

Women's Rights to Participate in Representative Politics: Perspectives from the Eastern and Central Regions of Uganda

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Abstract: *This article analyses and gives an overview of women's rights to participate in politics in Uganda and the actual role of women in formal politics today. Using a constructivist theory, the article reviews the factors affecting women's effective participation in politics in Uganda. It also examines the actual role of women in formal politics. It argues that women's involvement in politics has steadily increased to the hopeful reportage that the global empowerment campaigns have increased women's political participation across Africa. It establishes that, while the Ugandan women's role in politics gives the impression that so much has been achieved by the nature of their political participation, on a more realistic inquiry, women still face socio-cultural hindrances in this area. It recommends a reassessment of affirmative action policies and laws to complement women's agency in contesting for, winning, and participating in politics more effectively.*

Keywords— Human rights, Women, Participation, Representation, Uganda

1. INTRODUCTION

In Uganda today, women enjoy the same equal rights as men in all spheres of life and the constitution of Uganda prohibits discrimination of any person on the basis of gender or cultural background.¹ This was not the case many years ago when women were considered men's (father and husband) property and had no intrinsic rights of their own.² However, there have been calls in the last few decades, on the cation for effective inclusion and participation of women in politics and governance. Controversy ensued as a result, with the skeptics arguing against women's involvement based on competency.³ Lately, research has demonstrated that women are critical to development, good governance, and active civil society.⁴ Therefore the best way to improve living standards, and social entrepreneurship, and build a robust and self-sustaining community, and grassroots democracy, women have to be involved.⁵ From that understanding, Projects to empower women have evolved over the years like pushing women to get involved in national political and public sector decision-making to ensure that women's voices are included.⁶

The constitution of Uganda clearly provides for Affirmative action in its endeavor to get women involved in democratic processes and in the political and administrative structure.⁷ This progress in women's political empowerment has seen a gain in women's overall participation in various sectors in Uganda, especially in the political arena with women taking key political offices like the prime minister, speaker of parliament, cabinet minister, and permanent secretaries of ministries.⁸ This implies that Uganda is properly working towards meeting United Nations Development Agenda 3, whose aim is to promote gender equality and empower women by closing the gap in socio-economic and political spheres.⁹ Therefore, the argument that women have the right to participate in decision-making as the essence of democracy and fair representation is the sole move of democratic states, and non-representation is a violation of the principle that women have a right to equal participation in politics whether their impact is felt or not.¹⁰ This representation should be reflected at all levels of leadership, where special seats are

¹ The 1995 constitution of Uganda Article 21

² Doepke, Michèle Tertilt, and Alessandra Voena, *The Economics and Politics of Women's Rights* Matthias NBER Working Paper No. 17672 December 2011

³ Adom K and Asare-Yeboah IT, 'An Evaluation of Human Capital Theory and Female Entrepreneurship in Sub-Saharan Africa: Some Evidence from Ghana' (2016) 8 *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship* 402

⁴ Isobel Coleman, *The Payoff from Women's Rights*, 2004: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20033977>

⁵ Isobel Coleman, *The Payoff from Women's Rights*, 2004: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20033977>

⁶ Sylvia Bawa and Francis Sanyare, 'Women's Participation and Representation in Politics: Perspectives from Ghana' (2013) 36 *International Journal of Public Administration* 282.

⁷ The 1995 constitution Article 32

⁸ International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, *Women's Political Participation*: (2021).

⁹ International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (n 8).

¹⁰ Uganda Government, 'The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, [1995] Articles 21, 38 1 <<https://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/ug/ug002en.pdf>>.

reserved specifically for women.¹¹ Because placing more women in politics is said to address the needs of the then voiceless people whose nature and experience cannot be understood and even guessed by men.¹²

Ultimately, Women's participation in politics is centered around issues of justice, equity, and human rights. These are compounded in the representation of women and inclusion of their perspectives and experiences that can lead to more viable solutions having broader application in a given society.¹³ The rationale is that the exclusion of women in politics, renders them passive recipients yet politics is about how power is exercised and the outcome and not about institutions of power and who occupies them, who has power, what power relation exists, how power is exercised, and what policies and laws guide the process. Thus, the outcome of political participation should be able to reinforce their inferior status.¹⁴

2. LEGAL AND THEORETICAL CONTEXT

2.1 Methods

The study was carried out using field studies conducted in the Eastern and Central regions of Uganda in the months of January and February of 2022. Primary data was gathered through in-depth interviews with women on those in active politics and those not. The Snowball sampling technique was used to recruit participants. Statistical data was gathered from various sources including the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, government departments, and ministries databases; and UN compiled data.

