



Chapter 7

Interlinkages Between Gender and Political Finance

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INTERLINKAGES BETWEEN GENDER AND POLITICAL FINANCE

Gender Dynamics and Women Participation In Elections

ACFIM conducted an independent study on “Money and Women Participation in Uganda General Elections 2021”. The study involved monitoring and documenting party primary processes, candidates’ nominations, campaigns and Election-Day activities. Post-election Focus Group Discussions with female political candidates were conducted to triangulate the information.

The undisputed fact is that electoral politics in Uganda is masculinized with men dominating the direct constituency positions while women are often pushed to the affirmative positions. The size of one’s campaign war chest played a significant role in determining the electoral results especially and Parliamentary level. From ACFIM’s monitoring scope, only 0.03 percent of the total of 2,664 candidates were female! There were only two female candidates for District Chairperson (LCV) positions, two female candidates for the position of City Mayor of which one candidate stood in Kampala Capital City and the other stood in Masaka City. This imbalance in gender participation as candidates in Uganda elections is attributable in part to lack of access to campaign money, and in part to stereotypes in society that discriminate against women. Commercialized politics is one of the roadblocks to achieving gender parity in political participation and representation.

What Explains This?

The barriers for women participation in electoral politics as candidates of which lack of access to money is central, continues to be a dominant narrative the discourse on Uganda’s electoral democracy. This discourse focuses on the disabling factors for their effective participation. Proponents for political parity have attempted to find the answers for the provocative question: Why are the numbers for female candidates and elected officials significantly low?

Within context in a male dominated politics, elections have progressively become too expensive for the female politicians to afford. Money is an essential and unavoidable part of modern-day elections, but it also creates an additional barrier for women because they do not have the same access to campaign finance as men do. Thus, although the principle of “one voice, one vote” is essential to democratic elections worldwide, access to resources makes men’s voices louder than women voices.

Male candidates have deeper pockets due to their greater ability to fundraise hence standing a better chance of winning the party flag and subsequently, the elections than the women. This imbalance of funds and resources negatively impacts the campaigns of female candidates,



thus making campaign finance a major barrier to women's candidature. This chapter explores this narrative drawing experiences from the 2021 elections.

Women participation statistics

In Uganda, women constitute 22.46 million (50.7%) of the population (World Bank, 2019 report). This numerical advantage however is not reflected in the political participation statistics. For instance, out of the 459 seats in Parliament, women occupy only 160 seats which constitutes 34.9%⁹ of which 146 are on affirmative action. Representation at Local Government level, in directly elected positions is less than 3% for women and over 96 percent for men (UBOS 2018).

In the 2021 elections, only one out of twelve candidates that were nominated for Presidential elections, was female. At Parliamentary level the number of female candidates was 134 out of 2,664 nominated for the 499 direct constituency seats. In the end, only 21 female candidates out of 134, won the elections. On the other hand, 638 women contested for the affirmative seat of District Women Representative (DWR). Uganda has 146 districts and 11 cities which only guarantees 175 slots for District Women Representatives (Uganda Electoral Commission Report 2021).

Electoral Commission statistics indicate that the number of registered voters for the 2021 general elections was 17.6 million of which 9.2 million were female (52.2%), and 8.4 million male (47.7%). Going by these statistics, women had the potential to determine the electoral outcome including ensuring victory for all the fellow women that competed against men. But this was never the case. In other words, the numerical strength of women as voters does not translate into power to determine electoral outcomes in favour of female candidates. To borrow the words of Shauna Shames in her paper on "Barriers and Solutions to Increasing Women's Political Power" (2015), the choices women make whether to contest in an electoral race, are strongly affected by the costs and benefits they anticipate from a candidate.

Policy and Regulatory Framework

Women's political participation in electoral politics is being promoted through both international commitments and domestic legal provisions. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979) provides for recognition of women's human rights, including political rights. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action established the target of gender balance in decision-making and recognized that "women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace."

Africa's Agenda 2063 commits to improving women's political participation through Africa's good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law. At a global

⁹ This statistic is quoted from the world rankings of the Inter Parliamentary Union, 2020.



level, the Sustainable Development Goal Five on gender equality provides for the increase and meaningful participation of women in political decision making.

