

# Making a Difference: Embracing the challenge of women's substantive engagement in political leadership in Uganda<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

The campaign for women's participation in public life has taken several years and efforts, and the outcomes are reflected in international human rights frameworks as well as national efforts that acknowledge women's right to participate in public space. On the African scene these efforts have delivered considerable numbers and hence considerable progress has been registered in terms of women's presence (Wang 2013). At the parliamentary level, several countries have achieved well beyond the critical mass (Rwanda 63,8%; South Africa 44,8%; Senegal 43,3%; Mozambique 39,2% and Tanzania 36%). Uganda comes on the heels of its African peers with 35% per cent of women in Parliament.<sup>2</sup> Other key numbers in Uganda include 30% minimum women representation at local government level (as provided for in the Local Governments Act 1997), 29% of the cabinet and 39% of the chairpersons and 29% of the vice-chairpersons of the standing committees of Parliament (FOWODE, 2013). In recent times, women have been appointed to head key ministries of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Education, Health, Energy and Mineral Development, as well as Ministry of Trade and Industry.

Women's presence in political decision-making is largely premised on the fact that women in such spaces will make a difference for women's rights, development and gender equality. The question of making a difference has enjoined a robust feminist debate in the direction that, once in power, women should change the content of politics to cater for women's interests (Tamale 1999; Goetz 2003; Kwesiga et al. 2003). However, as the numbers of women in public political decision-making increase in many parts of the world, it has become more evident than ever that the strategy of getting women in formal political spaces is only part of what it takes to engender democracy. Therefore,

the question that has preoccupied the women's movement (globally) for the last decade or so is how to move beyond numbers. Put differently, the desire is to move from physical presence to strategic engagement (Ahikire, 2007).

There exists a sense of frustration amongst key actors in the women's movement, as well as gender-aware women leaders, that, despite women's increasing numbers in decision making, positive change for women is not happening as fast as we would want. The status of Ugandan women is still remarkably lower than that of men in all spheres: from that of politics and citizenship, to the economy, socio-cultural spheres, or in intimate personal relations. For example, feminised poverty, gender-based violence and the generalised lack of respect and fulfillment of women's rights seem to be the norm as opposed to the exception.

But why, in the first place, did we assume that numbers of women in decision-making spaces would automatically lead to gender-fair outcomes in actual practice? A robust feminist debate claims that women are as heterogeneous as their interests, and being female does not automatically translate into the will or the ability to pursue a feminist agenda (Tamale, 1999; Hassim, 2005). There is need for a much more sober approach that promises to take on the complexities involved in such political processes. This calls for a critical reflection, especially on the fact that women's physical presence has to be consciously translated into strategic presence (Ahikire, 2009) through a political process, which brings several players into focus. These players include, in addition to women leaders, the women's movement and the State—two different entities with very different capabilities. Outcomes of women's physical presence in the State then seem to hinge more on the articulation of the nexus between women in the State and the women's movement, and the ways in which this nexus is brought to bear on the decision-making processes in the State arena.

This article emanates from the aforementioned study conducted by ISIS-WICCE (Women International Cross Cultural Exchange), which sought to make a contribution to a holistic understanding of conditions under which women in Parliament and Local Councils (LCs) can make a difference. To achieve this, the focus quickly moved forward from the basic questions such as: "Do women represent women?" or "Do women in politics make a difference?" to questions like "What mark have women made?"; "Under what conditions has change been possible?" and more specifically "How is the nexus between

women’s political leadership and the women’s movement been positioned in all this?”

To pursue these questions, the ISIS-WICCE study sought to establish whether or not there existed a shared agenda between the women’s movement and women politicians and how such an agenda has been pursued with what outcomes. The researchers set about carefully registering the factors facilitating and inhibiting change in the gender regimes that pervade current governance challenges such as militarism, patronage, fundamentalism, as well as the intense sexualisation of political spaces.

