

Review

From no-party to multi-party competition: Analysing women's candidature in Uganda's 2006 national elections

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This article examines the question of women's candidature in Uganda's multi-party elections in 2006. For 20 years since 1986, Uganda was governed under a no-party system known as Movement. Under this system electoral competition took place within a framework of individual merit where nomination was based on one's individual decision to stand for public office. Within this same period there was remarkable increase in women's political participation at levels with faster progress being made at the local government level than the national and executive. In the following article, derived from a study conducted in 10 districts just before the February 2006 general election held under a multi-party dispensation, we demonstrate that while multi-party politics has thrown up enormous opportunities for possible expansion of the women's political participation, it has also generated more challenges and complicated existing ones. At the same time the parties remain largely patriarchal men's clubs. The bridge for women's political participation is still shaky. The article, however acknowledges that although the bridge is shaky, it is important that it exists at all.

Keywords: Women's candidature, elections, transition, political parties.

INTRODUCTION

On February 23, 2006 Ugandans went to the polls on the basis of multi-party competition, breaking a two decade long freeze of political parties. At the helm of the electoral contest, the presidential level, voters had five candidates from which to select a leader. The candidates were Miria Kalule Obote, flag bearer of the Uganda People's Congress (UPC), the first woman ever, in Uganda's history, to stand for this position; Sebaana Kizito of the Democratic Party (DP); Kizza Besigye of the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC); Abed Bwanika an independent candidate; and finally, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, the then incumbent of the National Resistance Movement Organisation (NRM-O).¹

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¹ Results declared by the Electoral Commission put the candidate performance in the elections as follows: Obote Kalule Miria, a female obtained 0.82% of the vote, Abed Bwanika, 0.95%, Sebaana John Kizito, 1.58%, Besigye Kizza 37.39% and Yoweri Kaguta Museveni the victor of the contest obtained 59.26% (Uganda Gazette, March 27, 2006).

The political party freeze was crafted in the spirit of holding the "divisive" party politics at bay so as to "allow" the country heal from the anarchical 1970s and the civil war period of the early 1980s under the all "embracing" Movement government. In the revolutionary post Museveni led guerrilla war rhetoric, the Movement government was supposed and indeed to some degree it was – a broad based government with representation in its political outfit drawn from all key political parties. The Movement enjoyed enormous support amidst optimism from Ugandans who had endured political turbulence for over two decades or so. However, the very crafting of the Movement ideology that was all embracing and intolerant to internal dissent created opportunities for its initial popularity but also set the ground for internal contradictions that "forced" its leader to "open up" as a way of letting enemies from within to go in the much needed consolidation scheme amidst falling popularity².

² This falling popularity of the Movement can be partly attributed to a betrayal of the people's expectations as leaders failed to address the very evils they had set out to eliminate from the Ugandan body politic namely sectarianism, corruption, nepotism, dictatorship, political patronage and personality worship. For the North and North East of the country, the

Consequently, Uganda went into a multi-party political gear after a long period of Movement governance with the hitherto opponents to the “divisive” party politics now championing the ‘open- up in a way, the year 2006 was unique. The very fact of the first ever female candidate at the highest political post was historical. Though somehow accompanied by cynicism on the basis of the under-currents in her party, the candidature of Miria Obote indicated that party politics could have the potential to bring out surprises, one of which is to have women at the helm of power- rescuing them from eternally acting in men’s shadows. Despite the fact that she did not win, Miria Obote joins the rank of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia in a sense that she has contested power at the very top.

Beyond the focus on the individual, the change from the Movement (that is, no party- system) to a multi-party political dispensation and what it meant for women’s candidature as a whole remains critical. World over, transitions have been known to offer moments of opportunity, especially with regard to gender equality lobbies. Whether in a form of revolutions or peaceful change of governance systems, transitions supposedly create situations for redefining state power where women as a marginalised group could make various gains. As according to Razavi (2000), transitions tend to provide moments when the state is more amenable to incursions, incursions referring to the possibilities to renegotiate positions and entitlements.

Uganda’s political transition specifically entailed at least in theory, a departure from the individual merit scheme to collective merit where parties play a relatively big role in selection and support of candidates. The point of departure for this study was: what did this move mean for women candidates? This question specifically became even more significant in that for the same twenty years of party freeze, a policy of affirmative action that accorded separate seats to women for parliament and local councils substantially increased women’s public presence. But at the same time many a scholar and observer pointed to the inherent exclusionary nature of the *add-on* seats for women in these structures (Ahikire, 2003, Goetz, 2003, Tamale, 1999). Would multi-party competition expand women’s political leverage or would it stifle it further? The research therefore sought to examine women candidature through the election period in the new context of party competition.

A note on the research process

The study generally targeted parliamentary elections.³

Movement government failed as war raged on for decades, casting doubts to the ability of the regime to deliver Uganda from the “horrible” past.

³ Indicative information was also captured at local Council level, especially where women were contesting leadership positions such as chairperson LC3.

The study specifically focused on women’s candidature at individual, party and community levels. Specifically, we examined the electoral practices of contesting political parties and their influence on women candidates and analysed community perceptions on women’s candidature in a multi-party political contest. The coverage of the study was ten (10) districts, purposively selected to represent geographical, as well as socio- economic disparities from the 76 districts that existed then. These were grouped into four regions: Northern included Arua and Lira⁴; Eastern included Mayuge, Mbale and Kapchorwa; Western included Kabale and Mbarara; and Central included Mpigi and Sembabule, with Kampala as the capital city selected for its overall significance. The selection took into account the need to observe the situation in relatively urbanized districts and more or less regional centres such as Mbale, Mbarara, Lira and Kampala. The second set included relatively remote districts while the third included relatively new districts such as Mayuge.

A variety of methods were used. First was a survey involving 616 randomly selected respondents from the ten (10) districts? Second were in-depth interviews with key informants such as election officials, candidates, party officials, opinion leaders, feminist scholars and gender activists. We also observed campaign rallies, poster messages and voting throughout the selected districts which enabled nuanced understanding of the gender politics in the elections. Documentary analysis was also done with a variety of sources, which included the Electoral Commission records, Party records, Election observers and monitors’ reports, books and Newspapers.

Overview of the transition

Throughout the 20 years of party freeze, several sections of the Ugandan society clamoured for the return to pluralism or what was popularly known as ‘opening up political space’. The opening up took place through a transition process that began around 2002 with a Constitutional Review. The referendum to decide whether Uganda would go multi-party or retain the no-party political system was shrouded in uncertainty. The Omnibus Constitution Amendment Bill of 2004 supposed to facilitate the transition process underwent severe criticism, on the basis of its content as well as the spirit behind it.

