

Political Literacy for Women's Empowerment in Botswana: A Feminist Perspective

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Abstract

This article serves to illuminate that Botswana's political landscape in the last 49 years has been very dramatic in the trend of women's visibility in cabinet and parliament. Post independence trends indicate non-existence of women in the first Botswana parliament, a gradual increase in the number of women in parliament during the 1990s, ranging from 5 to 8, and a sharp collapse in the last decade to only 6 in 2014 (Botswana Gazette, 2014). Women, just like men, need to be groomed to be politically literate and aggressive to make a transition and compete with their male counterparts for parliamentary and cabinet seats. Women's political illiteracy and history of being invisible in Southern African parliaments, particularly the highest decision-making organ of the Government of Botswana, is evident, based on numbers. Politics has remained a male province, with very few women as cabinet ministers or members of parliament.

Based on an analysis of trends in the political landscape in Botswana, political ethnography, historiography and the Critical Third World Feminist Theory, the authors argue that lack of political literacy and patriotism are major sources of women's failure to make it to parliament. These pose implications for accelerated role of Adult Continuing and lifelong education of women in politics to raise their level of political literacy.

Keywords

political literacy, women's empowerment, feminist

1. Introduction

Women are mainly found in some managerial positions across Government of Botswana Departments and Ministries. This trend can be reversed by preparing both men and women for success in the pathway to parliament, the highest decision-making organ. Regardless of its definition, scope and type, literacy as the combination of knowledge and skills with the ability to read, write, compute with understanding, has notions of empowerment and at personal, community and national levels.

This article serves as an introduction to the subject of women in politics and how they are located in terms of numbers. The article is informed by a combination of historical and feminist approaches. Through ethnography, and historiographical trends of women in politics in Botswana since 1966 after

the country gained political independence, the paper uses a feminist approach to illuminate the fact that women are left behind in positions of decision-making, particularly in parliament where major decisions are made, endorsed or rejected.

In the social sciences, there is renewed attention to political ethnography, a research method that is based on close-up and real-time observation of actors involved in political processes, at times even extending the definition of these processes to move beyond categories of state, civil society, and social movements.

This paper examines the trends in political literacy of Botswana women as observed from 1966 to date. The rise and fall of women in politics can be attributed to fluctuations in political literacy of women in Botswana since 49 years ago when Botswana gained independence. The author provides an understanding how politics work in everyday life. This overview highlights the place of women in politics, with indications of the national politics literacy of women as compared to men.

This paper serves as an introduction to the subject of Botswana women for non-experts, while surveying recent historiographical trends. In the past years, historical scholarship on political literacy has taken three trends. The first twenty years was when women slightly increased in politics, followed by a reasonable increase to about 8 women, and since the last elections there has been a sharp decline to only 6 women (Government Printers, 2014). These three trends are very worrisome to the emergence of the radical gender movement where women are not only concerned about changing their characteristics to be at par with men, but calling for gender transformative policies to bring about gender parity.

2. Background

Botswana's post independence development plans are based on the 5 national principles of democracy, development, self reliance, unity and "Botho" (roughly translated as "humanness"). The five principles are based on Botswana's cultural heritage with the ultimate goal of promoting social harmony or Kagisano (Presidential Task Group on A Long Term Vision for Botswana, 1997). The five principles combined echo sentiments of diverse freedoms within the limits of the national constitution, peaceful coexistence of men and women, and gender justice, which is a component of part of human rights and social justice. The specific objectives of national development are sustained development, rapid economic growth, economic independence and social justice. Within the broad principles and objectives of national development are statements of intent to include women and curb gender disparities in all fronts.

When Botswana gained political independence in 1966, women were almost non-existent in parliament. Politics remained historically a male province. Women remained politically invisible until the late 1980s when globalisation had a positive impact on the interaction of women globally. The period witnessed the formation of the Women's Affairs Unit which was a government unit tasked with oversee the plight of Botswana women. Botswana women remained politically illiterate and invisible in the highest structures of governance.

Having turned 49 years since independence and with only 4 women in parliament compared to 53 men in the same house, one wonders what type of magic would result in women's increased participation in Botswana's parliament. Elsewhere in Southern African countries that have signed the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, several options have been suggested to redress the plight of inadequate access to parliamentary seats especially occupied by women. Suggestions include having a quota system in which a specific number of seats are reserved for women to compete with fellow women for seats, while others suggested, special dispensations for specially elected slots to which more women can be appointed without necessarily campaigning or competing with fellow women and men.