Uganda ratified the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1985, and also adopted the 1995 Beijing Plan of Action. Uganda is also a party to other United Nations goals and resolutions dealing with political participation of women. The 1995 Constitution makes room and strong legal basis for gender provisions replicated in other laws, with affirmative actions. It explicitly prescribes equality between women and men under the law as well as the right to equal opportunity. Article 32 (1) of the constitution – which deals with affirmative action, states that, ‘the state shall take affirmative action in favor of groups marginalized on the basis of gender, age, disability or any other reason created by history, tradition, or custom for the purpose of redressing imbalances which exist against them.’

The institutionalization of the affirmative action policy in Uganda is reflected in the provision of reserved seats for women in parliament and local governments, and the provision of additional points for women students to join educational institutions (especially the university). Since then, the periodic Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Government elections held every five years have guaranteed women’s participation through quotas.

At the normative level, the legal and policy frameworks have opened up spaces and opportunities for women to participate in electoral and political process. Unfortunately, existing social, political and economic barriers to women participation are slowing down the progress of achieving meaningful equality and participation of women in electoral politics.

Party Leaders Politics Not Doing Enough to Engender Women Participation

Political Parties in Uganda which should act as political incubators and accelerators of democracy by engendering democratic ideals, have not done enough to level the playing field for women participation. Responses from focus group discussions (FGD) with female members of Political Parties that participated in the 2021 elections indicated that despite the existing opportunities and spaces within political parties for women, there are existent institutional, structural, ideological and cultural challenges that undercut women participation as leaders in available party positions.

ACFIM study on women participation established that the process of being a flag bearer in a political party in Uganda is highly subjective and non-inclusive of women irrespective of whether one contested on an affirmative seat or direct constituency. Women candidates revealed that to become flag bearer it takes approval from “Male Patrons” within the party, and at times involves sexual favors. In the context of this study, this is called sextortion where sex becomes the currency for a female candidate to access a political favor. Independent candidates alluded to internal party politics and intrigue as the main factors in their decision to contest as independents.



The study established that when it comes to women participation in internal political party processes, it is sextortion rather than money, that stands out as the biggest barrier. It was claimed that in extreme circumstances, some party leaders fronted and supported their “girlfriends” to become flag bearers for the 2021 general elections, but ACFIM could not independently verify this. The politics of having preferred candidates due to vested and subjective interests rendered structures and policies meant to promote women participation in politics through political party structures weak.

The study deduced that there are individuals who are more powerful than the party and who cannot be sanctioned by party disciplinary systems. These powerful men within political parties have the final say on which woman gets to be nominated and facilitated with campaign money to contest. Often their decision reportedly relies on their vested subjective interest in the individual vying for the flag. The study deduces that internal party politics orchestrated by powerful men leveraging the institutionalized patriarchy system, barred some prospective female politicians from participating as candidates in the 2021 electoral politics

“Most of the political parties are not transparent in choosing party flag bearers. On many occasions, they manage the process with preferred candidates in mind, manipulating the systems and structures to favor some candidates over the others. That is why many women keep away from the party politics” – Former MP candidate belonging to DP.

Overall, political parties have less women in leadership positions, they reportedly pacify certain leadership positions to males, they sexualize women, limiting them to specific gender roles, and violence among others. A combination of these factors creates an unfavorable political environment for women to contest in leadership positions. Some women share the view that the NRM primaries are at times chaotic and violent – a situation that keeps women away from participating in the process.

Election Violence as a Barrier for Women Participation

The study observed that violence against women in the 2021 elections was a significant factor barring them from participation in the electoral process as voters and candidates. Cases of intimidation, physical and emotional abuse were cited among female candidates especially those who stood on opposition tickets. Equally in the opposition strongholds like Wakiso, Kampala, Mukono and Masaka, some female candidates from the ruling party NRM reported emotional and physical abuse from voters.

