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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this paper to my beloved mother, Juliana Nakabugo Kato, who worked tirelessly to educate me.



# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

The participation of women in armed conflict has gained ground worldwide in the last two centuries. Women have not only participated in revolutionary and nationalist movements, but also in other forms of struggle for equality, freedom and fraternity (Moghadam 1993). This is contrary to the common belief that war is a monopoly of men. Despite their participation in armed conflict, women combatants continue to be marginalised in the governance of a post-armed conflict society (Isibister 1991).

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Uganda has experienced different forms of armed conflict and has had several post-armed conflict governments. In these, men's participation has been recognised and documented. The participation of women in armed conflict and in the governance of post-conflict society has not had the same luck. It is this anomaly that the study sought to redress by answering the following research questions:

- (i) What was the role of women during the armed conflict in Luwero Triangle?
- (ii) Have women participants been appointed to political office in post-conflict society?
- (iii) Do women combatants seek electoral office after the conflict?
- (iv) Have women participants retained membership in post-conflict armed forces?
- (v) Do women combatants participate in the post-conflict decision-making process?

## 1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objective was to analyse women's role in armed conflict and, to determine whether women combatants participate in the governance of post-conflict society. Specifically, the study sought to:

- (i) analyse the roles played by women in armed conflict in "Luwero Triangle" between 1981 and 1986;
- (ii) establish whether women participants are appointed to political office in post-conflict society;

- (iii) determine whether women combatants seek electoral office after the conflict;
- (iv) establish whether women participants retain membership in post-conflict armed forces; and
- (v) examine the participation of former women combatants in the post-conflict decision-making process of their society.

#### **1.4. Significance of the Study**

Existing literature shows that women all over the world participate in armed conflict but are marginalised in the governance of post-conflict society. However, literature on the experiences of Ugandan Women in this regard is scanty.

The study, therefore, aimed at the following:

- (i) Sought to provide empirical evidence of women's hitherto unrecognised contributions, through armed conflict, to the struggle for peace, freedom and equality, and to relocate them to their rightful place in Uganda's history;
- (ii) Hopefully make post-armed conflict governments and other policy-makers allocate women positions of political responsibility commensurate with their participation in armed conflict, and to initiate and execute policies and programmes to achieve gender equality;
- (iii) An understanding of women's marginalisation in the governance of post-conflict society will help women realise that the struggle against gender inequality must continue long after the conflict has stopped.

#### **1.5 Scope of the study**

The study examined women's roles during armed conflict and the participation of women combatants in the governance of post-conflict society. The study covered women and men who participated in the struggle but are resident in the area; women and men combatants presently serving in the army, and women and men civic leaders at the community and national levels.