2.2 legal context

Uganda is a party to several international, continental, and regional instruments that promote women's political participation. In some cases, these have been incorporated into national legislation and other mechanisms and measures, reflecting a positive trend of growing support for improving women's full and effective participation in democratic processes. The commitment to achieving gender equality can be traced to the 1948 UN Charter and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights which states that rights and freedoms will not be limited by a person's gender and establishes that 'all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Prominent among UN frameworks and instruments; The role of women in political movement strengthened between 1975-1986.¹⁵ Thereafter, various international and national instruments came in place to

provide for the empowerment of women in all political, economic, and social spheres.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW),. CEDAW provides the basis for realizing equality between women and men, Article 7 states that *States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, equal terms with men, the right: (a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies.* In addition, the UN conferences held in Mexico City (1975), Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985), and *The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)*¹⁶, aim to remove all obstacles in all spheres of public and private life based on a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making¹⁷, Outlines 12 strategic objectives and critical areas of action including "Women in Power and Decision Making". Among the critical areas of insufficient progress identified in Beijing Plus Twenty is the "participation of women in power and decision-making at all levels"; all point to gender equality, including in political leadership. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for action, obligates governments to take measures that ensure women's equal access to and full participation in decision-making. These may include, integrating women into politics, creating gender balance in government and administration, capacity building for women to participate in politics, and electoral process and political activities.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular, SDG 5.5 aims to 'ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.' SDG 5 underscores women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making. It picks up from where MDGs 3 left off, calling for the gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. Women's political participation is identified as the main indicator.

The African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR 2003) on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol). This Protocol was adopted to complement and strengthen the African Charter by promoting women's rights. Article 9. I call on state parties "to take specific positive action to promote participative governance and the equal participation of women in the political life of their countries through affirmative action, enabling national legislation and other measures to ensure that women participate without any

¹¹ See Article 78 (1)b of the constitution and as provided by the Local Government Act of Uganda

¹² International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (n 8).

¹³ International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (n 8).

¹⁴ Antony Mbithi, Damiana Ndambuki and Fredrick Owino Juma, 'Determinants of Public Participation in Kenya County

Governments' (2019) 54 Journal of Asian and African Studies 52.

¹⁵ (United Nations, 1982)

¹⁶ The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995

¹⁷ Martin, O., *The African Union's Mechanisms to Foster Gender Mainstreaming and Ensure Women's Political Participation and Representation* (International IDEA, 2013)

discrimination in all elections; and women are represented equally at all levels with men in all electoral processes.” State parties are urged to go beyond numbers by ensuring “increased and effective representation and participation of women at all levels of decision-making The target of the Protocol was to achieve full enforcement and ratification by 2015 and domestication by 2020.¹⁸ It details wide-ranging and substantive human rights for women covering the entire spectrum of civil and political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights. The Protocol is laudable for its emphasis on the right of women to participate without discrimination in all elections, equal representation of women in the electoral process, and equal partnership of women with men at all levels of development and implementation of State policies. The Maputo Protocol has been strengthened by other instruments such as; The African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance (African Democracy Charter 2007). This Charter establishes the African Union's standards and norms on elections, democracy, and governance. *The East Africa Gender Act 2016*-provides for Respect for gender parity in power and decision-making by a 50-a-50 ratio. Uganda has the oldest established system of seat reservation for women to ensure that legislated quotas are given effect. However, there is a debate as to whether this is the most effective way to increase women's representation.¹⁹

