members of parliament. By 1980 there was still only one female member of parliament out of 143 members (Tripp 2000). Neither Obote nor Amin considered women central to the development process and education and employment opportunities focused on men, not women. In addition most Ugandans continued to see girls as sources of dowry, so their education received lower priority than boys as girls were married off at the first opportunity. Those few lucky enough to get a small bit of education were pushed to become teachers or nurses. The very few women in university were encouraged to study Arts. As such, the economic, political and legal conditions of women stagnated in the post-independence period.

Women and gender under the NRM

The coming to power of the NRM ushered in a new era for women in Uganda; the government believed in gender equality and women's emancipation. Women's concerns were high on the government's development agenda and a number of steps were taken to ensure gender mainstreaming in Uganda's socio-political fabric. Women had played a key role in the insurrection leading to the establishment of the NRM government, and managed, unlike in most post-liberation societies in Africa, to establish a women's movement in Uganda that has remained relatively autonomous from the government. Moreover, it has generally cut across religious and ethnic lines as well as political affiliations.

The NRM government encouraged women to mobilise and women's organisations flourished, including Action for Development (ACFODE), Forum

for Women in Democracy (FOWODE), Uganda Women's Network (UWONET), Uganda Women's Efforts to Save Orphans (UWESO), The National Council of Women (NCW), to mention but a few. Strong networking created a movement that has been able to cross class, regional and ethnic lines, bringing grassroots and elite women together in a powerful lobby. Carefully nurtured alliances abroad, as well as a commitment to local autonomy from the Ugandan state, enabled the women's movement in Uganda to expand its agenda. It soon became a political force in the country that challenged the status quo by lobbying and agitating for inclusion of women in political and economic matters.

The relative freedom of association accorded to NGOs in Uganda after the NRM came to power, including women's associations (in spite of pressures for co-optation), created a conducive environment for debating women's concerns in public and private fora. Women's groups seized on the NRM's rhetorical encouragement of women's mobilisation to justify their local battles over their right to participate in public affairs and used their numerical strength to lobby for women's interests, successfully pressuring many government policies to be more responsive to women's needs. Women's groups lobbied government and other bodies on delicate issues such as women's access to land and property, rape and defilement as well as female circumcision. A case in point is the involvement of various women's groups in the discussions that eventually led to the promulgation of the 1995 constitution. The involvement of women's groups in debates over the recently approved Land Bill is also noteworthy. Women's groups also successfully lobbied government to increase budget allocations for the 'Early Nutrition and Childhood Development Project' which has had improved the health of women and children in different parts of the country. Improving women's participation in the leadership of NGOs across the country has been an issue of great concern as well, and some progress has been made (Gariyo Zie 1994).

Donor funding from major development agencies, especially plentiful in the late 1980s and early nineties also strengthened the women's movement in Uganda. As in Botswana, the reduction in funds since the mid-1990s has undermined some of these advances. Most donor money remained in the capital, funding authentic as well as more questionable 'briefcase' NGOs. However, grassroots organisations have continued to thrive, as they rely mostly on local dues from members and income generating schemes.

Women's political representation and decision-making

One of the key elements contributing to the advancement of women in Uganda since 1986 has been their inclusion in politics, representation and decision making. While NRM leaders supported women's advancement, pressure from the women's movement made a difference as well. Soon after taking power, a group of women from the NCW paid a courtesy call on the President, Yoweri Museveni, and handed

him a memo requesting that women be represented in the government leadership. This marked the turning point for women's involvement in politics in Uganda (Tripp 2000). Indeed, several women scholars and activists in Uganda (Kwesiga 2000, Matembe 2000, and Tamale 1999) have argued that NRM government's openness both for encouraging the growth of women's movements and for bringing women into the political development process has played a key role in women's advancement since 1986.

The NRM developed a number of strategies to increase women's political participation. Seats for women in parliament were reserved to encourage women to enter political life and make them politically visible so that the electorate eventually would become accustomed to voting for women as leaders. In the 1989 elections for instance, women claimed 41 of all parliamentary seats (17 percent) and by 1996, 52 women (19 percent) held parliamentary seats with 39 of these being reserved seats. Gradually, the mandatory position for women representatives at all levels of governance encouraged women's political participation.

The success of this move to involve women in politics is reflected in the growth of women's decision-making roles at all levels of government. In 2001, they constituted 39 percent of the decision makers at both national and district level, with participation in the political arena reaching 44 percent. At local government level, women occupied 45 percent of the decision-making positions. In non-political service, the participation or involvement of women was highest in the judicial service. Although still lagging behind men, women's participation in decision-making reflects a dramatic improvement over the early 1980s and before.