#### **1.6 Operational Definition of Concepts**

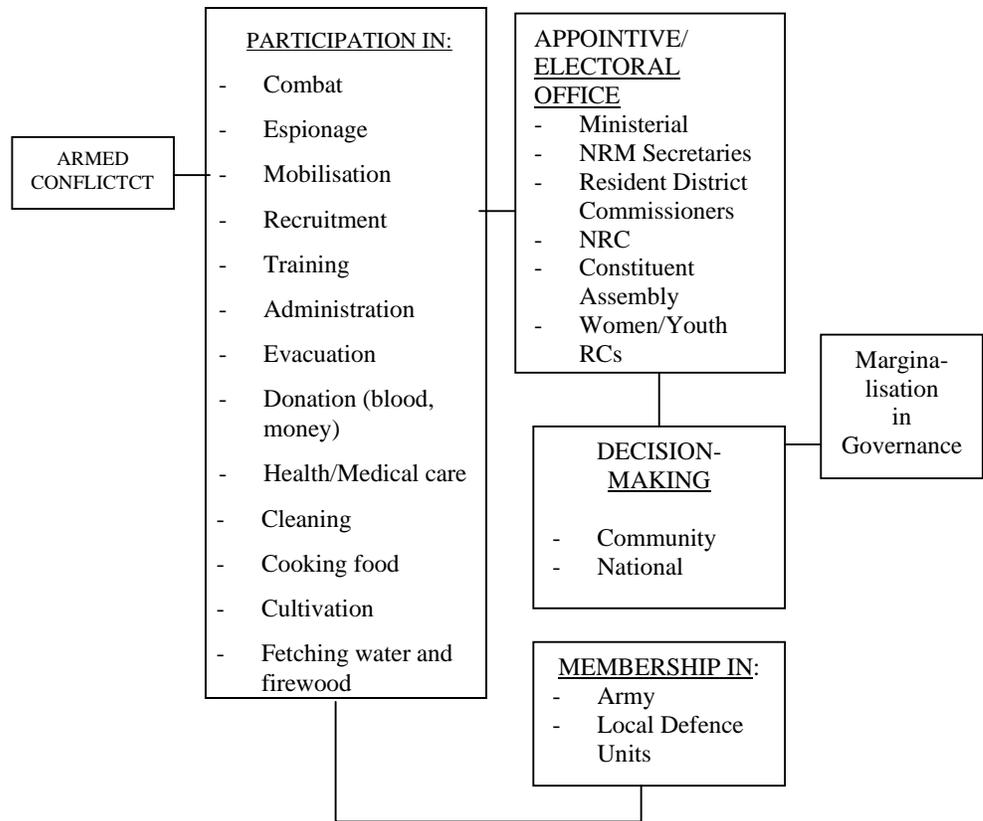
- (i) "Luwero Triangle" – An area in Central Uganda where the National Resistance Army (NRA), now called Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces (UPDF), waged a guerrilla war against the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA). It covers the districts of Luwero, Mubende and Mpigi.
- (ii) Armed conflict – A socio-political disorder involving two or more opposed groups that use arms in the settlement of their differences.

- (iii) Governance – having political powers to control and direct the affairs of society.
- (iv) Marginalisation – minimal involvement.

**1.7 Conceptual Framework**

When armed conflict breaks out, both men and women participate. However, in the governance of post-armed conflict society, women are marginalised.

Fig. 1. Conceptual Model



## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Introduction**

The literature reviewed hereunder covers the international, African and local perspectives under the categories of women's participation in armed conflict and women's marginalisation in the governance of post-armed conflict society.

### **2.2. Women's Roles in Armed Conflict**

When one thinks of war, the first image that springs to the mind is that of men engaged and dying in combat. If one thinks of women at all, it is of them mourning the death of their men, without considering those women who involve themselves in combat or the non-combatant women who have contributed in other forms. This is mostly because in history, it was usually men who took on the role of fighters. Traditionally, women stayed at home taking care of children (Williams 1989) and keeping the home fires burning (Andama 1990). Secondly, because women are supposed to be naturally frail and submissive (Rowbotham 1990), and lack force and masculinity (Tiger 1989), they are regarded as unfit for participation in armed conflict. However, during the last two centuries, women have been increasingly drawn into war as combatants and non-combatants. During the two world wars, women produced munitions and served as nurses, drivers, mobilisers and combatants (Williams 1989). Women have also played major roles in revolutionary movements – Britain (17<sup>th</sup> Century, France 1789), Russia (1917), China (1911 – 45), Afghanistan (1978), Iran (1979), Nicaragua (1960s-79), where they fought in streets and jungles alongside men (Randall 1987).

This trend is evident in Asia where women participated in Vietnam against French and American occupation, in Sri Lanka, Korea, Japan and China. Roles included carrying out mobilisation, providing food and other supplies to and hiding revolutionaries, recruitment, evacuation, combat and welfare provision (OAH, 1988; Rowbotham, 1972; Benett, Bexley and Warnock 1995).

In the Middle East, women's participation dates to as far back as 625 AD, during the battle of Uhudi; the Mohammedan wars against the Sasanian and Byzantine empires between 661 and 750 AD (OAH 1988). Similar participation has been witnessed more recently during the Afghan revolution and civil war; the Iranian and South Yemenis revolutions; the Iran-Iraq war, the Lebanese civil wars (Benett, Bexley, and Warnock 1995) as well as the Palestinian Intifada and the Gulf War. During these conflicts, women played significant roles (OAH 1988; Moghadam 1993; Randall 1987).