## Registering Women’s Mark in Political Leadership

For the first time women became a subject of discussion which was not the case before. Women became an issue in the public space. They started highlighting issues that affect them as women and proposing what they would want to amend for their economic empowerment. The women in Uganda became visible and audible to the extent that you could not just do without them. They were the second powerful interest group that embraced the constitution with enthusiasm, energy, and hope. They were visible at last... (Hon. Miria Matembe, July 2013).

The physical presence of women signified a critical breakthrough, an initial step of breaking into a domain that was historically not theirs. Without doubt, that presence engendered a significant shift in the public conversation. The fact that women leaders, particularly women Members of Parliament (MPs), have put what was regarded as private issues into the public space constitutes an achievement for women to celebrate. A female former MP had this to say:

I wanted to join politics and use my position to advocate for women’s rights and the right to refuse to undergo female genital mutilation (FGM). I hoped to bring about a change in a culture that oppresses women...(Interview with female former MP, Kampala, July 2013).

In Northern Uganda, women councillors have specifically positioned themselves as the voice of peace, and women councillors in Pader and Agago districts have apparently influenced the public visibility of topics such as gender-based violence, defilement, and rape. Voices from Agago District indicated that:

Women leaders are making a difference in the specific area of GBV. In cases of a grave nature, the women give the victims referral letters to

health centres, LC3 and LC5. We have been able to handle cases that women leaders have referred to us. As I talk now, I have left 20 men in the cells for cases of defilement, rape and wife battering (male key informant, Agago District, July, 2013).

We had a case of medical personnel who wanted to have sex they agreed with the woman but instead of having sex he pushed in his hand and damaged the woman. After some time she started rotting and later died. When the women leaders heard about this story they demonstrated and took the man to the police. Another incident was on Women's Day when a man hacked his wife. Women mobilised, demonstrated and made sure that the man is taken to the police. Therefore women are making a difference in the area of human rights. (ISIS-WICCE Dialogue with women Councillors and V/ Chairperson, Agago District, July, 2013)

**Women MPs have raised a red flag on many cases of sexual abuse, especially those that involve young girls in schools, as an urgent issue of national concern. Consider the case below:**

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise on an urgent matter of national importance. Last weekend I attended Women's Day celebrations in Paya sub-county and among the reports that I received from the LC III chairman was that from January to 28 March, 124 girls had been defiled. ... When a child leaves home, the other parent to that child is the teacher, but now the teacher is the one defiling this girl. What is this teacher instilling in this girl as a person of moral authority? I am requesting that when these cases get reported, they are dealt with without fear or favour. I am requesting government to actually ensure that those who defile children are punished accordingly... (Woman MP, Tororo: Parliament of Uganda – Hansard; Wednesday, 1 April 2009).

Women's movements across the African region have mounted sustained resistance to entrenched sexual and gender-based violence, including cultural practices that are harmful to women. These struggles are a significant site for challenging oppressive gender relations more broadly and demystifying the invocations of tradition and religion to justify damaging practices. The African women's movement has also engaged the political sphere on the premise that women's interests would be advanced by women's entry into decision-making spaces such as the Parliament.

The increased presence of women in Ugandan political institutions has without doubt led to significantly more debate on women's condition, especially that to do with maternal health. In 2013, the *Red Pepper Newspaper* ran an article entitled: "Women MPs Demand Action from Government over Maternal Deaths". The Women MPs resolved to block the passing of the 2013-2014 National Budget and any supplementary budget that Government might present, unless it included a health sector supplement, or saw the Government's fulfilling the 15% funding of the health sector to maternal health that was agreed in the Abuja Declaration (2001)<sup>3</sup>, to which Uganda's government was party (15 July 2013). Furthermore, ISIS-WICCE learned that women MPs were instrumental in ensuring the provision of the basic birthing equipment provided in packages known as "maama kits"<sup>4</sup> in local constituency health centres. Implementation remains a challenge in the context of run-down social services, where even rudimentary resources are shamelessly lacking, thus stalling the impact of women's legislative efforts on ordinary women's lives.