Taking a more realistic situation of women's actual participation in Uganda, there is a belief that the women in Uganda have attained higher status in politics because they have transcended to hold major offices in the land, they have openly participated in politics as active members in the national legislature, and local governments in voting and campaigns and mobilization for the cause in electoral processes. Whereas that may be true, significant gender disparities continue to exist and grow in some cases.²⁰ The men through the patriarchal powers vested in them by society, tend to become the “directors” of virtually all public life, and politics has a male figurehead. This is because the gap between the de jure and de facto equality among women and men in decision-making is greater.²¹ Essentially, the inroads made for political empowerment of women where they are regarded as equal to their male counterparts are eroded by these prevailing socio-cultural discriminatory systems. Noteworthy is that the struggle to transform prevailing socio-cultural and political systems that marginalize women

continues amidst the gains in increasing women's participation in the political process.²² The women politicians in Uganda have traversed barriers and have competed powerfully in politics, an area considered a preserve of astute men where adeptness, manipulation, and competence count. Since 1995, the women have contested and got themselves elected to almost all positions available in Uganda's political system such as presidential, the legislature, local governments, and mayorship to the smallest units of administration.²³

2.3 Theoretical context

The study relied on Rawls's constructive theory that postulates justice as fairness as a political conception of justice. Justice is only achieved if the true views of the persons studied are expressed by research through constructivist methods such as interviews, and participant observation, which allows the free interaction of the researcher and the participant and also allows them to co-construct knowledge.²⁴ Constructivism theory tends to go together with the conservative political views, promoted by ways of considerations of certainty and foreseeability with regards to the legal consequences of actions. “In order to fulfill its task, legal science must take the path against which Schweigaard warned, and view the legal norms in their conceptual and systemic interconnections.”²⁵ This theory ascribes to the discourse in determining correctness and moral truth or the most reliable path to achieving truth.²⁶

3. IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN REPRESENTATIVE POLITICS

Women's participation in decision-making has become a desirable part of governance in recent times. This is notable in the increased women's visibility in politics and the battle to attain gender equality by governments.²⁷ This move is motivated by the benefits of getting women involved in decision-making and avoiding paying the price caused by gender disparities. For instance, it is believed that any community where women are excluded in important decision-making processes shall suffer poverty in the long run.²⁸ This was also advanced by the Millennium Development Goals 2000, that, the international community should attack poverty by addressing gender equality issues and consider empowering women.²⁹ Studies have also argued that women's

¹⁸ International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (n 3).

¹⁹ International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (n 3).

²⁰ International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (n 8).

²¹ United Nations, Report of the United Nations to the Fourth World Conference on women, (UN, 1996) pp.12

²² Bawa and Sanyare (n 6).

²³ Articles 38, and 59 of the 1995 constitution of Uganda.

²⁴ Weithman P, *Why Political Liberalism?: On John Rawls's Political Turn* (2011)

²⁵ Pattaro, Enrico CR, 'A Treatise of Legal Philosophy and General Jurisprudence__ Legal Philosophy in the Twentieth Century_ 2011, P'794

²⁶ Pattaro, Enrico CR, 'A Treatise of Legal Philosophy and General Jurisprudence__ Legal Philosophy in the Twentieth Century_ 2011, P'794

²⁷ Isobel Coleman, *The Payoff from Women's Rights*, 2004: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20033977>

²⁸ Isobel Coleman, *The Payoff from Women's Rights*, 2004: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20033977>

²⁹ The 2000 UN Millennium Development Goals

economic, social and political participation is of paramount importance that should not be ignored by developing economies,³⁰ because societies that have marginalized women, often count few anti-authoritarian voices in politics and more men join politics who end up in fanatical religious and political brotherhoods which are the two main factors that stifle democracy.³¹

Incidentally, many questions are asked like, does society have anything to lose without women's participation in decision-making? Why should Uganda's contemporary society bother about women's participation? In that context, the study argues that women play an important role in the nation's socio-economic³² and political of any nation due to the unique dynamism they inject into the political process.³³ The other reason for including women is to comply with the pillars of representative democracy. This kind of democracy focuses on the quantitative representation of all groups in society to access the decision-making process and qualitative inputs drawing from the group's experiences and aspirations for better accountable and responsive governance.³⁴ Undoubtedly women's participation can greatly impact the quality and dynamism of government institutions. According to Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), 'women under-representation violates the democratic principles of fair representation and that the concept of democracy will only assume true and dynamic significance when political policies and national legislation are decided upon jointly by men and women with equitable regard for both the interests and aptitudes of both halves of the population.'³⁵ They further assert that 'women's' participation is not only a demand for justice or democracy but a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account. Therefore, equal participation of both men and women in decision-making has the potential of balancing the composition of society and strengthen democracy and proper functioning of the government.³⁶