The various views expressed on the nature of Uganda’s recent transition pointed to the fact that it was a moment of opportunity but nevertheless a highly uncertain process. At the very general level, the transition was an unclear process, according to many respondents. A referendum on the need to open up was held in July 2005,

⁴ Due to the resource constraints such areas as Karamoja and Kalangala were not included in the sample. Similarly, Gulu which would bring in the dimension of conflict areas was omitted.

less than 12 months to the general elections meaning that the promise to open up was not obvious.⁵

The 2005 referendum on political systems came out with an 'open up' verdict. But in the run up to the referendum, there was a point of concern about the ping-pong transition process. The Political Parties and Organizations Act (2004) was already passed and was in existence and functional. Various political parties and organizations including the NRM had already registered and in full operation. Even the framing of the question: Do you allow for opening of the political space to allow those who want to join other political organizations or parties of their own choice to do so", raised concerns about the spirit behind the referendum. According to analysis of academics and civil society actors, the question was meant to entrench the Movement government into power at all costs. If 'the people' said YES, the NRM under the leadership of President Museveni would operate as a fully registered party alongside other political parties whose opportunities to win political power were seriously hampered. In the same vein, if they said NO, then the Movement would, still, under the leadership of Museveni continue to rule.

In a complete turn around, after a 19-year unrelenting campaign against parties, President Museveni held the flag for the YES vote in 2005. As reported by the Weekly Observer Newspaper (July 14 - 20), President Museveni said that the Movement had been medicine to fight against sectarianism, brought about by colonialism, but after 19 years, the overused medicine had started having side effects. The President's view seemed to originate from the growing internal dissent within the movement government represented by openly defiant army officers and especially Colonel Kiza Besigye who criticised government and offered himself as Presidential candidate in 2001 contesting against President Museveni in what apparently turned out to be labelled by movement ideologues as "jumping the queue." Other top-level leaders had also "quit" the Movement and some military officers had been charged in the Courts of Law in the effort to "clean up" the movement. Hence multi-party politics would in view of that, allow those who had rejected the medicine for 19 years, to organize independently – to eject discontented people who were undermining the system from within.

On the side of voters, especially in the rural areas, there was relative confusion, especially regarding the government's sudden change of position. Majority were not clear about the reasons for the referendum. And during the fieldwork for this research, we found out that majority of people in the rural areas, particularly women,

⁵ The Referendum was held on July 28, 2005. The referendum question posed to the voters was: 'Do you agree to open up political space to allow those willing to join other political parties/organisations to do so to compete for political power?' The options presented to the voters were 'YES' symbolised by the Tree and 'NO' by a House. The YES vote was declared winner with 92.5% of the votes (Hanssen 2006: 1).

were not sure about the implications of the referendum. It was not clear to them, how President Museveni could have suddenly changed his mind to now promote what he had earlier and vehemently too, termed as divisive political party politics.

It is specifically very important to note that the position of women remained invisible in the debate on the transition. The question of how you position women to compete in the multi-party system was not adequately addressed (Ahikire and Madanda, 2005). Women in the dominant NRM became 'yellow girls'⁶ while those in other parties were too few to make a national impact on the woman question. A study carried out on Affirmative action for women, in early 2005 indicated that there was no effort to go beyond the given add-on seats in parliament and local government. A number of women organisations under the umbrella of the Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) made 'women's minimum demands to political parties and organisations,' which required them to apply affirmative action by ensuring that women formed at least 40% in all political party and organisations governing structures. But on the whole the nature of inclusion of women in the new political space in a multi-party set-up was not clearly articulated. One respondent placed this lacuna squarely on the women's movement in Uganda in that it was unstrategic and severely unorganised.

The women's movement in this country is very reactive. We are not clear on what we want as women' in this so-called transition (woman activist cited in Ahikire and Madanda, 2005: 20).

All the above informs the perspective from which we look at women's candidature in the 2006 elections. Whereas Uganda is often cited as a success story with regard to women in political leadership, on the basis of a relatively gender sensitive constitution and increased presence⁷, the current trends need to be critically examined to go beyond numbers.

Framing the debate

The primary focus of the study was to examine the position of women candidates in view of the move from indivi-

⁶ A term coined to refer to key women strong members of the NRM. Why did we not have 'Yellow Boys? Did we just miss them?

⁷ The 1995 Constitution has various articles that address women's political participation. The National Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy enshrined in the Constitution stipulate that the state shall ensure gender balance and fair representation of marginalized groups on all constitutional and other bodies. Specifically, Article 32 provides for affirmative action (AA). Affirmative action both at the national and local levels, which brought women to nearly 25% of parliament and a minimum of 30% of Local government councillors, coming on the heels of Rwanda with 48.8% and South Africa 29%, places Uganda well above the regional (Sub-Saharan Africa) average of 14.3% (IPU: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>).

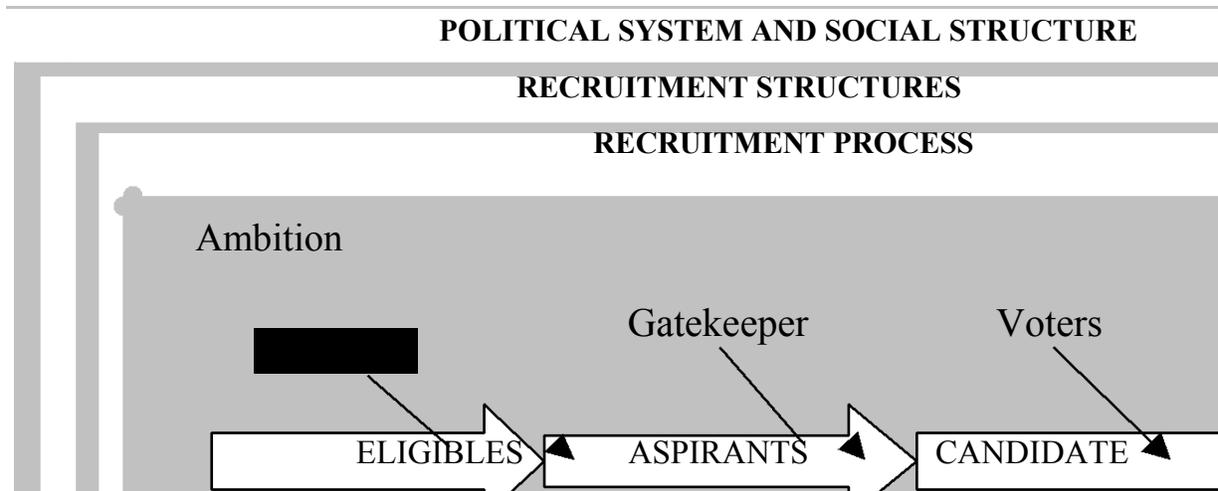


Figure 1. Legislative recruitment system.
Source: Adapted from R. E. Matland 1998, p. 67.

dual merit to party systems. For women to get elected they need to pass through three crucial barriers: first, they need to select themselves to stand for elections; second they need to get selected as candidates by their party; and third, they need to get selected by the voters (Matland, 1998:66). This section highlights the approach used to look at the whole question of women candidates: the role of parties, as well as the individual and community factors. Figure 1 shows these three crucial stages. Individual factors churn out aspirants from all eligible people, parties as gatekeepers convert aspirants into candidates while community as voters, finally, by the tick on the ballot paper, turn candidates into MPs. Indeed all these are dependent on the nature of the political system, as well as recruitment processes and structures.