Women's organising within the political institutions of the State has also had some impact. The Uganda Women Parliamentary Association (UWOPA) is a parliamentary caucus that has been an important space for policy interventions, working to support women parliamentarians to utilise their position more effectively. UWOPA provides a forum to discuss, share experiences and support activities that facilitate women's participation and leadership with the ultimate aim of ensuring a gender-responsive legislative process. Because it is an institutionalised space, UWOPA facilitates women's influence in parliamentary processes. It has successfully pushed a number of gender-sensitive pieces of legislation through parliament, notably the Domestic Violence Act (2010) and the Law against Female Genital Mutilation. The Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (2010) was passed as a private members bill by the chairperson of UWOPA, and the revision of the Penal and Sexual Offences Bill is directly attributed to the effort of UWOPA. There are also provisions in various pieces of legislation that can be traced to the fact of women's presence. These include provisions around maternity leave in the Employment Act 2006, the clause around family land in the Land Act 1998 (amendment of 2004), and the girl-child focus in education policies, to mention but a few.

Women MPs have also used UWOPA as a key lobby site. The specific case of the African Union (AU) Protocol to the African Charter on Human and

People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa<sup>5</sup> is instructive. States have been known to sign such instruments and not ratify them, meaning that there is limited possibility to infuse such norms into national laws and policies. In the Ugandan case, the Protocol was ratified in 2010, seven years after being signed. Yet it is important to register the fact that that ratification was specifically lobbied for by women leaders in parliament and in civil society. With the back-up of the women's organisations, the then-chair of UWOPA ensured that the President ratified the Protocol when Uganda was due to host the 15<sup>th</sup> African Union Summit, in 2010.<sup>6</sup> In actual fact, UWOPA argued that it would be a shame for Uganda as a country to host the AU summit when it had not ratified the Protocol. Overall, limitations notwithstanding, UWOPA provides an opportunity for the women's movement to influence public policy.

Women's presence demonstrates their ability to govern in various other ways. For example, the ascendance of a woman, the Rt. Hon. Rebecca Alitwala Kadaga, to the position of Speaker of Parliament, to occupying the third position in the hierarchy of leadership in the country (after the President and Vice-President), is no mean achievement. It is an achievement that should be documented to draw lessons for the present and future. Kadaga entered parliament as a district woman MP (the affirmative action seat for women). In the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Parliaments, she became Deputy Speaker. When she became Deputy, her designation as 'Madam Speaker' and her visibility in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Parliaments challenged the male norm. So much so, that when the Deputy (a male) presides over the parliamentary sessions, many members apparently stumble between 'Madam' and 'Mr. Speaker, Sir'. The Speaker of the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) is a Ugandan woman, Rt. Hon. Margaret Nantongo Zziwa, the first woman elected to the position.<sup>7</sup> As Speakers of legislatures at the national and regional levels, the duo have demonstrated women's ability to govern.

Yet, despite all these efforts there seems to be a critical glass ceiling when it comes to effecting transformation. Women's influence seems to be limited, with women still regarded as clients in the current system. What is it that blocks a substantive articulation of a feminist agenda? In the section that follows, we seek to interrogate this question but with full appreciation, not only of the fact that female does not necessarily mean feminist, but also that substantive engagement is largely constrained by the structural context.

## Understanding the obstacles

When we see an increase of women in many leadership positions, it is exciting... but leadership with a difference is clearly still a challenge. Now we are enjoying the positions, but what difference are we making? (Woman MP, Zombo District ISIS-WICCE Dialogue for Women MPs, July 12, 2013).

Ann-Marie Goetz summarises the situation in this way:

Once in office, many women have faced profound obstacles to advancing a gender-equality agenda. In effect, they have discovered deeply embedded gender-biased patterns in public decision-making and policy implementation that stop progressive public policy in its tracks. While some of the obstacles women face stem from divisions between women...most stem from challenges...where profound gender biases are embedded in the justice and public administration systems (Goetz, 2009:5).