The author agrees with the notion of quota system where women of various competencies would compete as that would ensure that selections are made on the basis of merit or for parliamentary seats preference of the electorates rather than sheer appointment.

As of July 2009, Botswana and Mauritius were the only two countries that had not signed the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development. In Botswana, failure to sign was prompted by the need to tone the legal language of the protocol to make it easy to understand before making a formal commitment. However, several programmes had been run, indicating the Government of Botswana as one of the pace setters in promoting Gender and Development by implementing the National Gender Framework.

According to the Gender Department in Gaborone SADC office, there are critical areas identified as priority areas and education and training is one of 12 critical areas in SADC strategic plan. However, before 2001, gender as an area of concern was like other programs coordinated by the member states until after 2001 when it was moved to the secretariat in Gaborone. A gender audit study was conducted and one major finding is that there are still disparities in enrolment of boys and girls in education. Unlike in other southern African countries, Lesotho emerged as the only country where the boy child was disadvantaged in access to education than the girl child. Boys drop out of school more than girls. Botswana and other SADC States have made a commitment to:

Ensuring the equal representation of women and men in the decision making of member states and SADC structures at all levels and the achievements of at least thirty per-cent target of women in political and decision making structures by year 2005 (SADC Gender Protocol, p. 24).

The target was not received except in the judiciary which reached a target of 30% by increasing the number of women judges to 3 by 2005. A critical question is "Are there any efforts towards meeting the targeted 30% in other sectors?" Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are needed to ensure that the target is reached in the local government, public sectors and cabinet so that women can be well represented in paid work.

3. Methodology

There were four major research questions that were the focus of data collection in providing this analysis:

- 1) Why are women invisible as active participants in Botswana politics since 1966 to-date?
- 2) Why is it difficult for women to vote for other women when they are historically amongst the most active organizers of party meetings, congresses, advertisers through choral music, advocates, campaign managers during elections?
- 3) What role does the media play in reporting news on women politicians?
- 4) What are the socio-economic factors in relation to election campaigns and the strength of women?

Data collected to inform this paper was mainly from studying the political arena as a gender activist; a desk study on gender-disaggregated data on women in decision-making positions; focus group discussions with women politicians in the capital city of Gaborone, transect walks and ethnographic observation of political rallies and congresses proceedings recorded by different media outlets especially during peak robust election campaigns during the last three national elections in 2004, 2009 and 2014.

4. Conceptual Framework

This paper is informed by a combination of ethnography, historiography the Critical Third World Feminist Theory (CTWF) and the Gender and Development Approach (GAD).

4.1 Political Ethnography

In the social sciences, there is renewed attention to political ethnography, a research method that is based on close-up and real-time observation of actors involved in political processes, at times even extending the definition of these processes to move beyond categories of state, civil society, and social movements. This paper examines the emergence of political ethnography from a number of disciplinary locations, such as political science, the cultural turn in sociology, and anthropology, and shows the value of this new approach for understanding how politics work in everyday life with particular reference to Botswana women who are recently mobilized to active participation in politics. Politics involves, amongst other things, management of national affairs.

4.2 Historiography

The history of women and gender has proven one of the most dynamic landscapes in Botswana's history in recent years. Yet in spite of this intellectual promise, women and gender have been unevenly incorporated into standard narratives of modern Botswana's social, political and economic development.

The terms "gender" and "sexuality" are relatively new. As recently as the 1960s, "gender" was most commonly a grammatical term applying to nouns in Romance languages. Only recently has it become a critical half of a "sex/gender" system, in which "gender" refers to the social expectations and social roles that are attached to biological sex. "Sexuality" has a longer heritage in its present meaning, appearing in the Oxford English Dictionary in the nineteenth century as "the quality of being sexual or having sex" within the past several decades, however, it has come to embrace a spectrum of sexual differences rather than an implicit heterosexuality. The rich and ever-expanding literature dealing with

both gender and sexuality testifies to their centrality to today's understanding of structures of power and meaning in the past. Writing about both gender and sexuality initially emerged in the field of Women's History, a major effort to recover the perspective of over half the population by bringing the background into the foreground, and discovering the difference it made. As the marked category, women were conventionally the "other" and not part of mainstream actors in politics.

The history of women and gender has proven one of the most dynamic fields in documenting Botswana women in politics in recent years. Taking stock of this explosion of scholarship, the Women's Affairs Department compiled gender disaggregated data on women in positions of decision-making (WAD, 1999). An update of this is necessary as Botswana marks 50 years of independence in 2016.

