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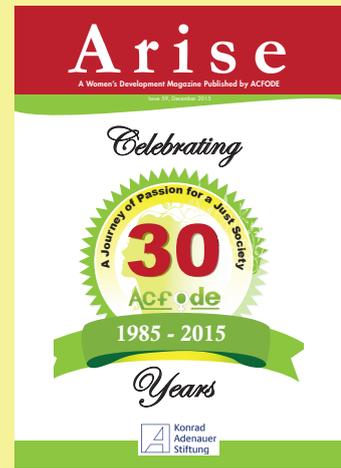
# Arise

A Women's Development Magazine Published by ACFODE



## POLITICS OF GENDER EQUALITY: The Role of Men and Boys in Promoting Women and Girls Rights





## Vision

A just society where gender equality is a reality

## Mission

To empower women and influence legislation and policy for gender equality in Uganda

## Core Purpose:

Advocacy for gender equality and equity

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Congratulations ACFODE on your 30th Anniversary! What you shared with readers in ISSUE 59 of the Arise Magazine reflected what I already know to be the excellent and quality of your work, as well as your care for women and development as whole. Many thanks to you for your continuing efforts and congratulations on thirty years of distinction! Here's to the next 30!

**Nanyunja Elizabeth  
Mukono**

As a proud and grateful member of ACFODE, I congratulate ACFODE on producing an exceptional magazine that celebrated her glorious legacy that continues to inspire many. ISSUE 59 shared an unbounded optimism about the organisation's continued impact and relevance in shaping and enriching the lives of countless women, in Uganda and beyond.

**Robert Kabale  
Sub County Chief, Luweero District Local Government/ Long time  
ACFODE Member**

Dear ACFODE, the Magazine was well received. On behalf of the Health Unit at Kisoro District Local Government, we extend our heartiest congratulations to your organization for 30 glorious years of success. You have always been on the top of the list for serving the community with your unselfish services.

**Nick Muneza  
District Surveillance Focal Person, Kisoro District**

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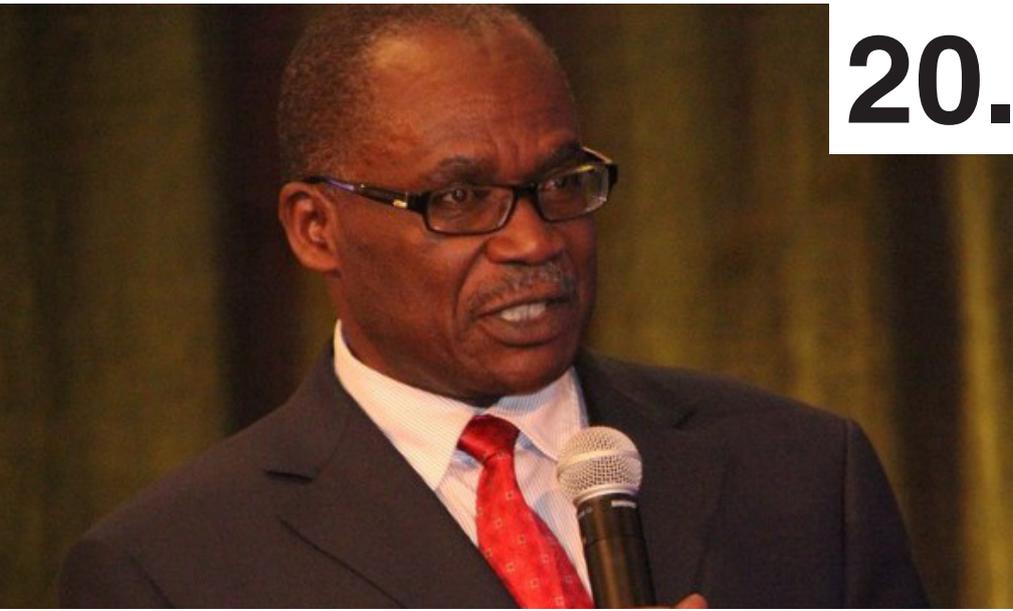
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# FROM THE EDITOR



## Dear Readers,

Welcome to Issue 60 of Arise magazine themed “Engaging Men and Boys in Promoting Women and Girls’ Rights”.

Today, it is widely recognised that improving women and girls’ status and advancing their rights yield benefits for the whole society. This is because women and girls are undeniably a valuable resource in the development and sustainability of a nation.

In Uganda, women and girls still do not have the same opportunities as men and boys. Society continues to turn a blind eye to the multitude of issues surrounding them, thus necessitating a redress. Some of these issues include early child marriage, land and property rights, education, maternal health and domestic violence, among others.

It is on the above grounds that women and girls should be highly appreciated and their needs put at the forefront. Indeed, it is high time society realised the political, social and economic contribution that women and girls make to the development of the nation and the world at large.

The emphasis of Issue 60 of Arise magazine is, therefore, to encourage men and boys to put a focus on women and girls. Not only does it look at uplifting women and girls’ status but also ensuring that their rights are observed and respected.

There is a broad scope of informative stories and experiences in this issue from men who have embraced gender equality and have zealously fought for it. Readers will be able to understand the current state of gender equality and the role of men and boys in guaranteeing its observance.

This particular issue, therefore shares the efforts in which men and boys have been involved towards supporting the human rights of women and girls in the various communities. It portrays how men and boys have been engaged as gender advocates to speak out as active agents and stakeholders who can transform social norms, behaviour and gender stereotypes that perpetuate discrimination, inequality and rights violation, especially against women and girls.

Achieving women and girls’ rights is about men and boys standing up to speak out and take action in support of their sisters, mothers, daughters and partners because silence and inaction by good men and boys only conspire against women. Thus, there is need to transform gender roles between male and female, to transform unequal power relations, and to challenge negative notions of masculinity.

It is time for men and boys to join forces and enhance their role in helping to achieve a more egalitarian society since they are equally strategic allies in the pursuit of gender equality. The result of this is a win for women, men and for our common humanity and society.

One cannot deny, therefore, that there is need to engage men and boys in the promotion of women and girls’ rights. Change is slowly taking place, and men and boys are increasingly working alongside women to support and empower women and girls.

Enjoy the magazine!



PHOTO CREDIT- EDWARD ECHWALU

# SITUATION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS' RIGHTS IN UGANDA

JOAN KABAYAMBI

*Gender bias against women arising from cultural and religious attitudes needs to be tackled by gender-parity promoting policies and legislation.*

**E**fforts to change the situation of women in Uganda focusing on narrowing the gender gap have made remarkable progress over the past 30 years. However, the situation of women and the gender gap in social, economic, health and political aspects remain dire and unacceptable.

Progress has, for instance, been made in enrolments at primary, secondary and tertiary education levels. Considerable progress has also been made in women's participation in leadership and politics.

Up to 40% of Members of Parliament (MPs) are women and, to a smaller extent, this is reflected at lower levels of leadership, in the private sector and in both public and private institutions. Very modest progress has been made in the area of economic



*The recently mooted Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Fund with an initial annual funding of US\$ 243b for women groups countrywide is a good initiative. Land and asset ownership and security should be guaranteed by legislation.*

annual funding of US\$ 243b for women groups countrywide is a good initiative. Land and asset ownership and security should be guaranteed by legislation.

Policy and legislation should be made to ensure that women benefit from their labour, particularly in agriculture.

To achieve the above, it is also important to recognise that women's contribution is an integral part of sustainable development, which is critical to ensure gender balance in decision-making at all levels, to share roles and proceeds in agriculture, and to ensure male involvement and active participation in agriculture.

Finally, it is crucial to strengthen women's asset security, visibility and influence on improving livelihoods. These efforts should open the way for rapid attainment of gender parity in Uganda.

Source: Internet

**The writer is a public health professional and women rights activist. She can be reached at: [joankabayambi@gmail.com](mailto:joankabayambi@gmail.com)**

According to the UN 2015 Gender Gap Report, which scored a combined index of economic, education, health and political aspects of gender-gap indicators, Uganda emerged number 58 out of 145 countries assessed.

The topmost countries (with the narrowest gender gaps or with the highest gender parity) were Iceland, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Ireland and Rwanda. The bottom six countries were Yemen, Pakistan, Syria, Chad, Iran and Jordan.

Rwanda scored better than the UK and the USA, both of them developed countries, whose scores stood at 18 and 28 respectively. This indicates that it is policy and not necessarily economic prosperity that determines gender parity in a country.

To accelerate progress towards gender parity, Uganda will have to adopt or catalyse a number of policy measures. Women's participation in leadership and in politics at all levels, but especially at higher levels, must be strongly promoted.

Gender bias against women arising from cultural and religious attitudes needs to be tackled by gender-parity promoting policies and legislation.

Investment has to be made in women's health and in reducing domestic workloads and risks. In particular, simple technologies need to be made available for increasing access to safe water and cooking-energy sources and to reduce the risks of 'smoky' kitchens.

Efforts should be made to increase women's economic independence through income-generating projects and supportive legislation.

The recently mooted Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Fund with an initial

emancipation.

Four main obstacles hinder rapid progress towards achieving gender parity in Uganda.

First, poor or non-existent maternal health services continue to cause high maternal morbidity and mortality.

Second, there is poor quality education, with a high dropout rate of especially girls in primary schools.

Three, there are cultural impediments to land, asset and property ownership and security for women.

And four, there are cultural attitudes and practices which have led to rampant gender-based violence.

On the global scene, Uganda is fairly well rated in the effort to reduce the gender gap.

# IS THE GENDER MOVEMENT STILL ALIVE?

ARISE REPORTER

**A**fter decades of gender mainstreaming and women's rights advocacy in both the public and private spheres, it would seem the gender movement has gone silent. Proponents of this argument state that many of the women who were influential and outspoken on gender and women's rights in the early years of the movement have since gone silent or taken up other careers. Would this be a fair assessment?

Proscovia Nakaye, Exchange Programme Officer, Isis-WICCE, says that gender advocacy is still alive. 'As activists, we have only changed the strategy of engagement. Instead of street demonstrations and radical strategies, we engage the people directly involved in policy-making. For instance, when we need to push for a policy at the national level we will go to the gender committee in Parliament.'

## Working behind the scenes

Sheila Muwanga, Deputy Executive Director of Programmes at the Foundation for Human Rights Initiatives (FHRI), agrees, adding that sometimes activists need to carry out

targeted advocacy and lobbying. This involves getting the attention, not of the general public, but of the individuals or key institutions relevant to the issues being raised. She calls this lobbying, which is a form of advocacy.

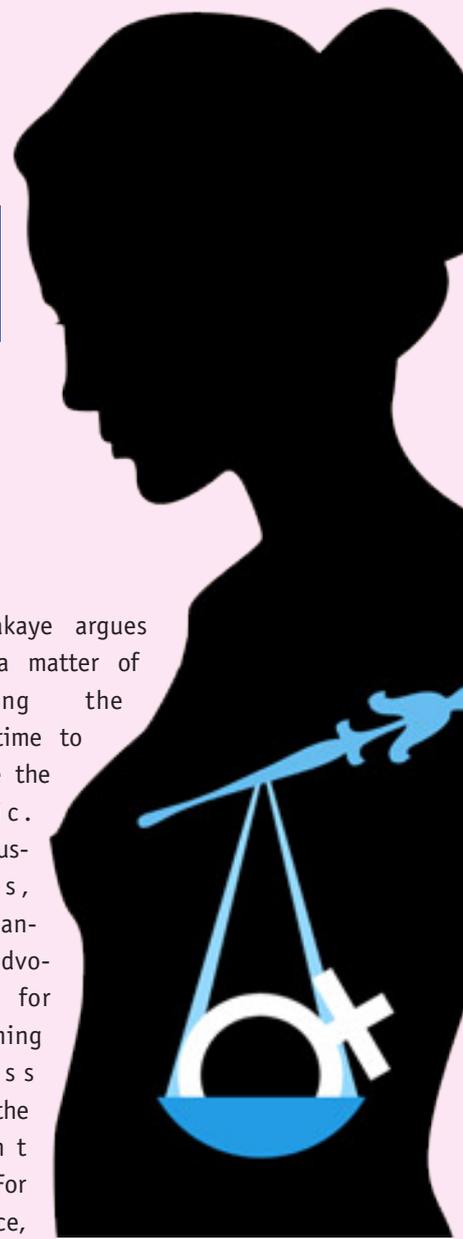
Ms Nakaye adds that gender and women rights advocates have discovered that radical strategies no longer work. 'We found that when we make noise, people become defensive, even when they do not understand the issues we are raising.'

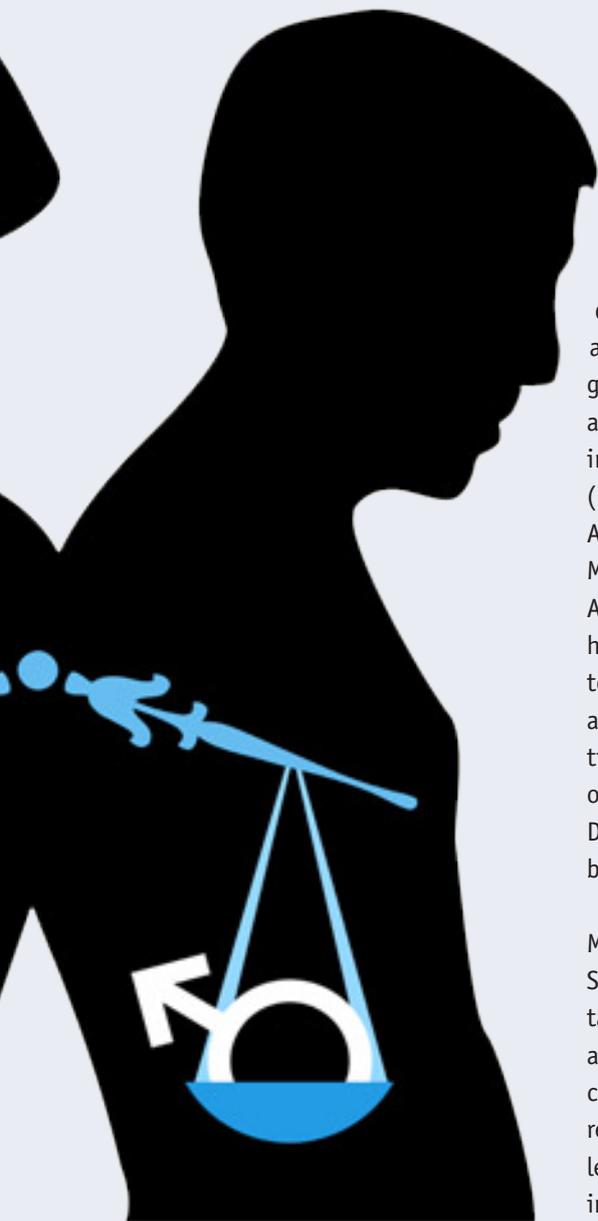
The activists additionally assert that women's organisations are doing a lot behind the scenes to advance the gender and women's rights agenda. 'Currently, we are working on the implementation and sensitisation of the different laws we advocated for, such as the Domestic Violence Act, and creating awareness in different communities about the international conventions government ratified that affect women. That may not be visible but it is good work. The women's movement is vibrant; maybe we are just now working behind the scenes,' shares one of them, who prefers anonymity.

Ms Nakaye argues it is a matter of choosing the right time to engage the public. She illustrates, 'you cannot advocate for something unless it is the right time. For instance, this is not the right time to advocate for the passing of the Marriage and Divorce Bill by the newly-elected MPs. We have to wait until it comes up to the floor of Parliament, for us to begin engaging the different MPs, parliamentary committees, and the public.'

## What progress has been made?

The women's movement has definitely registered significant progress in various fields. Take, for example, the political field where the current Speaker of the National Assembly is a woman. That is a position of influence. Other women have also held powerful positions in government. Examples include, among others, the Hon. Irene Muloni, who is Energy Minister, the Hon. Saida





es, which are currently required to meet the country's development needs.

It is further noted that the gender and women rights movement has advocated for the abolition of retrogressive socio-cultural practices that affect women. This includes the passing of the Domestic Violence Act (2009), the Trafficking in Persons Act, the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act 2010 and the Succession Act (2006). Women's organisations have also tremendously contributed to Uganda's policy and development agenda. A number of these organisations participated in the development of the first and the second National Development Plan (NDP), Uganda's blueprint for development.

Ms Nakaye reveals an interesting trend. She says that more rural women are taking a lot of interest in gender advocacy as compared to their urban counterparts and, as a result, many are reporting, for example, domestic violence as it occurs and are also engaged in economic activities to uplift themselves and their families.

Indeed, many women's organisations have taken the gender and women rights advocacy work to the grass-roots level. There, women and women's organisations are being trained to analyse budgets and monitor government programmes on education, health and governance, among others.

#### **Weaknesses in the movement**

Like any other people centred drive, there are weaknesses noted. There has been an argument that while the number of women in the political space has increased, their meaningful contribution is yet to be realised. 'At some point, it ceases to be about numbers and becomes more about driving the



*Indeed, many women's organisations have taken the gender and women rights advocacy work to the grass-roots level. There, women and women's organisations are being trained to analyse budgets and monitor government programmes on education, health and governance, among others.*

women's agenda.' This view is shared by Mukono municipality MP, the Hon. Betty Nambooze Bakireke. She argues that oftentimes women MPs and those holding significant positions in government have been compromised to serve the interests of their political parties but not the interests of the women or the country at large. She gives the example of the Marriage and Divorce Bill that failed to pass in Parliament and wonders why most women MPs did not support the bill that was intended to take care of the interests of women and their rights.

There are also complaints that competition among some gender and women's rights organisations may retard the progress or efforts towards comprehensively delivering for women and girls. Nevertheless, the gender movement is still alive and going from strength to strength. There are opportunities and momentum for growth. The Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda, for example, seek to advance justice and equality, and this will put the gender and women's movement at the fore of the development agenda.

Bbumba, who was a Minister of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, and Justice Irene Mulyagonja, who is the Inspector General of Government.

Because of gender advocacy, affirmative action in public universities and in political spaces was achieved. In every public university girls are offered a 1.5 point bonus and in politics every district has a woman representative in Parliament. This, in turn, has led to a rise in the number of women standing for public leadership positions.