Women's political leadership faces several hurdles at local and national levels. Patriarchy manifests in the nature of the State, and its political processes provide a conducive environment to men as political actors. It is argued, for example, that the institution of Parliament is patriarchal because women still have to constantly justify their presence and their issues. At the local level, patriarchy also plays out in the existing cultural institutions that nurture women and men differently, conferring gender-differentiated social capital that limits women's effectiveness.

The example of Uganda illustrates many key blockages to women's effective decision-making, blockages that make it difficult for feminist legislators to make a difference. In this analysis we go beyond the conventional liberal approaches of relying on gender training and capacity building. These are premised on the notion that it is women who are lacking. Rather we seek to highlight obstacles that are structural in nature: the prevailing culture of militarism, the normalised sexualisation of women, and the patronage politics characterising the multiparty dispensation.

### *Militarised Politics*

Militarism is not just about war and armed forces. It is an ideology. Ursula Franklin (1988) defines militarism as a threat system, which when stripped of all its extraneous verbiage simply says "Do what I tell you – or else".

Accordingly, the basic value of militarism is power over others, where the population begins to accept the use of violence as a method for resolving conflict. Military ideology creates an enemy out of difference and then uses the existence of the enemy to justify continued militarism (Burke 1998). The ideology is normalised through language, which distorts and sanitises its impact (Burke 1998). Key African feminist scholars such as Amina Mama have for long advanced the analysis that feminists must as of necessity take on the permeation of militarism in African politics if we are to create substantive transformation. Mama and Okazawa-Rey (2008) argue that anti-militarism activism must be a key area of feminist strategy in the contemporary period.

The situation in Uganda reflects militarised politics more than ever before. Many women MPs expressed their sense of threat. While this militarism undermines the exercise of democracy more generally, women are more vulnerable to the threat of force. The period from 2001 to date, with a transition from mobilisation politics to a politics of regime survival, has seen constitutionalism undermined. In this context, the space for pushing a substantive gender-equality agenda in the political dispensation has narrowed dramatically.

### *Multiparty Politics and Patronage*

The research interviews suggest that the nature of Uganda's multiparty politics has greatly inhibited the emergence of a unified women's voice at national and local levels. The creation of enemies based on political differences and the overly personalised party agendas make it extremely difficult for women to generate a strong lobby to advance women's interests.

When a political party takes precedence over other social parameters of mobilisation, women's interests can only be taken up when the party position reflects these. Women MPs emphasise that women's issues cannot be effectively addressed because women cannot form a coherent political constituency. As one MP noted: "Because the party brought you to Parliament, it can discipline you if you go against its position" (ISIS-WICCE Dialogue, 13 July 2013).

However, this is not just an individual matter. Women MPs from the ruling and opposition parties alike all note the constraining impact of the multiparty dispensation. The imposition of party gagging that is not guided by clear principles and party rules illustrates the patriarchal and militaristic domineering practices within the parties. In the case of the NRM, it was noted

that the party caucus seems to operate as a “cult”, while those in opposition parties talked of undue witch-hunting often directed at women considered undesirably strong or independent-minded.

In this context the majority of women are seen to have been captive to patronage politics. Patronage was perceived as a powerful tide moving against the achievements of women in politics:

Women are swimming upstream and there is a powerful tide moving against them downstream. It is a tide of patronage. It's the kind of patronage where people think they put you there and expect you to perform to their tune. The tide of patronage is still strong and needs to be confronted head-on (male former legislator, ISIS-WICCE Dialogue, July 2013).

Such a relationship between the government and women political leaders undermines their capacity to demand accountability and pursue social justice agendas.

### *The Crippling Effect of Sexual Pacification<sup>8</sup>*

Pacification is a term derived from the process of colonisation as a tool for conquest, extended here to conceptualise the particular exercise of power to disempower women through sexual practices. The sexualisation of political space persistently emerges as a major obstacle to women's political effectiveness. This was seen to manifest itself in the lived experience of women political leaders, reflecting the dominant discourses that frame women as sexual objects rather than political actors.