While surveying recent historiographical trends in the past forty six years, historical scholarship on Botswana women has taken three broad directions. First, historians have studied the role of rural and urban women in their homes and within Civil Society organizations where they do a lot of charity work to develop their communities. Second, historians have focused on issues of women's status in relation to prescriptions of customary law, access to land, credit and inheritance. Third, historical and gender scholarship turned to issues of women in development, and ultimately including men as women's counterparts, in the implementation of the National Gender Framework adopted by Botswana in 2002. Influence from the global gender movement and international accords have moved the concept of gender to be inclusive of both men and women, and regional initiatives such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) gender protocol have prescribed how gender parity can be achieved. This article builds a picture of a complex institution that still illuminates how women's experience in the post- independence period is still influenced by footprints of Tswana custom and British protection of Botswana for close to 100 years. This further indicates a great deal about the static aspects of Botswana culture and socio-cultural values of the broader society which suggest that politics is a male province.

The terms "gender" and "sexuality" are relatively new and closely connected to roles of men and women in the political arena. As recently as the 1980s, "gender" was most commonly a grammatical term applying to mainly women. Only recently has it become a critical half of a "sex/gender" system, in which "gender" refers to the social expectations and social roles that are attached to biological sex. For instance, women by virtue of their sex are found weaker than men in campaigning for political positions. They are therefore worthy of special elections if trends in ensuring gender parity are expected to change for the better. The rich and ever-expanding literature dealing with both gender and sexuality testifies to their centrality to today's understanding of structures of power and meaning in the Republic of Botswana since attainment of political independence.

Writing about both gender and sexuality initially was non- existent in the early years after Botswana's independence. The emergence of documenting women's historical place in politics is therefore very important since it is a major effort to recover the perspective of over half the population by bringing the background into the foreground, and discovering the difference it made. As the marked category,

women were conventionally the “other”, the forces for community, kinship, or propriety accompanying the rugged Batswana men individualist on their journey to success in the civil service, commercial agriculture, politics and in the international arena.

4.3 The Critical Third World Feminist Approach (CTWF)

Feminism is a global political struggle to end all forms of discrimination against women based on gender, class, ethnicity, race and other lenses. In this analysis, gender and a Feminist Standpoint are the main analytical tools useful to illuminate the social role of men and women in parliament. The gender and development approach to which Botswana is a party calls for deserving women to be empowered to compete with men and earn decision-making positions based on merit rather than the urge to increase numbers with consumers of borrowed power or simply “lucky” women. The CTWF incorporates the elements from the Marxist, Nationalist and post-structuralists streams of feminism and uses the lenses of gender, imperialism, class and race/ethnicity in articulating the root causes of women’s invisibility in development generally, including their role in politics and parliament. Gender justice in education has dominated discussions during the UN conferences since the 1990s. The UN conference held in 1985 in Nairobi, the women’s NGO caucus the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1992 and its implementation in 1996 respectively and the International Conference on Population and Development in 1995 are examples of UN conferences advocating for global redressing of the status of women. According to the Gender and Education Office (GEO) of the International Council for Adult Education, issues of access to education, literacy and mainstreaming gender were refined at the Beijing and Copenhagen conferences (GEO, August 2001).

CTWFS, grounded on experiences of Third World and specifically Botswana women, is the most appropriate for explaining injustice and gender-based issues. The paper draws on issues of injustice, inequality between men and women characterized by skewed balance of power socially and historically constructed to disadvantage women in parliament. Lenses used for explaining exclusion of women in positions of decision-making include gender, class, race, ethnicity and sex.

5. Major Findings

Guiding questions were posed during political rallies, congresses and other forums meant to groom women as politicians or those aspiring to be politicians during the 2004 and 2014 general elections. Over 50 people (30 men and 20 women) interested in politics, responded to the guiding research questions.

5.1 Invisibility of Women in Parliament

Southern African parliaments and high structures of governance are characterized by under-representation of women in and Botswana is no exception. There are more men than women and this invariably makes politics a male province and rather than promote equality in terms of the numbers of male and women politicians.

Women are socialized to believe that politics is a kind of rough and “dirty game” that requires not only the skills but the threshold to withstand critique no matter how severe it may be. Women featured late as amateurs in the political arena.