Alfred Rwamirengo, Communications Manager, Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) says that more girls need to be given scholarships to study courses in oil and gas and other science cours-

# EXPERIENCES OF MALE GENDER EQUALITY ADVOCATES

BRIAN MUTEBI

*In the past decade, a virtual firestorm of controversy has erupted regarding the role of men in advocating for gender equality and women's rights. As community, political or religious leaders, they often control access to most resources. And as heads of state and government ministers, as leaders of religious and faith-based institutions, as judges, as heads of armies and other agencies of force, as village heads, or indeed as husbands and fathers, they often wield enormous power over many aspects of women's lives. It's therefore, important that they are involved in all initiatives that are geared towards making gender equality a reality.*

*On the one hand, it's exciting that people are paying attention to it. On the other hand, we also worry that if the controversy runs amok, it may confuse and thwart what would otherwise have been exciting opportunities for moving forward. We would hate to see this happen.*

*Being a male gender equality advocate – or any diversity advocate for that matter – can be a tricky business. But rather than scare folks off, we hope the voices below will inspire a desire to rise to the challenge. They are particularly relevant for men who want to take on this role but aren't sure how; other suggestions are relevant for anyone interested in working with, or encouraging, male advocates.*



**My childhood orientation inspired my passion for gender equality – Julius Mukunda, National Co-ordinator of Civil Society Budgetary Advocacy Group**

My passion for gender equality emanates from my family background. I grew up in a family of eight children and there was no single day I saw Dad or Mum differentiating our roles because one was a boy or girl. Duties were assigned based on age. The older children grazed cows, the younger ones calves. So I don't understand it when in some families cooking is for girls and fetching water for boys. For

us at home, if it was your turn to cook it did not matter whether you were a girl or boy. That kind of orientation taught me that we are all human beings, what I can do my sister can also do.

Outside our home, however, I saw a lot of discrimination and injustice in society. I remember, for instance, in Primary 5, a girl was married off and could not come back to school. I asked why and I was told her father wanted to save money he was spending in school fees. Such incidents inspired me to make a difference in the world. And fortunately for the last 15 years in my professional career, I

have worked with a number of women's rights organisations such as FOWODE and ACFODE, which did not only expose me to the causes and the consequences of gender inequality but empowered me with the tools to make a contribution in the promotion of gender and women's rights. I have done research, attended meetings and workshops both local and international, which have given me a wealth of experience. When you attend an international conference there are many things you learn. I have been involved in activities of building coalitions and management of campaigns. I have also worked with UN Women in Zimbabwe, Brazil, Philippines, Zambia, USA, among other countries, as an international consultant on gender budgeting.

Interestingly I have never been in a class that teaches gender. Nevertheless, I don't think you first need to study gender to champion the rights of women. It begins with you. It is a question of looking at human beings and their abilities, not at whether they are male or female. For me I felt there shouldn't be injustice in society. I didn't have to first go to school to understand that. I qualified in economics and my role is to see how economics relates to gender relationships. I look at numbers and see who is benefiting and who is not. I realised our resources allocation is not based on needs; otherwise our budgets should be engendered. That's why I promote gender budgeting.

There is progress in realising women's rights and gender equality. Uganda enacted the Domestic Violence Act, the Anti-Female Genital Mutilation Law, and Uganda is the first country in the world to issue certificates of gender equity, the policy that requires every sector to have policies and programmes compliant with the precepts of gender equality. Back then women's rights were not a priority. Today the orientation has changed. There was no gender budgeting, for example. It has since been adopted in government

programmes.

It's been lots of 'fights', however. Sometimes you can't understand why someone feels injustice is okay. You go to a meeting and people ask whether you are a woman because you have talked about gender and women's rights. Some people still don't want to hear the word 'gender'. But if you face a challenge and you know how to deal with it, it becomes a milestone. Men should be participants in this movement and appreciate that having gender equality is smart business and that women's rights are human rights issues so that if one is told FGM or domestic violence against women is bad, he understands it from a human rights perspective, not a cultural perspective.

The journey is not over, however. It's something we shall die doing because there are still challenges. We, for instance, have only 40% women representatives in the National Parliament and girls still drop out of school at tender ages. The journey is still long.

**Misconceptions of gender inspired my curiosity in gender studies – Amon Mwine, lecturer at Makerere University and PhD student at Stellenbosch University, South Africa**



I can't remember when exactly I started advocating for gender equality but it's been a revolution since 2001 when I was admitted to Makerere University for a BA Social Sciences programme. I was to study three subjects: Gender, Political Science and Social Administration.

Since Gender was a new subject at the university and because of the misconceptions that surrounded it, it wasn't a rosy ground to study. In the minds of many, gender was a subject for women and by women, inappropriate for men. For heaven's sake, they would say, why would a whole man study Gender, a course for women?

But rather than despair, I took a lot of interest in the subject. As we were being ridiculed as men studying gender, we had to make lots of explanations and those explanations gave us a lot of insight into what gender is and is not. It was the same situation back in my village of Rugando in Mbarara district. When I went for Semester One holiday, I was asked by an old man what I studied at the university. I told him Gender. You see, explaining gender in Runyankole is not easy so the man took my explanation for gender to mean studying women. He couldn't believe what I had told him. He asked, "you mean you go that far in the capital city and waste government money studying women?" He said that if I wanted to study women and who women are, I did not have to go to university but to him and he would tell me all about women.

It was clear gender was misconceived by all, both the rural illiterate persons and university students. But that pushed me to be more inquisitive about what gender is all about. In my second year I majored in gender, and at the end of my programme I got a first class degree. My first job, though, was an administrative job but my interest was in writing and doing research in the field of gender so I

resigned after two years.

I enrolled for a master's degree in gender and consequently was offered a non-remunerated position of research assistant. My master's degree thesis was on students' accommodation spaces and how they are gendered. That was another unique area of study but I wanted to explore unfamiliar angles. I am now a lecturer at Makerere University and a PhD student at Stellenbosch University, South Africa. I am investigating the role of men in Parliament in passing gender-sensitive bills.

I have experienced interesting scenarios about how people perceive the relations between man and woman. One was when my then girlfriend and I intended to procure a plot of land in Kampala. We wanted a lawyer to transfer the title to both of our names. He objected even if it was the two of us who called him for business. He called me aside and said, 'Are you really sure you want to include this girl's name on the title? What if you don't marry her?' We laboured to convince him, three times altogether, until we told him that those were the terms of his service; it was us employing him so it was not up to him but us to decide whose names should be on the title. I told him 'this is our business. If we marry, that land will be our property. If we don't, the way we called you is the same way we will call you back and say we want to dispose of this property.' He reluctantly accepted. We married and we have our home on that piece of land. It's a home that is proudly owned by two people. That incident, however, shows the perception people have about women and gender.

Yet that was not all. When my wife, Jovah, and I were getting married, we wanted our order of service not to read 'Amon weds Jovah' but 'The wedding of Amon and Jovah' because we thought neither of us was wedding the other but it was our wedding, both of us. We faced

resistance and it took a lot of explanations. We argued our case amongst our peers, church and finally it passed. But when the videographer was branding our wedding tapes, he wrote 'Amon weds Jovah'. We were not disappointed; it just points to what is in the society concerning gender.

The other milestone concerns the course on gender and masculinity we introduced at Makerere University. The guidelines stipulate that for a given course to be introduced it must have a minimum number of students. The course was first disapproved. People wondered why study about men, what don't we know about men? We started with 12 students. In the second year of its running we had 50 as students gained interest in the subject. Today we have 150 students. That shows the progress we are making. The future is bright. It means more people are going out of the university with knowledge. In the past we had a theme for the International Women's Day on bringing both men and women in advancing gender and women's rights. I think the stage has been set. Now we only need to be more innovative and strategic in our work.

### **I use scripture to preach gender equality – Monsignor Gerald Kalumba, Parish Priest of Christ the King Church, Kampala**

Though a lot has been done to promote gender equality, its ugly head still peeps every now and then. I, for instance, witnessed my mother domineered over by my father, how we boys domineered over our sisters, and this happens in very many other places. I have also witnessed how people misinterpret the scriptures to favour men. But as a leader in the Roman Catholic Church, I have played my role in promoting gender equality by preaching the equality of everybody. I emphasise

the fact that before God we are all equal. I think the biggest role men can play in promoting gender equality is appreciating each other, female and male. Men need to appreciate that being male or female does not in any way make one superior or inferior, a commander, an oppressor and oppressed. This is a big step in achieving gender equality.

Traditional perceptions of gender equality pose big challenges to the crusade for gender equality. Such perceptions are ingrained in the assumption that one sex inferior to the other. But it is also true that some men lack appropriate information on gender issues, so such men need information, for men have influence in society and some have money so they can use that to promote gender equality. Those in decision-making positions can make good laws and policies that empower women. This will help achieve gender equality.





**A gender-sensitive man is a happier man – Richard Sewakiryanga, Executive Director of Uganda NGO Forum**

Gender equality is not something I encountered as a job but it is a reality I lived since I was young. Our mother was a clear-headed woman who taught us to understand that men and women are not different from each other. That's what I grew up knowing, so much that after my undergraduate degree in Social Sciences at Makerere University, with a number of options for my master's degree, I offered to do one in Women and Gender Studies. That was in 1997. I considered my choice to be much more interesting as it would teach me something new. I was in a class of two men and thirteen women. I loved reading and found writings on feminist studies very insightful.

I have, since graduating from university worked in many places. I started as a Research Fellow at the Centre for Basic Research before working on a government programme on participatory poverty assessment. I then revised the National Gender Policy in the early 2000s before I got involved in gender budgeting work. Working on gender equality programmes has not always been smooth. There was resistance. People would always question why. Today I work with the Uganda NGO Forum. I am still a Fellow at the Centre for Basic Research and handle gender and a lot more other things.

What 20 years have taught me is that we become deceptive if we do not realise that men and women are equal. Societies are not made up of one sex, given the fact that the process of reproduction is by man and woman. Look at the concept of a family. It all begins at the family level. Families are relational. They are made up of children, mother and father, at a minimum, so it is very deceptive for society to imagine that women are valueless. The value of gender is rooted in

the fact that it is at the core of society's existence. There is no society without relationships and gender is about relationships. You cannot say I am a man (without a woman). You can only be a man in relation to another person, a woman. If people realised the importance of those relations, there would be no fighting but valuing and respect for each other. Fighting a woman means fighting a person you should be in a relationship with.

The first thing societies do is develop rules and then play the game. Rules are important as they help structure our lives. Sometimes as you play the game you may forget the rules but that doesn't mean the rules don't exist. Today we are concerned about how men and women should live but really why, when man and woman are the core of society? They are supposed to live together in harmony in the first place. We ask: Should there be marital rape, domestic violence and things like that? Should we be asking so? We're simply debating rules. We are debating these things not because they are the issues we should be debating but because we have broken the rules.

If you want to find comfort in your home, you need to be gender-sensitive. For instance, the men in polygamous marriages have more discomfort than those in monogamous marriages even though one may claim to be happy (in a polygamous marriage). Such men live under daily pressures from their wives, being pushed here and there. A happier man is a gender-sensitive man. Going forward, society needs to think about how men and women relate, not only men with women but also men and men, for there are men fighting men. In schools boys fight boys. It's abundantly clear that men can be a problem to themselves. It is high time we intentionally targeted men on issues of gender. There is need for such a solidarity movement.

### **Promoting human rights is a natural calling – Dr Livingstone Sewanyana, Executive Director, FHRI**

Dr Livingstone Sewanyana is the founder and Executive Director of the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI). He is a lawyer and human rights activist with over 20 years' experience in promoting the rights of vulnerable persons. He has vast experience in legal research and analysis; advocacy for policy reform; human rights, access to justice and rule of law issues. Sewanyana is a decorated human rights defender who has won several national and international human rights awards, including the prestigious European Union Human Rights Award.

He attributes his success to the passion, sacrifice, humility and dedication that he brings to his work. He says that the virtue of being tolerant is crucial to the promotion of human rights. 'We work in an environment where people have divergent views so you have got to be tolerant to succeed in working in such an environment,' he says. Working in partnership is another. 'I don't work alone but in partnerships, with others. At FHRI, we have worked in partnership with all actors in the field of human rights at local, national, regional and international levels. Right from the local community to the UN Human Rights Council you will find FHRI presence. We engage in constructive engagement with all stakeholders, particularly government.'

For Sewanyana, it is also about being visionary. 'I am a visionary person. You will find my fingerprints everywhere. I have had a hand in the founding of many organisations in Uganda, particularly human rights organisations. For instance, I am among the first pillars in ACFODE. I was there in the reign of the Hon. Miria Matembe. For me, promoting human rights is a natural calling, a

cause, a conviction I must pursue.'

FHRI takes a holistic approach to human rights and Sewanyana says it is because human rights are about the dignity of the individual, all individuals. 'Dignity is not exclusive of any gender,' he says, 'for inequality affects us all irrespective of whether you're a man or woman. So the issue is not about man or woman, but the individual, for equality and non-discrimination are as important to a man as they are to a woman or children.'

Sewanyana argues that promoting gender equality and human rights must be a natural process because the bulk of Uganda's population is comprised of women, so if one pursues justice and ignores the bulk of the population justice cannot be achieved. 'One would be naïve to think that one can deal with rights without addressing issues of gender equality and parity,' he remarks. 'For me, promoting gender equality is not a question but a settled matter. In fact, at FHRI we don't talk about equality but equal opportunities and justice for all.'

Sewanyana is a risk-taker and says that is what has made him break through barriers. 'The prisons or elections work we do involve risks but I am convinced it is a good cause so I am not deterred. I want to see something happen; I want to exploit and explore. I pursue something to its logical conclusion.' He also demands perfection from his team. 'Our work is serious business. It is not different from private business where excellence is demanded. It is the same here, only that we are non-profit. We are driven by the desire to see transformation and empowerment.'

**The writer is a Features Reporter with the Daily Monitor and a women rights activist. He can be reached at [brmutebi@gmail.com](mailto:brmutebi@gmail.com)**



# GENDER AT THE WORKPLACE: EQUALITY IN ROLES OR EQUALITY IN RIGHTS?

TUMUSIIME K. DEO

If the 1948 United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, and possibly the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, were to be implemented passionately to the letter, the question of gender equality would never arise. The former, in Article 1, stipulates that all human beings are born equal in dignity and rights; while the latter emphasises, in Articles 2 and 3, that every individual shall be entitled to the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms recognised in the charter. To this end, everything seems very good and on the right track.

Many African countries have moved the above aspirations and others a step further by having them domesticated in their constitutions. Unfortunately, there persists a disparity between what is provided by law and what happens in real life.

It is imperative to note that a number of organisations are by law required to formulate their respective constitutions prior to being allowed to operate – and sometimes these are in the form of human resource manuals. However, in this respect, in many organisations the gender provisions are but merely mentioned in the booklets and not much seems to reflect them in real life. The coming up of women's rights movements and, indeed, women's organisations could have been the right approach to furthering equality; but these organisations also have a tendency of employing only females, inadvertently causing inequality at the expense of males. The argument put out by such organisations is usually that males have for long taken the fatter jobs and now women have such an opportunity in their own organisations – which, unfortunately, only has us going round in circles on the issue of gender equality.

What I find rather interesting (or is it!) is that even in institutions that are not necessarily for women only, there is a growing tendency of women getting the jobs much more easily than their male counterparts. The difference, though, is that in many instances, the women are favoured squarely both for reasons to do with suitability for the job and, in cases where the employers are males, other non-job-related reasons may come into play. In both instances, the women are still justifiably seen to face discrepancies in pay and the work environment in comparison with their male counterparts.

While it is easier from a rights perspective to argue in favour of gender equality, many employers tend to struggle with balancing this with roles distribution from a gender perspective. In the course of their service, for example, women are likely to get

## Rights

pregnant, meaning they must take leave of at least three months and bear an additional seven or so months of interruptions, at least until the children are able to comfortably stay home on their own without causing worries. During this time, male employees' work life runs with little interruption and the employees are thus able to earn more from opportunities arising at the workplace.

I have also observed from experience that in some workplaces, especially in the non-governmental organisations, staff tend to earn more from field activities than from their monthly salary. It is quite tricky for most women to take part in these field activities, particularly those who are married and



with children to care for, as staying out of home for a long time may only work to strain families. In such situations, employers often leave it up to the women to decide whether to follow company schedules or forego their jobs, an issue that can sometimes be quite traumatising.

According to the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the global gender pay gap ranges from 3% to 51%, with a global average of 17%. The ITUC also noted the impact of the Great Recession between 2007 and

2010, during which men and women were affected differently. Men are said to have lost more jobs than women, but men experienced a much steadier recovery. One in five women are working part-time because they cannot find full-time work yet, prior to the recession, the proportion was less than one in ten women. This simply points to how gender disparities are quite unpredictable, often unintentionally skewed to disadvantage women – just because they are women!

Well, not in the short term or long term

or longest term, shall women and men be equal from a mathematical perspective. What is more feasible is that women and men should and must be entitled to equal rights – the right to education, the right to food, the right to play, the right to get employed, the right of speech, the right of association, and the right of recognition, among others. The situation should be akin to when it rains and when it shines. When it rains, it rains for us all, both male and female; and when it shines, it shines for us all, irrespective of sex. Similarly, both women and men should enjoy the world's opportunities in equal measure as long as one possesses the qualification it takes to perform a given responsibility. And in situations where our state of being, whether male or female, is of particular importance, measures must be put in place to ensure that nothing works to the disadvantage of any member of staff by virtue of their sex.

It is indefensible for an expectant mother to go on maternity leave with conflicted feelings due to the fear that she will be disadvantaged in one way



# PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE: FOUR ORGANISATION CASE EXAMPLES

## ARISE REPORTER

### INSTITUTE GENDER-FRIENDLY POLICIES AT WORKPLACES – GIDEON BADAGAWA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PRIVATE SECTOR FOUNDATION OF UGANDA (PSFU)

or another in comparison with her male counterparts. Instead, organisations should establish mechanisms to ensure that women's specific concerns do not work to their disadvantage, especially unavoidable situations like childbirth and child care. In fact, women should even be allowed one week in a month to take it easy during the time they experience their monthly periods. This is something only experienced by women, and male employers and colleagues may sometimes not understand or even appreciate women's mood changes during this period. The policy does not need to be explicit, but women deserve such privileges.

I believe that with increased education about these and other gender-related issues, we shall be able to make more headway in addressing an issue that has existed across generations. Each one of us has a responsibility to advocate for gender equality because someone affected out there could be your sister, daughter, mother or even brother, uncle or son – and soon it could be even you!