The emotional abuse of candidates manifested in several forms including “name calling”. Some female respondents reported cases where female candidates without spouses were perceived to be prostitutes. There were reported cases of intimidation of female candidates especially those holding the flag of political parties in opposition. During the FGD’s female



politicians reminisced how candidates especially from the ruling party (NRM) used security personnel to intimidate them to either drop out of the race or beat up their supporters and agents. Incidents of intimidation of voters not to vote for opposition candidates including female candidates were cited during the Focus Group Discussions. These cases were mainly referred to by candidates from the western region of Uganda.

The 2021 elections were arguably the most violent, most securitized and also most monetized elections Uganda had ever seen. They were characterized by the high handedness of security agencies against opposition politicians under the guise of enforcing COVID-19 standard operating procedures (SOPs) and election guidelines. In doing so, opposition candidates, agents and supporters were shot at and killed, beaten, arrested and perhaps also “kidnapped”.

Thus, it is deduced that opposition female candidates especially in the regions of Buganda, Busoga, Bugisu, some parts of Ankole and Kigezi region were more affected by the election violence resulting in security agencies continuously interrupting their campaigns, and arresting their campaign agents and supporters. In most of the districts where election violence occurred, female voters preferred to stay away from campaign activities, and some didn't even turn up to vote on the polling day.

Monetized politics as a Barrier to Women Participation

Over the past three electoral cycles it has become apparent that access to campaign finance is a key determinant of electoral outcomes in Uganda. In this regard, the chances for women to successfully run for elective office largely depend on their ability to access to campaign money. But women face difficulties raising campaign money as well as spending it. At times even when they have raised it, they may have less independence in monetary decision making because the campaign agents often call the shots on campaign spending.

It is the nuanced understanding of ACFIM that when money dominates politics, women are disproportionately affected and often end up losing out especially where electoral politics is highly commercialized. The 2021 elections ticked all boxes of a highly commercialized electoral process. Candidates interviewed indicated how costly campaigns were because media houses hiked the prices for campaign advertising. Campaign agents also charged exorbitant rates to carry out door-to-door canvassing amid stiff demand from the big numbers of candidates vying for the same seat.

The prohibitive costs for women participation in elections mainly were on items like; voter inducement, publicity and paraphernalia expenses, and campaign administration expenses (allowances for campaign agents and polling agents). Unanimously responses from female



candidates indicated that commercialized electoral campaigns worked against them in the 2021 elections, majority losing, and the winners having to outspend their competitors to a point of being broke and indebted. The lucky ones who didn't spend much were beneficiaries of the National Unity Platform (NUP) wave mainly in the central region.

The study contends that until the electoral playing field is leveled to allow electoral players to fairly compete, women participation in electoral politics is still a challenge. Unregulated money is just one of the many prohibitive factors affecting women participation in electoral politics.

Access to Campaign Resources

Due to the cultural barriers, the power relationships between men and women automatically lock out women from owning and accessing resources. Participation in politics especially as an electoral candidate is highly dependent on one's ability to fundraise resources to contest. The women candidates interviewed were nostalgic about the difficulty in raising campaign money. Some of them accessed campaign financing thorough the following:

1. Campaign launches where they fundraised from friends and family,
2. Personal savings
3. Loans from individuals, loan sharks and financial institutions.
4. Political party support

Unlike their male counterparts, very few female candidates raised resources from sale of property since majority don't own it anyway. Whether they stood as party flag bearers or independent candidates, women faced the same constraints in accessing campaign funds. Those on affirmative action where the constituency is the entire district, faced an even bigger financial challenge.

One female candidate said: *"money can potentially woo voters to overlook cultural biases and vote for a woman in a male dominated race"*. The study established that the electorate often considered the female candidates to be weaker in the race especially when they competed against men. As such, they struggled to convince financiers to invest in their candidature. In other circumstances, financiers that are mainly men, demanded sexual favours in exchange of campaign finance.

Because of the challenges of accessing resources, majority of women candidates don't necessarily budget for their election campaigns. The study established that many women candidates could only estimate how much they spent with an average expenditure of UGX 500 million for direct seat candidates, and UGX 300 million for Woman MP seat, the least having spent UGX 50 million to contest and win on the National Unity Platform (NUP) ticket.