Women need to be politically educated to acquire literacy skills to campaign for elections. Political education encompasses the interaction between men and women, and the socio-physical and political environment in which they are found. The manner in which men and women interact with the political environment is important and useful. Since Botswana gained political independence in 1966, women’s role in positions of decision-making has been invisible but gradually increased on a relatively better scale in all fronts except in parliament, the highest decision-making organ. To make women visible, a number of suggestions have been put forward from the 1999 and 2014 elections. One suggestion came through a motion calling for an increase of four more specially elected posts (8 altogether for the 2009 elections). The motion, it was argued, was essential for ensuring representation of women in parliament, and giving women a chance. The author argues, from a Critical Third World Feminist standpoint that any efforts to make a special dispensation for women in parliament without educating them politically to perform renders the entire processes of the gender and development approach to a total circus. Women’s visibility must historically be illuminated through efforts they make in political education and campaigns rather than making themselves objects of pity who deserve special dispensations to make it to parliament.

5.2 Barriers to Women’s Participation in Politics

Due to socio-cultural factors and stereotypes, male leadership is preferred and better tolerated than female leadership from time immemorial. Originally, men assumed leadership positions socio-culturally by birth right. As more and more women became empowered through literacy and education, many women started to question the relevance of males as the sole leaders. In Botswana, two women ascended to positions of paramount chiefs in the last decade. This was a big achievement that typified victory to women. Women’s political education and participation is very important to make a breakthrough in leadership.

The participation of women in all aspects of development is important one of the good indicators of good governance. Southern African parliaments and high structures of governance are characterized by under-representation of women in and Botswana is no exception. There are more men than women and this invariably makes politics a male province and rather than promote equality in terms of the numbers of male and women politicians. Until disparities between men and women in parliament are bridged, Southern African states, including Botswana, cannot raise their flag and claim democratic governance and sustainable development. The SADC member states are Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mauritius and Namibia. Literature on gender-based discrimination in all fronts is included in feminist research on gender in the Third World. Findings of such research and literature suggests that due to a number of reasons, a Third world woman is more likely to be educationally and economically disadvantaged than a Third World man (Davison,

1998; Meena, 1992; Nnaemeka, 1998). This disadvantage is conspicuous in the participation of women in parliament, the highest organ of decision-making. Women's poverty and lack of empowerment are factors in their invisibility in parliament (Preece, Ruud, & Raditloaneng, 2007).

Empowerment cannot be achieved unless the target group participates in programmes and activities in which they are expected to benefit. Hypothetical statements have been made by different authors as to what counts as participation, in this case, youth participation. One of the relevant writers on youth and children's participation is Hart (1999). According to Hart, participation is a joint venture between children/youth on one hand, and adults on the other hand. There are different levels of children/youth and adult participation, as indicated below. The author argues that women's participation can be equated to that of children in that they participate at a very minimal level of being sent around to campaign for men rather than seeing the strengths in themselves as women.

5.3 The Role of Media in Reporting Women's Participation

Print and broadcasting media make skewed reports of women as followers, sex objects, beauty pageants and lack of women's fitness as politicians. Women are captured as listeners during workshop forums, beauty pageants defined by males as judges of what counts as a beautiful woman, and men as leaders, Chief Executive officers, intelligent and making an impact in the public domain. There is usually a general attack on women who campaign for elections rather than a focus on national issues that need to be articulated by those who would like to attract the electorate to vote for them. Magazines and political rallies demean women who are not married as unfit to be politicians, yet men are looked upon and portrayed as fit regardless of their marital status.

5.4 Socio-Economic Factors

Women have strong characters but socially expected not be to in politics because it has always been a male province. Women were initially socio-economically expected to operate within their homes, carry household chores, cook give care to the sick, and not run any show in the public domain. These socio-cultural stereotypes delayed their entry into the political arena. What they lack is grooming and fielding to campaign in time to be successful. Some women lack the economic resources to campaign because they are new to the political arena while male candidates have supportive systems from having entered the arena much earlier than women. Men therefore have a comparative advantage in knowing the rules of the game and how to play their cards strategically very well. In almost every general election held every five years, more women lose the race than men. This deficiency calls for political education especially to women so that they are moved from a position of inequality to be competitive with their male counterparts.

An article by academics Patrice Cailleba and Rekha A. Kumar in the *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* explains that the dual legal system operating in Botswana is an indigenously-based customary legal system, and received law, that is, the Constitution, based on a system inherited from the former colonial state (Cailleba & Kumar, 2010, p. 330). This dual system and the manner in which it is enforced in terms of soci-cultural practices influence customary practices that

women are best suited for the home and men for the public domain. The government's capacity to promote women's basic rights depends on whether customary law takes "precedence" over constitutional law (ibid.). Similarly, BOCONGO notes in their statement to CEDAW that the *Abolition of the Marital Power Act (No. 34 of 2004)*—an Act that "provides for equal powers in community of property for spouses" (University of Pretoria n.d.)—does not apply to customary and religious marriages; because it does not, and because a "sizeable number" of people in Botswana choose to follow customary law, the Act "tolerates" violence against women (can be sexual, physical, emotional, psychological) as a means of enforcing the unequal power relations that exist between men and women (BOCONGO, 2010, p. 3).