Female employees have a lot to deal with before they settle down at their workplaces. Some may be mothers and have to take care of their children in the morning before reporting to work. It could also be tending a sick child, which may, for instance, cause them to get to work late, which may directly affect their productivity. You have got to support them.

At PSFU, we have developed programmes with our 190 members, that include labour unions and the Federation of Uganda Employers, to address some of these concerns. We have, for example, established friendly socio-economic policies. Having day care services, for example, helps a lot. It saves mothers time of running back and forth between home and the workplace to breastfeed. This is what is happening in the banks and other corporate organisations and it is helping to retain female employees while boosting their productivity at work.

At the PSFU Secretariat, we have 60 employees of whom more than half are women. Many are young women of child-bearing age, meaning that we have to handle matters of maternity leave, among others, which have direct implications for the cost of labour and employee productivity. But as a manager, you plan with your employees. If maternity leave is close, you might want to reschedule and, for instance, bring forward some activities or transfer some activities to other departments. You ought to find a way around it, especially if you cannot have additional labour.

I should also note that some female employees are understanding employees who

want to excel at work and who may be willing to report back to work before their stipulated maternity leave period has elapsed. Others could put in two or three days of work a week during their maternity leave, especially if they had a normal birth. However, this is never forced but left entirely to the employee's discretion. It is not mandatory but voluntary.

**LET WOMEN OCCUPY POSITIONS OF INFLUENCE AND RESPONSIBILITY – CISSY KAGABA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ANTI-CORRUPTION COALITION OF UGANDA**

The biggest bottleneck to women being heard and men refusing to cooperate with women is culture. We have the policies but we have realities. We have the policies but we have culture. We have policies but we have religion. We need to bring on board cultural and religious leaders in order for them to understand these dynamics. We have to address the root cause through religious and cultural ambassadors in every corner of the nation who will help address the male ego so that men can treat women as equals and give them the respect they deserve in homes and at the marketplace.

A patriarchal mindset blinds some people to what women can do. In the local council meetings, for example, sometimes men do not listen to women yet some of them contribute sound ideas. Yet their male counterparts dis-

miss or ignore them because they still hold ancient and biased opinions about women.

Men can become allies of women by letting women occupy positions of influence and responsibility where they can excel. For example, a few years ago I worked with an organisation started by a man. In the first meeting I attended, I realised I was the only woman. All the other employees were men. I questioned the manner in which persons were recruited in the organisation. Gradually more women were employed. Sometimes women ought to be the first to fight gender disparity at the workplace and then get men to be their allies.

More should be done to actualise the gender-friendly policies that have been put in place by government. Employers must make a conscious effort to ensure that the men cooperate with and support their female counterparts. The reason why some men intimidate and sexually harass female employees is because they think they are superior and women are the weaker sex. There is need for sensitisation of men to treat women as equals.

There is also need for women's empowerment. At the Anti-Corruption Coalition of Uganda, we work with women at the grass roots; we give them skills to monitor service delivery, especially in the health and education sectors; we work with the Budget Monitoring Accountability Unit of the Ministry of Finance to acquire budgetary information on key sectors of the economy, which we relay to groups of women at the grass roots for them to share through barazas and use to monitor and demand commitments and accountability from their respective duty bearers.

The experience we have is that women can indeed excel, and I believe once men understand that, they will cooperate more with their female colleagues at the workplaces instead of viewing women who have risen up the corporate ladder as having given sexual favours to their bosses in exchange for promotions.

**GOOD LABOUR LAWS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE AT WORKPLACES – ATUKI TURNER, FOUNDER OF THE WOMEN'S RIGHTS ADVOCACY ORGANISATION, MIFUMI**

Discrimination against women is evident throughout the woman's lifetime exhibited in the kind of education she receives or is encouraged to pursue and ultimately the kind of job seen as fitting for her. And at the workplace, she will further be discriminated against for her need for maternity leave, which might hinder her possibility for promotion or a pay raise. The lack of flexibility in some employment industries makes it easier for men and harder for women. Some jobs may not be flexible enough to accommodate women during maternity or the woman will miss out on promotion and pay raises. These are some of the factors that perpetuate inequality in the workplace.

Uganda should adopt the tried-and-tested practices that value women as equal partners in the workplace while responding positively to their roles as mothers and caregivers. Women's

careers stall because of their motherhood roles. Maternity is the reason why women are not promoted or paid as highly as men. The motherhood role women play should be viewed as the parenting role of two people, not just one individual, the woman. There should be good policies to retain women's positions while on maternity leave.

When women ask for pay raises, they are regarded as asking for a favour and this has the risk of attracting sexual harassment; whereas when men ask for pay raises they are seen as requesting for an entitlement if not demanding a right. Therefore, pay scales linked to skills, experience and qualification should be made transparent in the workplace and applied equally to men and women.

It is also good practice to have crèches available for women in the workplace to enable them to breastfeed at work or keep children in day-care facilities. Where necessary, affirmative action should be applied to break the glass ceiling for women.

Finally, it is important to note that gender inequality begins at home and progresses through school and that by the time it gets to the workplace, myths and prejudices about women and their value are already dispelled in people's minds. So the fight for gender equality needs to start early, and in the homes.



## DEVELOP TALENT OF YOUR FEMALE EMPLOYEES – JOEL ORONI, MANAGING DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL CENTRES

At the International Medical Centres (IMCs) – 17 IMCs across the country – the majority of our staff are women and I have seen women who perform excellently at work. Women are often open to learning, are productive, loyal and have a comparatively higher degree of integrity, humility and patience. And when you employ young and fresh minds who do not have heavy family responsibilities, they perform well and their productivity is really high.

Women, however, have a downside. They have big responsibilities at home, running home and family affairs, which they tend to carry to the workplace. They have their work at heart just like they do their domestic affairs. Their moods also tend to change, especially during menstrual periods, which affect their concentration and work. The effect may even be greater where you have many women working together in a unit. Nevertheless, the women who have worked for a while know how to handle such situations. At the administrative level, we try to mix them with other employees so as to break the ties. For the breastfeeding mothers, their attention too tends to be divided between family, children and work, while the energy of the expectant mothers tends to wane towards the delivery date.

What we do at IMC and what every manager should do is reassure your female employees. Believe in them and trust their talents. We, for example, have

a culture of celebrating the women around us like on the International Women's Day. We give expectant mothers leave a month before delivery. Before that, as their pregnancy progresses, we put such women on shorter and flexible shifts. We, for example, avoid putting expectant mothers on night shifts. Then our hospital has a crèche so mothers can come with their children so they do not have to go back home to breastfeed. The hospital provides food for the children and employs attendants.

We give equal opportunities for all so men and women can compete favourably. The women who qualify are given positions of responsibility. You should not doubt their talent. You should not regard women as the weaker sex. That is for the managers. Colleagues who work with women can also do something to support them. It begins with respect for them and knowing that women can perform as effectively as men at the workplace. Respect involves respect for their sex, humanity and being. That helps avert things like sexual harassment. Women can also be supported in duties that require physical energy.



*Women, however, have a downside. They have big responsibilities at home, running home and family affairs, which they tend to carry to the workplace. They have their work at heart just like they do their domestic affairs.*

# FEATURE INTERVIEW WITH THE MINISTER OF GENDER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT – THE HON. WILSON MURULI MUKASA

HON. WILSON MURULI MUKASA IS A UGANDAN POLITICIAN. HE HAS BEEN MINISTER OF GENDER AND SOCIAL ISSUES IN THE CABINET OF UGANDA SINCE 1 MARCH 2015. PREVIOUSLY HE SERVED AS MINISTER OF SECURITY FROM 27 MAY 2011 UNTIL 1 MARCH 2015. MURULI MUKASA ALSO SERVES AS THE MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR BUDYEBO COUNTY, NAKASONGOLA DISTRICT. BRIAN MUTEBI, A REPORTER WITH THE ARISE MAGAZINE CAUGHT UP WITH HIM FOR AN INTERVIEW ON THE ROLE OF MEN AND BOYS IN PROMOTING WOMEN AND GIRLS' RIGHTS.

“MEN MUST  
CHALLENGE THE  
PATRIARCHAL  
THINKING THAT  
PERPETUATES  
GENDER  
INEQUALITY.”

”

**Q. Why is gender equality important in Uganda's context?**

**A.** Gender equality is not just an important issue but a necessity. It is a human rights issue. There are obvious economic advantages accruing from a society that observes gender equality. Take, for example, where there are equal opportunities for employment for both women and men, it is not only the individual persons who benefit but the community and the country as well.

Socially, you want to have people who feel secure, people who are partners in society, not a society where some people are superior to others. That breeds conflicts and misunderstandings, which erode away all the gains achieved in other spheres of life.

**Q. Is it important to involve men and boys in promoting gender equality? If so, why?**

**A.** It is important. We live in a patriarchal society where men control many aspects of life. It is crucial to realise that men cannot exist without women or live



in a society where one party (women) is inferior. We need that appreciation of the symbiotic nature of the relationship between man and woman. In any change that is meaningful, both men and women have got to take part. This world is for boys and girls, women and men. They both make the human race. You cannot have only half of that and you think you will have a full human race.

**Q. What role(s) can men and boys play in promoting gender equality?**

**A.** The first contribution men can make in promoting gender equality is the change of their mindset and attitude. There is need for a change in the patriarchal thinking modelled by culture where society assigns roles and responsibilities to a particular gender. While growing up, boys will probably be told to go and look after the goats in the fields while the girls are sent to the kitchen or to the bush to collect firewood. When the boys come back, they sit or chat with the father or go and play while the girl is till

busy with home chores. Society ought to understand that if a boy prepared a matooke meal it would be as good and delicious as when prepared by anyone else. The man should come out clearly and say if it is work, it is work regardless of whether it is in the kitchen or in the field. We need to see a situation where girls look after goats or the boy helps the mother in the kitchen. Men ought to know that a change in mindset is necessary and cautiously go for what that change requires, which is equal opportunities. When this happens, these distinctions between men and women will gradually become blurred.

The men in positions of influence can put in place mechanisms or institutions that support and propel gender equality. If one is a politician, for example, he can make good laws that recognise gender equality as a human right, and follow good principles such as affirmative action. He must make sure that there are functional institutions like local councils that settle disputes. He can ensure that gender becomes a cross-cutting issue in

the sector or programme where he works.

The ordinary man can do something too – a lot. He can go out of his way and assist his wife at home in all ways possible. He can go further by giving his children equal opportunities, say in school, by spending on the education of girls as much as he does on boys. Girls and boys must be brought up together, without discrimination. He can be an agent of change for gender equality by stopping domestic violence against women and treat his wife as a partner whom he consults on home affairs because her contribution is valuable. When it comes to property rights, why wouldn't a man give inheritance to his wife and daughters the same way he would with the boys? Give them property and put it in the will. I should say change is steadily taking course in this area. More girls today inherit their father's property. My grandfather, for example, made one of his young girls his heir. These are things a man can do so we can gradually realise gender equality.

**Q. In your opinion, is it true that men are better placed when it comes to promoting women's rights and gender equality?**

**A.** Yes. Take, for example, the elders or grandfathers in the home. They are better placed to change the cultural rules, for they hold influence in their cultural settings and are respected. And like I said, men in positions of influence – and men control many aspects of life – can put in place mechanisms or institutions that support and propel gender equality. The man in the home as a leader can pronounce himself and say if it is work, it is work regardless of who does it, male or female.

**Q. What are some of those challenges they are likely to face in their bid to promote equality?**

**A.** It won't be smooth. There will be ridicule and rejection. Some people will say this fellow was bewitched by his wife and that sort of thing. But it should be understood in the history of change, such is inevitable. I am, however, confident that if there is good advocacy, which brings a good critical mass, the ridicule will sooner rather than later cease. I will give you an example. I have a shaven head. Shaving hair in the past was a sign of grief and people would ask you what went wrong, they would ridicule you. Today shaving or plaiting hair is a lifestyle, it is fashionable. People have embraced it. It is why I am confident a time is coming, and it is not far, where gender equality will be a reality, where people are informed and dedicated to this cause, of course with the help of good policies and laws.

**Q. What is your assessment of the current situation of gender equality in the country?**

**A.** It is a lot better than it used to be 20 years ago. It is improving. Gradually

Uganda is embracing the change. There is a good government, legal and policy environment. Women are as important and capable people as men. In business, for example, we have powerful businesswomen who are even the envy of some men. There is also a conducive international environment, characterised by international conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which Uganda is party to. This is making the gender situation in Uganda a lot better.

**Q. Are there still issues that need our attention?**

**A.** Gender-based violence still happens both in the form of men beating their wives and girls being forced into marriage. There is also female genital mutilation. Girls are still denied the opportunity to stay in school and instead married off. Some parents, because of cultural beliefs, think boys have higher chances of succeeding in education than girls. There are also issues of early pregnancies where girls find themselves vulnerable with teachers and other older people who are supposed to protect them. Yet, unfortunately when such girls get pregnant, they are consequently disowned by their families. Sexual and reproductive health education is still a taboo in many of our societies.

**Q. What is government doing to promote gender equality?**

**A.** We have put up a national task force for adolescent girls and made the issue of gender cross-cutting mandatory so that each ministry or government department is tasked to mainstream gender into their plans, policies, programmes or activities. It is our deliberate effort to ensure gender is integrated into everything that government does. Every unit is assessed and when proved compliant issued with a certificate of

gender equity. If a plan, policy or programme does not pass the test, then it does not get funding from the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. The Equal Opportunities Commission is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that all government policies take into account gender equality. The purpose is to plug the gaps, wherever they exist.

There are laws put in place, for example the Domestic Violence Act, the law on defilement which states that, regardless of whether it is consensual, as long as the girl is below 18 years, the man cannot get away with it. We have a good legal and policy environment for attaining gender equality and government has mobilised all stakeholders, such as civil society, religious and traditional leaders to take the matter of gender equality very seriously.

We are also saying let the girls stay in school. Even if an accident happened and she got pregnant, she can produce her child and go back to school, for if she does not it will not only affect her but her child, the community and the country **Editor's note:** The World Bank estimates that Uganda's productivity would be USD15 billion higher if teenage girls delayed pregnancy until their early 20s and got a skill and worked). Education is important because without it, chances of being poor are high and when one stays poor, chances are that his or her children and grandchildren and the generations to come will be poor, causing a vicious circle of poverty, and poverty breeds violence against women.

We are doing gender budgeting where gender concerns are integrated into government budgeting processes. Moving forward, we are working to consolidate these gains and the good programmes we have had. We are, for example, putting particular interest on the Women

Empowerment and Entrepreneurship and Youth Livelihood programmes.

**Q. Are there limitations to what your ministry can do to realise gender equality?**

**A.** We do not get enough funds. Yes, we ask and argue our case but decisions are influenced by many factors. The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development is not the only spending point of government. Government has other equally important commitments, for example the energy and road infrastructure sectors, which have been prioritised. Then you take into consideration the current economic situation in the country where resources are not enough. But whatever we get from the treasury we put it to its optimum use.

**Q. Energy and road infrastructure are prioritised; does that mean gender is not important? Good roads, but when Q. women still suffer domestic violence, really?**

**A.** Not really, as you state it. Some of these issues are interrelated. Energy and road infrastructure are connected to the wellbeing of the family. You know, for example, poverty to some extent contributes to gender-based violence, for sometimes wife-beating is connected to the economic wellbeing of the individuals. The thinking, therefore, is that if we can have good roads, it can act as a stimulus to the economy, which reduces poverty and consequently violence. It is a complicated matter but we are trying our best to ensure gaps are fixed, particularly at the budget level. Yet gender is a cross-cutting issue, so as we budget here at the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, other sectors and ministries also budget (to ensure gender equality). These efforts are co-ordinated by the Office of the Prime Minister and we trust, eventu-

ally, justice will prevail on the gender question.

**Q. Well, let's shift to you as an individual. At a personal level, what has been your experience as a male advocate for gender equality?**

**A.** I have not had problems settling here at the ministry. When you get here, there are policies and plans and targets that you must meet so it really doesn't matter whether you are a man or woman. Anyone can excel here. There are targets – scientific targets – worked out so you either achieve them or fail.

However, I have met fellows who think it is only women who can push issues of gender equality, and that is where they go wrong. Gender is not about women, it is about women and men. I have not had personal insults; though maybe one small incident that happened recently while I was in New York. Along with my Permanent Secretary who is a man, I was introduced as Minister for Gender and one woman Member of Parliament from Kenya shouted, 'You men! What are you doing there?' In other words, this being the ministry that co-ordinates gender matters, she expected women to run it. Well, we said it does not matter whether you are a man or woman. Gender is not about women but human beings (men and women) working together to ensure gender equality and equity.

The other interesting scenario is really a humble one where some colleagues, especially in cabinet, call me Namukasa (Namukasa is a name for women). They say, 'You are there (at Gender Ministry), you are now Namukasa.' But that is an acknowledgement that I am in the right place doing something good.

**Q. Are there precautions that must be taken while promoting gender equality?**

**A.** As we advocate for gender equality, we need to be careful. Some activists take gender to mean reversing the roles, that once men ordered women to carry out duties and now it is their turn to order men. I am talking about this mentality of 'I am the CEO! If I have been invited to New York, you do not have to know but see me board a plane.' I think that does harm to the crusade for gender equality. You know why? It is because men will see gender equality as a licence for women to boss them around. Gender parity doesn't mean substituting one tyrant with another! Rather, it means appreciating and partnering with each other. It does not mean hatred. Some women call for the strangling of men. That is extreme. Gender parity does not mean you cease to be a mother who cares about your children and husband as he cares about you and the family. There should be respect for each other.

**Q. What are your gender best practices at home?**

**A.** There is gender parity in my home. Opportunities are the same for boys and girls. We discuss important issues together as a family. There is mutual support. I may not be cooking at home but the boys do. I clean the house, compound and we tend the garden together as a family.

**Q. What future do you see for gender equality in Uganda as far as men and boys are concerned?**

Culture and attitudes are changing. It is a forward movement that is growing stronger and stronger. I see a partnership for gender equality between men and women strengthened and gender equality a reality.

# OPINION: OP-ED AND COMMENTARY

Sorry women, your rights are unpleasant to us

BOB G. KISIKI

**R**ights. Listen to yourselves – women’s rights. Rights to do what? Offered by who? And by the way, you need to give careful thought to this last question, about who gave these rights. Let’s do a simple bit of research: Go look up the attendance list of the guys (oops!) who were at the meeting where this talk of rights started, and see how many women were there. And while you’re at it, you could also look out for how many of the rights they came up with are specifically addressed to women. Then you can come back and scream about rights. Rights my little toe!