Similarly, there is tangible evidence in Uganda that, when women are part of the political process, there is seen intellectual and social diversity in debates and contributions to policy formulation and implementation.³⁷ This is a result of the women's, unique repertoire of knowledge and experiences that technically contribute to opening up of political space, Due to the fact that faced with different economic situations than men, like higher financial vulnerability, and lower incomes, women in politics will demand more of public welfare programs, governmental income redistribution and hence reduce on public spending by government.³⁸ Substantially, Uganda maturing democracy will grow to better heights if it sticks to and jealously takes necessary steps to protect human rights and women's participation in politics.³⁹ Because under-representation of any segment of a locality in political decisions, is as good as committing suicide and it raises questions about the legitimacy of such a regime.⁴⁰ Given the importance of women's participation in representative politics, it is not surprising that president Museveni Yoweri Kaguta of Uganda has put them at the forefront of his administration amidst tensions everywhere as it often collides with the twin powers of culture and religion furthered by the patriarchal society.⁴¹

4. BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN REPRESENTATIVE POLITICS IN UGANDA

The women in active participation in representative politics are doing a commendable job amidst overwhelming evidence of many factors that they face and those that hinder their effective participation. These factors include social-cultural issues, gender stereotypes, media perspectives, electoral systems, finance, and resources which result in the constant "one step forwards, and 2 steps backward". These are rooted in age-old patriarchal norms that cannot be eliminated overnight.⁴² These barriers are analyzed thematically below; Cultural, traditional and religious barriers. These are made of customary laws and moral principles that often decree and

³⁰ Isobel Coleman, *The Payoff from Women's Rights*, 2004: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20033977>

³¹ Isobel Coleman, *The Payoff from Women's Rights*, 2004: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20033977>

³² Monica Adele Orisadare, 'An Assessment of the Role of Women Group in Women Political Participation, and Economic Development in Nigeria' (2019) 4 *Frontiers in Sociology* 1.

³³ Monica Adele Orisadare, 'An Assessment of the Role of Women Group in Women Political Participation, and Economic Development in Nigeria' (2019) 4 *Frontiers in Sociology* 1.

³⁴ International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (n 8).

³⁵ Inter Parliamentary Union, Plan of Action to Correct Imbalances in the Participation of Men and Women in Political Life" (IPU, 1994).

³⁶ United Nations, The Beijing Platform for Action, paragraph 181, (UN,1995)

³⁷ International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (n 8).

³⁸ Doepke, Michèle Tertilt, and Alessandra Voena, The Economics and Politics of Women's Rights Matthias NBER Working Paper No. 17672 December 2011

³⁹ See Adom K and Asare-Yeboah IT, 'An Evaluation of Human Capital Theory and Female Entrepreneurship in Sub-Saharan Africa: Some Evidence from Ghana' (2016) 8 *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship* 402

⁴⁰ Adom K and Asare-Yeboah IT, 'An Evaluation of Human Capital Theory and Female Entrepreneurship in Sub-Saharan Africa: Some Evidence from Ghana' (2016) 8 *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship* 402

⁴¹ Isobel Coleman, *The Payoff from Women's Rights*, 2004: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20033977>

⁴² International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (n 3).

place women at a lower level than men. They for instance state that a woman has to be submissive to her husband and thus her duty is to fulfill her husband's whims. This hinders a woman from moving forward to engage in politics because her status is already predetermined by culture to be the kitchen and to please men and politics is believed to be a men's affair. Information gathered through interviews reveals that, in these communities, empowering women is considered a subversive proposition, a move that is geared towards interfering with and failing culture and the marriage institution. In these communities, women's rights are in a protracted battle between cultural norms, religious extremists, and tradition.⁴³ The women who have succeeded to join politics are viewed with a negative attitude as those who have abdicated their cultural roles and instead decided to contend in men's positions and their husbands are always castigated by fellow men, that they are not men enough to tame their wives. For example, they use statements like 'you are now wearing the skirts and she the trousers' implying the man is now playing the role of a woman to take care of the home and be submissive as the woman does the man's work of engaging in politics. Consequently, without the support of her husband, a woman is always hesitant to participate in politics and if she does so, she is likely to face stress during the whole process of campaigns. This is an explanation of why women would choose not to tread on the path of politics in order to keep peace at home and not to put their families in jeopardy.⁴⁴