In South and Central America, too, women have participated significantly in peasant revolts and urban guerrilla movements in Argentina and Brazil. By 1977, they constituted 27% in Nicaragua's Sandinista National Liberation Front. Participants' roles included combat, espionage, welfare provision, donation of blood and other supplies, staging of riots and provision of traditional medical care (Randall 1987; OAH 1988). On the African scene, women constituted 25% of the ZANLA forces in Zimbabwe, 33% of the Tigrayan forces (Snyder and Tadesse 1995) and 5% of the Kenyan Mau Mau guerrillas (Kanongo 1987). Elsewhere, women fought alongside men in Angola and Mozambique (Snyder and Tadesse 1995; Urdang 1989), in Sudan and Chad (Doual 1991; Bwolo 1991). In all these

wars, women were involved in combat, mobilisation, underground work, evacuation and welfare provision, food cultivation, cleaning and administration (Benett, Bexley and Warnock 1995).

In Uganda, despite a history of armed conflict, women's participation has not been documented according to most literature reviewed. Karugire (1980) surveys the pre-colonial wars while Kirunda (1995) and Kabwegyere (1987) talk about the Rwenzuru insurgency and the 1979 Liberation War. However, not all of them mention women's participation. Undoubtedly, women have been part and parcel of these armed conflicts and have been involved in the struggle against indigenous despots. During the conflict in Northern Uganda, Alice Lakwena led the Holy Spirit Movement against the NRA while other women participated as combatants, couriers, gave refuge to rebels and provided them with water, food and clothing (Benett, Bexley, and Warnock 1995). During the conflict in the "Luwero Triangle", women participated by gathering intelligence, collecting and transporting arms and doing administrative work (Byanyima 1990; Nyonyintono 1992). These studies were not, however, aimed specifically at women's participation.

### **2.3. Women's Marginalisation in the Governance of Post-conflict Society**

Because of their massive support for and participation in armed conflict, women's visibility increased (Williams 1989). The stereotypical notion of women as the weaker sex has reduced (OAH, 1988) and women's organisations sprung up, thus strengthening the women's Movement (Rowbotham 1972). In some countries, like Afghanistan, Turkey and South Yemen, national progress was viewed by the post-conflict leadership as bound up with equality and the emancipation of women (Moghadam 1993). This trend is also evident in Cuba (OAH 1988) and Nicaragua (Molyneux 1985).

However, most of these gains were only temporary (Williams 1989). In most countries, the leadership in post-conflict era regarded cultural identity, integrity and cohesion as strongly dependant upon women's "proper behaviour" (Moghadam 1993). Therefore, women participants who had expected their burdens to be lightened after the conflict, were often disappointed (Isibister 1991). Too often, the road to political power stretches from battlefields (Kelber 1994) but this rarely applies to women whose sacrifices during armed conflict have gone unrecorded by those whom they helped bring to power (Molyneux 1985). In France, male revolutionaries denied women legal political rights after 1789. Women's political associations were banned and it was not until 1944 that French women gained suffrage (Kelber 1994). In Iran, Algeria, Kenya, Japan and Ethiopia, where women demonstrated admirable courage during battle, they were not accorded adequate participation in the affairs of the new republics. National constitutions provided theoretical equality yet denied women emancipation (OAH 1988). In Algeria, Sharia law was instituted after independence, thus effectively barring women from public life (Panaf 1975; Moghadam 1993). In Zimbabwe, Angola and Mozambique, the principle of equality of the sexes has not translated into equity in decision-making (Parpart and Stuardt 1989).

On the whole, women have never risen to the presidency or premiership resulting from participation in armed conflict. The number of women ministers is small in most countries. This is also true of women parliamentarians. In 1986, women

constituted 15% in Angola, and in 1989, they were 12% in Mozambique and 15.3% in the former USSR. By 1991, China had 21.3% women legislators, North Korea 20.1%, Vietnam 17.7%, Japan 2.3%, Nicaragua 16.3%, Turkey 1.3%, Iran 1.5%, Kenya 1.1%, and France 5.7% (Kelber 1994).