As shown above, the very first stage is for the individual to make a decision to stand for an elective office. Indeed the individual decision is influenced by many factors including resources and their social location. For women, the gender nexus is a thread that runs through right from the decision to the point of being selected. We find that, women tend to be constrained at the individual level in terms of ambition and requisite resources. This is for instance where we shall analyse the influence of spouses, relatives and friends on women's aspirations for public office.

The second stage, that of gatekeepers, the party is a very crucial stage. The single most important location of parties in elections, the gatekeeper role of turning aspirants into candidates leads us to examine the parties in Uganda, especially in view of the freeze of party activity in the past. Parties are, as it were, the heart of multi-partyism. Questions of women's inclusion and gender responsiveness in parties should equally be at the heart of multi-party competition.

At the third level of voters, there is a tendency for voter

preference for male candidates as well as cultural negativity towards women. On the whole, the interjection of the party in terms of nomination and candidature support is an important area to consider, which brings in the question of party practices in terms of recruitment and nomination processes.

Worldwide, political parties have been a focus of debate. Political parties have critical roles in any political system because they nominate candidates and control the election campaign as well. As political machines to win elections and wield government, there is a whole discussion about whether or not they are tools of democracy or sources of tyranny and repression (Heywood, 1997). From the feminist point of view, political parties have been principally viewed as patriarchal, instruments by men and for men. Accordingly, political parties continue to be male spaces where women face serious obstacles (Razavi, 2000). Yet it has also been acknowledged that parties are more or less a necessary evil since modern society is yet to come up with a plausible alternative for competition for political power. This means that there is need to examine concrete dynamics within parties so as to increase women's political leverage within them.

WOMEN AND PARTIES

The outcome of the 2006 elections in terms of women's positionality had contradictory directions. On the one hand, the number of women in parliament increased. Looking at the spectrum of leadership in the aftermath, (Table 1), a very big jump happened at the parliament level. Women legislators increased from 75 to 101, also meaning that more women participated in the 2006 elections as candidates. Women on mainstream constituency increased from 11 to 15 and clearly, the biggest

Table 1. A spectrum of women in leadership in Uganda 2006.

Position	2006				Females previous period
	Female		Male		
	No	%	No	%	
Executive					
Cabinet	14	20.28	55	79.71	15
Cabinet Appointees	1	8	11	92	1
Parliament	100	27.81	231	72.18	75
District women representatives	80		0		56
MPs representing constituencies	15	6.07	201	93.93	11
Other interest groups	5				
Local Government					
Local Council V C/P	1	1.144	68	98.87	1
Municipality/City Division Chairpersons (Local Council III)	1	5.55	17	94.44	2
Sub-county Chairpersons (Local Council III)	11	1.12	969	98.87	6

Source: Byamukama (2006), Ahikire (2004).

contribution was the creation of 11 new districts, in the immediate pre-election period.

The leadership spectrum above indicates women's progress in some areas and retreat in others. But beyond the outcome of the elections, this research focused on the process, the electoral contest and specifically analysed the party dynamic, the question to which we now turn.

On NRM-O and the contagion effect

Women contesting in other parties other than NRM were considered as jokers and enemies of government – (Mayuge).

Often more men than women attended the FDC rally while more women than men attended the NRM rally (Mbale)

More women turned up to vote especially in the morning than men. And when Museveni was announced as winner at one of the polling stations, the men around said that women had won - (Mayuge).

The above views clearly bring out one point. Women were seen to be concentrated in the NRM, both at the level of voters and the level of aspiring candidates. According to press reports, it was believed that if women voted as a bloc, they would be the major determinant in NRM victory (The Daily Monitor Newspaper, February 1, 2006). Just as in the previous two general elections of 1996 and 2001, women were generalised as a vote bank for the NRM (Ahikire, 2004). In terms of women aspirants, there was a large pool of seasoned women politicians who were thrown by the way side - through the NRM nomination exercise and due to the fact that many also

focused on the district seat.

There was overwhelming fear of the opposition on the part of women. Whether by design or by default, the seeming concentration either through women's own evaluation or fear of intimidation worked against women's collective leverage in the elections. What we see as the women's fear of opposition has far reaching implications since it limited women's opportunity for political exposure and may in a way have the danger of constructing them only as clients of the dominant party leadership.

Is there a problem if women are seen to be more supportive of the ruling/dominant party than the opposition? Ideally, a dominant party may have the capacity to address equity issues for which other parties may not have enough political clout to venture into. If women as members of a dominant party are able to mobilise and push gender equality agenda in the party, there are possibilities that this creates a contagion effect (Matland and Studlar, 1996). In other words, other parties cannot afford to ignore those issues if they are serious about winning votes. This is what we see, for example, in the case of South Africa where women in the African National Congress made an impact on the ANC position on women which forced other parties to at least 'bend' their overtly patriarchal build up (Ballington, 2002). In Kenya's 2002 elections most women candidates aligned themselves with NARC, seen then, as the dominant party (coalition) (AWC Features, 2003). In the case of Uganda, however, the prospects for women to keep the NRM accountable seem to be very limited (Kyarimpa, 2005).

In 2003, Goetz noted the problem with patronage in Uganda. She argued that the Movement system only allowed the executive to widen the net of patronage to include women. Goetz asserted that:

"The absence of a party structure condemns women's engagement in politics to remain at the level

of special pleading and success in gaining patronage appointments, not at a more institutionally secure level of sustainable change in party structures, candidate support and party policy (2003: 135).”

The above observation seems to place a higher premium on the political party arrangement, which now makes it imperative to examine the parties in their role as the custodians for candidate selection.

Party leadership: Where are the women in the party hierarchies?

The year 2006 was in a way unique in that it was the first time in the country’s history to have a woman presidential candidate. In a surprising turn of events, Miria Obote, wife of the UPC late leader, Dr. Apollo Milton Obote was among the 5 presidential candidates, as the UPC flag bearer. During the late party president Milton Obote’s burial, the people of Lango were said to have ruled that the widow leads the party. One of the top party officials was reported to have told his colleagues that the decision of the people of Lira could not be defied because they were the heart of the party. “She has the charisma, the wit, in her lies the Obote spirit,” said a UPC leader promoting her candidature (Sunday Vision October 30, 2005).