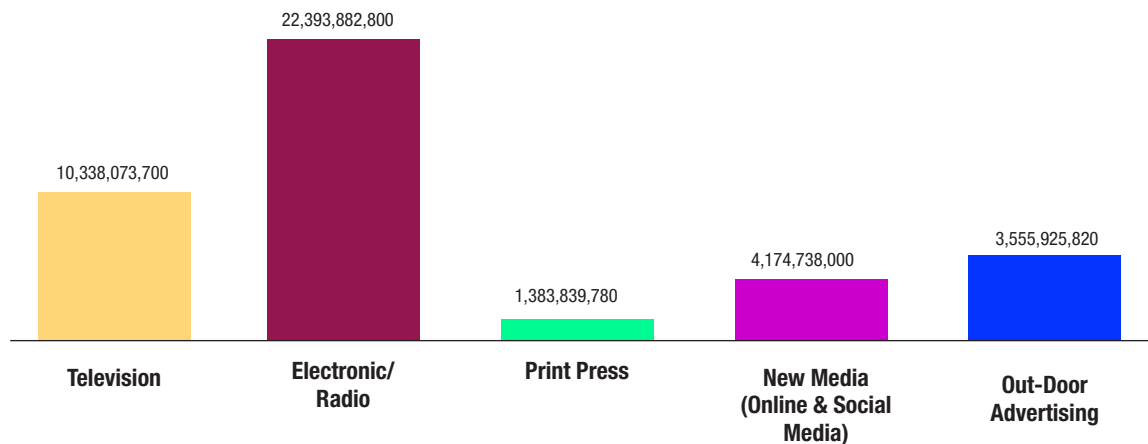


ANALYSIS OF CAMPAIGN SPENDING ON MEDIA

Uganda has approximately 398¹⁰ active media organisations in addition to social media platforms. The directive by the Electoral Commission that the election campaigns were going to be hybrid in nature with contestants being advised to use mostly radio and television, prompted owners of media organisations to form cartels and revise upwards the rates chargeable for campaign advertising. Print and broadcast media houses consequently hiked the rate for advertising in anticipation of making a kill from the political parties and candidates. The rates for outdoor advertising on billboards and giant screens were also increased.

However, media owners reported that the business turnover was less than projected prior to the start of campaigns. As part of the study, ACFIM monitored 63 FM radio stations, and 10 Television stations, four newspapers and on-line media. The TVs monitored included among others NTV, Spark, NBS, Sanyuka, TV West, Bukedde, BBS Telefayina, Baba TV, Urban Television and Uganda Broadcasting Corporation TV. It was established that most spending by candidates on media went to radio accounting for 48.7 percent followed by television spending which accounted for 24 percent. The figure below illustrates the distribution of campaign spending on media.

Figure 35: Distribution of Campaign Spending by Media Type



Source: ACFIM Campaign Finance Analytical Platform (2021)

Television was mainly used by political parties and candidates in urban constituencies. The most popular forms of media programmes for campaigns were political talk shows, debates, spot messages, DJ mentions and endorsements, campaign songs, squeeze backs and scrolls. Owners and managers of radio and television stations designed strategic packages to strategically position themselves to tap into the campaign budgets of the candidates. New media mainly