This talk about rights has been going on for way too long. The right to marry. You don’t marry, ladies, you get married. The right to own property. Who has stopped you from owning property? As long as you work for it, go right ahead and own it. What I do not quite understand is this talk of women’s right to inherit property. Oh come on now, lasses. Inherit? Whose property are you going to take over,

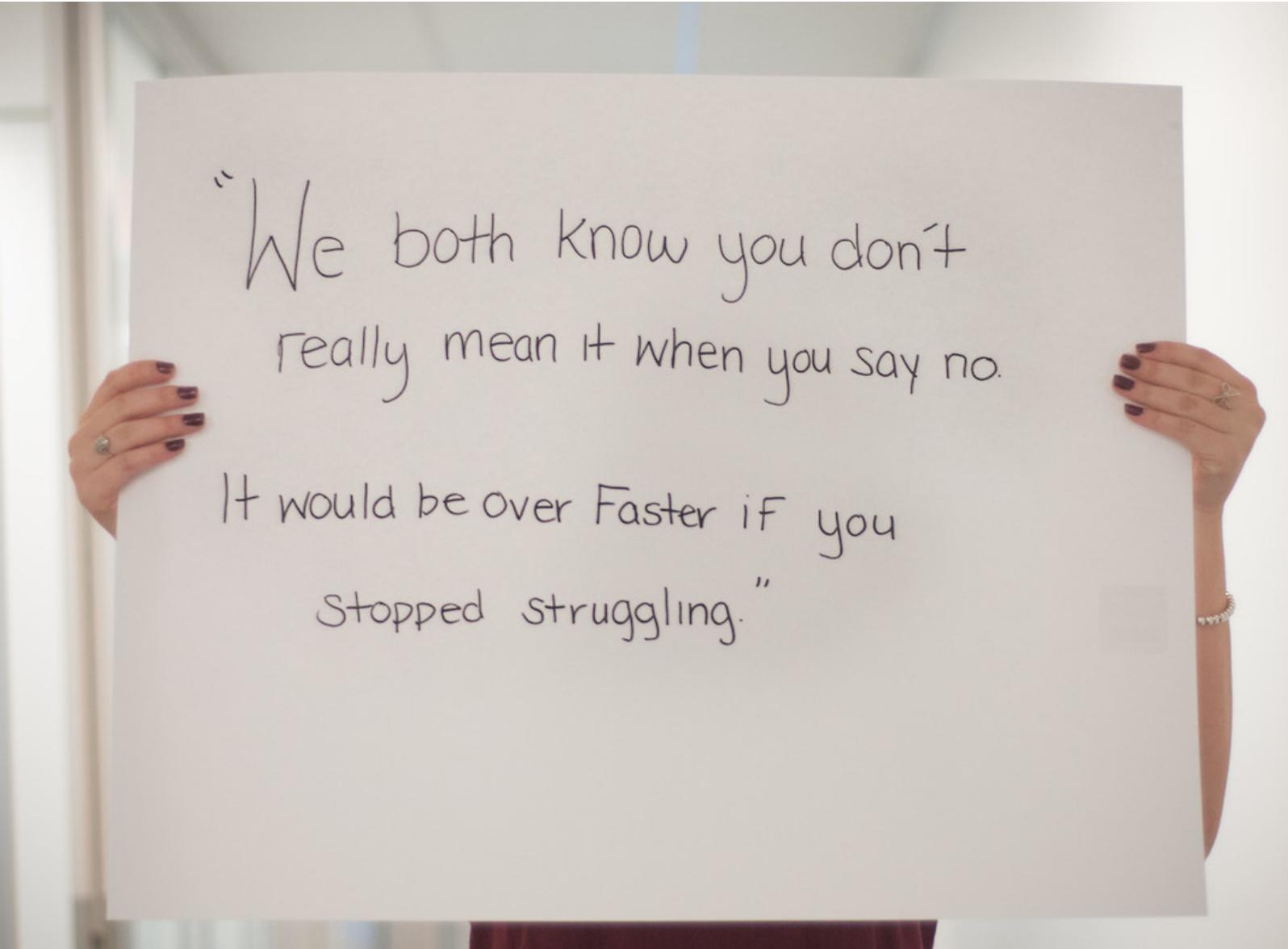
yet the one who made it did not inherit it from anyone? Listen up, friends: Go out there, work your little ladylike hands off and accumulate your own property. We’re even taking too long on this subject.

Just in case some of you get too miffed to proceed beyond this point, let me tell it to you straight: Your insistence on getting your rights is repugnant to us. It offends us. It has an unpleasant odour to it. Rights are unisex. There are no men’s rights and women’s rights. Now if we agree that this is so (which we must do, you have no right to refuse universal facts), what then is this thing about women leaving their home responsibilities to gather in town squares, shouting about women’s rights? What are women’s rights? Human rights, yes; women’s rights... I get a headache thinking this over.

Let me not be misunderstood: People who beat up people are bad. They were badly brought up, if they were brought up at all. So a man who beats up a woman is a bad man; just like a

woman who beats up a man has bad manners. Where do such people grow up? So no, being beaten does not constitute the demand for rights. It is already contained in human rights – men, women and children. Just like (if you will let me repeat myself) owning property – we all should: men, women and children. Nothing like women’s right to own property or their right not to be beaten up.

Even dunces know that there is the right age for women to get married. That sense is there even among non-primates. Which is why nobody should condone defilement of female human beings. I say ‘female human beings’ because, curiously, it is only humans who are guilty of this grossest of vices. But back to you with your incessant demand for rights. So I was saying that since we all know that pre-consent-age marriage is wrong, it does not require you to enact new laws granting women the right to be married at the right age. That is already a given, and the law, as it is, is rife with traps for men who breach this requirement.

A person with dark nail polish and a ring is holding a large white sign. The sign has handwritten text in black ink. The text reads: "We both know you don't really mean it when you say no. It would be over Faster if you Stopped struggling."

"We both know you don't  
really mean it when you say no.  
It would be over Faster if you  
Stopped struggling."

Strangely, though, you might already be aware that sometimes it is you, women, with your knack for demanding rights, who conspire with lascivious men to marry off your underage daughters. Ha, you're lucky I am not an officer of the law! If I just got a mother before me, who is accused of giving away her daughter in marriage before the poor thing is ready – in body and mind – for those things... Luckily, like they say, it is those with no teeth who find juicy meat.

And know what, this whole thing of rights would never have arisen had you ladies kept to your original place, as helpmates to your men. One, you were created with specific terms of reference. In fact, you are the only lot of God's creatures who were tailor-made – to sort out man's inadequacies.

After the Lord had looked at all of His creation and declared everything good, He had a second look and said, 'It is NOT good that man should be alone...' Isn't that the reason He added one item to creation – you? Else, the whole thing had ended with Adam. Anyhow, I was saying that if you folks had maintained your God-ordained place as helpers, and not ventured out into the world of autonomy and competition, there would be no such concept as women's rights, because your only right from the beginning was to have a man to help. Period. You got the man, you served him, the equation was complete. But now see where we got to, just because you could not rest in your God-given place! Women!

So as I wind up, let us agree on this: There is no such thing as women's

rights. What we should be talking about is you fellows returning to where you all belong – at home, helping those poor guys whom God said should not be alone. It goes against God's grain. But now just look around and see who is suffering alone – driving back home from church; in the living room at home; pulling up weeds in the garden... And where is his missus? At the women's meeting, cooking up ideas on how to demand women's rights. Nkto!

**The writer is a Senior Sub-Editor with the New Vision.**

**Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of ACFODE.**

# YOUTH RISING TO TAKE THEIR PLACE AS VECTORS OF GENDER EQUALITY

NANCY NANDUDU & KAVIRI ALI.



Uganda, as the youngest economy in the world, has a record 70% of its population below 18 years of age. It is now common knowledge that in our country, the future truly belongs to the youth and, therefore, it goes without saying that all efforts to equip the next generation for excellent citizenship and leadership

is the most urgent need for a society whose principles, both good and bad, could just as easily be wiped out in a few years unless understanding of the importance of the equality between women and men, and girls and boys is inculcated into children and young people who are the adults of tomorrow.

Looking at Uganda's situation, youth

account for over 70% of the population and the number of women in leadership is far behind that of men. In terms of political representation, men occupy most of the mainstream seats in Parliament and at local councils whilst most women are elected on the basis of the affirmative action policy which takes women as a marginalised group. For instance, in the 2011

general elections out of the 1,269 candidates nominated for the directly elected seats in Parliament, only 46 were women, accounting for 3.62%, whereas the men were 1,223, accounting for 96.38%.

The situation in workplaces is no different, especially where top jobs are still occupied by men owing to stereotypes about women. In homes, many women are still viewed as kitchen wives who are incapable of even managing the financial resources of the home. Many cultures still believe that women are incapable of making proper decisions without questioning men's behaviour. In such an environment, which is highly patriarchal, many people have internalised male dominance and have not advanced the gender equality agenda, and hence influencing public policy, especially from a gender perspective, has become a daunting task for women who wish to see change. Those who may be willing to take up leadership positions have been impoverished by the cultural wing of society that believes that women are only meant to do production, whereas the management of the finances is left to the men who deny women access to and budgeting of the money. The over-dependence of women on men for financial assistance hinders women from seeking leadership positions since the procedure usually requires robust financial muscle.

This state of affairs means that empowerment of young female and male leaders is crucial for the achievement of gender equality and social justice. Such leaders need to be empowered socially, economically and politically. There is need to increase access by women and young leaders to information to empower them to become advocates of change. An informed woman or young leader will lead to an informed society.

Access to information is a powerful tool for influencing change.

In addition, young women and men need to be mentored for social change. In addition to strengthening the capacities of women and youth for decision-making and advancing issues of gender equality in the political arena, there's also need to nurture feminist visions and values among young people who will come into public institutions with 'a critical eye', especially with regard to pressing societal issues such as social injustices and gender inequalities.

More importantly, there's need to begin empowering women from childhood by instilling in them concepts of leadership, emotional intelligence, critical thinking, effective interpersonal communication and public speaking, among others. These will enable women to learn leadership roles at a tender age and, therefore, practise them while growing up.

This will enable them to be better focused in their undertakings and positively influence those they interact with, thereby improving the situations in which they operate.

It is only by infusing transformative leadership skills into youth's overall leadership through mentorship that the realisation of social change that leads to gender equality will be attained.

However, to say that rights-based organisations have not started to home in on this fact would be doing grave injustice to the grand efforts made by men and women across the country who have trained and equipped young men and women from primary school to university in their roles, responsibilities and rights as citizens of Uganda.

As a result of this, a crop of young people with knowledge of the evils of discrimination is budding, marked by youthful exuberance and talent, with a passion for the correction of all evils brought about by gender inequality and ushering the nation into a new era of hope for the realisation of justice for all in every sphere.

The women at the forefront of this new breed of youth who have been educated on the urgent need for redress of the wrongs against women in Uganda include the likes of Ms Jaqueline Cherotich, a social worker who started fighting against the evils of gender-based violence (GVB) in her home district, Bukwo, the hub of female genital mutilation (FGM). In the story below, Jackie explains her journey to leadership of youth in gender issues:



*My name is Jackline Cherotich and I am proudly Sabinu from Bukwo district in eastern Uganda. My homeland is well-known for FGM and I have always known at the back of my mind that there was something wrong with our culture. Ever since I was a little girl I heard stories about the painful practice and how it was an expected rite of passage for all Sabinu girls into womanhood. I personally never underwent the ritual because my grandfather halted the practice in our family tree when he refused to circumcise his daughters.*

*While I am relieved to have survived, I can't help but remember a holiday from school when I*



was in high school that my sister and I escaped out of our father's village house during the circumcision time. Out of curiosity we ran to witness a mass circumcision of about 100 girls at a nearby circumcision ground. The experience traumatised us because of the sheer brutality of the process and the unsanitary way that the female surgeon who was an old woman used one curved knife to circumcise up to 100 girls at once. She just went from one to the next, mindless of the risk of transmitting diseases across the entire gathering.

I shoved this experience to the back of my mind because it made me feel like I was the one being mutilated remorselessly; but I remember praying to God that I'd get to pursue a course in humanities when I went on to university. So naturally I was excited when I was admitted for Development Studies at Kyambogo University and I thoroughly enjoyed the course.



I was unexpectedly forced to dredge up my memory of FGM at an eye-opening leadership camp organised by the Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE) where, during one particular session, we were each asked to share a negative cultural practice from our home area. I think my story was the most popular one, eliciting lots of questions and discussions among the other youth at the camp. I am forever grateful for that discussion, which opened my eyes to the fact that not only was the situation dire but it needed to be addressed and, as a 'daughter of the soil', I was

probably the best person to set the ball rolling.

Immediately after the camp closed, I headed back to my home village armed with new knowledge, skills, confidence and resolve to get involved in the process of change in my community. I spent several months out in the community interacting with girls of school-going age, some of whom were still attending school while the majority of others had dropped out due to early marriages and early pregnancies. We talked at length about their sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and it became apparent to me that they didn't have the same information about it that I had received, while growing up.

I also met with women in the community, most of whom were survivors of FGM. Their greatest issues were the repercussions of FGM during childbirth, which were over-bleeding, delayed recovery from pregnancy and a high risk of death from infections. Others were concerned that their husbands refused to let them use contraceptive methods, thus exposing them to great risk.

When I met with the men, I realised that they simply didn't know how the family planning methods worked and were governed by mythical stories about them when they denied their wives the chance of using them.

When I returned to Kampala, I was employed by Digital Opportunity Trust (DOT) Uganda first as an intern and then as a Field Officer. The oppor-

tunity allowed me to interact with women and youth groups from all corners of the country concerning entrepreneurship and gender issues. This eventually brought me to the conclusion that, except for FGM, many SRH issues affect all women in Uganda.

I felt a stirring on the inside to do something about it but I didn't know what or how. I teamed up with three other colleagues who had attended the leadership camp and after a lot of discussion, we pioneered the Youth Equality Centre. Our aim was to increase awareness about gender issues and capacity among the youth and women across Uganda to prosper economically and be able to access all the rights and privileges that are theirs as citizens.

Amid all this, my colleagues nominated me for Ms FOWODE, an initiative that encourages young enterprising, confident and passionate women to build on their passion for women's rights. Despite my reservations, I won!

Being Ms FOWODE uplifted me to the status of role model for the youth in gender issues, something that I have not taken lightly. I have purposed to get more learning and experience and be able to lead young people in cohesive efforts to end violence against women and build a society where everyone prospers.

This opened doors for recognition of my hard work. Early in 2015, I was awarded the prize for most innovative field

facilitator at DOT Uganda. I also nominated myself for the UK-based 'Queens Young Leaders Award' around the same time and came in second as the first runner-up. I was awarded a 10-month leadership course at Cambridge University, which I completed online in December 2015.

Right now I believe that the greatest challenge to youth uniting against GBV is the imbalance in exposure and awareness between urban and rural youth. While urban youth are regularly furnished with information about basic human rights issues, rural youth cannot even access Straight Talk or Young Talk magazine so they are left out of the most basic platforms for the discussion of youth issues on development.

I propose only one solution for youth and that is to train them as trainers to be able to mentor one another in key development and gender issues that affect them. I know that this will cause a ripple effect of change smoothly across the nation.

I also believe that in order for stakeholders under the women's movement to work well together, we need to build a strong network under women empowerment with a joint strategic plan that governs our key actions according to our strengths. Only then will we be able to share cohesive, useful information with the neediest populations as opposed to duplicating projects within urban to peri-urban circles that have already been approached.



# STREET TALK

ROBSON OKELLO

MOSES OTWANG

KENNETH KABEBASIZE

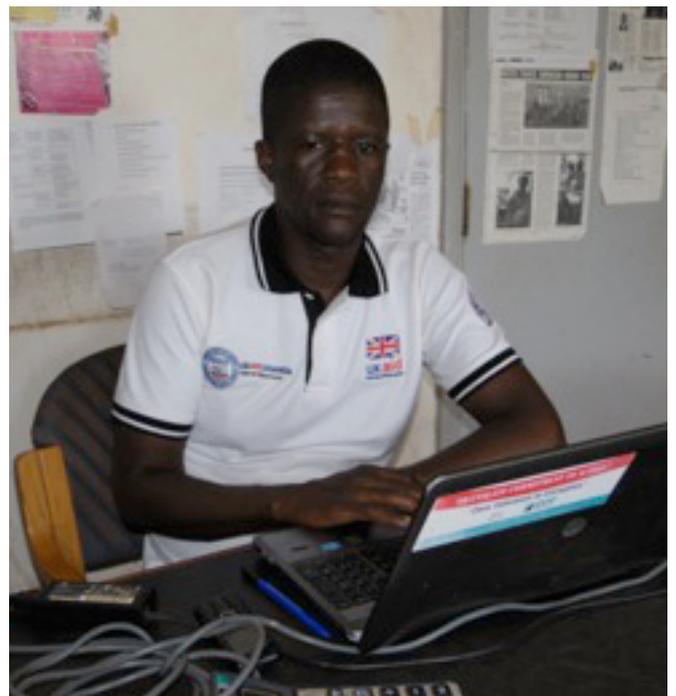
BRIAN MUTEBI

1.

**Should men and boys be involved in efforts aimed at promoting women's rights and gender equality?**

The Lango sub-region, just like any Africa society, is a patriarchal family system where all the decisions are by clan and local council courts which are dominated and presided over by men. Therefore, it would be a very big mistake to ignore men in the struggle to achieve women's emancipation. The approach of Women in Development (WID) failed in Uganda because men who are decision-makers were left out. Besides, they became saboteurs of women's economic empowerment because they interpreted the approach to mean women will rule over them.

**Okullu Geoffrey, Programme Manager, Apac Anti-Corruption Coalition**





Connie Atto Ogwang, ACFODE CEDAW Committee member, Oyam district

**B**y involving men in the promotion of women’s rights we ensure that they involve women and girls in decision-making processes right from the family to the community level because their perceptions about women will have been changed in the process.

**Connie Atto Ogwang, ACFODE CEDAW Committee member, Oyam district**



Obote Tommy, Carpenter/ACFODE male role model, Apac district

**I**t’s important that men are put at the forefront of the women’s movement because they wield power over most of the resources. Thus, it would be difficult for the women’s movement to achieve its core objective of emancipating women if men are not at the centre of it all.