The reaction of most women to Miria Obote’s succession of power ranged from cynicism to half-hearted celebration. Many did not see it as a real gain for women worth of celebration and on the whole both men and women frowned at the question whether they would vote Miria Obote. In a sense, it can be argued that despite the fantasies about the “good old times “ under Obote’s rule in the 1960s still alive in some parts of the East and Northern Uganda, his much demonised legacy painted with dictatorship, brutality and failure to control the army was a key factor in determining Miria Obote’s election fortunes. Even in central Uganda Miria’s birth place, the memory of Obote’s regime took precedence.

However, an argument could still be made to the effect that party arrangements may bring out surprises, one of which is to have women at the helm of power (*kuntiko*⁸), normally a preserve of men. This same argument has been used to understand the current President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the first woman President in Africa. Much as many critics may not see her as representing the most progressive forces in Liberia, the fact that a woman reached that level has an ideological impact, also giving the opportunity to demonstrate women’s ability to govern. Miria Obote’s campaign all over the country as a presidential candidate could have had an impact of break-

ing the male image and perhaps, paving the way for more women aspirants, if not now at least in the future.

Apart from the very unique situation of the UPC, we find that party leadership was male dominated. Even the feminization of deputising role that had slowly become the norm took a new turn as parties adopted a new fashion of creating multiple deputies. In 2005, as parties prepared to register, the NRMO had three deputies, two men – one woman, while Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) though has in its principles gender equality and creating opportunities for all had before its registration three co-chairpersons all men.

In the run up to the elections the positioning of women in party leadership stood as presented in the Table 2.

The distribution of positions at party district branches was no different. The post of chairperson was a preserve of men. Out of the ten districts, only in Kabale did we find chairpersons as females - for NRM and FDC. Most females appeared at the post of women mobiliser or women affairs, a role that was in itself very invisible in the electoral process.

The general observation could be that parties were still in a form of freeze as evidenced by the fact that a number of them did not have well constituted and functioning branches in all districts. Only the NRM had party branches in all the districts visited. It was the only party that had structures that permeated the whole country partly because it was able to take advantage of the already existing Local Council (LC) structure. The nomination roll released by the EC, indicated that Kampala was the only district where six parties presented candidates to compete for MP positions. Outside Kampala, it was NRM that had the capacity to have candidates for all contested positions except for major municipalities and urbanised areas where FDC fielded candidates thence providing a semblance of a political contest (Table 3).

Women and party recruitment: Internal politics of party primaries

All political parties intending to participate in the 2006 elections were supposed to hold party primaries to select their candidates before the nomination date set by the Electoral Commission. The NRM-O and UPC having been the only parties that have been in power, though at different times, appeared to have roots in regional terms to warrant primary elections. Other parties had to either mobilize the undecided or new entrants into multi-party politics or the rejects from the central stage parties. Parties other than the NRM particularly expressed the inability to ‘attract’ women in their ranks. The nomination roll clearly indicates that only NRM was able to field candidates on all posts. But independents topped the list with 290 candidates, 36% of all nominated candidates for the open seat.

Even with regard to the District Women Seat, not all

⁸ A Luganda word that signifies the ultimate helm of power and control of a particular system

Table 2. National Party Leadership: Women positioning.

	NRM	FDC	UPC	DP
Chairperson	M	M	F	M
Deputy One	M	F	M	F
Deputy Two	F	N/A	N/A	N/A
Deputy Three	M	N/A	N/A	N/A
Secretary General	M	F	M	M
Treasurer	M	M	M	M
Publicity	M	M	M	F
Others	F (women Mobiliser)	F (Envoy)	F (Women Leader)	F (Women Affairs)

F- Female, M-Male, N/A-Not applicable.

parties fielded a candidate. Apart from the NRM which was able to field candidates on all seats, in the 10 districts sampled, FDC fielded five (5) candidates, DP three (3) UPC 2, Jeema one (1) and CP none. As with the mainstream independents were six, a clearly substantial number⁹, meaning that the party space was not meaningfully engaged.

In what one would see as a democratic gesture the NRM rejected the demand by incumbent MPs who subscribed to the party to automatically become its candidates in the 2006 multi-party elections. If accepted, the proposal would have meant that no primaries would be held in those constituencies where the incumbent MP was a supporter of NRM. The incumbent would be unopposed as party candidates. The party's Central Executive Committee (CEC) discussed the demand and said it was against the party doctrine. The CEC resolved that the primary elections to choose the candidates be held in all constituencies as provided by the NRM constitution¹⁰.

In the demand for favouring incumbency, the MPs clearly demonstrated reluctance to move to an ideal multi-party contest. This very reluctance in what would ideally be called a dominant party, the NRM, was reminiscent of the broader contradictions in Uganda's transition to the multi-party system. There was little in the direction of opening up party activities and open recruitment of members. Such that it was difficult to know exactly how many party members were there for each party. Some people held both the FDC and NRM cards while in some places one would encounter an agent who represented both the FDC and NRM giving out cards for both parties. Despite this lack of clarity, the primaries that took place, specifically with NRM and UPC can be used as indicator of possible constraints and opportunities for women inside parties.

As already discussed, the single most important role of parties in elections is their function of constructing aspi-

rants into candidates – the gate-keeper role. Much as women tend to be constrained at the individual level in terms of ambition and requisite resources, the interjection of parties in terms of selection processes is very important. Looking at the nomination roll, it is very clear that parties, including the dominant NRM did not sufficiently field women candidates. They principally remained in the ghetto of the district seat. Out of the total of 808 contestants on open parliamentary seats only 33 were women, constituting 4% of the electoral contest. A synthesis of party performance is presented below (Table 4).

The major contestants, NRM, FDC, UPC and DP did not reach even 10% of their fielded candidates. In the case of NRM and UPC there were reports that many of the would-be aspiring women were dropped in the primaries. FDC and DP did not in a way have primaries but the overall point is that women were marginal to the electoral contest. Can we then find the points of inclusion and exclusion?

Points of inclusion

One of the important points of inclusion for women candidates was seen in the phenomenon of group campaigns. In this kind of campaign, candidates sub-cribing to the same political party would move together using similar transport arrangements and organise joint campaign rallies. For such group campaigns, members would move as a team and the area MP contestant would announce the NRM or FDC team members who were contesting to the voters. The issues emphasised by the team for the NRM were often linked with voting President Museveni and then the entire team to fulfil his manifesto. Many candidates who had hitherto coined their own campaign manifestoes, slogans and individual identity often took on the messages of the parties they belonged. Both women and men contestants usually adopted the premier messages of their parties. The Movement candidates often took the 'prosperity for all' slogan (*Bona Bagagawale*). For the FDC, it was connected to voting for change.

This approach of team campaigns had the advantage

⁹ Independents had no limit while a party had to field only one candidate

¹⁰ Section 39(2) stipulates that for every elective national and local government office, there shall be primaries held within NRM to determine NRM candidates?.

Table 3. Nominated candidates for directly elected members of Parliament 2006.