At the district level women political leaders decried the sexualised language used to describe them. They indicated that, quite often, women who choose to participate in politics are commonly stigmatised as “prostitutes”, portrayed as lacking either the courage or the self-control to participate alongside men. Women councillors revealed that men often refer to women's bodies, dress style, and social interactions to intimidate, confuse or divert the attention of women councilors during local council debates. Even the most resilient women are undermined by this kind of intimidation:

I stood up in council to contribute. I had not known that as I was standing up, the button of my blouse opened. Then a male council/or stood up on a point of order... “Is it in order for the honorable member to dress indecently in the house?” It was so embarrassing, I could not

proceed. He had focused on my abdomen not even my mouth and what I was going to say (Woman Councillor, Pader Town Council, July, 2013).

Sexualised politics manifests in patronising behaviours, sexist jokes, and derogatory media representations<sup>9</sup> describing women political leaders in terms of ‘best legs’, ‘big bums’ and the like. Cultural stereotyping and name-calling undermine female political leadership (IPU, 2009).

Perhaps the most daunting challenge is the predatory nature of men in political institutions:

... Men are like hyenas; very greedy...they look at female policy makers as sexual objects. If some could dare at me, what happens to the young women? It is very dangerous for young women from up-country... who find themselves rubbing shoulders with these so-called big men they used to hear and see on the TV. (Interview with female former legislator, Kampala, July 2013).

In 1999, Tamale stirred up controversy by documenting sexualisation as part of the gendered nature of parliamentary politics. At this time her revelations were received as exceptional rather than the norm. However, the sexualisation of women is now so pervasive that even the president of the country was quoted in a daily newspaper stating that the male MPs were consistently broke and indebted because they spent most of their money on “MP concubines”. The newspaper article read, in part:

The report penned recently lists sex as number one among terrible secrets that have dipped them into an awful financial quagmire. It says some male MPs spend their money financing sexual networks with fellow female legislators. Horny male MPs have had a huge drain on their incomes orchestrated by their MP concubines (*Red Pepper Newspaper*, 27 July 2013).

To make matters more complicated, key informants in the study raised the issue of sexual transactions in political recruitment. Political favours often depend on women’s willingness to yield to sexual advances. Appointment to ministerial positions stood out as one big sexual battle. For example, top men in the system are alleged to use overt threats such as: “I have seen the tentative list and your name is there, but you need to do something if you want to make it to the final list of ministers” (ISIS-WICCE, July 2013, anonymous source).

From a systemic perspective, whether or not women give in to these sexual advances is immaterial: women in general get to be labeled in sexualised terms while predatory men maintain their legitimacy as political actors.

In sum, the sexualisation of political spaces has profound effects on how women can deliver on their leadership roles. At a practical level it disorients and diverts women and negatively affects women's self-expression and esteem. At the same time, sexuality is deployed as an instrument of blackmail, creating a "damned if you do...damned if you do not" scenario. In such a situation, the push for a gender-equality agenda is undermined. A feminist response to this problem of sexual pacification will have to embrace a political process that challenges the sexual pacification of women by men in the strongest terms possible.

### **The Political Costs of Dismantling Patriarchy**

The political culture in Uganda today tends to reject strong and effective women leaders. Women's efforts to confront male domination often position women political leaders between a rock and a hard place. Challenging the system they work in was widely described as an attempt to "rock their own boat". Effective women politicians often end up sacrificing their political careers:

A senior woman MP was considered too strong for her party because she would take on the male leaders where they went wrong, contrary to the party culture where the leaders are only supposed to be worshipped. In the wake of the general elections in 2011, party functionaries were heavily deployed to fight her. Another woman was secretly identified and provided with money and other logistical support to contest against her. During the campaigns, the Secretary General of the party camped in her constituency for over 5 days to campaign for her opponent. The senior woman MP lost the election. The big lesson, according to this former MP, was that the current party practice only supports women who tend to sing praises for the leaders. The moment one thinks independently and pursues what is right, that person is looking for a humiliating defeat (ISIS-WICCE July 2013).