**Obote Tommy, Carpenter/ACFODE male role model, Apac district**



Ms Magret Ewany, newly elected councillor for PWDs, Apac district

**I**nvolving men is imperative as it will accelerate women’s economic empowerment because if men become gender-sensitive, they will allow women to access, control and even own resources such as land and also engage in income-generating activities such as baking.

**Ms Magret Ewany, newly elected councillor for PWDs, Apac district**



**Mahiirwe Kellen, Community Development Officer, Nyakabande sub-county, Kisoro district**

**I**nvolvement of men and boys in advocating for the rights of women and girls helps streamline gender issues in the community. This will also see cases of SGBV reduce since men are the perpetrators. The men also understand the need to respect women's rights once they are involved.

**Mahiirwe Kellen, Community Development Officer, Nyakabande sub-county, Kisoro district**



**C/ASP Alum Carol, O/C station, Kisoro Police Station**

**R**ights do not exist in a vacuum and women do not survive in a unique environment. Men are women's partners and so have to be involved to understand why the women's empowerment. Therefore, with sensitisation, men can help uplift the status of women.'

**C/ASP Alum Carol, O/C station, Kisoro Police Station**



**Ndinumukiza Charles, ACFODE Community Agent of Change, Kisoro district.**

**M**ale involvement in advocating for the rights of women and girls helps to promote partnerships. These partnerships are what will help families to cater for their children, value the education of girl children, and help in planning and transparency within the homes. These partnerships also lead to equal property rights.

**Ndinumukiza Charles, ACFODE Community Agent of Change, Kisoro district.**

## 2.

### What role can the men play in achieving this?



HAVE TRUST IN WOMEN'S CAPABILITIES – MOHAMMED KIRUMIRA, DISTRICT POLICE COMMANDER, OLD KAMPALA POLICE STATION

Promoting gender equality faces many challenges, such as gender stereotypes. Other times women are given a platform to serve in positions of influence but misuse such positions, which leads some people to make general conclusions about women and what they can or cannot do. This can be overcome by sensitisation of the masses about gender equality. Both men and women need equal opportunities, and my view is that men should be at the forefront of ensuring that this happens. It begins with having trust in women's capabilities and backing them for positions of influence, for over time, women have been tested with powerful positions and have excelled in their work. In the Uganda Police, for example, we have a big number of women in powerful positions, like Assistant Inspector of Police and Deputy Police Spokesperson, Polly Namaye, who have performed well. My considered opinion, therefore, is that when people are given the opportunity to deliver on an assignment, success should be measured on performance, not sexes.



USE THEIR POSITIONS OF INFLUENCE TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY – PROF. VENANSIUS BARYAMUREEBA, FORMER PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE AND UGANDA TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITY VICE CHANCELLOR

Gender equality starts from home and a man can model his daughter into the superwoman he wants her to be, but this can be achieved only if we believe in gender equality. Perceptions like boys are superior to girls derail efforts of achieving gender equality. For example, I have two daughters and I have met many people telling me to produce more children so I can get a boy, which, of course, is being disrespectful to my daughters. It is intended to mean my daughters are not valuable enough. I adore my daughters and I will not waste time in the name of trying to father a son. Men can also support women to advance in their career and I have made my contribution. Before I was head of the School of Computing at Makerere University, we had very few women lecturers. I came up with policies of quotas for education scholarships for women. Today there are many women PhD holders at the school. It is difficult for women to perform to their best without education and mentorship. And since this has financial implications, as a CEO you have to allocate a budget for it and come up with gender-sensitive policies and programmes that empower women and

promote gender equality, otherwise gender equality may be hard to realise. There are more male CEOs than women, so it is the responsibility of the male CEOs to use their positions to make the world a better place.



DON'T FIGHT WOMEN, EMPOWER THEM – ISSA SEKITTO, SPOKESPERSON OF KAMPALA CITY TRADERS ASSOCIATION

Men need to understand that they cannot exist in solitude but in unison, thus need to realise the importance of respect for each other. Men should work towards empowering women economically by, say, providing them with educational opportunities and, where necessary, financial business support. When women are financially independent, the road to gender equality becomes smoother. Men ought to know they are the majority in spheres such as politics, law and academia so they can utilise such positions to enact laws and policies that promote gender equality. They can also do so by supporting women in positions of influence rather than fighting them. Cultural beliefs about women in society are an impediment to attaining gender equality. Many times, men are held back by tribal and cultural norms and beliefs. This needs to change. Other men are simply ignorant of the importance of gender equality, which should be addressed through sensitisation. At Kampala City Traders Association, we take gender equality seriously and give both women and men equal opportunities.



**MEN, THE BALL IS IN YOUR COURT TO ADVANCE THE GENDER AGENDA – BETTY NAMBOOZE BAKIREKE, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, MUKONO MUNICIPALITY**

Over time, some men have treated women as second class citizens. Therefore, for men to appreciate that women are equally important is a crucial step in attaining gender equality. There should be a change in attitude, where men look at women as partners as opposed to objects or assets. Economic empowerment is also important. Men should provide their children, both boys and girls, with equal opportunities, for example in education and in the distribution of wealth. They can also contribute to shaping their daughters into being independent-minded. I also think boys should be sensitised early in life on the importance of gender equality, otherwise ignorance will be a big obstacle to achieving gender equality. We are forced to believe society is and will continue to be a patriarchal one where there are separate roles for men and women. This is a mindset issue which entrenches the status quo. As a leader, I have experienced this though in a subtle manner. I remember when I announced plans to stand for Mukono municipality Member of Parliament (MP), there were voices that I should instead go for district woman MP, implying I would not win a directly elected MP seat because I am a woman. I, however, stood firm and went on to win. I think men have an advantage to advance the gender equality agenda.

Take, for example, the case of Uganda. The president of the country is a man and most of the positions of influence are filled by men, meaning that men are the majority key decision-makers. The ball is thus in their court to advance the gender agenda.

There is a lot men can do to support gender equality efforts. Fathers

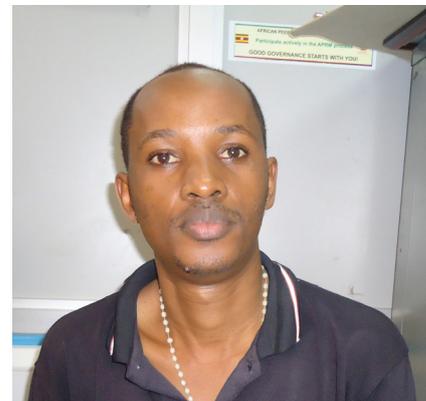


**GIVE INHERITANCE TO YOUR DAUGHTERS – ADEKE ANNA EBAJU, NATIONAL FEMALE YOUTH MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND FORMER MAKERERE UNIVERSITY GUILD PRESIDENT**

can empower women by treating their children, both girls and boys, equally. This can be done by giving the same opportunities, like education, to both boys and girls. Fathers should also give their daughters inheritance. This will help address the gender inequality question. Gender inequality is something that I witness on a daily basis in all spheres of life, but the most vivid one was when I stood for the guild presidency at Makerere University. Very few believed in my capability. They said I was not as vigorous as men and that I was soft in approach and so I would easily be compromised simply because I am a woman. Some even dismissed my candidature, saying I was standing because I am a woman. Fortunately, such talk did not derail me from pursuing my goal. I stood firm in my conviction and when we went to

the polls, I was not just a woman but a true politician. I was voted into office not because I am a woman but because of what I promised I would deliver.

Since this is a patriarchal society where some people are yet



**NO EXCUSE FOR NOT DOING SOMETHING – STEPHEN SSENKAABA, AWARD-WINNING JOURNALIST**

to embrace gender equality, society will look at men who promote gender equality as effeminate. It won't be easy for them; they will meet resistance. But that shouldn't be a deterrent. Men in managerial positions can deliberately champion gender equality by coming up with quotas for women to achieve gender equality. They can advocate for friendly gender policies that empower women like training, mentoring and providing an atmosphere where they feel accepted. Men should stop looking at women as subordinates but rather equals. This can help talent development and prosperity. There is no excuse for not doing something. We can all use every platform available to us to promote the cause for gender equality. As a journalist, for example, I have written extensively about gender equality and raised awareness on the subject. My job is to tell stories to the world.

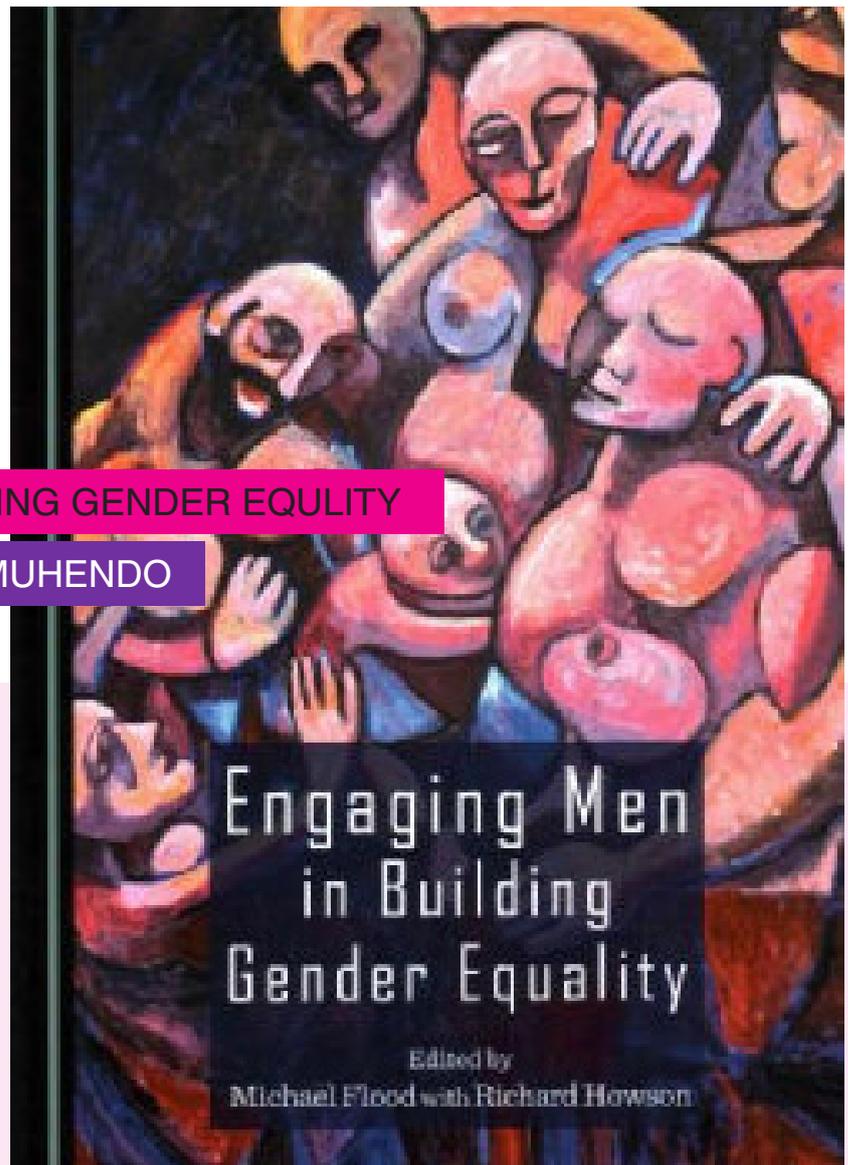
# BOOK REVIEWS

ENGAGING MEN IN BUILDING GENDER EQUITY

REVIEWER: BELINDA KYOMUHENDO

Men's roles in building gender equality are currently on the public agenda. Across the globe, there are growing efforts to engage men and boys in building more equitable relations with women and girls. The last decade has seen the emergence of national and global campaigns, initiatives by international agencies and local NGOs to involve men in the work towards gender parity.

Programs with men have increased in fields such as violence prevention, sexual and reproductive health, politics, parenting, education, and work. *Engaging Men in Building Gender Equality* brings together the key discussions and evaluations of this field. Some chapters' contributions are practical, exploring the promise and problems of this work. These chapters are authored by educators, activists, and researchers, and highlight valuable or innovative programs and initiatives and the lessons learned from these. Other chapters' contributions are more conceptual and political, inviting more thoughtful and critical understanding of men, masculinities, and the question of men's involvements in feminism.



In these contributions, leading writers in the field explore how to understand men and masculinities – how to make sense of the meanings given to manhood, the lives men lead, and the changing patterns of men's and women's relations.

The book has a global reach. Some chapters offer frameworks and insights applicable to work regarding men and gender across the globe, while other chapters present case studies from particular countries or regions.

*Engaging Men in Building Gender Equality* bridges the gap between

contemporary scholarship on men and gender, on the one hand, and practical work with men on the other. The book will be of interest to a wide range of researchers, advocates, educators, and professionals from universities, governments, local and international organizations, and community agencies. It offers a timely examination of an area of policy, programming, and research which is growing rapidly.

# BOOK REVIEWS

WE SHOULD ALL BE FEMINISTS

REVIEWER: BELINDA KYOMUHENDO

“You know, you’re a feminist.” It was not a compliment. I could tell from his tone—the same tone with which a person would say, “You’re a supporter of terrorism

I looked the word up in the dictionary, it said: Feminist: a person who believes in the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes. My great-grandmother, from stories I’ve heard, was a feminist. She ran away from the house of the man she did not want to marry and married the man of her choice. She refused, protested, spoke up when she felt she was being deprived of land and access because she was female. She did not know that word feminist. But it doesn’t mean she wasn’t one. More of us should reclaim that word...”

What does “feminism” mean today? That is the question at the heart of *We Should All Be Feminists*, a personal, eloquently-argued essay—adapted from her much-viewed TEDx talk of the same name—by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, the award-winning author of *Americanah* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*. With humor and levity, here Adichie offers readers a unique definition of feminism for the

twenty-first century—one rooted in inclusion and awareness. She shines a light not only on blatant discrimination, but also the more insidious, institutional behaviors that marginalize women around the world, in order to help readers of all walks of life better understand the often masked realities of sexual politics.

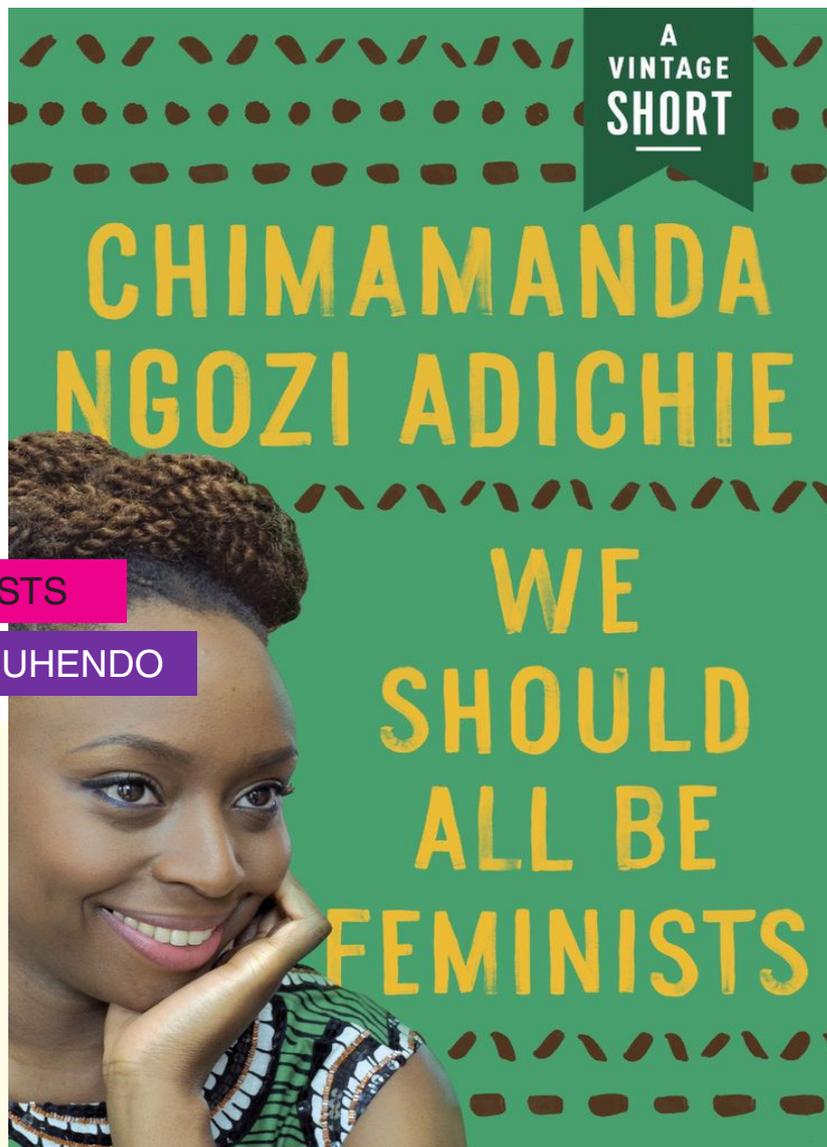
This book is perfect for those who don’t know much about feminism and are looking for a place to begin. It’s also perfect for those who aren’t new to the ideology and need a reminder about why we still continue to fight for gender equality.

Throughout, she draws extensively on her own experiences—in the

U.S., in her native Nigeria, and abroad—offering an artfully nuanced explanation of why the gender divide is harmful for women and men, alike. What I liked was how direct she is. She simply lays out the facts, and asks the pertinent questions.

This is such an important speech, full of enlightening wisdom, wit and personality. Adichie’s voice is an invaluable voice of today, and for the generations to come.

We should all read this book. We should all be feminists.



# BOOK REVIEWS

## THE SECRET LIVES OF BABA SEGI'S WIVES

REVIEWER: BELINDA KYOMUHENDO

"Wipe your eyes," she said, passing me a rag. "It has been a month since your parents died. This is not your home and it will never be. A girl cannot inherit her father's house because it is everyone's prayer that she will marry and make her husband's home her own. This house and everything in it now belongs to your uncle. That is the way things are." – from *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*, page 135 –

Bolanle is Baba Segi's fourth wife in a polygamous marriage. She is educated and young, and is a threat to the other wives in more ways than one. When she fails to conceive a child, Baba Segi is bereft and begins to seek answers which may uncover the biggest secret his wives have kept from him yet. Told in multiple and alternating viewpoints, *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* explores the polygamist society of Nigeria by gradually revealing the secrets of the women who people the novel.