Code	District	Nominated Candidates			FDC	NRM	DP	CP	UPC	JEEMA	PAP	IND	AP	LDP	FIL	MVMO	IDPT	NCFD
		NO.	F	M														
1	Apac	19	1	18	1	4	0	0	5	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	Arua	22	3	19	4	6	1	0	5	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	Bundibugyo	9	0	9	3	3	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	Bushenyi	17	0	17	5	7	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	Gulu	23	0	23	5	5	2	0	4	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	Hoima	8	0	8	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
7	Iganga	27	0	27	5	5	1	1	2	0	0	13	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	Jinja	19	1	18	4	4	2	0	3	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	Kabale	17	0	17	6	6	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	Kabarole	8	0	8	3	3	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
11	Kalangala	5	0	5	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	Kampala	36	4	32	4	8	8	2	3	2	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0
13	Kamuli	14	1	13	1	4	1	0	1	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
14	Kapchorwa	7	0	7	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
15	Kasese	18	0	18	4	4	1	0	2	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
16	Kibale	9	1	8	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
17	Kiboga	9	0	9	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
18	Kisoro	9	0	9	1	3	1	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
19	Kitgum	7	0	7	2	2	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
20	Kotido	4	0	4	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
21	Kumi	19	1	18	3	3	0	0	3	0	0	9	1	0	0	0	0	0
22	Lira	18	1	17	0	6	0	0	6	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
23	Luwero	16	0	16	1	3	3	0	0	1	0	7	0	1	0	0	0	0
24	Masaka	30	0	30	2	9	8	0	0	1	0	9	0	0	1	0	0	0
24	Masindi	10	0	10	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	4	0	0	0	1	0	0
18	Mbale	18	0	18	3	3	0	0	3	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0
27	Mbarara	11	1	10	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
28	Moroto	7	0	7	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
29	Moyo	10	1	9	2	2	1	0	1	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
30	Mpigi	14	3	11	2	4	3	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
31	Mubende	11	0	11	2	3	1	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
32	Mukono	24	2	22	3	7	6	0	2	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	2	0
33	Nebbi	12	0	12	2	3	1	0	2	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 3. Contd.

34	Ntungamo	12	2	10	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0
35	Pallisa	27	0	27	4	4	2	0	3	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	0	0
36	Rakai	14	0	14	2	4	3	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
37	Rukungiri	4	1	3	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
38	Soroti	16	0	16	4	4	1	0	2	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
39	Tororo	20	0	20	4	4	0	0	3	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0
40	Adjumani	3	0	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
41	Bugiri	14	0	14	3	3	0	0	3	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
42	Busia	10	0	10	2	2	1	0	2	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
43	Katakwi	4	0	4	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
44	Nakasongola	3	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
45	Sembabule	9	0	9	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
46	Kamwenge	5	0	5	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
47	Kayunga	10	2	8	0	3	2	0	2	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
48	Kyenjojo	11	0	11	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
49	Mayuge	16	0	16	3	3	1	0	1	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0
50	Pader	5	0	5	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
51	Sironko	8	0	8	3	3	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
52	Wakiso	26	5	21	5	7	7	0	0	1	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	1
53	Yumbe	5	0	5	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
54	Kaberamaido	8	0	8	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
55	Kanungu	6	0	6	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
56	Nakapiripirit	6	0	6	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
57	Amolatar	5	0	5	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
58	Amuria	9	1	8	3	2	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
59	Bukwo	2	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
60	Butaleja	6	0	6	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
61	Ibanda	9	0	9	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
62	Isingiro	9	0	9	1	3	2	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
63	Kaabong	2	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
64	Kaliro	2	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
65	Kiruhura	3	1	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
66	Koboko	4	0	4	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
67	Manafa	14	0	14	3	3	0	1	3	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
68	Mityana	10	1	9	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 3. Contd.

69	Nakaseke	4	0	4	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		808	33	775	138	214	68	5	78	6	2	290	1	1	1	1	2	1

Source: Uganda Gazette, 14th February, 2006.

Table 4. Gender synthesis of party performance in 2006 elections.

Party/Ticket	No. Candidates	Females	Female % age of party total	% age of National total
NRM	214	12	5.6	36.4
FDC	138	5	3.6	15.2
DP	68	5	7.4	15.2
UPC	78	1	1.2	1.2
CP	5	1	20.0	3.0
JEEMA	6	1	16.0	3.0
Independent	290	8	2.7	24.2
Others*	9	-	-	-
Total	808	33	4.1	

*Others include: Action Party (AP), Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), MVMO, IDTP, National Convention for Democracy (NCFD), Poverty Action Party (PAP), FIL

of lowering the costs to an individual candidate. Sometimes contestants who did not have own sufficient resources would take advantage of especially the joint transport and public address systems. This approach had an additional advantage in that it limited the possibility of voters requesting for money from individual candidates as it was usually observed when candidates organised individual rallies. Similarly, this approach could have had the advantage of shielding women candidates from some 'gender battles' with voters.

Facing nominations, the two leading parties, NRM and FDC had some 40% commitment to women's representation in their respective constitutions. According to the constitutional amendment of the NRM, about 40% of the leadership posts were supposed to be taken up by women.

The FDC constitution provided for 40% women in the structures. There was also provision for a women's league in almost all contending parties though their function was not clearly stipulated.

There were two major positions on party nominations. One was that not many women presented themselves as eligibles. 'Party Nominations were free and fair. The only problem was that women were not willing to come out to contest for party seats' said one respondent affiliated to DP, giving the example of DP's Vice President Rainer Kafiire who sailed through unopposed¹¹. Also in the same party, DP, a man stood down in favour of a woman for the post of Secretary General. In trying to explain the trend, this particular informant had it

¹¹ Interview with a DP official, January 2006, Kampala

that:

The trend has changed and men would rather give way for women rather than being defeated in a race¹².

The party nomination of some women to run on competitive seats, the open constituency seat is a positive pointer. Although the numbers of women in this category still remain small, it is an important step. Affirmative action (the woman district seat) had tended to create a ghetto for women and there was fear that the move to party competition would worsen the situation. Yet the 2006 also saw a high success rate of women who stood on mainstream competitive seats. The 8th parliament saw

¹² (Interview with a DP Official January 2006, Kampala)

15 women legislators on the constituency seat out of the 33 that stood on the mainstream constituency seat. In 1996 26 women contested with only 8 winning and in 2001, 33 contested with 11 of them winning. This particular election indicated that there was more willingness to vote women candidates especially on the basis that they held a promise for more pro-poor development. This optimism needs to be further nurtured rather than taken for granted. But the larger point is that had parties fielded more women on open seats the situation could even be more positive. Since voters are more willing than in the past to vote women especially on parliamentary seats, it means that the biggest hurdle in the years to come will be the party. Hence there is need to look at the points of party exclusion and how to address them.