The council also identified a lack of financial resources as a reason why the *Domestic Violence Act* is ineffective since women, especially poor women who constitute the majority in Botswana, experience limited access to legal aid (BOCONGO, 2010). The Botswana Government, reporting to CEDAW on its implementation of the convention in 2010, also indicates that the cost of legal proceedings was the "main" obstacle for women wanting to access justice and that although there is no legal aid system in place, its planning document for 2016 recognizes the need to put one in place (BOCONGO, 2010, p. 6). Women's participation has therefore been invisible due to socio-cultural and legal practices that demean the ability of women as politicians.

5.5 Interpretation of the Ladder

Sociologist Hart (1997) wrote a book called *Children's Participation: The Theory and Practice of Involving Young Citizens in Community Development and Environmental Care* for UNICEF. This ground-breaking work put the work of young people and adult allies around the world in the context of a global movement for participation. The "Ladder of Children's Participation", also called the "Ladder of Youth Participation" is one of many significant illustrations of the level of participation of women, based on their political literacy.

Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation

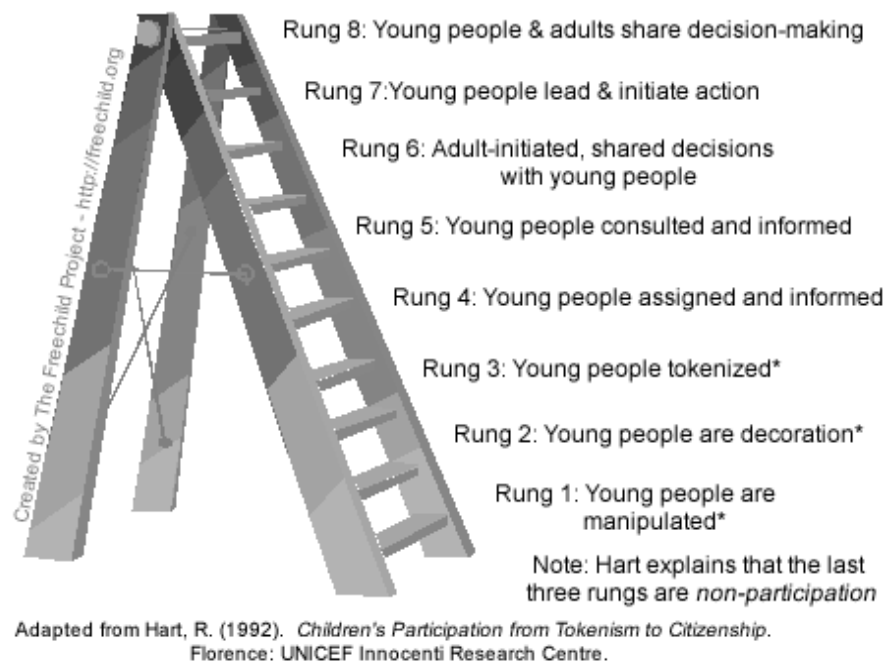


Figure 1. Hart's Ladder of Participation

Hypothetical statements have been made by different authors as to what counts as participation, in this case, women's political literacy that influences their participation in politics. Typologies of participation, ranging from levels 1 to 6, are descriptors of women's political literacy. This amounts to women as objects of manipulation, decoration for male counterparts and given tokens to serve as campaign managers and other assigned duties to ensure male success. Women run errands, get busy over tasks that do not place them as winners but just helpers of male counterparts.

5.6 Degrees of Participation

One of the relevant writers on youth and children's participation is Hart (1999). According to Hart, participation is a joint venture between children/youth on one hand, and adults on the other hand. There are different levels of children/youth and adult participation, as indicated below.