Iya Segi is the first wife – large and outspoken, she is the unofficial power beneath Baba Segi's roof. Her plan to humiliate Bolanle and drive her from their home gets lukewarm support from Iya Femi, the third wife who has vengeance on her mind and who would rather see a quicker solution to the problem.

Iya Tope is the second wife, a woman whose compassion is silenced by fear. Forced into an arranged marriage to Baba Segi, Iya Tope has learned to be humble and silent in the face of wrong doing.

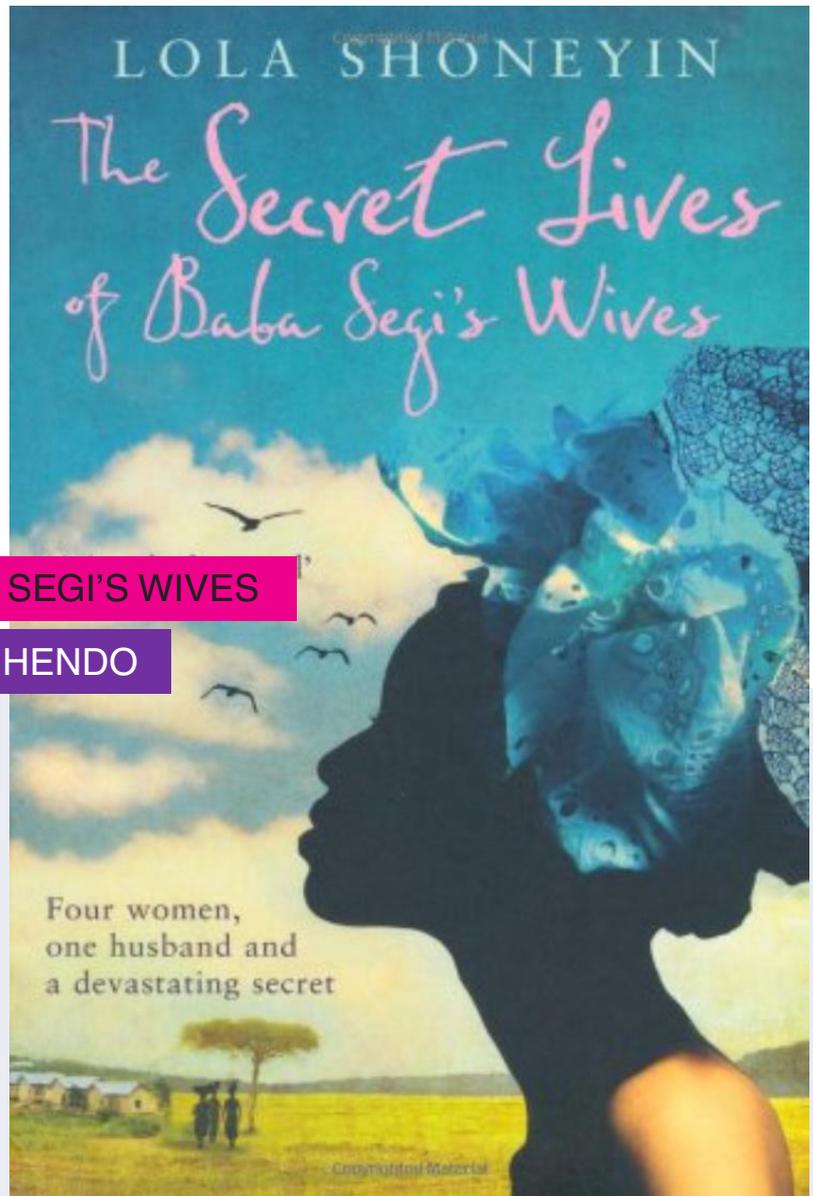
Thematically, the novel probes the rights of women in a polygamist society and in Africa in general. Baba Segi is a self-important, chauvinistic man who sees Bolanle's inability to conceive solely her fault. His view of sex is all about his own pleasure; it is represented as a wifely duty for the women with the point being to produce children.

Shoneyin shows the inequality of women in her book, and all but Bolanle are portrayed as conniving,

manipulative and vengeful. It makes you wonder how accurate the novel is with regard to women in African society. Ultimately, Shoneyin provides for some redemption and forgiveness in her book about family secrets, betrayal, and disloyalty.

This is an easy book to read. The individual stories are laced with humor, parables and folk lore. I enjoyed the gradual revealing of each character's secret – a bit like peeling the layers off of an onion. Baba Segi's character who is so stereotypical at the outset, managed to grow into a person who had depth and empathy by the end of the book.

*The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* was nominated for the 2011 Orange Prize for Fiction.



# THE ROLE OF MALE LEADERS IN SUSTAINING DISCUSSIONS ON WOMEN & GIRLS' RIGHTS

ROGER KIWANUKA

All over the world women recognise the value of collective action as a starting point to effectively activate positive outcomes for gender equality. The journey to this has been heightened with a lot of capacity-building and information sharing, which all culminated in an unwavering resolve to garner as much support as possible for equity and equality for all genders represented in the citizenry of the nation.

So far, the women's movement has successfully epitomised collective action as a tool to partner with women politicians and influence the legislative agenda of Uganda. The passing of laws on Domestic Violence and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), such as the Domestic Violence Act (2010), bear witness to the power of

strong partnership.

However, male politicians haven't been fully engaged in this thriving venture, despite the fact that they are the custodians of the patriarchal system that women are forced to survive under. Granted, the gradual emergence of male champions in Parliament has shed a glimmer of hope for positive partnerships between female and male politicians in Uganda. These influential male legislators have been fundamental in the passing of gender-sensitive legislation, such as the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (2009), the Domestic Violence Act (2010) and the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act (2010.) Female politicians, however, should be cautious not to always depend on this type of male support, and instead use the temporary support as a springboard

to enhance the power of collective action.

Undeniably, the existing systems for participation have been so choked up by discrimination and selfish ambition that they cannot presume to offer satisfactory opportunities for women the way they ought to. Systems such as multi-party politics, which resurrected in 2005 following a national referendum, originally left space wide open for women to participate in politics. In fact, since the onset of multi-party politics, three women have been able to contest the presidential seat in 2006, 2011 and 2016.

Nonetheless, political parties continue to restrict the number of women candidates fielded for open or mainstream seats. For instance in 2006, out of the 808 candidates



*So far, the women's movement has successfully epitomised collective action as a tool to partner with women politicians and influence the legislative agenda of Uganda.*

research by UN Women, the dominant political parties in Uganda, that is, the National Resistance Movement (NRM), Uganda People's Congress (UPC), Democratic Party (DP) and Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), are governed by gender-sensitive constitutions that support equal treatment and increased participation of female party members. For instance, Article 38A of the 2010 amended NRM constitution states that 'in electing the leadership of the organs of NRM, 40 % of the positions shall be reserved for women except in cases where it is impracticable to do so..', while Article 2.10 of the UPC constitution (2008) declares the party's commitment to support women's emancipation and advancement by mainstreaming and integrating women and women's issues effectively into the party and party leadership and advancing gender equality in party programmes, structures and decision-making processes.

In conclusion, Ugandan politics ought to strive to be governed primarily by an innate culture of mutual respect for each participant in decision-making processes. Without a concerted effort to value the opinions and needs of both men and women, the desired end of a democratic society shall remain a distant dream for our nation, causing society to diminish into silence and intolerance.

in the race for mainstream seats in Parliament, only 33 candidates were women, constituting only 4.1 % of the aspirants. Thus, despite boasts about numerical success at the time, Uganda's record of 35 % female parliamentarians was chiefly the result of reserved seats designated for women.

The party system in Uganda has also promoted a system of patronage, in which female leaders who are elected through affirmative action seats are made to feel inferior and incapable of effectively lobbying for gender sensitivity and responsiveness in policy-making and implementation. This calls for male leaders to strengthen structures within the party system and accommodate the views of these women leaders as legitimate and worthy of acting upon.

Furthermore, contrary to their very own constitutions, parties have undermined the importance of internal programmes to promote women's participation. For instance, the ruling NRM party has installed commissions with specialised functions, such as the Electoral Commission, Ethics and Discipline Commission, Finance Commission and

the Social and Economic Planning Commission. Unfortunately, none of these commissions are designated to promote gender equality, equity, equal opportunities or the interests of special groups identified in the NRM constitution.

Add to this the pressure of a highly sexualised political space, and the odds are unevenly stacked up against women politicians. A study conducted by Isis-WICCE highlighted sexual harassment in Uganda's political arena as one of the hurdles faced by women political leaders. The report indicated that persistent and repetitive acts of sexual harassment, comments, jokes, statements or other related practices by male colleagues severely dampen women's confidence and effectiveness. This, therefore, calls for male politicians to directly address the unacceptable situation by holding the perpetrators accountable.

In the light of this, ample party reference to the gender-sensitive constitutions that govern their structures would go a long way in establishing male politician support for women's participation in politics. According to

# FANNING THE WRONG FLAME:

THE MISTAKES SOCIETY CONTINUES  
TO MAKE WHILST HARBOURING

## GENDER INEQUALITIES

NINA KULABAKO



In the past, African societies nurtured folks to believe that every culture had to uphold certain key practices to mark social transitions, achieve community cohesion and pass on traditional values to the next generation. This system of social education so deeply entrenched itself in the minds and hearts of communities that, despite the apparent evolution of societal infrastructure and systems, the resultant developmental forums that they encountered, such as school, government and workplaces, simply became spaces for them to exert these customs in their behaviour towards each other, with keen emphasis on the establishment of parallel relationships between men and women, and girls and boys. For some reason this became a really popular practice, which, even with the enlightenment that education brought and exposure to the equally

superior abilities of both males and females in the same social, academic and economic spheres, fanned the flames of stigma against the socially defined 'weaker sex'.

So over time, the generations that ensued have been privy to more of the same cultural delinquency in an evolving journey of prejudice. Where in the past girls were dragged off to be circumcised, the recent enactment of international and local laws against this has seen a reduction in female genital mutilation in the targeted communities and, in its stead, a rise in cases of rape and defilement of girls who are considered prostitutes because they aren't circumcised. Where the past held little promise for girls attending school, now, with the help of affirmative action, schools are bursting at the seams with female students. Unfortunately, though, the likelihood of all these girls finishing their education is lowered by early marriages/pregnancies, and for those who persevere to the end, marketplace stigma awaits them as they go head to head with the dominant males that control the sphere.

Thankfully, with time the gradual amplification of women's voices through the women's movement has opened the eyes and ears of society to the apparent crisis of survival facing women across Africa. Seemingly, men, women and children across all spheres have been reached with information about the rights and privileges of women as equal contributors to community. At last! All is well with the world...or is it? Can it possibly be true that about three decades of advocacy and communication against the mistreatment of females has suddenly turned the tide of prejudice that goes back many centuries? Are today's youth in one accord against gender-based violence? Can we confidently count down the days to the dawn of a violence-free society where women and men work respectfully alongside one another?

While we definitely all hope that is the case, it is widely apparent

that the males in our society still harbour unbalanced views of the roles of women and men. The cloak is still draped over many an eye, with regard to whether women have the same rights and respectability as men to make key decisions that affect society.

Male celebrities, whose actions are mirrored by even younger male fans in society, still think that a women's place is to look pretty and stand silently by their side like a trophy that they can flaunt whenever they are in the public eye.

Workplace politics still has its cold fingers firmly draped around women's necks. Should a woman start to rise in the ranks over her male peers, the notion that she had sex with her bosses to attain her position will become the automatic consolation for counterparts who don't believe that she could ever genuinely merit such authority over them.

Even the media continue to contradict themselves in their coverage of the issue. On one hand, we are treated to exposés on the ill treatment and representation of women in society while, on the other hand, we are assailed with sexualised images and stories about women that are definitely staged to undermine the image of women in society. Tabloids and mainstream media alike are awash with pornographic material, thus fomenting sensational coverage of women and nullifying the entire framework of dignity that the women's movement has struggled to build over time.

This overt disrespect of women has carelessly spilled over into the minds of younger, more impressionable children who are being raised by the cynical media! Gone are the days of innocence, when children were introduced to sexuality through biology charts in sex education class at school. Now, with the constant parade of 'sex tapes' and lewd stories shared on social media, there no longer exists a veil of ignorance over children of any age. Little boys are erroneously being raised to view little girls as sex



objects and, unfortunately, the careless trend of information sharing that is running rife in our communities continues to evolve into simpler ways for anybody to access information.

Clearly, the legacy of gender discrimination still runs deep in our society and it is not enough to bury our heads in the sand with programmes that continue to address shallow issues. It is high time the women's movement and its partners dug deep to the root causes of the negative attitudes in society against women. It is time that focus is directed onto the media; yes, they are partners in the sharing of developmental information, but they represent the most popular forum for influence on the next generation and they need to be held accountable on that account.

It is also time to prioritise the moral aspects of gender discrimination. While religious and cultural leaders have only been marginally engaged in the discussion in the past, their role as the bedrock of societal norms and beliefs can no longer be denied. These leaders are the only true influencers of male attitudes and beliefs. Therefore, if true and consistent change in the hearts and minds of generations to come is the goal, the women's movement ought to forge and maintain strong partnerships with this group.

Gender equality and equity are not simply an end to aspire to, but a hope to cling onto for the preservation of society. Therefore, it is time for every stakeholder in the fight to abandon all reservations and do exactly what is required of them for the survival of positive relationships.

## FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM) WHERE DOES IT HAPPEN?

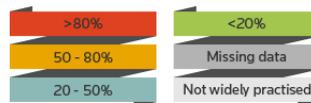


FGM is practised in 28 African countries and parts of the Middle East and Asia. It is also found in immigrant communities worldwide.

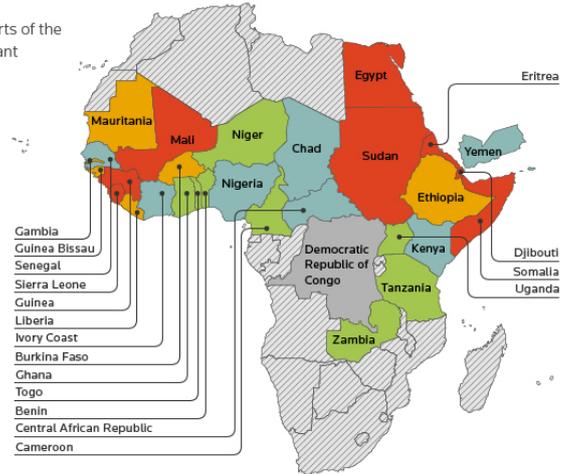
An estimated 100 to 140 million girls and women have been subjected to FGM. In Africa, around 3 million girls are thought to undergo FGM every year.

FGM is often a prerequisite for marriage, but it can cause life-long physical and psychological problems.

FGM PREVALENCE FOR WOMEN AGED 15-49



Source: UNICEF and Population Reference Bureau



2012 Thomson Reuters Foundation



*Male celebrities, whose actions are mirrored by even younger male fans in society, still think that a women's place is to look pretty and stand silently by their side like a trophy that they can flaunt whenever they are in the public eye.*





# GENDER EQUALITY- A FAMILY EXPERIENCE

TUMUSIIME K. DEO

**Y**ou have heard it time and again that charity begins at home. Similarly, gender equality is best appreciated and inculcated within a home setting; that smallest unit of society where we all grow up in the absolute love of our parents and siblings. It is at home where as little children we are taught how to live first with each other, and later with the wider community.

My remote understanding of the question of gender equality is certainly not so much about girls being literally equal to boys; otherwise this would be an attempt to undermine the divine reason why God created us different and with distinct characteristics. Rather, I am more interested in the fact and blunt reality that what Phionah can do, Daniel can do in case the two are subjected to similar conditions.

I am perhaps one of the luckiest of guys, being a father to two girls. What this ideally means is that I am a lone, only man in my home, living happily in the company of females. And even if I were to claim more importance than the females in my household, they could use their numerical advantage to put me where I belong. However, what is rather true is that I have learnt to set an example to my wife and my daughters; that being male does not necessarily put me anywhere ahead of the females.

I started off when we got our first daughter, Nichol, in 2006. My wife had been operated upon and the doctors discouraged her from doing any strenuous work. I was like: Why should she even strain herself at all when I am around? Of course she would occasionally want to stretch a bit, fearing



what people would say on seeing the husband doing all the housework, but I asked her to take it slow. We had no 'house-help' at the time, and this is a term that has come to be largely associated with females. I washed the baby's nappies daily before heading to work and on return; I bathed the baby, and I sometimes did the cooking. It was during this time that I actually discovered my other talents because I had never been exposed to women so closely, and certainly not to babies. By the time we had our second baby, Tia, in 2010, I was very comfortable with all the housework, which I still do to-date. I believe so much that this is one of the reasons that have ensured stability in my marriage that is now coming to a decade.

When my wife and I had just wedded, any contemporary girl could have said of me that I was not romantic at all. I would encourage her to contribute to our bills; and when she once said we needed to build a home, I remember telling her that we would have to con-

tribute and we would build it together. Traditionally, many ladies are brought up to rely on men, believing that only men can have enough money and only men, therefore, should build homes. In the end, we both contributed money to buy our piece of land, and from the very first brick, we've both contributed to putting up our home. And I actually know some ladies in Uganda today who have even singlehandedly built their personal homes.

Sometimes my wife laughs at me whenever I do not inspect the doors before sleep, wondering what kind of a man I am. I usually remind her that what a man can do, a woman can do, and I insist that she does the inspection. Yes, because when I have travelled and she's at home alone, then she's able to be in full control, undertaking roles which are traditionally reserved for me as a man.

In living a life like this, we have comfortably grounded a foundation for our daughters to appreciate their

ability as they grow up, and not to be bulldozed by their male counterparts. Hopefully, by the time they are out of home, bullying by boys will have stopped; but even if it still prevails then, I believe our daughters will be in a better position to stand tall in every circumstance.

If we can learn to look beyond this African ego that fronts boys and men ahead of girls, surely the notion of gender equality can be realised. I know pretty well that I am not alone in the world of men who share my personal belief. But it is also very true that where we are is still grossly at baby-steps stage. The issue of gender equality must be moved away from being a women's campaign because that's what many in the population perceive it to be. In reality, gender equality is part and parcel of our human life whichever way we look at it and must, therefore, be critically observed at family level if we are to make headway in making it a dream come true.