Women excluded

From the very outset and as already pointed out, it was clear that women did not constitute a formidable voice in the transition to multi-party politics. The women's movement did not successfully locate itself in the whole question. The minimum demands made under the ambit of UWONET yielded minimal influence¹³. Similarly, the Women's Manifesto was not visible in the whole electoral contest. We see that a clear articulation of women's representation in a multi-party set up was largely absent.

In a leadership training workshop facilitated by the IRI for women parliamentarians, one MP implored participants to creatively think of a concrete formula that would ensure women's increased representation in parliament but without reducing the number of men or expanding the size of parliament. How would this be possible in practical terms? The view by a highly influential woman represented the political reality at the time. Major political actors were clearly not interested in going beyond the add-on seats for women. In other words, there was clear reluctance to engage the parties on the issue of women's inclusion. Yet active engagement rather than dependency on hand outs of party leadership is the only sure way to make women legitimate party members and candidates, 'to buoy up women's power in the party' (Caul, 1999:83). On party nominations, especially for NRM, almost all those who lost asserted that the nominations had been rigged. A key informant from Mayuge had this to say; The primary nominations were completely unfair because

¹³ The demands are divided into eight broad areas: 1) Real and meaningful democracy, 2) integration of the Principle of AA; 3) People-centred development; 4) Commitment to obligations under international instruments; 5) Peace and security; 6) Environment, land and Natural resources; 7) Law and Administration of Justice; 8) Health and Reproductive Rights. Specifically, the minimum demands require all political parties and organisations to apply affirmative action by ensuring that women form at least 40% in all political party and organisations governing structures. To this end UWONET has held 'bilateral' talks with major parties. Some of these talks were facilitated by the International Republican Institute (IRI).

there was a tendency to entrench the incumbent in their seats. That is why some of us are contesting as independent to show our dissatisfaction with the primaries nomination process¹⁴.

In Kabale, the same incidences were reported by independent candidates:

What forced me to contest as an independent is that the primary elections were not fair. My supporters were beaten and some imprisoned by the incumbent. I was not happy with the results so decided to stand as an independent. My counterparts who were not happy with the results encouraged me to contest¹⁵.

The second view was mostly common with regard to the NRM precisely because most people, especially women crowded themselves in the party. There was overwhelming fear of opposition as it was called although, legally, all parties were competing for power on the same footing.

The most blatant example of parties as gatekeepers was the locking out of MP Cecilia Ogwal of the UPC. Cecilia Ogwal was a leader in the UPC since the 1980s and the chairperson of the Interim UPC contesting for the UPC party primaries (Akello, 2007). In a seminar organized by Northern Uganda Women Forum, there was a call for tolerance and internal democracy in all political parties. Concern was expressed over the blocking of Ogwal who had for long worked for the good of her party. Reacting to the incident, the Deputy Speaker of parliament, Hon. Rebecca Kadaga, said it was a big shame for UPC to discuss democracy, which they do not practice. Whereas the locking out of MP Ogwal was not necessarily about her as a woman, the incident speaks to the enormous gate keeping power that parties can assume and the need for women to take appropriate measures to ensure their parties' accountability to them¹⁶.

Another factor prominent in the nomination was the patron-client dynamic. The patronage system appeared to be more in favour of the incumbents than the new entrants. The incumbents were the engine of the party and with their track record of holding a political office, they were part of a bigger network, which was able to mobilize resources to enable them influence the voting process in their areas of operation. Incidences of bribing voters in the primaries were reported.

There was also a question of change of venues in the case of NRM primaries. The venues for primary elections were changed from parishes to sub counties. The change of venues affected the poor who had no resources to ferry voters from their respective villages to sub counties. The costs of transporting of voters including their other

¹⁴ (Interview, February 2006, Mayuge District).

¹⁵ (interview, February 2006, Kabale District).

¹⁶ Ogwal lost the election to the UPC backed candidate Akena and was only able to get to the house following the creation of new district as an Independent Woman MP, meaning that she had substantially started her exit from the party that she had for quite sometime identified with.

welfare needs were supposed to be catered for by the intending candidates without any party support. There was also merging of parishes that were considered small enough and splitting those considered to be big. In either way, merging of parishes and sub counties had the effect on women and men contesting at lower levels where women dominate. Apparently, the merging of electoral units was not communicated to candidates and secondly those who had relatively bigger populations in their parishes would automatically win those who had relatively small populations from their respective electoral units.

The Women's League (WL): The problem with directed inclusion

All major parties had the women's league in the party structure. But what was the role of the women's leagues, especially in relation to women's candidature? The leagues and their leaders were not substantial actors. They did not feature and yet their presence in the party structures meant that women were somehow located in a parallel structure. Indeed some of the women in the FDC frowned at the WL. To them the league constructs women as appendages rather than active party members. Given the tainted history of women's leagues where (mostly under single party rule) parties tended to marginalize women's leadership and channelled women into mobilising around a narrow set of issues (Tripp, 2000) there is need to critically evaluate their direction in future. The experience of Ghana and more importantly, South Africa (the ANC Women's League) demonstrate that a league within the party, if created by women themselves with a clear structure and legitimacy, can actually make substantial gains for women both within the parties and beyond. But the dangers are real. Women's leagues can act to make women merely as appendages and clients in the system.

WOMEN'S CANDIDATURE: COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS AND REALITIES

The previous section addressed the experiences and barriers women face in party politics within the context of transition from the no party to the multi-party political system in Uganda. We will in this section address the individual factors that affect women's candidature and discuss the community perceptions and realities in the political transition process in Uganda. We argue that candidate factors and community anchored perceptions and realities coalesce to influence the electability of women candidates.

Individual factors

As Matland (1998) argues, the decision to run for office is generally influenced by the opportunities available as well

as personal ambition. Personal ambition is in turn influenced by a number of factors including levels of education and income, support from spouses where applicable and immediate relations as well as the overall community and national environment. Women have also to deal with and consider the possible consequences of joining politics. They have to contend with issues such as of men relaxing to the extent of abandoning their roles when women obtain an income. Some women who would have liked to participate are hindered by lack of money to enable them participate effectively. Coupled with these factors was the thinking that the pertaining political system and structures are crucial in providing opportunities for women to take on.

Women's support from immediate relatives

Reports regarding support for women's candidature from spouses are contradictory. While most women survey respondents (56%) stated that they were aware of women who had been stopped by spouses from making a political contest, 52% of the male respondents said they were not aware. It is clear however that the spousal factor in a woman's decision to join a political contest is significant.

Reports from more rural districts like Kabale, Kapchorwa, Sembabule and Mayuge indicated that there were numerous examples of women who had been barred by their spouses to contest in elections. In Mayuge district, a story was told of a woman who had even picked nomination papers to contest but was forced by her husband to return them. A female informant in Mbarara narrated a story of a woman who was stopped from re-contesting in the previous election on account of the accusation that when she joined politics, she became a "prostitute and even bought a car." She added that:

Some women have been stopped from standing by their husbands, the reason being that if they join politics, they become difficult to handle. Instead a woman becomes the man in the family¹⁷.