In Uganda too, women have been marginalised in the governance of their society. In his analysis of pre-colonial Ugandan society, Karugire (1980) talks about chiefs, kings, clan councils and councils of elders, all of which institutions did not have a place for women. Kyokutamba (1984) argues that during colonialism, a patriarchal legacy was promoted based on the Buganda administrative structure that had, in the past, sidelined women. Women's low participation partly results from cultural beliefs and low literacy levels among women (Mwaka, Mugenyi, and Banya 1994; Kyokutamba 1994). This view is supported by Karugire (1980) who argues that western education effectively disenfranchised women who form the majority of the illiterate and who as such have largely been spectators rather than active participants in politics.

At independence, politics was monopolised by the elite to the near exclusion of the peasantry, a majority of whom are women. Amin's regime put restrictions on women in the 1970s and banned political parties that would have served as substitutes (Mwaka Mugenyi, and Banya 1994). Amin, however, appointed Senkantuka Astles as Sports and Culture Minister. During the UNLF regime, apart from the appointment of Mirembe Bitamazire as Education Minister, women's participation was not felt. Between 1980 and 1985, more women were involved than before as political parties went out to recruit new members. However, women were only encouraged to vote, and no deliberate efforts were made for women to contest.

With the coming to power of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government in 1986, after a 6-year war against Obote's regime, institutions were established and policies initiated to encourage women's participation (Mwaka Mugenyi, and Banya 1994). The government has done this by developing a decentralised system of Resistance Councils and Committees (RCs) with different levels from RC1 to RC5. Each of these has a mandatory executive position for women, i.e., Secretary for Women Affairs; District National Resistance Council (NRC) and Constituent Assembly (CA) Women's representatives; establishment of a Department of Women Affairs at the NRM Secretariat; the creation of the Ministry of Gender, and the appointment of Women to ministerial positions and a woman vice president (WID 1994).

Despite the government's commitment to increase women's participation in politics, the number in decision-making positions is still very low (UNCC/GOU 1994). Women, therefore, lack a meaningful voice in community affairs while their problems are secondary in planning (Andama 1990). By 1994, there were only 5 women as opposed to 38 men ministers. In the NRC, women legislators formed 16% and in its Executive Council, only 8%. While a woman was the Vice-Chairperson, women composition in the CA was 19%. Of the 39 Resident District Commissioners, only 5 are women (WID 1994; Kyokutamba 1994; Mwaka Mugenyi, and Banya 1994).

After the war in 1986, the NRA never formulated a clear policy on the terms of engagement of women in the army. Young women consequently fell at the mercy of

the male superiority that controls the army. Most of them, therefore, withdrew to civilian life (Kyokutamba 1994) after seeing their male counterparts getting promotions while they were marginalised. All officers with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and above and directors of the different UPDF directorates are men. Women's representation in the army is important because of the army's proximity to political power, monopoly of the instruments of coercion and ability to influence government policy and to invade corridors of political power (Almond and Powell 1994). The NRA was allocated 10 seats in the NRC and CA each, none of which was taken by a female soldier.

While works on youth and women councils are yet to be carried out, in her analysis of RCs, Mulyampiti (1993) concludes that women's participation on these structures is still very low. Boyd (1989) and Mwaka, Mugenyi, and Banya (1994) advance that women rarely initiate policy nor do they contest for electoral office. Women are constrained by heavy workload and the few who participate do not have mechanisms to translate their participation into policy-making.

For women, equality has not been realised because political power is shared unequally. Deprivation of opportunity to participate in political decision-making has left women in an inferior position while making them vulnerable to exploitation and marginalisation (Boyd 1989; Aseny 1994). This, however, is an analysis of women's marginalisation in general. None of the literature shows in any way how women participants in armed conflict have been marginalised in the governance of post-conflict Uganda.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Study Area**

This study is basically qualitative and gender-focused. It was conducted in Luwero District in the "Luwero Triangle" but confined to the parishes of Kapeeka, Kapeeka Sub-county and Semuto (parish), Semuto Sub-county, all in Nakaseke County.

#### **3.2. The Sample**

The study included both men and women from the local population, male and female soldiers and members of the local defence units, members of the NRC, former delegates to the CA, Directors at the NRM Secretariat, Ministers and Resident District Commissioners (see table 1).