It should be mentioned, however, that initially many women hesitated to enter politics despite the clear openings, because among other things, not many women were educated. Women also lacked the necessary resources to compete in mainstream constituencies and had to face widespread hostility in the general population towards women's participation in politics. The lack of exposure and techniques in public speaking also inhibited many women, especially rural women. Eventually, with government and non-governmental organisations' support for women's education, sensitisation and conscientisation, more and more women began to enter politics. Looking specifically at the cabinet level statistics, eight out of the seventy-five ministers in Museveni's earlier government (late 1986 to 1990) were women. Notable among these were Gertrude Njuba, Deputy Minister of Industry, Victoria Sekitoliko, Minister of Agriculture, and Betty Bigombe, Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Office. By 1995, women constituted 17 percent of all ministers, 21 percent of all permanent secretaries, 35 percent of all under secretaries and 16 percent of all district administrators (Tripp 2000)[4].

Evidently there has been some marked improvement in women's participation in the higher levels of decision-making.

Despite this progress however, women's involvement in Ugandan politics is still low compared to men, and in some cases it seems to be declining. For instance, whereas in 1999 there was a woman Vice President by 2003 both the President and Vice-President were male. The percentage of women in the cabinet has dropped precipitously, from 29 percent in 1999 to 18 percent in 2003. While the percentage in the legislature has increased, access to key positions of power has declined. By 2004, women constituted 8 percent of all ministers and 15 percent of all permanent secretaries (*The New Vision*, 8 March 2004). The resignation of Dr. Specioza Kazibwe, Uganda's first woman Vice-President, was viewed by many as an end of the era for women's political advancement in Uganda. The subsequent reshuffling of the cabinet and the removal of Miria Matembe, one of Uganda's most vocal women activists from the Ministry of Ethics and Integrity, allegedly because of differences of opinion with the President regarding Uganda's political reforms, is regarded as an ominous sign. This has dashed the hopes for high office of many elite women, and raises important questions about women and political power. These concerns are reinforced by the continuing tendency for women to gain representation through reserved seats rather than direct election. Men continue to dominate the legislature (81 percent in 1999 and 75 percent in 2003), with women more often gaining admission through reserved seats. In 2003, women constituted 25 percent of parliamentary representatives with 53 of these being reserved seats.

Many women have shifted their focus to local government, an area where their representation and participation rate is much higher. In 2000, at the district level, almost 45 percent of the nearly 14,000 councillors at various local government levels were women. This is over one-third of local council seats, making Uganda a leader worldwide in female representation at local level government (Tripp 2002).

In terms of the Judiciary, women are also playing an important role, although still not proportional to women's numbers in the population. The Supreme Court has 14 percent female judges and women hold 25 percent of all positions in the court of appeal, 26 percent in the High Court and represent 30 percent of Chief Magistrates.

Thus, many advances have been made in the political arena, but it should be mentioned that the policy of reserving seats for women has of late been a contentious issue. Many women and men argue that although it was necessary initially, a lot of advances have been made and the system should now be scrapped so that women compete directly with men. If this happens, the percentage of women in politics would perhaps decline, at least in the short run.

The Ministry of Women in Development

In order to consolidate government efforts to emancipate women and address gender inequalities, the NRM established a Ministry of Women in Development in 1988. The ministry was charged with the responsibility of ensuring that women's issues were integrated into all government policies and the development planning process. The ministry was later renamed the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Welfare in 2001, and given the responsibility of increasing awareness, knowledge and sensitivity among the population and government institutions nationwide about the need to redress prevailing gender inequalities and imbalances.

The Ministry has achieved a number of policy goals, most notably the National Gender Policy and the National Action Plan for the Advancement of Women. The National Gender Policy recognises gender relations as a development concept and regards gender equity as a development issue. The National Action Plan identifies four critical areas for women and girls: poverty, income generation and economic empowerment, reproductive health rights, legal instruments and decision-making and the girl child's education and the problem of violence against women and girls.

However as Aili Mari Trip (2000) argues in her book *Women and Politics in Uganda* 'the greatest hurdle to improving women's lives in Uganda is neither policy and laws nor the constitution – [important as they were/are]…it was, and still is the need to overcome patriarchal assumptions and practices'. This challenge has been a central pre-occupation of the Uganda Women's Movement.