# THE TRUE NATURE OF LEADERSHIP: RESPECTING EACH ONE'S STRENGTH TO ACHIEVE A COMMON GOAL

STACEY PEARL KEIRUNGI

**W**e live at a time when the marketplace is increasingly becoming conscious about teamwork and virtually all organisations and entities agree that leadership teams should be made up of both men and women. At the same time, however, there seems to be much more confusion concerning how exactly men and women can work well together. Society has for a long time believed that men and women are gifted differently and thus ought to maintain specific roles and responsibilities in society. Some extremists have gone to the extent of asserting that the differences between men and women are so great that it is virtually impossible to understand each other, let alone work well together. Thus a wedge has been driven between the sexes, pitting us one against the other, locked in perpetual competition that has developed a pattern of dominance; if either a man or woman is in leadership, the other may not be a partner, but instead a follower in order for a successful result to ensue.

Although society may have come a long way in setting the scene for women and men to access the same opportunities and prospects, the

battle for the same privileges seems to have overridden reason and caused a departure from mutual dependence. We need to acknowledge that women's success still depends largely on men because they have been the custodians of culture and its norms, and as such have had the opportunity to establish themselves in the highest positions of authority. And, like it or not, women do constitute the highest percentage of the consumer market and, thus, bring to the table a greater understanding of what makes good business. An aspect that men need in order to

stay afloat as competent leaders in the marketplace.

The thing is, unless the men and women at the top of our society strategically decide that equality at the top is the right goal to achieve, it simply won't be happening any time soon. For real change to occur, and in order to achieve a stronger balance, today's leaders must have a strategy to achieve equality for men and women. This calls for a willingness to ensure that there are ample numbers of female and male candidates for all available leadership



positions, with relevant mentoring programmes to build their capacity. In order to do this, we must hold leaders accountable for specific actions that signify diversity and strength at the workplace.

### Building Authenticity

The key proponents of unbalanced societal politics presume that there are fundamental differences in the way women and men think and behave. 'Men compete, women converse'; 'men think sequentially, women think in a more random way.' Are women and men truly so different? One school of thought teaches women to respect men by not interrupting them as women do with each other, while another believes that women need to learn to interrupt men to get their point across – as men do all the time – otherwise they will not be heard. So who are the 'natural' interrupters, men or women? Could it possibly be more to do with personality and experience than with gender? The danger in being too aware of possible gender differences is that we can overlook the things we have in common, the task we have to complete, and also the real differences between us as people. So perhaps a better way of thinking in our relationships, whether we are supervising, working with or reporting to someone of the opposite sex, is to see and treat them as an individual, with respect and care.

### Amplifying Individual Strengths

According to Google ([www.google-forentrepreneurs.com](http://www.google-forentrepreneurs.com)), women-led tech companies achieve 35% higher returns on investment, and when backed by venture capital, deliver 12% more revenue than their male counterparts. A woman's power of perceptiveness and emotional intelligence far outshines that of any man, irrespective of her position in a workplace. Great leaders recognise and optimise this strength while selecting team leaders and planning to grow their businesses. So, rather than worrying about the skills they don't have, leaders should focus their energy on identifying individual strengths of all employees regardless of their sex, and arranging capacity-



building opportunities for each of them to enhance their performance at work.

### Building and Strengthening Mutual Support Systems

As important as it is for women to build internal groups to support one another to succeed in male-dominated spheres, leaders should also be held accountable for stretching such support systems to include male colleagues. This would go a long way in ensuring that women are no longer looked at as inferior to men, but instead it would build a mutual nurturing environment where both men and women learn to lean on each other to effectively get the job done at all times.

### Building Synergy for Innovativeness

Recognition of the need for a complete team effort to build cohesive, strong ideas for the good of any society is a key attribute of a strong leader. So, rather than allowing the citizenry to get obsessed with complaints about

independent decisions made by management, the establishment of open spaces that build on innovativeness is important in sending out signals to the staff that all their ideas are essential for enhancing the effectiveness of the organisation. The notion that men are the only natural born leaders will always be put to rest in such instances, giving way for acceptance of the fact that everyone can have a brilliant idea and contribute to positive change if given a chance.

All in all, the fact remains that improving gender equality in the world today means improving joint decision-making. The only way to ensure this is for management to guarantee that all hands are on deck when it comes to planning and implementation of the societal mandates. This way, every individual feels like a useful part of a growing system, and teams are able to respect one another, regardless of sex, because of the apparent contribution of each team player to the overall success of any given community.

# WHY RWANDA, NOT UGANDA, IS OFFICIALLY THE BEST PLACE TO BE A WOMAN

SASHA MUMBI

**A**ccording to Ms Saadia Zahidi, Head of the Gender Parity Programme at the World Economic Forum and lead author of the Gender Gap Report, 'A lot of the progress on gender equality over the last 10 years has come from more women entering politics and the workforce.' According to global statistics at the World Economic Forum, there are now 26% more female parliamentarians and 50% more female ministers than nine years ago.

The case of Rwanda stands out as a key milestone for Africa's progress in attaining gender equality. Ranking sixth in the world in the World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Gender Gap Report 2015, Rwanda is the only country from sub-Saharan Africa to be ranked in the top 10 countries whose highest priority is the extension of gender equality throughout its economy. Although the report cited a growing global gap in political empowerment at 21 %, this was one of the areas where Rwanda excelled.



One of the reasons that inspired Rwanda's performance was the country's leadership that advocated for legal frameworks that would give women more opportunity. Among these is the 2003 constitution, which provides for 30 % automatic representation of women in decision-making organs. The quota has since surpassed this percentage in various organs, especially Parliament, where 64 % of the seats are occupied by women, and the executive, where women constitute 36 % of cabinet ministers and ministers of state.

In addition to this, Rwandan policy stipulates that every public entity put in place a gender budget that emphasises capacity enhancement plans for women in the economic sector. This has led to an increase in the number of women wielding senior positions in the mainstream marketplace.

A distinct focus on rural women's empowerment, however, may be the most productive initiative for Rwandan gender indices to-date. By acknowledging the centrality of the agricultural sector as a backbone of the economy and land as the cause of gender disputes and fashioning the National Land Policy to allot women equal rights with men in land inheritance, Rwanda's

land policy framework far outweighs those of the rest of Africa in so far as it respects women as the pillars of the sector.

On the other hand, Uganda ranks 88th globally in gender equality. 'Why is that?' you may ask. For all intents and purposes, we have also increased female participation in politics, with excellent laws that uphold the rights of minorities through affirmative action at both local and national levels. Our 1995 constitution allots room for one woman representative in Parliament for every district while the Local Government Act (1997) stipulates that the population quota of women representatives shall be determined by the requirement of women constituting a third of any local council being considered (Part X, Article 109 (3)). Section 11 of the constitution reserves seats for women in the composition of district councils; in paragraph (c) two councillors, one of whom shall be a female youth representing the youth in the district; in paragraph (d) two councillors with disabilities, one of whom shall be female; and in paragraph (e) women councillors forming one-third of the council such that the councillors elected under (b), (c), (d) shall form two-thirds of the council.



*The case of Rwanda stands out as a key milestone for Africa's progress in attaining gender equality. Ranking sixth in the world in the World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Gender Gap Report 2015, Rwanda is the only country from sub-Saharan Africa to be ranked in the top 10 countries whose highest priority is the extension of gender equality throughout its economy.*

Despite all this, however, the nature of the Ugandan model of women's inclusion in political leadership has raised questions about the fact that despite an increase in numbers, women politicians do not seem to be at the centre of debate with their male counterparts, preferring instead to compete amongst themselves for space to raise gender issues.

Also, though the Local Government Act of 1997 provision for decentralisation to ensure good governance and democratic participation created an expansion of participation, including that of women on the reserved seats, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) Country Review Report of 2009 depicted low-level participation of women in district structures and platforms for debate. With 47 % representation as councillors in district local councils, 1.4 % of chairpersons in sub-counties and district local governments, men continue to dominate the decision-making process.

Furthermore, although the existing political party constitutions, including those of the National Resistance Movement (NRM), the Uganda People's Congress (UPC), the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) and the Democratic Party (DP) provide for special organs within the party structures



in the form of women's leagues to promote women's political participation, their effectiveness is questionable. A survey on women's participation in politics conducted by UN Women revealed low activity by women's leagues. According to Norbert Mao, the Democratic Party (DP) president:

... here in Uganda, I have never seen or heard the women's league leader of NRM. I don't even know who she is. There is only women's league leader you hear but even then, her voice does not really come out on issues of gender concern. They are always complaining about general policy issues like the rest of us.

Taking into consideration these key issues, it is, therefore, imperative for the women's organisations across Uganda to unite into a strong advocacy unit in one colossal effort to strengthen the resolve of women in politics and design key strategies for promoting gender equality through their renewed efforts.

In order for the women's movement to achieve this, a critical mass of women leaders wielding the skill and charisma to engage with men in positions of influence is of the essence. Therefore, a long-term nurturing environment for aspiring female politicians of all ages should be established in all areas of influence, from schools to the workplace. This will serve to build much needed confidence, skills and knowledge in diplomacy and advocacy that are currently lacking in most female political representatives at all levels of leadership.

With regard to existing women politicians who have been known to sideline gender issues on the floor of Parliament in favour of 'national issues', further exposure to the imbedded gender issues in each national area of interest may serve to return these vocal mouthpieces to a place of holistic political debate, which views gender as a key aspect of the success of the general nation's focus.

Furthermore, the effectiveness and overall importance of continuous research and documentation of evidence and supportive frameworks should not be underestimated. This should be scaled up in academia and CSOs in order to constantly keep women political representatives up-to-date with data that would directly influence legislative processes in favour of gender equality. Finally, although the above changes are far-reaching for Uganda's economy and culture, clearly much still needs to be done regarding improving women's political participation in Uganda. Therefore, it is imperative that the pace of change be accelerated in the above critical areas.

## INTERNET SOURCES

Global Top 10	
The Global Gender Gap Index	Global rank*
Iceland	1
Norway	2
Finland	3
Sweden	4
Ireland	5
Rwanda	6
Philippines	7
Switzerland	8
Slovenia	9
New Zealand	10

Source: The Global Gender Gap Report 2015

Note: \*2015 rank out of 145 countries



*Rebecca Alitwala Kadaga  
first female to be elected  
Speaker in the history  
of the Parliament in  
Uganda.*



# THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM THAT IS TRAMPLING EVERY ROAD TO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS

## ARISE REPORTER

In conversation with the Speaker, Pader district

**Q: Do you think it is possible for women to stand and win on open seats?**

**A:** Possible and not possible. Possible because some women have proved to be better performers. Like now if the incumbent (county) and district MP stand for election the woman would sail through. However, we should note that women don't support women. People think that big things can only be done by men and yet women perform even better. We need to prepare the minds of the people to know that women can lead at all levels. In Latanga sub-county, there was a woman who acted as the interim chairperson after the creation of Latanga from Awere sub-county and she performed very well. People even encouraged her to stand for the post of chairperson. When it came to election time, she lost. We

were all surprised that she lost and yet everybody seemed to like her.

Source: Ahikire 2007; Kwesiga et al. 2003; Tamale 1999

There is growing disgruntlement with the slow progress in the advancement of women's rights in Uganda. This is fuelled by fear within the women's movement of possible regression in the gains women of Uganda have made over the years. Four burning questions linger in the minds of the electorate:

**Q. Who do women MPs represent?**

**A.** After years of growth in women representation, it is still unclear who exactly the women leaders on reserved seats represent. The apparent absence of a clear mandate for women leaders has left them grasping at straws to prove their relevance. This has often pushed them to extreme actions, such as furnishing health centres with equipment and medicine, disseminating farming equipment and providing educational scholarships, among other roles that far exceed the remit of an MP. In fact, most women MPs have been put under pressure to believe that simply representing women is too narrow a focus for them and that they should represent national issues on the floor of Parliament. The challenge with this school of thought is that it undermines the social responsibility naturally appended to a woman MP and raises unnecessary queries on role duplication.

**Q. Is affirmative action still relevant?**

**A.** Now that the number of women representatives in politics at local and national levels has increased to 35%, and more girls are accessing university education through the quota system, many people believe that affirmative action may have outlived its relevance. Many believe that women should by now be able to contest open seats exclusively, even though

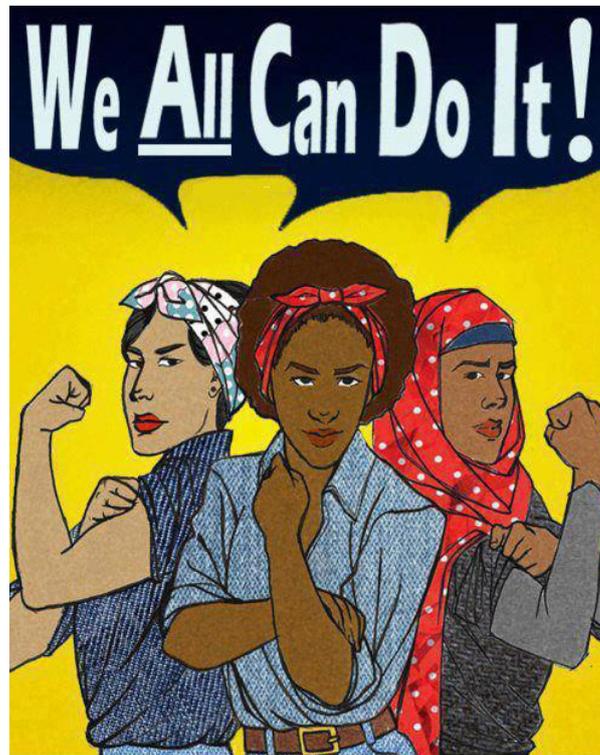
institutional challenges still exist that hinder the effectiveness of women elected through reserved seats. This indicates a growing need for increased civic education among the electorate on the roles of woman parliamentarians.

**Q. Do female ministers still support women?**

**A.** Female ministers are seen to be increasingly detached from the women's agenda due to the fact that they no longer argue issues of gender in Parliament, and are not often seen to promote the gender aspects of the key offices that they represent. However, the fact that the amount of female support diminishes as female ministers go up the rungs of the political ladder is often overlooked. The challenge is, therefore, to devise a means of bringing women ministers into the sphere of the women's movement by identifying mechanisms that can maximally utilise their current capacities to promote gender issues on the existing political terrain.

**Q. Is the women's movement solid enough?**

**A.** The evident lack of co-ordination among women's NGOs has eroded their credibility as genuine facilitators of positive change for women in development. The duplication of activities and projects across the organisations has left female MPs fatigued with repetitive workshops and trainings and filled them with a sense that NGO activities are not meant to cater to their interests and issues but instead those of donors. Overall, it is necessary to re-energise the women's



movement in Uganda by working together and optimising the strengths of the individual players within the movement to strategically reach women politicians at their points of need.

This calls for the women's movement to galvanise support for dialogues and briefings immediately after the elections with the new female leaders – MPs and councillors – through the Uganda Association of Women Parliamentarians (UWOPA) with the aim of rekindling the connection between women leaders and the key purpose of the women's movement. This will go a long way in addressing the challenge of limited political influence among female leaders.

Furthermore, more attention should be accorded to increased research and documentation by women's rights organisations. This will facilitate the establishment of an up-to-date resource centre on the status of gender relations and society's visions geared towards gender-equitable governance to support women leaders in influencing the legislative agenda.

# GENDER-RESPONSIVE SERVICE DELIVERY – WHAT IS THE STATUS QUO IN UGANDA?

## ARISE REPORTER

With a citizenry that is more aware of their rights and privileges, the quality of service delivery offered in the country has improved greatly. However, the extent to which gender equality is being promoted in service delivery in both the

public and the private sectors leaves many questions unanswered.

Given that women constitute 52 % of the population (UBOS Population Census Report 2014), women's voices

are important at policy and implementation levels. Decisions made at such levels are reflected in how gender-responsive the services offered can be. Therefore, failure to include the majority voice would distort democracy and



amount to infringement on the fundamental rights of women.

Statistics, though, tell a different story. In 2011, the Ministry of Public Service, Payroll Monitoring Unit, reported that there were more men (77%) in public sector jobs than women. In the senior management positions, there were 78% men holding positions as compared to only 22% of women.

This, therefore, begs the question: Are women's voices really necessary in making and implementing policies that affect service delivery?

### Women's voices are crucial

Patricia Munabi, Executive Director, Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE), argues that it is important to have women in positions of power. She asserts, 'These women should not only be in positions of power but also be able to influence decision-making. This way, they can bring the concerns of women to the fore, to be debated, and make sure the policies that arise out of those debates get into the national budgets. This is because policies need financial resources to be implemented.'

The lack of women in positions that influence service delivery results in unfair allocation of resources which, in turn, leads to poor service delivery.

'Most chief executive officers and district planners are men and they are the ones in charge of making budgets and allocating funds,' Munabi says, adding, 'Because women are not in those positions, it is not easy for their concerns to be heard.'

Perry Aritua, Executive Director, Women Democracy Network Uganda (WDN-U), argues that the interests and needs of women differ from those of men.

'The issues that affect women in service



delivery need to be addressed, integrated and implemented in national budgets. At a later stage, the implemented programmes have to be monitored and at all these stages, women have to be in the processes.'

Naomi Kabarungi, Communications Co-ordinator at WaterAid Uganda, adds, 'When women are empowered to be leaders and entrepreneurs in service delivery, when spaces are open for them to participate in decision-making, to speak out and hold their leaders accountable on minimum standards of service delivery, access, quality, affordability and sustainability of services can be guaranteed.'

The accrued benefits of women's inclusion are essential to building a prosperous economy.

### The glaring gaps

One would argue that the political environment is now conducive for women to stand in elective politics and influence policy. But be that as it may, not many women stand and win competitive elective positions.

'Of course there is still a gap because policies are made by elected leaders,' says Aritua, adding, 'Only 147 out of the 458 members of incoming 10th

Parliament are women and most of them stood on affirmative action.'

Munabi notes that the women already in positions of influence need to be encouraged. 'We need to work with them, even with their inefficiencies, to strengthen and improve them. We need to bring the influential men on board to understand gender equity in service delivery.'

### Service delivery in the health and education sectors

In terms of service delivery in health-care, a woman in a decision-making position would know what it feels like to have low service delivery.

'She will feel this because she is the caregiver of the patient who cannot be treated because there are no drugs in the hospital,' Munabi says, adding, 'or because she does not have the money to take the patient to a better hospital.'