A civic educator in Mbarara reported that the community looks at women who join politics as those who want to cheat on their husbands. They argue that women's participation in politics destabilises families. There was a case of a woman whose husband put a condition that before she starts campaigning, NRM should first provide him with a job¹⁸. There was also another case where the husband had set 6 o'clock as the time his wife is supposed to be at home. This woman was standing for an LC Councillor position. There was a Bodaboda (bicycle) cyclist who chased his wife to go and marry (the area MP candidate) because she supported him. It was clear that women had to contend with a wide array of hostilities to decide to be in a political contest or even to win an

¹⁷ Interview Mbarara District, February 2006

¹⁸ Interview, Mbarara District February 2006.

election. In a study of women's civic rights and responsibilities in Rakai district, it was found that the perpetuation of gender based political violence against women was not only by ordinary people but also men in political authority (Madanda et al. 2005). There was this commonly reported belief among some men that if a woman joins politics, "then you have given her in."

On the point of election-related domestic violence, it was rather surprising to find very few reported cases. At the time of the study, the situation was in general relatively calmer than in the previous elections. Overt cases of election related violence were few and gender based election related violence was rarely encountered or reported. There were suggestions that election violence was low due to the holding of separate campaign rallies for candidates of different parties.

There were, sporadic reports of election related domestic violence. In a number of districts, there were reports where men did not want their wives to participate in elections. Some men also wanted their wives to support candidates of their choice. If not, the wife was harassed by being beaten or chased away from the home. In Kabale district, there was a case where a husband and wife disagreed on the choice of the candidates they supported which resulted in a fight. Many informants knew of women whose husbands had barred from attending political rallies and majority of these cases seemed to have been resolved out of the main legal system.

At the general level, however, the 2006 elections did not seem to have flared up intra-household conflict the same way as in previous elections. The dilemma noted here was: how can a woman take her life time partner to police yet elections are seasonal? 'My advice to women is to keep quiet but know whom to vote at the end' argued a Civic Educator in Mbarara district¹⁹. This same "advice" was encountered many times during fieldwork. For example, in Arua, members of the research team attended a campaign rally where a candidate advised women to keep quiet in such cases and vote at the end according to their choice since apparently it was 'after all' a secret ballot.

The apparent fall of election-related domestic violence (whether real or imagined) was hence attributed to the fact that majority of women decided to remain silent. There was general uncertainty and fear of what the multi-party arrangement would bring with it. In addition, if spouses differed on their choice of candidates, women often chose not to show open support for their candidates – to keep peace. One woman MP who stood on the FDC ticket informed the researchers that women would come to her secretly to assure her of their support. It is important to note that silence and focus on the ballot box has far reaching implications for women's political participation. It means that women will not actively engage in

the elections, an issue that requires further research and action.

Beyond spouses, survey results from the ten districts indicated that women had to deal with perceptions of friends, relatives and in-laws. By and large, a large number of men do not feel comfortable if their wives or female relatives stay away from home for a long time, for instance when they frequently attend conferences organised outside their districts. The field results indicated that men too could be dissuaded from participating in politics, but for women the situation was different and was mostly forceful.

The point of marriage in deciding the political fortunes of women was significant. First, spousal support or lack of it has been acknowledged by this and other studies as important in defining a woman's candidature and, to a large extent, the resultant fortunes (Byanyima and Mugisha, 2005). Marriage and marital status and relations have enabled or jeopardized women politically. For example in Arua district, marriage was the single most important explanation given for the women who lost. In one case a woman who was elected to parliament but later separated and remarried was not re-elected. Another woman who also lost the election was said to have uneasy relations with her husband.

There were also plenty of stories in many parts of Uganda, pointing to the idea that women's association or disassociation with some man can define their political fortunes. Using men as lenses to gauge women's political potential is still very common. Particularly, strong women candidates were viewed in terms of their fathers. In Kampala, Susan Nampira Lukyamuzi was ostensibly elected on account of the appeals of her father, Ken Lukyamuzi than on her own appeal to the electorate. At one of the rallies one speaker (LC2 official) emphasised thus:

"Susan Ngenda kukuwa akalulu, ssirwa bulungi bwo, ssirwa kuba gwe omwogezi omulungi naye lwa kitawo".

Literally translated in English as: Susan am giving you my vote not because of your beauty, not because you are a good speaker but because of your father²⁰.

In Mbarara, a woman contender on the Municipality MP seat was seen as strong because according to one male key informant:

Her background is good. She is born in Mbarara and her father was a prominent man. He was the first person to put up a storeyed house in Mbarara²¹.

Community support for women's candidature

Results from the survey data indicated that biases against

¹⁹ Interview Mbarara District February 2006.

²⁰ Field Observation Notes for Susan's Political Rally, Kampala February 2006

²¹ Interview, Mbarara District February 2006.

Table 5. If given a choice, would you vote for a woman as?

	Yes%	No%
President of Uganda	55	45
President of Party	63	37
Constituency MP	82	18
LC 5 Chair	70	30
LC 3 Chair	76	24
LC 1 Chair	79	21
Party Branch Chairperson	78	22

Source: Field research January-February 2006.

women are slowly changing. In view of what generally obtains as cultural negativity against women in leadership, the study team posed a specific question for respondents to give their views about specific prominent positions in Uganda's elections. The question was: given a choice would you vote a woman in these positions? This question aimed at testing voter preference assuming that there were no separate seats for women as in Uganda today and what the choices would be if women and men had to, as a matter of procedure, compete for the same seats. As shown in the results below, majority had a yes response with the highest percentage at MP level and president as the lowest (Table 5). Further analysis of the responses disaggregated by sex showed that more women than men supported women to be in leadership positions as shown in Table 7.

The data above indicated that there is high willingness among the population to vote women at various levels of leadership than before namely: presidency, LCV Chairpersons, LC3 Chairpersons, village (LC1) Chairpersons and party branch leadership. While the majority of those indicating this positivity are women, the proportions for men are equally high with small differences between men and women's responses. Most important also is that the often mentioned attitude of women against fellow women did not show significantly. According to the study results women are willing and are indeed voting women candidates. In-depth interview data in Mbarara indicated that the increased support for women resulted from the perceived good performance of women who have been in leadership.

Yet we still see that cultural negativity is a significant factor in determining women's political success. As such those study participants who were in the negative argued that women cannot lead men or that it is disrespect when women stand against men. Those in the positive argued that women should be given an opportunity as they are believed to be less corrupt. Put on a balance, a critical review of the findings indicates that the apparently positive attitude towards voting women has not to a large extent been translated into actual voting of women. Citing the biblical saying a member of the research team stated that "the spirit is willing to vote women but the body is

weak. The people are willing to vote women, but when they go to polling centres, they mostly vote men." It is important to examine why this divergence between willingness and actual voter behaviour. Is it the social – cultural environment or is it the patriarchal nature of the party structures or some other factors? The section on constraints attempts to deal with this point at greater length.