Table 1. Composition of study sample

Category	Participants		
	Women	Men	Total
<b>1. Community Level</b>			
- Local, Youth, Women Councillors	20	10	30
- Local Defence Units (LDUs)	-	2	2
- FGD <sub>I</sub> Semuto	4	3	7
- FGD <sub>II</sub> Semuto	8	-	8
- FGD <sub>III</sub> Kapeeka	4	3	7
- Former combatants	8	2	10
<b>2. National Level</b>			
- UPDF soldiers,	6	2	8
- Former - Cads	1	1	2
- NRC Members	1	1	2
- Members of Parliament	2	1	3
- Resident District Commissioners	1	1	2
- NRM Secretariat	1	1	2
- Ministers	1	1	2
Total	61	25	86

The total sample finally exceeded the 75 originally envisaged for the following reasons.

- (i) Two FGDs, instead of one, were conducted in Semuto because, women did not have enough opportunity to express themselves during the first one.
- (ii) Members of Parliament, originally not in the sample, were later included because of their central role in national electoral politics.

### 3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The main methods of data collection included conducting interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and documentary review.

Data was analysed manually using content to determine qualitative consistence. This was done at the end of each day after notes of each discussion, interview or documentary review had been checked for consistency, and corrections made.

## 4. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to analyse women's roles in armed conflict and their marginalisation in the governance of post-conflict society.

The study was conducted in "Luwero Triangle", but confined to the parishes of Semuto and Kapeeka, both in Luwero District. The study employed a qualitative

methodology in both data collection and analysis. In the latter case, however, tables and percentages were used where necessary, for purposes of emphasis.

This chapter presents the findings of the study, which are discussed in relation to the literature reviewed, and supported with relevant quotations from informants. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first tackles the role women played while the second deals with their marginalisation in the governance of post-conflict society.

#### **4.2 Women's Roles during an Armed Conflict**

Women's roles in an armed conflict have not diminished in importance or changed in nature in recent years. Nevertheless, their social interpretations have changed and women's tasks have been conceived as subsidiary to those of men, not as crucial to the attainment of peace and development.

According to the information gathered, it is evident that almost everybody in this area, men, women and children participated in one form or another.

It was reported by both men and women informants that at the beginning of the war, around 1981, women did not join as combatants because the demand was for men at that time. Similarly, at the beginning, it was unheard of for women to be in the ranks of the fighting forces, so many feared to join. Women started joining in large numbers from 1982 on, when a number of them received training from the male soldiers, and thereafter managed to train other fellow women. This increased their numbers in the liberation forces. Combat activities carried out by women included capturing guns from the enemy UNLA forces, and planting land mines. Notable women in this field include, among others, Nakamya (deceased), Nambooze, Nalweyiso (now Major) and Honorary Captains Zizinga and Njuba.

It was also reported that women such as Zizinga and Njuba trained in combat, formed part of the Officer Corps of the NRA High Command (at that time) and so were not always in the battlefield. It is these same women who, after the war, received honorary awards as captains. The majority of women in the lower ranks of the Resistance Army (RA) are the ones who were involved in actual combat. For instance, three women reported having been involved in storming the UCB branch in Kayunga in 1984. Other instances where women were involved include the 1983 Kayukiyuki attack; the assaults on Mbarara and Fort-Portal in 1995; and in the different battles for the control of Masaka and Kampala.

From the foregoing, it is apparent that women were involved in combat. This is in conformity with OAH (1980) and Rowbotham (1990), who observed that women participate in wars as combatants. What varied is the degree to which they were involved, compared to their male counterparts. Whereas activities in combat involved such tasks as planting land mines, facing the enemy at the battlefield, bombarding enemy targets, and capturing the enemy together with its military weapons, women were often excluded from those operations considered risky.

It can also be pointed out that the majority of women who joined as combatants did so as a matter of convenience. A situation arose where it was found better to join the ranks of the liberating forces to save one's life rather than being abducted, raped or killed by the enemy forces. A minority of women who formed membership of the

high command wanted to give total support to the cause, but at the same time acting as role models to other women.