10 Report by Uganda Communication Commission (UCC), 2020.



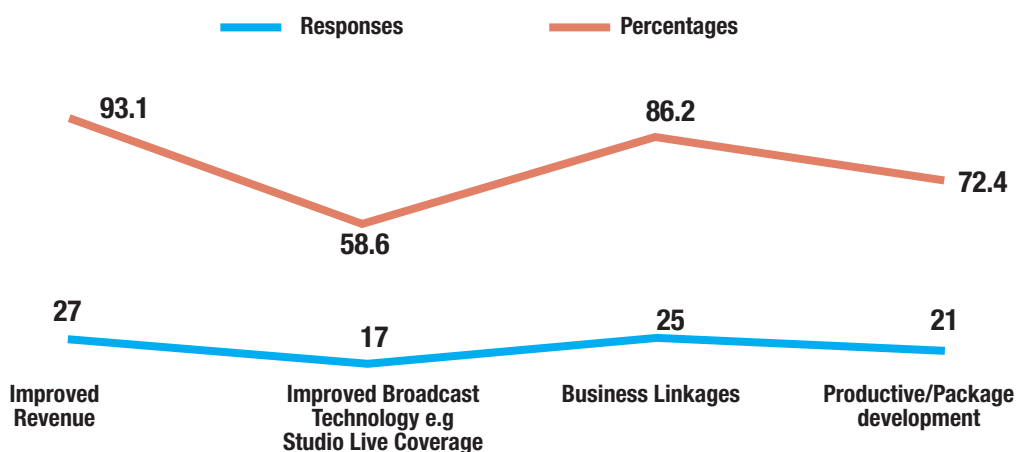
Facebook, Youtube and WhatsApp were maximally utilized. The most common online/virtual televisions used during the campaign were; Ekyoto International TV, NUP Media TV, Kyagulanyi TV, Kyagulanyi Army TV, Olujjuliro TV, Map media TV, Team Kyagulanyi TV and Ghetto TV.

How did Media Owners Profit from Election Campaigns?

A post-election complementary media survey was conducted to establish how media owners reaped businesswise and to review media spending trends during the campaigns. The findings indicated that, some media owners speculatively invested in new technology and equipment in order to meet and satisfy the anticipated demand by political parties and candidates. The investment in technology was directed into improving broadcast signals, procurement of production equipment, and revamping the broadcast studios with a view to enhance the quality of broadcasting and reporting. Some media houses indicated reaching the extent of acquiring investment credit. Some owners of television stations invested in improving their live commentary and quality of production capabilities.

Majority of the media owners interviewed (93.1%) indicated that election campaigns had not lived to their expectations in terms of income generation, but only somehow improved it. However, they credit the elections for the unintended results of improving their broadcast technology, production and overall programming which will stay in place for a long time to come. Leading national television stations reaped big from live broadcast of political party events, candidate advertising and talk shows.

Figure 36: Number of Media Houses with Business Benefits by Percentage Responses



Source: ACFIM Media Business Survey (2021)

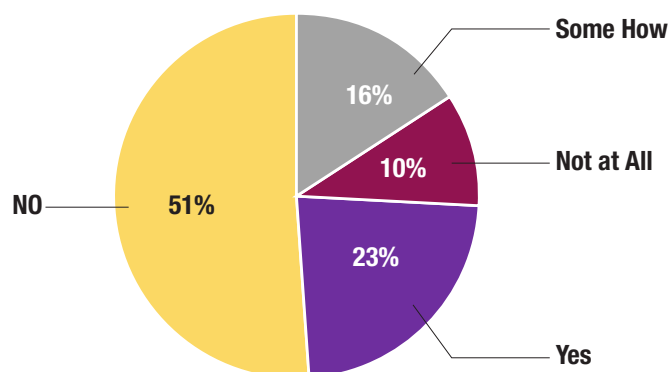


Analysis indicated that 98.3 percent (27) of the stratified sample that answered yes and somehow, their media houses realised an increment in business revenue linked to the relatively improved competition for media space. Results show 86.2 percent (25) realised new and continuous business linkages after campaigns. Others engaged in development of business packages having learnt the business trends during the political campaigns, and these constituted 72.4 percent of the total sample of media houses that responded to the survey. A few media houses indicated that they had invested in establishing new equipment to aid effective broadcast and programming at 58.6 percent (17). Whereas, the media owners interviewed were evasive to attaching tangible figures and benefits, they claim comparatively better business proceeds.

Did the business from Parties and Candidates meet expectations?

Most of the media owners interviewed indicated that whereas there was an increase in media business during the campaign period, the increase was not to the scale they had anticipated when the electoral management body declared that campaigns will be strictly on media platforms. Only 23% of the responses from media owners indicated that they were satisfied with the business. Most of these were national level players especially television owners. Half of the respondents indicated (51%) that the business recorded during the campaign period was not sufficient.