A critical analysis of qualitative data indicates that views regarding the support for women varied between the urban and rural areas. For example data from Kabale district indicated that, in urban areas women enjoyed community support and stood on mainstream LC seats though contesting for female only seats was preferred. Men were at the forefront of perpetuating this arrangement but women equally held stronger views. One LC 3 candidate remarked as follows:

Like me, who was contesting with men, fellow women would confront me and ask: why don't you go for the women's seat and leave the men's seat alone?²²

Another woman LC3 Councillor stated:

The community prefers women to contest female specific seats. However if a woman is uniting all people in terms of party, religion and the area she comes from, we can tolerate her to contest with men...But for President, it must be a man. We can't elect a woman. Women have many problems compared to men. Presidents must be men.²³

These deep rooted gender biases meant that women had to look elsewhere. They were also encouraged to participate at lower levels which do not draw them away from their domestic roles. Both men and women in various communities in Kabale believed that women can't make binding decisions for the community. There was a common denigrative saying that "a woman is a woman"

Reports from Mbarara district indicated that the community preferred to support women whom they thought were as aggressive as men. They should be good orators. Others argued that the support for women was because they were perceived as more financially trustworthy than male counterparts. Others however argued that women received support when they demonstrated feminine characteristics than when they were apparently threatening. Our daughter, our mother, our wife, perspective is critical. So, women candidates have to sometimes endure harassment to be liked by the voters. They have to put on a smile even when they detest the harassment for the sake of votes.

On the chances of Miria Obote one of the presidential contestants then, 78% of female and 80% of the males indicated that she would not be elected. It was predicted that Miria Obote would not win because: she had no sig-

²² Interview with LC3 Woman Candidate, Kabale District, February 2006

²³ Interview with LC3 Concillor, Kabale District, February, 2006,

Table 6. No of constituencies against percentage of women open seats nominees.

District	No. of Constituencies	Males	Females	Female%
Arua	6	19	3	14
Kabale	6	17	0	0
Kampala	8	32	4	11
Kapchorwa	2	7	0	0
Lira	6	17	1	6
Mbale	3	18	0	0
Mbarara	3	10	1	9
Mpigi	4	14	3	18
Sembabule	2	9	0	0
Mayuge	3	16	0	0

Source: Uganda Gazette, 14 February 2006.

Table 7. Support for female candidates by women and men for key posts.

	Yes %		No %	
	F	M	F	M
President of Uganda	57	53	43	47
President of Party	64	62	36	38
Constituency MP	84	81	16	19
LC 5 Chair	72	67	28	33
LC 3 Chair	78	73	22	27
LC 1 Chair	82	75	18	25
Party Branch Chairperson	79	77	21	23

nificant support in the various areas covered; her party was unknown rather surprisingly; all the support had been usurped by NRM or FDC. Other reasons given were that women do not vote for fellow women, because it is believed that women cannot make good leaders at higher levels." "Culturally, we have not reached a level of being led by a woman in this country" stated a man who had lost in the NRM LC5 primaries. There was also a suggestion that the fact that Miria Obote was standing as a president was not because the party members liked her but because she had the means financially and the fact that she was the wife of the late former president. While the case of Miria Obote may not be used to gauge the level of support for women candidates countrywide, the kind of perceptions expressed on her candidature could be pointers.

A study conducted under the auspices of the Uganda Women Parliamentarian Association (UWOPA) in 2005, on the effectiveness of women parliamentarians reports these very contradictions. Most people took men as natural leaders. However, in candid discussions on development, people showed preference for women leaders. In many cases the justification for choice of women as opposed to men was based on the alternative leadership,

service, consultation and feedback. On the converse the preference for men over women was largely informed by general gender prejudices and stereotypes (UWOPA, 2006).

Analysis of the data by region shows that negativity towards women's public life was more intense in the Western Uganda districts of Kabale and Mbarara as well as the more rural districts in the sample namely Mayuge, Kapchorwa and Sembabule. A look at the socio-economic characteristics of the districts indicates that Mbarara and Kabale are fairly developed districts while the three rural districts also exhibit characteristics of high levels of poverty and low education achievements. This variation implies that the design of gender programmes needs to take into account regional and district characteristics.

The second point that emerged from the study was the variation in terms of women contesting open seats. It was noted that in general, the chances of women contesting on the open seat were greater in districts that were bigger with many constituency seats than those with few. Table 6 illustrates these two points.

Generally, it is clear that the chances of a woman being presented on open seats in districts with fewer consti-

tuencies (as shown by the examples of Mbale, Kapchorwa, Mayuge and Sembabule) or districts in western Uganda were very low. While this point may require more research, it is clear from the nomination roll that districts with one or two constituency seats presented no woman on the open seats. By inference, fewer constituencies in a district tended to narrow down voter's choices and hence restrict women's possibilities to even offer themselves for election. This means that as the creation of new districts continues and districts become even smaller, the chances for women to stand on open seats could be fewer. On the other hand, if the phenomena of one-county districts such as Nakasongola, Adjumani and Yumbe becomes the norm, the effect will be of a multimember constituency – one man (County), one woman (District).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The foregoing discussion has demonstrated that a shift from a no-party to a multi-party political dispensation in Uganda presented greater opportunities for women's entry into political life while at the same time it threw up enormous challenges. While the many parties provide alternative avenues, parties as gatekeepers have to necessarily choose candidates whose chances of winning the electoral contest are high. In a situation where women may be perceived by the party as less competitive even when the people are more than willing to vote them as the results showed, they can be locked out of the contest by the party candidate selection processes. Additionally the results indicate that party structures remain largely rigid and patriarchal in nature, thereby excluding would be women's upward political mobility.

If there is anything more that the foregoing discussion has shown is that women have travelled a long and slow journey as far as political representation is concerned. Even when Uganda's national legislature currently stands at 30% the critical minimum, most of the gains have been made through the affirmative action seat that has brought in more women as new districts are created. Progress on the mainstream seat has been very slow though rising, and parties continue to present dismal numbers of women even when the chances of selecting women would have been higher.

Furthermore, even if parties were willing to back up female candidates, it is clear that women have to weigh their political fortunes much more carefully. They have to evaluate individual factors, party and community much more than men have to. In the process many eligible women do not cross the bridge to become aspirants – even with the affirmative action seat. Indeed, this is a case of a half empty or half full glass (Stetson and Mazur, 1995). In the past, the bridge for women's access to public office was almost non-existent. Now, the bridge is shaky. But the significant point at this stage of Uganda's political development, is to probably acknowledge that

the bridge is there at all.

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