Educational and economic opportunities

The NRM inherited a deeply skewed educational system that favoured boys and males. The government quickly set about addressing this problem as a means of promoting women's advancement. Universal Primary Education (UPE) increased the enrolment of girls in primary schools nationwide. Through affirmative action, admission points for women entering higher institutions of learning were lowered and set at 1.5 points below that of men. As a result, the percentage of females enrolled at Makerere University and other government institutions of higher learning throughout the country rose dramatically (Kwesiga 2000). In 1998 for instance the female enrolment at Makerere was 48 percent compare to a miserable 19 percent in 1987.

As women have attained more education, many have been able to move into good waged jobs. However, most women in Uganda work in agriculture and much of that work is unpaid family labour. Ugandan women entrepreneurs, market traders and cross-border traders are few and face a lot of challenges. Hostility to businesswomen, poor access to credit and increased competition due to neo-liberal policies have combined to limit women's opportunities in this sector. However, the government and NGOs have combined efforts to promote women's

entrepreneurship in Uganda. The National Women's Council (NCW), for example, is working with government to implement credit schemes and improve household incomes throughout the country (The *New Vision Daily*, 8 March 2004). Other NGOs, most notably the Uganda Women Entrepreneurs Association, are assisting aspiring businesswomen with skills training and information.

All in all therefore, favourable government policies together with a vibrant women's movement in the country have contributed towards the improvement of women's status and addressing of gender issues in Uganda, although a lot more still needs to be done. We now turn to look critically at the challenges still being faced.

A critical review of women's emancipation in Uganda

Despite the advances towards their empowerment, women still face many problems in Uganda. Elite women in Uganda have benefited the most and although the situation in the rural areas has improved, the majority of rural women are largely illiterate, isolated, and submissive, with their endeavours hardly recognised. According to UNDP's Human Development Report 1999, 70–80 percent of Ugandan women are engaged in agricultural work, but only 7 percent own the land they cultivate. Only 51 percent of them can read and write compared to 74 percent of the men. The same report notes that rural women not only perform most domestic work, they also grow, harvest and store most of the food. Many are becoming heads of households. All of these tasks depend largely on female unpaid labour and yet women are rarely included in major decisions, especially regarding disposal of the products of their labour and/or property that their labour has improved.

The 1995 constitution did go a long way in removing the discriminatory tendencies enshrined in Uganda's 1967 constitution. Yet, while the constitution states that all persons are equal under the law, some patriarchal bias continues to exist. For example, the government has not redressed the 1967 laws stating that a person born outside Uganda could only became Ugandan if his or her father was a Ugandan citizen, with no mention of the mother whatsoever. Also a foreign woman married to a Ugandan man can register as a Ugandan where as a foreign man married to a Ugandan woman cannot. The bill of rights of women in the constitution is largely unoperationalised. The domestic relations bill, the family land rights proposal about co-ownership of land by spouses and the law against gender-based violence, have been largely ignored by the executive. Indeed, the biggest roadblocks to having these laws in place and fully functional have been erected by the highest offices and at times parliament itself. Demands by women organisations to have these laws enacted have been greeted with cynicism and despite the limited gains for women, men are increasingly arguing that the women have had enough. This negative backlash against women is making matters worse.

Indeed, some women have given in rather than face male hostility—such as the Bagisu women who have reluctantly returned to female circumcision because those who refused the practice have been having difficulties finding a husband (*New Vision Daily*, 6 March 2003).

Moreover, the bureaucratic institutions that were meant to liberate Ugandan women have suffered from many of the problems experienced by similar institutions around the continent. The state is still largely a male-dominated affair. Thus it is not surprising that the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development's share of the total Government of Uganda Budget was 0.2 percent in 1998/1999, 0.4 percent in 1999/2000 and 0.5 percent in 2000/2001 (*New Vision*, 11 June 2003). This impoverishment has hampered the bureaucracies and programmes designed to improve the condition of Ugandan women, and undermined lobbying efforts. The National Gender Policy and National Action Plan for Women exist mainly on paper. The gap between policy and practice is particularly disturbing because there has been some backlash against women, who are seen as having received more than their share of help from the government.

Furthermore, as we have seen, the percentage of women in the executive is gradually falling. While in 1999 appointments in the executive almost touched the 30 percent line – the number required in an institution to make a difference – the 2003 reshuffle sharply reduced the percentage of women in the executive and the cabinet.[5] Those few women who are in the cabinet occupy relatively lower status ministerial positions. Thus, even at this level, women are making very little progress and the women's movement in Uganda stands to lose some of the gains made over the years unless the tempo of empowering women increases.