Although men can also pay political costs for thinking or acting independently, women are particularly penalised in a political space where the prevailing norms and practices undermine any leverage they might have to effectively engage.

## The Nexus between Women Political Leaders and the Women's Movement

Feminist scholars argue that women's interests are best defined through collective processes of interest articulation (Celis et al., 2007). In Uganda there have been many efforts to bring women political leaders and the women's movement together. According to the findings of the ISIS-WICCE study, women's organisations work to identify and support women to aspire for elective political positions, run programmes on gender and civic education and democracy, design mechanisms of accountability, and offer gender capacity-building workshops to which women MPs and councillors are invited. Despite these laudable activities, a sense of frustration persists. The frustration stems from a realisation that structural gender inequalities have persisted and major obstacles to the advancement of women still remain. The relationships between women political leaders and the women's movement that will consistently bring these actors together remain weak. Yet without a stronger nexus, Uganda's women's movement will be unable to nurture a robust feminist political agenda.

In Uganda, this nexus comprises women NGOs and women political leaders. One of the ways of strengthening the relationship between the two has been through the NGOs' provision of training. NGOs train women candidates for electoral office and offer induction programmes for newly elected women MPs and local councillors. NGOs also run different programmes in the pre- and post-election periods, offering leadership skills training for women in public office. It is in this context that ISIS-WICCE offers training around the specific challenges posed by post-conflict situations.

There have also been attempts at creating a shared agenda. FOWODE (2010) sees this as a means of bringing to the forefront gender dimensions that ought to be addressed, so that real and meaningful development for the total empowerment of women and girls can be achieved. The production of the Uganda Women's Agenda is part of a journey that the women of Uganda and the Women's Movement began in 1996. At that time Ugandan women made history as pioneers of the highly successful People's Manifesto (1996), an action that was followed by The Women's Manifesto (2001). On Uganda's return to pluralism in 2005, women consulted nationally and developed a position paper on Government's white paper on multipartyism. The women's demands came to be known as "Women's Minimum Demands to Political

Parties and Organizations”. This was subsequently followed by an updated Women’s Manifesto (2006). In preparation for the 2011 general elections, FOWODE facilitated a process of putting together a women’s agenda entitled “Equal by Right”, which was designed to guide the women’s movement.

Despite these commendable efforts, the reality is that they have not been able to do more than sustain loose, largely informal, connections between the women’s movement and women political leaders. In the meantime women MPs are still chastised for forgetting their roots in the women’s movement, while women MPs accuse the women’s movement of having unrealistic demands.

NGO approaches to women political leaders have not been sufficiently systematic, in the face of persisting systemic inequalities. Part of the problem lies in the nature of NGOs under pressure to validate themselves by claiming credit as individual organisations rather than as a women’s movement (Dialogue for Women’s NGOs Organised by ISIS-WICCE, August 2013). NGO programming tends to work from an individualistic capacity-building approach that does not do justice to the task of building a collective force of women that will unite around the pursuit of women’s gender interests.

Conversations with women MPs show a critical perspective on NGO approaches for mounting numerous ad hoc programmes. The workshop culture is criticised for dealing with women MPs in generalised terms while offering very little that might concretely enhance their ability to pursue the gender equality agenda in their legislative, oversight and representational roles.

At another level, there does not appear to be a shared sense of direction, or a systemic analysis of gender oppression. This is reflective of the fact that the women’s movement, being largely located within NGOs, has become issue-based, more reactive than proactive. As Tamale puts it:

“We only come up in response to specific issues and we do not sustain the pressure even on those specific ones...We are dealing with a long-term issue yet employing short-term strategies. It cannot work...It is a silver bullet, crisis approach rather than a sustained continuous social movement” (Tamale, 2003).

The second and perhaps more serious challenge arises from the first: Because there is no direction, it has not been possible to consolidate the modest advances that have been made into more formidable political leverage.