Similarly, most women interfaced with expressed that they are facing stereotype barriers entrenched in a patriarchal system in which family control and decision-making powers are a preserve of men. These beliefs are still very strong in the eastern and central parts of Uganda, they tend to make it so difficult for women to take the decision to join politics. In these regions, the worth of a woman is measured by the role she plays as a wife and mother, she takes the man's name (father husband) all her life and it implies she is overshadowed by the man. It is believed that if a woman engages in politics will bring shame and disrepute to her father or husband. There are proverbs that society uses to discourage women from trying to contend with men in politics. For example, the Banyole and Basoga tribes in the Eastern region, have a saying, "*omuhasi asihamira enyuma shyenghombe afuga ani*" implying that until a woman starts urinating like a man, she cannot contend and even stand before men in politics and decision making, giving the notion that women cannot be leaders and casting doubt on their ability in politics and decision making. Those women who are engaged in active politics face these sentiments from men which weakens their self-esteem and confidence because, she

knows that the people don't believe, respect, and trust that they can deliver better than men.⁴⁵ Thus, the women in politics live their daily lives in fear of judgment, trying to prove a point that they can be better than men which is not the case with their male counterparts.

Better still, among the Bantu people in the Eastern and Central Regions of Uganda, women are presumed and considered the weaker vessel and incapable of making independent decisions outside men. This has been the trend across generations and continues to haunt the women in politics as they are believed not to have a mind of their own and represent some man behind them. This is depicted during the time of elections when people ask questions like, 'whose wife is she?' 'Who is her father?' implying that your candidature represents the men behind you. A woman candidate who is not married or divorced faces a lot of challenges and trust issues from voters as they believe you may not have that capability to make smart decisions without a man. Likewise, since the men have all power, they usually choose not to give women more bargaining power in marriage by empowering them politically, so they would prefer to keep their wives' power low and vote for another man's wife.⁴⁶ These sentiments were protracted by the male-dominated and patriarchal societies which put forward the idea that women are inferior to men. The men are quick to say, 'a woman! Ahh, she cannot perform,...but let us give her a chance to prove herself. This is not the case when it is a man, he will be supported regardless of his performance or capabilities. The moment a woman is elevated to a position of prime minister, cabinet, or state minister, people put a radar simply to prove that the women simply cannot perform. Even women try to question the capacity of fellow women in power instead of supporting them. Therefore, it becomes hard and challenging for women to effectively participate in representative politics.⁴⁷

Another stereotype is about women. Women politicians face the challenge of being ostracized by fellow women. 6 out of 10 women interviewed stated that even if women are the majority voters in any election, they would rather vote for a man who is contesting with the woman just to bring that woman down. Mostly these elderly women claim they're the custodians of culture and thus should preserve it by keeping women in the kitchen and childbearing role and not in politics. For instance, in the Baganda, Basoga, and Banyole tribes, a daughter-in-law is not allowed to raise her voice or be heard in the presence of her mother-in-law. This is a clear indicator that she can never participate in politics or decision-making in the presence of those challenges or else she will be going against the family tradition and it is considered shameful to her family. Those who have engaged in politics are considered

⁴³ Isobel Coleman, *The Payoff from Women's Rights*, 2004: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20033977>

⁴⁴ International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (n 3).

⁴⁵ International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (n 3).