Few Ugandan women, who are wage earners (professionals included), agricultural producers, or petty commodity producers, either live a life of joy and happiness or speak about the injustices that they face. They still tend to be enslaved to the male-construct of a 'woman's place' and the 'man is a boss' despite their education and employment. Those women who speak out about injustices against women are labelled as rebellious and unwomanly, frequently attached to Ugandan feminists like Miria Matembe, current Member of Parliament for Mbarara women and Former Minister of Ethics and Integrity, as well as Winnie Byanyima, Former the Member of Parliament for Mbarara Municipality. Matembe seems to have been mistrusted by men because she is 'too vocal' and does not conform to the female norm.

Thus, it seems that women in Uganda have been inserted into the development process without addressing the underlying issues that bedevil attempts to improve their lives and encourage gender equality. Many women, particularly poor rural women, continue to face severe difficulties like accessing education, adequate health facilities, credit, adequate incomes and political representation and

participation. Two major issues reveal the extent of on-going problems facing women, and these problems cross class and ethnic lines; violence against women and the threat of HIV/AIDS. Violence is often a domestic matter[6], involving arguments over male expectations such as food preparation, care of children and the house. However, quarrels and violence frequently arise over male 'rights' especially over obedience from women and sexual access. Women are targets for violence and this is partly due to their physical vulnerability (in relation to men), economic dependence and their responsibility that arises out of their roles as mothers.

Sexual relations are, of course, an increasingly contentious issue as many women decide celibacy is the best way to protect themselves from AIDS. This decision makes sense when one realizes that women in Uganda are considerably more susceptible to AIDS than men; the male to female ratio of AIDS cases in the 15 to 19 year age group is 1:5 (*New Vision Daily*, 8 March 2004). Also, women constitute over half of the 1.2 million HIV infected individuals in Uganda and a majority are infected through heterosexual transmission. Women have been the most hit by the HIV/AIDS epidemic because in most cases they have no say in the factors leading them to catch the disease. They for instance do not have the power to negotiate and insist on safe and responsible sex. It is also hard for a woman to demand fidelity from her partner or insist on condom use or even refuse sex if she knows that her partner is promiscuous. According to the Human Rights Watch report of 2001 entitled *Just Die Quietly: Domestic Violence and Women's Vulnerability to HIV in Uganda*, many women expressed a fear of violent repercussions, which impeded their access to HIV/AIDS information, HIV testing, and HIV/AIDS treatment and counselling. In addition, cultural practices like widow inheritance, genital mutilation, polygamy, wife sharing and wife replacement expose women and girls to HIV/AIDS. Sexual violence, domestic violence, abuse and exploitation in homes and areas of conflict like in Internally Displaced Peoples camps (IDPs), further increase women's vulnerability.

Conclusion

What do these two cases tell us about the conditions and opportunities of women and the possibilities for gender equality in 'developmental states' in Africa? At the level of policy, both Botswana and Uganda have demonstrated a varying commitment to improving the lives of women. Both have established women's ministries and bureaucracies to improve women's lives. Both have passed laws and policies supporting improvements in women's lives. Social services, especially education and basic health provision, have improved for women. Both countries have also been influenced by the demands of local women's associations though an important difference emerges here, as the women's groups in Botswana are more closely tied to the government than is the case in Uganda. Thus, women's groups in Botswana have not been as free to criticise and pressure the government

as similar groups in Uganda. This may explain women's lower political participation rates in Botswana as well as the state's open refusal to enforce decisions such as the Unity Dow case and its foot dragging over establishing gender policies and programmes, let alone enforcing them. The greater autonomy of Ugandan women's organisations, and the powerful elite women's lobby, has pushed the Ugandan government further both at the level of policy and action on the ground.

However, a number of issues continue to undermine efforts to improve women's lives and encourage gender equality in both Botswana and Uganda. Patriarchal assumptions and practices continue to hold sway in many arenas. While this is particularly true in the poorer regions of both countries, even educated men (and some women) are critical of the women's movement and the notion of gender equality. The issues of domestic violence and HIV/AIDs are also very crucial. A backlash against women is growing in both countries, inhibiting efforts to reduce violence against women, to address women's concerns about sexuality and AIDS and to improve women's access to education, employment, physical and emotional security. Both cases remind us that economic development is not in and of itself a panacea for women's problems, either in the South or the North. Both cases remind us that long-standing traditions of patriarchy and paternalism are difficult to change. Both cases raise questions about the central role of culture, notions of masculinity and assumptions about gender roles and relations in establishing and maintaining gender inequality. Clearly, a focus on economic development alone is not sufficient. A more truly gendered approach to policy and practice—one that takes history, culture and long-held attitudes about appropriate male and female behaviour seriously—will be required, before even the most successful developmental states in Africa can be truly developmental for both women and men.