Women participate minimally at levels 1 to 5 which do not significantly increase their public domain status. They work to support and glorify men rather than seeing strength in themselves as women.

i) This is the highest level of participation in which young people-initiated, shared decisions with adults. This happens when women begin to serve as key actors in the political landscape and participate as adults rather than campaigners for men. They engage in programs initiated by their political parties and decision-making is shared between both men and women as adults. These projects empower women while at the same time enabling them to access and learn from the life experience and expertise of adults thus youth/adult partnerships. In the political arena, men dominate at this level.

ii) This is almost the highest level where women are initiated and directed. Women initiate and direct a project or program. Men involved only in a supportive role (men-led activism). Women dance to the activism tune of men who direct them in the direction they (men) wish to go.

iii) This is the level at which there is women-initiated, shared decisions with men. This level occurs when projects or programs are initiated by adults but the decision-making is shared with the women, men and the youth (participatory action research). Women however still wield power than men but a bit empowered to level.

iv) Women are consulted and informed about programs. This stage happens when women give advice on projects or programs designed and run by adults. The women are informed about how their input will be used and the outcomes of the decisions made by adults (youth advisory councils).

v) At this level, the women are assigned but informed about how and why they are being involved (community youth boards).

vi) Tokenism is a level when young people appear to be given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about what they do or how they participate (adultism).

vii) Decoration happens when women are used to help or “bolster” a cause in a relatively indirect way, although women do not pretend that the cause is inspired by men. Like the previous stage, this rung of the ladder reflects (adultism).

viii) Manipulation. This happens where men use women to support causes and pretend that the causes are inspired by women themselves, reflecting the most basic level of (adultism).

Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation at rungs 7 and 8 shows women-initiated shared decisions with adults as the top form of women's participation followed immediately by young people-initiated and directed. This is somewhat controversial an issue for many people working with and around women. Essentially, the debate is which of these levels of participation is actually the most meaningful? Levels 1 to 4 represents minimal participation of women, while levels 5 to 8 represent maximum and desired participation.

Many believe that shared decision making is most beneficial to both men and women in politics. Others believe that young people are most empowered when they are making decisions without the influence of adults. Most often, this doesn't exclude adults but reduces their role to that of support.

Both arguments have merit; ultimately, it is up to each group to determine which form of decision-making best fits with the groups' needs. Applied to the five projects evaluated, women's participation mainly ranged from rungs 5 to 8. Women were key actors in the programs but not active in terms of major decision-making.

Another way of looking at participation gauges the level that would be most appropriate to promote political education and participation.

Table 1. Typologies of Women's Participation

Typology	Characteristics of Each Type
1. Passive Participation	People participate by being told what has been decided or has already happened. Information being shared belongs only to external professionals.
2. Participation by Consultation	People participate by being consulted or by answering questions. Process does not concede any share in decision-making, and professionals are under no obligation to take on board people's views.
3. Bought Participation	People participate in return for food, cash or other material incentives. Local people have no stake in prolonging technologies or practices when the incentives end.
4. Functional Participation	Participation seen by external agencies as a means to achieve their goals, especially reduced costs. People participate by forming groups to meet predetermined objectives.
5. Interactive Participation	People participate in joint analysis, development of action plans and formation or strengthening of local groups or institutions. Learning methodologies used to seek multiple perspectives, and groups determine how available resources are used.
6. Self-Mobilisation and Connectedness	People participate by taking initiatives independently to change systems. They develop contacts with external institutions for resources and technical advice they need, but retain control over how resources are used.

As one moves from the lowest (1) to the highest (6) levels, women's participation improves and increases. The most desired levels of participation are appropriate for women to be politically literate range from 4 to 6. It is at these levels that women can be expected to display the highest level of political literacy and meaningful participation.

6. The Role of the Women's Affairs Department (Rebranded Gender Affairs Department (GAD), 2013)

The Gender Affairs Department, which is the gender policy making body in Botswana, is mandated to "facilitative, coordinate, and monitor the delivery of women's advancement and gender transformative and mainstreaming policies. GAD also provides technical guidance and backup support, including the promotion and training of both men and women to participate in all sectors of Botswana's economy. By interpretation, GAD is mandated to provide quality education and training on gender and mainstreaming gender to bring about gender parity; these responsibilities are part of the Vision 2016 pillar of creating an "Educated and informed Nation". This is in the form of the National Literacy Program inceptioned in 1980 to increase the literacy rates of men and women, and post-literacy programs which were later introduced as a realization that literacy skills alone would not bring about sustainable development. Gender parity in all fronts is regarded as a Human Rights issue to be addressed through various strategies. Some of the gender dimensions of the strategic areas of the gender and development

approach strategies that focused specifically on gender issues were not included in the development of mandates, programs and policies under the priority areas recognized. However, the Government of Botswana through the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs, and in collaboration with the Women's Affairs Department commissioned a gender mainstreaming pilot project in four ministries, namely, Labour and Home affairs, Finance and Development Planning, Local Government and Trade and Industry. The Women in politics lobby groups were established to take responsibility for preparing women to take up the responsibility of taking political positions and sustain their role in parliament to ensure that their concerns are well represented and properly articulated in national development.