⁴⁶ Doepke, Michèle Tertilt, and Alessandra Voena, *The Economics and Politics of Women's Rights* Matthias NBER Working Paper No. 17672 December 2011

⁴⁷ International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics, *The Patriarchal Barrier to Women in Politics*, August 2014 <<https://www.iknowpolitics.org/en/knowledge-library/opinion-pieces/patriarchal-barrierwomen-politics>>

disdains who have relegated their traditional duties and are shameless women and a bad example to young girls.⁴⁸

Amidst those struggles with the cultural and religious stereotypes, the women in politics still face systematic barriers that come from the laws, media, and beliefs. There is a belief that women have been brought up to regard politics as a men's affair and should not be eyed by a normal woman. These beliefs tend to drive women away from engaging in politics and keep them to their traditional set roles of family responsibilities.⁴⁹ The women in politics indicated that any woman who tries to indulge in politics is faced with the challenge of balancing family responsibility and a career in politics. This limits their opportunity of being effective and efficient amidst being judged by the media and society. The media tends to be hostile to women in politics, it hounds and ridicules them to the extent of keeping a close eye on the women's private and family lives. The media has done a lot in distorting the family lives of women in politics.⁵⁰

Further, the barrier faced by women in politics tends to escalate as they progress from one state to another, key to this is violence against women that is used as a target and destructive tool in several ways by opponents to dissuade women from participating in politics. This violence includes verbal, physical, and psychological, political violence, social stigma, and the notion that politics is a 'dirty game' which are major disincentives to women participating in politics. In such a situation, the woman's status does not allow her to take any decision without her husband's approval to curb issues pertaining to jealousy, and distrust. That does not guarantee that the husband will allow the wife to participate, he may refuse due to the fear that politics is a dirty game.⁵¹ For example, female candidates for the position of president from 2010-2021 in Uganda bear witness to all these challenges. They witnessed enormous violence during the race, from physical violence, name-calling, and intimidation, to ostracization by both men and women. These incidents discourage potential candidates from joining politics and have a significant impact on women during campaigns and in political parties.⁵²

Similarly, commercialization of politics in the country. the women interfaced with during the study indicated that most of them were hesitant to run for political offices for the fact that, the process requires heavy financial investment from candidates, which finances they don't have to mount to the level of their male counterparts. This cut them off from the initial stages of politics, and their opportunities remain minimal. Likewise, when it comes to party affiliations, some political parties heavily support their candidates financially

and thus your success depends on the political party affiliated with them. These cuts off those women who cannot get a ticket from such political parties and the fact that money rules in elections in Uganda are a destabilizing barrier to women's participation.

Lastly but not least, affirmative action policies are believed to result in positive attitudinal changes towards women's participation in politics and try to encourage women's representation in public life, on the contrary, the 8 out of 10 women interviewed these policies have had less impact mostly in the rural areas of Uganda and have not translated into ensuring overall acceptance of women within the system. The women reveal that they get constant bullying and intimidation because of their special seats by male counterparts who view them as members representing women. One MP was ridiculed by a male counterpart in the house that she does not have the mandate to talk or comment on matters regarding development in the constituency but should only have a say when it concerns women's issues like sanitary pads maternal health, and women's SACCOs. This has helped in pushing women into political obscurity, muffling their ability to contribute to policy and agenda setting in the area. yet the sole purpose of these affirmative action policies if exercised well would guarantee that women are represented in politics and gradually erode the negative perceptions about women's ability to perform in politics.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study concludes Uganda has to a great extent provided and promoted women participation in politics by putting in place policies to empower women, like special seats for women, and creating a favorable environment. That notwithstanding, there is exists a discontent among the men, who use it as a tool to taunt the women politicians. The study recommends a reassessment of affirmative action policies and laws to complement women's agency in contesting for, winning, and participating in politics more effectively.

The study further established that, culture, tradition and religion play a key role in hindering women from participating in representative politics, it was revealed that customary law compounds inequality between and women. It is therefore vital for the government to pay much attention to these cultural impediments obstructing gender equality and women emancipation. The government should expand on the public awareness about women emancipation to be able achieve active an effective participation of women in representative politics.

⁴⁸ P.R. Beckman, and F D'Amico (eds.) Women, Gender and World politics: Perspectives, Policies and Prospects. (Westport, Bergin, 1994) pp.76

⁴⁹ International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (n 3).

⁵⁰ Molyneux, M., Mobilisation without Emancipation? Critical Social Policy (1984) 10,4; and Phillips, A Engendering Democracy, (Oxford Polity Press, 1991)

⁵¹ According to Elisabeth Fourn Gnansounou, International Consultant in Gender with a Masters in Sociology and Anthropology

⁵² International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (n 3).

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