Figure 37: Percentage Distribution of Whether Media Houses Acquired Sufficient Business



Source: ACFIM Media Business Survey (2021)

Whereas spending on media contributed over UGX 41 bn (5.3%) of campaign finance costs (see chapter on campaign spending), over 51 percent of the media houses did not realize returns based on business projections before the campaign. There was a proportion of media houses (23 percent) whose business returns improved. These mainly included those whose business



profiles were already high. Others somehow reaped at 16 percent while 10 percent of media did not realize any business returns yet they had invested.

Table 24: Reasons for not Realizing Business Expectations

Business Expectation	Responses	Percentage
Gagged media environment	71	97.2
Inadequate campaign funds	69	94.5
High competition in the media Industry	67	91.7
Changes in campaign strategy/Guidelines (alternative options)	61	83.5
Exorbitant Rate Cards	53	72.6
Deferred payments	51	69.8
COVID 19 campaign disruptions	47	64.2
Short campaign period	43	58.9
Dishonored business contracts	34	46.5

Source: ACFIM Media Business Survey (2021)

Why were Media Owners' Business Expectations Not Met?

Respondents attributed the failure to meet business expectations to a range of reasons namely;

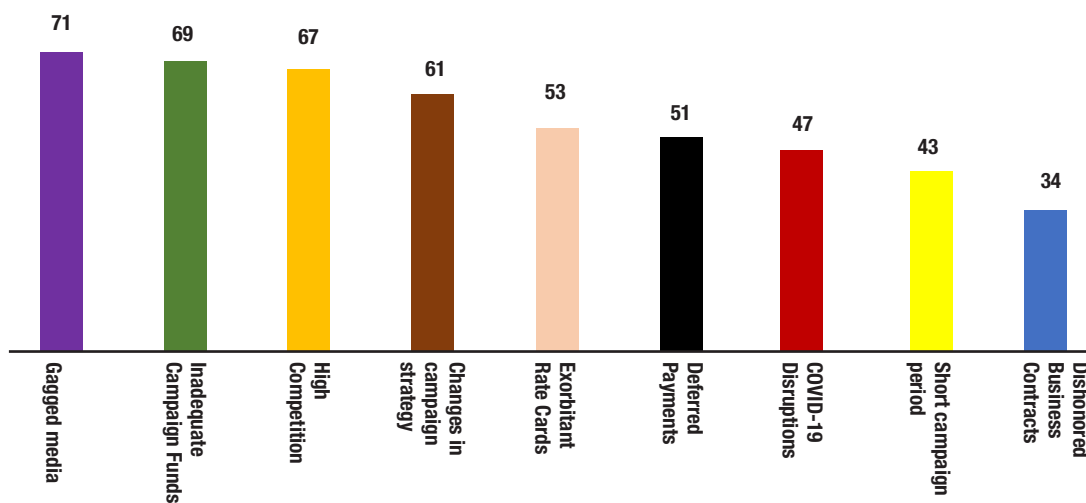
1. Gagged media – where opposition political candidates were denied access,
2. Inadequate campaign funds,
3. High competition,
4. Changes in campaign strategy,
5. Exorbitant rate cards,
6. Deferred payments,
7. COVID-19 disruptions,
8. Short campaign period,
9. Dishonored business contracts

Analysis indicates that a gagged media environment where the state apparatus provided restrictive business measures to media houses to host particular opposition candidates worked against the media benefitting from campaign money. Media houses reported threats and restrictions from Uganda Communications Commission (UCC), Resident District Commissioners (RDC) and state security agencies to alter and abandon specific programming that target particular candidates. There were reported cases of media time at specific radios being bought



out by the state at lower rates as a means of redistricting opposition candidates to use the media houses to sell their candidature. Media houses went into self-censorship mode for fear of backlash from the state including possibility of closure by the national media regulator (UCC). The figure chart below shows the opinions of media owners to explain why they did not reap from the campaigns like they had anticipated..

Figure 38: Reasons for not Realizing Business Expectations



Source: ACFIM Media Business Survey (2021)