Since GAD is driven by the philosophy of ensuring gender parity in all fronts, the role of the department in sensitizing people about gender parity in all its programs and mandates cannot be overemphasized. WAD also produced gender disaggregated data on the role of women in positions of decision-making nationally within the public service, the private sector and parastatals. Data suggests that overall, women, compared to men, are still invisible in higher levels of decision-making, including parliament. The ideas of gender parity as facilitated by the global gender movement led a transition from the Women in Development Approach to the Gender and Development Approach as adapted by Botswana. Feminist actors of all streams have never advocated for favouritism for women. Their main point of focus is that where there are deserving women, be it in politics, recruitment, employment, training, and promotions, inclusive systems must be in place to ensure that both men and women are given equal opportunities.

6.1 The Political Arena

Botswana has retained multiparty democratic institutions to date. It is one of the oldest democracies in the continent. Elections are held every five years as prescribed by the constitution, and everyone aged 18 and above is entitled to vote. The country has never had political prisoners, and its human rights record has been regarded by many as one of the best in Africa. Despite these achievements, however, Botswana faces some challenges. It has been dominated by a single party, the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), since independence. The opposition has remained weak and fragmented, often splitting the vote and lessening its chances of winning more parliamentary seats. Moreover, although elections are free and non-violent, the opposition and civil society have consistently complained that the polls are not fair. The political playing field is not level, since the BDP has more resources and enjoys the other benefits of incumbency. Additionally, factionalism is a challenge that all the political parties confront.

Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), Botswana National Front (BNF), Botswana Congress Party (BCP), Botswana Alliance Movement (BAM) and the Botswana Movement for Democracy (BMD) are the major political parties in existence. In 2004, the Minister of Local Government and Lands nominated 101 councillors, three of whom were from the opposition. The system has been subject to severe criticism and scrutiny following a motion by a BDP backbencher to the effect that the system of special nominations has outlived its usefulness, is undemocratic, and should be discontinued. There have been

calls to reform the electoral system. Some have advocated proportional representation, arguing that it would have the added advantage of bringing more women into political leadership positions. This matter has been on the agenda of the opposition parties for many years, and the debate continues.

Opposition talks resulted in the Umbrella for Democratic Change to win several seats for the joint opposition coalition during the 2014 national elections (Republic of Botswana Calendar on Members of Parliament, 2014-2019). Botswana uses a first-past-the-post electoral system, whereby the candidate who secures the most votes wins the election. The system does not allocate seats in accordance with the proportion of the popular vote gained by each party, and therefore the opposition has complained that it distorts electoral outcomes. The ruling party also enjoys the advantage of the special nomination process. The President of Botswana is allowed to select four specially elected MPs. These nominations are not meant to be reserved for a specific political party; they are intended to bring more skills into Parliament and help offset the failings of the electoral process.

6.2 Promoting Gender Parity

The Government of Botswana developed the National Gender Framework in 2000, as part of the efforts to guide integration of gender issues in development planning. Increasing access to disadvantaged groups, including women, is one of the main objectives of national development as stipulated in the national vision 2016 and the newly endorsed Sustainable Development 5 “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” (UN, September 2015). This poses great challenges for development leading to skills, knowledge and positive attitudes towards self-employment and general progression of women in all aspects of national development. In 2014, four specially elected members joined Botswana parliament (two men, two women). While this scenario appeared like an effort to bridge gender gaps, that was not significant for women to find voice as they were already far outnumbered by men.

The overall gender empowerment measure as indicated by UNESCO (1993) and the UNDP Human Development Report (2004) indicate very low ranking human development index for South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Swaziland, Lesotho Zimbabwe and Zambia. In terms of seats of women in parliament, South Africa has 27% of the total population, Namibia 17% and 10% each for Botswana and Lesotho, Angola 15.5% and Mozambique 30%. The female professional and technical workers figures indicate that for Namibia the figure 55% Botswana 52% and 61% for Swaziland.

7. Reasons for the Invisibility of Politically Educated Women in Botswana

Raditloaneng (2004) argued that there are several factors making it impossible for women to make it to parliament. Women, because of being politically illiterate and as latecomers in the political arena, suffer from a multiplicity of problems that relate to socio-cultural factors, capacity building (training and preparations ahead of elections, finance and lack of skills). Women further lack general and political literacy, and there is neither advocacy nor tangible political will to ensure that women win the electorate.