Without a more systematic approach it may be unrealistic to expect women leaders to make more of a difference.

## **Conclusion: Towards Feminist Transformation**

This report was commissioned to support the planning of strategies to advance more effective pursuit of feminist agendas. In the first instance this requires overcoming the evident gap between the interests articulated by women's movements and the interests of women who have entered in the political sphere (ISIS-WICCE 2014b) While there are powerful forces that block women's sustained efforts to make a difference in the political leadership of Uganda today, there are a range of possible actions for the women's movement to turn this around. There is need for a clear political agenda that takes on the broad issues of governance and their gendered aspects in a more consistent manner and that is better informed by the systemic nature of the problem. Effecting change will require a long-term vision and strategy, as well as a concerted effort to build the women's movement into a force powerful enough to bring about deep changes in Ugandan politics and society. Ultimately such a movement must reverse the status quo by ensuring that neglecting women's interests will become politically costly for political actors.

A vibrant well-coordinated women's movement will need to create alternative channels to nurture women's political power on a much larger scale. This can be supported by a careful non-judgmental validation of women's experiences, taking stock of women political leaders' careers, and using such testimonies to critically inform and inspire other women to pursue political leadership. Ugandan politics remains volatile, highly informed by historical and social-cultural processes, whose implicit and explicit impact on political relations between women and men as political actors cannot be underestimated. The ISIS-WICCE study finds that, while most women politicians may wish to make a difference for women, the challenges they face are largely systemic and thus cannot be effectively addressed by individualised approaches or generic skills training packages.

The nexus between the women's movement and women political leaders is a key aspect of movement-building. It cannot be treated as a discrete project or as a momentary event, but rather as a long-term process, purposively powered with strategic alliances and mobilisation across social differences and partisan allegiances. With the feminist nexus that is advocated here

strengthened in this manner, women political leaders and activists will become part of a shared constituency, driving a more unified and robust movement that is a real force in Ugandan politics.

## Endnotes

- 1 This article is based on Making a Difference Beyond numbers: Towards Women's Substantive Engagement in Political Leadership in Uganda – a study conducted by ISIS-WICCE (Women International Cross Cultural Exchange). The study covered the case of Parliament and two districts in Northern Uganda (Pader and Agago). The research team consisted of: Josephine Ahikire (lead researcher), Peace Musiimenta, Amon Ashaba Mwiine, Ruth Ojiambo Ochieng, Juliet Were Oguttu, Helen Kezie-Nwoha, Suzan Nkizi, Bedha Balikudembe Kirevu, Achie Luyimbazi, Harriet Nabukeera Musoke, Prosy Nakaye and Gloria Oguttu Adeti.
- 2 Interparliamentary Union (IPU), [http:// www.ipu.org/wmn](http://www.ipu.org/wmn).
- 3 Abuja Declaration on HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and other related infectious diseases was reached during an African Union Summit in Abuja, Nigeria, April 2001.
- 4 Noted in one of the dialogues with Parliamentarians organised by ISIS-WICCE. Maama kits refer to a simple and basic package necessary to facilitate child delivery. These include gloves, polythene paper, razor and cotton wool.
- 5 The (AU) Protocol covers a wide range of women's rights ranging from the elimination of discrimination against women, women's right to dignity and security of the person, livelihood, including health and reproductive rights, social security and protection by the state.
- 6 The 15th African Union Summit was held in Kampala-Uganda from 19th – 27th July 2010 under the theme "Maternal, Infant and Child Health and Development in Africa" see more; <http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/conferences/2010/july/summit/15thsummit.html>
- 7 The *New Vision* Newspaper, "How Margaret Zziwa Won EALA Speaker Post," 6 June 2012.
- 8 Concept generated during facilitated discussion at ISIS-WICCE's 2014 Kampala think-tank to 'highlight the historical continuities regarding the use of violence against African women systematised during the colonial era' (Editor's note).
- 9 See *New Vision* article 11 May 2011, "Beauty Survey of Female MPs Proves a Point."

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