Rural women bear the burden of walking long distances to fetch water and often the water is not safe, thus exposing their families to health hazards.

'Girls miss substantial learning time at school and drop out sometimes because there are no safe and private sanitation facilities or sanitary materials for



them during their menstruation period,' Kabarungi says. She adds, 'In this case, the service deficiency in water and sanitation directly impacts on the quality of education services.'

Pregnant women in rural communities walk long distances to access health-care services. Unfortunately, in most health centres there are no drugs, there are long lines, and in case they develop complications during labour, they cannot receive proper treatment. This has been known to lead to newborn and maternal deaths.

Kabarungi adds, 'Clearly, service delivery issues are women issues: they have the first and direct encounter with the service centre as primary users as well as shock-absorbers for the rest of the family.'

In a 2012 report by USAID and IntraHealth, Gender Inequality and Discriminatory Analysis, it was reported that the extent to which the health sector is actually promoting gender equality at operational levels (as measured by perceptions of political will, accountability and organisational culture) was perceived by health managers to be only moderate.

It was found that women are most concentrated in nursing and midwifery

positions and in administration. Men are found in a broader range of jobs, from medical doctors and dentists to allied health to support staff jobs.

Without women in decision-making positions, a hospital may function, for instance, without anyone realising the need to have an incinerator attached to the labour wing.

### **In the tendering process**

The Public Procurement and Disposal of Assets Act 2003, section 44 states that a bidder shall not be excluded from participating in public procurement and disposal on the basis of nationality, race, religion, gender or any other criterion not related to qualification, except to the extent provided for in this Act.

However, when one considers the tendering process in the public sector, especially when it comes to service delivery, there is gender inequality.

'When it comes to bidding to provide services to the community, most of the companies that bid are owned by men,' Aritua says, continuing, 'This is because the way our economy is structured, fewer women are able to compete favourably. For instance, in Kampala, most market vendors are women, yet men win the tenders to run these markets.'

You can be sure that in case a woman wins a tender to run a market, the proposal will be structured around amenities that make life easier for women, such as toilets with running water, cleanliness as a priority, or even small nurseries to take care of the toddlers of the market women.

### **Way forward – enhancing equitable service delivery**

A number of options can be explored to improve or enhance a gender-respon-

sive service delivery systems. One such action is affirmative action in terms of employment.

'Affirmative action on employment should be legislated through instituting specific quotas for the different sectors,' argues Spera Atuhairwe, head of Programme Effectiveness, WaterAid. 'For instance,' she explains, 'recruitment and placement of teachers in schools should ensure that a certain number of females are recruited in each school and incentives provided to ensure their retention. This would make it easy for girls in schools to approach female teachers and get guidance on issues of menstruation and reproductive health.'

Men should also be deliberately involved in efforts to ensure effective gender-responsive service delivery because they control resources and hold positions of power. Also, women need to be deliberately empowered to demand for accountability from their leaders.

'The most important thing now is to ensure that the citizens are more empowered to know their roles and hold their leaders accountable,' Munabi says, adding that a population that is aware of their roles is crucial to gender-responsive service delivery.

'There is need to develop gender-responsive performance measurement indicators to be used to assess progress at the different levels,' Atuhairwe says, adding, 'these could be included in the performance contracts of public officers and used to measure progress made in terms of policy provisions, planning, budget allocation and actual services reaching women and related outcomes.'

Lastly, negative cultural perceptions about women as managers, tagged to their traditional gender roles as mothers, must be reversed.

# INVOLVING MEN AND BOYS IN THE PROMOTION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS' RIGHTS: THE UGANDAN CIVIL SOCIETY EXPERIENCE

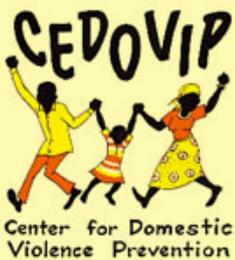
ARISE REPORTER



**R**egionally, Uganda is known to be one of the leading countries with good policies on gender equality, having gender equality high on the political agenda and in political statements over the years. However, ACFODE notices that the involvement of men and boys in attaining gender equality is often missing from country policy dialogues and that in-country gender expertise and tools to mainstream it have not been sufficiently utilised in this regard. If the momentum is to be sustained, this has to be tackled. We bring you the experiences of some of the renowned civil society organisations that have succeeded in using this approach:



**WE TRAIN MEN TO HANDLE POWER WELL – CEDOVIP**



The Centre for Domestic Violence Prevention (CEDOVIP) is a local non-governmental organisation

whose mandate is to prevent violence against women and girls. We believe the root cause of vio-

lence against women and girls is the imbalance of power between men and women and, therefore, if we must stop it, our focus should be on the root cause, the power imbalance.

Gender imbalances happen between men and women, meaning that if you target one group, you will have reached half the group and that won't be effective. CEDOVIP works to make a shift in the issues that perpetuate violence – the social norms, the belief systems, traditions and practices – and we involve both women and men, for if you exclude men, how will they

know these issues? We include them and start with the boys because it's the boys that become men.

In our community mobilisation model called SASA, we identify men and women and train them to reach out to their colleagues in various places like homes and drinking joints, sensitising them on creating the much needed change and supportive environment that promotes peace and discards violence in homes. Where we have community activists, for example, we ensure that half the number are men. We train men to handle power well by

emphasising the fact that relations between men and women should be marked by mutual respect and fairness.

We have seen impressive outcomes with relationships between men and women improving in the communities where we work. As husband and wife learn to trust each, their bond is strengthened. They make joint decisions instead of one party ordering the other around. There is unity and harmony in the home. And as parents jointly take care of their children's needs, their children's performance in class improves. Their incomes also improve because, among other things, the husband and wife jointly plan expenditure and talk about their health in terms of HIV/AIDS prevention, for example, something which, if couples do not guard themselves against it, will increase their expenditure on health.

That is not to say that there are no challenges. There are still violations of women rights. We, for example, documented the case of a 72-year-old woman whose husband duped her into signing bank loan documents and instead of doing business with the borrowed money, the man built a house for his new, younger woman and deliberately did not pay back the loan. The bank eventually evicted the old woman. You wonder where a 72-year-old woman can go! There is so much unfairness! Men punish women for even a natural phenomenon like age, in which case when the wife becomes old, she is replaced.

The problem of domestic violence is deeply rooted in traditions and beliefs. There is still resistance to gender equality. For example, some people use religion to suit their purpose. This is in addition to nega-

tive peer influence on the treatment of women. In many circles women are still treated unfairly. When, for example, a woman commits adultery, she is condemned mercilessly. But when a man does the same, they say *omusajja, asajjalaata* (a man has the right to commit adultery). Where is the fairness? Shouldn't the principle of fairness be exercised?

So yes, we have seen impressive results in engaging men in gender equality promotion, but there are still challenges that we continue to confront.

**Interview conducted with Tina Musuya, Executive Director, CEDOVIP**

## WE EMPOWER MEN TO UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF GENDER EQUALITY – WOMEN'S DEMOCRACY NETWORK – UGANDA CHAPTER

WOMEN'S DEMOCRACY NETWORK  
*Empowering Women to Lead*  
Uganda Chapter

At Women's Democracy Network – Uganda Chapter (WDN-U), we have embraced the concept of involving men in achieving gender equality, for we know having men on board is crucial to realising the vision for which WDN-U exists. WDN-U is a national affiliate organisation for the global Women Democracy Network operating in 14 countries around the world. Our vision is a just society where gender equality is the norm rather than the exception.

We work to provide a platform for various women leaders to empower other women to pursue leadership roles. We work with women and men in political parties, academia, media and government. The involvement of men is crucial for you can't have a just society without having men on board who share the same conviction. Gender is about men and women sharing opportunities, benefits and responsibilities. We empower women who are aspiring for leadership roles. We give them information through training. In working with political parties, the first set of training is for women's leagues, followed with training of all party leaders. This is where men are involved because many leaders of political parties are men.

We work with six universities in the country. These are Kyambogo University, Kumi University, Uganda Christian University Mukono, Muteesa I Royal University, Mbarara University of Science and Technology and Gulu University. We hold dialogues for young men and women and in all those platforms, invitations are extended to women and men. We used to get questions like: If these sessions are about empowering women for political leadership roles, why invite both men and women? The answer was always: who elects women to political offices? It's both men and women. So it is important that both women and men are sensitised.

We have learnt that the way you communicate or approach the concept of gender from the onset determines whether people will listen to you or not. And that determines whether you succeed or not. If it is perceived as a women's issue, of course the men will become disinterested, but if it is perceived as a development and peace-building issue, which is about

sharing opportunities, you will be on the right track and will see positive results. This is particularly important at grass-roots level where the misconception that gender is about competition between man and woman is prevalent.

In the communities where women were considered subordinates, you need to get 'buy-in' from the leadership dominated by men. If men do not understand the importance of gender equality then you have lost it, for they are the people in decision-making positions and many lead households. This realisation is very important.

**Interview conducted with Perry Aritua, Executive Director, WDN(U)**

## WE INTENTIONALLY WORK WITH MEN TO ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY – FOWODE



**Forum for Women in Democracy**

Born out of the 1994-1995 Constituent Assembly (CA) process, Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE) has, right from the onset, engaged men in gender mainstreaming. At the time, a group of originally nine CA delegates formed the Gender Working Group (GWG) comprised of interest groups such as the youth, workers and gender-sensitive men with whom they would work to ensure gender issues were integrated into the constitution-making process.

After the CA process, the group agreed to continue with the pro-

cess they had started. That is how FOWODE was born. The organisation worked with women in politics at all levels because we thought it was important for them to be effective in their legislatures. We did a lot of work on gender budgeting, youth and leadership development. In the process we realised the importance of working with men because, unless we brought men on board as allies, it would be difficult to pursue the gender agenda. Yes, we might have made progress but the process would be very slow.

In 1998, for instance, we trained women councillors, but after training and empowering them, the feedback we got was that the men occupying the influential positions were not gender-aware and women's efforts were being thwarted. We started training men in strategic positions in politics and civil service, such as Chief Administrative Officers, District Education Officers and Planners. You have got to work with men, for it is they who occupy a big number of these positions. In Parliament, for example, most of the technical committees are headed by men who need to understand and appreciate the importance of gender budgeting.

At the local level, we have the Village Club Models where ordinary citizens are part of the advocacy group to track the allocation and distribution of resources. These clubs are comprised of both men and women. Working with men at this level is particularly important because it is here where negative perceptions about gender equality are deeply ingrained and women's space is limited. So we have become more intent on working with men in achieving gender equality.

The experience is a mixed one, depending on where you find the men to work with. In some districts progress has been made, while in others there is still much to be done. Take, for example, Karamoja where women are still viewed as being unfit for the public space. We notice this from the challenges and the language women face from their opponents on the political campaign trails. That is why in advancing the gender equality cause, we need to go out of our way to bring men on board. When you have men as messengers and role models, the message is digested faster.

We also need to reach out to more women because not all of them are gender-aware. You still find some women who do not think that the public space is for them. We need more women and men on board – women to appreciate their rights and men to be part of the advocacy for gender equality, so that together we can forge a good future. And we need to do that at the various levels – household, community and national levels. At institutional level, we have to work on laws and their implementation. We have good laws but implementation is still a challenge. We need to translate what is on paper to the ground or fix the gaps that exist. It is multiple approaches, not individual efforts. The future is bright. The change we desire to see may take some time to come, but I am confident it will.

**Interview conducted with Patricia Munabi, Executive Director, FOWODE**

## WE COUNT NOT ON MEN, BUT WOMEN TO REALISE GENDER EQUALITY – MEMPROW



The Mentoring Programme for Young Women (MEMPROW) focuses on empowering girls to have a voice and make informed choices. We believe this is important so that young women do not have to 'fight' with men. In other words, girls should understand that just because they are empowered, they do not have to fight with the system, the environment.

We focus on girls because culture empowers boys. We do not spend much time empowering those who are already empowered. For example, culture teaches boys to be assertive, communicators and decision-makers, whereas the girls are told 'your father or husband will decide for you'. Even her uncle decides how much bride price will be paid. At MEMPROW, we believe that empowerment must focus on girls. However, we reach out to boys, too, so when there is a mindset shift for girls, the same happens with the boys.

When we do joint dialogues for girls and boys, we emphasise that girls have rights that must be upheld, and it is important that boys listen to the girls and the girls hear what the boys have to say. Our work is mainly in Kampala and Zombo districts. We invite boys and men in our community training so they understand issues of gender equality and

women's rights.

We need the boys to listen to the discussion that stresses the fact that girls have rights. The boys have got to understand that women are human beings just like men. Men need to unpack the system, literally. The problem is not men; it is the system, for you will find even girls and women who, because of the system, censure themselves. For instance, on the issue of intimate partner violence, a young woman may tell you why the boy has to beat her into submission. It is the system, the culture we have got to work on so that both women and men are treated equally. And that requires collaboration between men and women so that the system works for everybody's good.

We know this work is for life, and that men will not do it. They still love their privileges and entitlements that they would not want to give up on. We can work with men, involve them, but I don't trust men to promote this gender agenda. I hope they will change but I won't count on them to change the balance. Many are still double-minded. They may sound feminists in public but privately speak otherwise – their language, the way they communicate is different from what they profess in public.

The future lies in having a movement of young people with the voice and courage to promote the gender agenda, young people who have knowledge, the independent-thinkers. It is important to equip them with marketable skills and the ability to analyse the environment – a patriarchal society – and see how to use the system well enough to make sure they don't conform to it, they who can see the bad and the good things

in it. That's where the future is. I will not count on men to do that, though. MEMPROW have chosen to work with girls. That one we will do well. But if someone elsewhere can work with boys, it is okay. MEMPROW cannot do everything.

Interview conducted with Dr Hilda Tadria, Director, MEMPROW

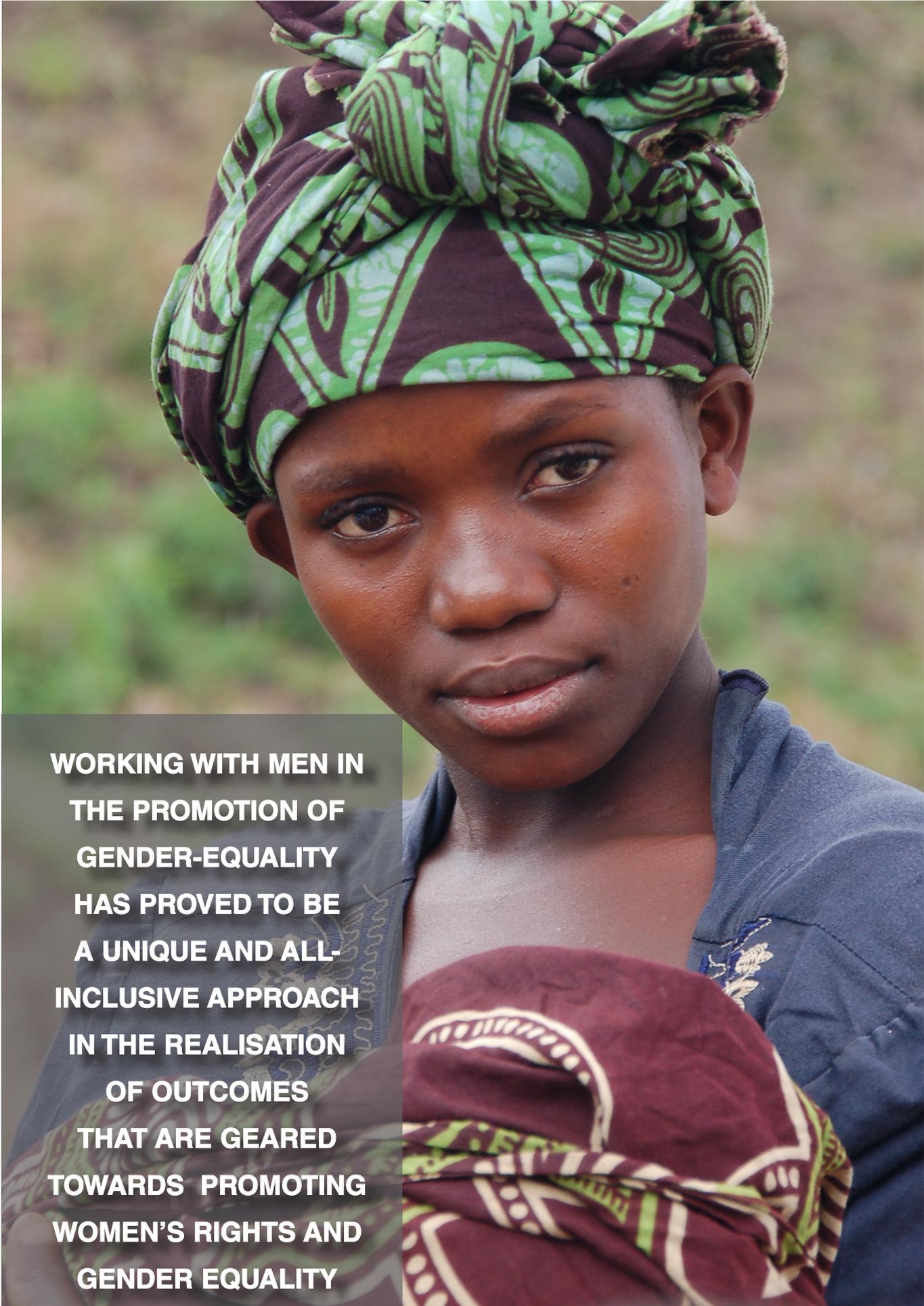
**Women in leadership cannot cry without raising a storm of commentary**

**Madeleine M Kunin**

**IF YOU SAY  
YOU RESPECT ME  
BUT I CAN'T HAVE  
THE SAME RIGHTS  
AS YOU  
THEN YOU  
DON'T RESPECT ME.**

**I'M NOT  
A  
JOKE**

DANIEL ARZOLA 2013



**WORKING WITH MEN IN  
THE PROMOTION OF  
GENDER-EQUALITY  
HAS PROVED TO BE  
A UNIQUE AND ALL-  
INCLUSIVE APPROACH  
IN THE REALISATION  
OF OUTCOMES  
THAT ARE GEARED  
TOWARDS PROMOTING  
WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND  
GENDER EQUALITY**

**I believe that  
the rights of  
women and  
girls is the  
unfinished  
business of  
the 21st  
century.**

**Hillary Clinton**



# GIRLS JUST WANNA HAVE FUN FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS

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