7.1 Socio-Cultural Factors

Examples of socio-cultural factors include constraints in time, competition, lack of personnel or colleagues to assist them in the campaigns. Women play a multiplicity of roles as single heads of households, caregivers, mothers, wives, and have the obligation to fully play these socially constructed roles. By contrast, men have a supportive socio-cultural environment and the economic resources to launch massive political campaign especially backed by the fact that they have been longer in the political arena. Men have the requisite technical skills for success in politics.

7.2 Lack of Capacity and Skewed Nominations

Women have been placed in areas where there are very limited opportunities of winning against their male counterparts with relatively more experience in politics. Women are tactfully fielded to campaign in constituencies where well fielded to campaign in constituencies where well seasoned male candidates with financial backing are between placed to beat women by earning higher votes. An example is the Gaborone Central constituency where a woman candidate from the Botswana Democratic Party was fielded last minute (a month before elections) to campaign with a male from the opposition Botswana Congress Party and lost with a very high margin of at least 2000 votes. The 49 year old post independence Botswana as a nation has 57 legislators (53 men and 4 women). This is sharp decline from the previous elections when there were 7 women.

7.3 Lack of Political Will

According to the civil Society presentation at the 11th July 2009 Commemoration of the World Population Day, Botswana and Madagascar were the only two countries that had not signed the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. While Botswana women are, by comparison with other African women well covered in terms of gender transformative policies on employment and maternity benefits, lack of an official commitment to sign the protocol remains publicly questionable especially for activists in the gender movement and organizations of the Civil Society

7.4 Women's Poverty and Illiteracy

Women suffer financial constraints due to their inadequate access to credit, and late entry into the political arena. The Earth Summit +5 of June 1997 articulated inclusion of women in all fronts as very important for policies and practices that do not threaten health and wellbeing for sustainable development. Women's roles have been enormous in advocating for and ensuring good nutrition, child care and household management. Despite their role, women are not adequately represented in decision-making processes locally, nationally and internationally.

8. Future Directions

8.1 Advocacy for Including Women

Agenda 21, the 1992 Rio Summit, the 1993 Human Rights Conference, the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, the 1995 Social Summit of the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women have focused on the UN work on the connectedness between environment,

population, human rights, poverty and gender, and the relationship between these issues (UN Department of Public Information, June 1997).

8.2 Gender Mainstreaming

There is globally a growing emphasis on gender mainstreaming, which means incorporating women's concerns and participation in the problem definition, planning, implementation and monitoring of all programs from a gender perspective. Recommendations have included the need to a quota system where eligible women are groomed to campaign for parliamentary seats reserved for women (Institute of Democracy and Electoral Assistance website, 2009).

Although a gender-mainstreaming project has been piloted in Government of Botswana, nothing has been taken on board in terms of the political arena. There are only very few success stories of four women in parliament—Two specially elected and two with constituencies, amongst a total of 53 men. The 2014 general elections reflected very bleak future for women politicians unless serious education and campaigns are launched to improve quality and numbers of women in Botswana's parliament next when the country goes to the polls in 2019.

8.3 Overhaul of the Knowledge Base, Attitudes and Skills Acquisition for Best Practices

Both men and women need to have the knowledge base and necessary preparations to successfully participate in politics. With the growing critique from the global gender movement on the relevance of treating women as “helpers”, gone are the days of perceiving women as kitchen managers and politics as purely a male province. The entire nation and the media would also need to change knowledge base, perceptions and portray women as equally knowledgeable, skilled and capable of participation in politics as long as they are prepared and fielded fairly. The current journalism focus on depicting women's weaknesses (marital status or lack of children) and how they fail to compete with their male counterparts is not encouraging for women to be active politicians in their own right though they do a lot of work to support male politicians rather than fellow women.

9. Conclusions

A number of lessons can be learned from the above analysis. Firstly, women's participation in politics requires a lot of political literacy training and resources to make a significant breakthrough. Botswana prides herself as a symbol of, amongst others, democratic practices, rule of law, political stability and prudent management of public resources good overall good governance. The international community also echoes similar sentiments and place Botswana as one of the least corrupt African states, based on certain global indicators. Botswana must rise up to gender justice in politics and decision-making as the country celebrates 50 years of political independence in 2016. An important aspect of the post 2015 development agenda is to ensure gender justice in all fronts including women's participation in parliament. While not all major decisions are made and concluded in parliament, it's important for women to be well represented to find voice in what is traditionally a male province.

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