It was reported that women were engaged in spying for the National Resistance Army (NRA). They carried out what they referred to as 'recking' (reconnaissance), intelligence and clandestine operations. One woman veteran thus reported:

We would go to barracks as maids or as wives, but after a month or two of gathering the required information, we would run back to the camps to inform our bosses.

The above goes to support the observations of Byanyima (1990), Randall (1987) and OAH (1988) that women were involved in gathering intelligence during a conflict.

Further still, several women reported having been involved in hiding the 'guerrillas' from the government army. For instance, many would always try to cover the footsteps of the 'guerrillas' so that they would not be traced by the government soldiers. Ms. Teddy Sentamu (now the women's representative at the County level) would make her children chase cows around her home area, after the guerrillas had left her place (because they used to meet from there) to disguise the foot steps, especially during the rain season.

It was found out that a greater majority of women were engaged in the mobilisation work. This also confirmed the observation of Bennett, Bexley, and Warnock (1985) and Williams (1989) who pointed out that during wars, women are involved in mobilisation. In 1982, Mrs. Gertrude Njuba, (now in charge of mass mobilisation at the NRM Secretariat), used to hold meetings in Kapeeka and Semuto. These meetings were intended to lure as many people as possible to join the war. Similarly Mrs. Zizinga (now Captain) was very instrumental in this work.

It was also noted that mobilisation work by women was done on a bigger scale after the formation of the Resistance Councils in 1982, on which some women participated as committee members. It was reported that women were very instrumental in convincing their husbands, daughters and sons to join or support the 'guerrilla' forces in the form of donating money, food and clothing.

Mobilisation work was mainly done through music. It was reported that men and women organised themselves into singing groups. For instance, Agnes of Semuto led a singing group which was used to attract people to join or support the guerrillas. Similarly, within the NRA, music was used as a strong source of motivation and cohesion building.

Food cultivation and collection on the collective farms was made possible through mobilisation. Women organised fellow women and men to grow food for the guerrillas and for themselves, and even when it was ready, women spearheaded its collection from the fields, with the assistance of children. Men could not do this because they could be shot dead on sight.

All this, therefore, goes to confirm the view that women are community managers. They can organise members in their communities to do what they want for their own good. Ability to mobilise the community members makes it possible for women to spearhead change. For instance, during an armed conflict, it would have

been difficult to have men and women join the army ranks and give total support to the liberating forces without the persuasion of women.

Further still, mobilisation by women also proved to be easy because of the nature of their domestic roles, where they are in touch with fellow women around the gardens, wells and forests where they used to collect food, water and fuelwood. This way, they would get the chance to discuss matters related to the war.

It was reported that at the beginning of the war in 1981, recruitment of soldiers was mainly done by the men. Women got involved in recruitment after 1982, and a great intake occurred in 1984 at a place called Semliki. Women encouraged their children to go and join the forces of the 'liberators', while those who were already in combat, also managed to recruit a good number of fellow women and men. Agnes reported having convinced as many as 10 women from Kapeeka and a considerable number of men. Bulandina reported having persuaded her daughter and her son to join the National Resistance Army.

It was, however, pointed out that when the war intensified, it became a matter of life and death. Women and men found themselves joining the forces, to be able to defend themselves and members of their families without necessarily being convinced to do so. Still, others reported that after losing their parents at the hands of the Obote forces, they had no choice but to join the forces. Women's significance in recruitment cannot, therefore, match their role in mobilisation. For the participants, the role of recruiting people in the forces seemed fairly easy for those women who were non-combatants, since they had more opportunity than their combatant sisters.

It was reported that women as well as men were engaged in training new recruits. Many of the women trainers were the same ones who had excelled in combat and other related activities. These had to impart skills to the men and women recruits, especially in spying, capturing guns, planting land mines, parading, and general militia work, and handling military equipment such as guns and bayonets. The women combatants gave training, since they could impart the same knowledge acquired to the new recruits. However, training by women did not involve the heavier tasks such as handling heavy and complicated military hardware such as tanks and Anti-Personnel Carriers (APCs). Women instructors were involved in the basics such as how to use a gun and bayonet and how to make parades.

In the field of administration, it was reported that Resistance Councils (RCs) were established in the NRA liberated zones around 1982, and these started in Kapeeka sub-county. The women occupied the position of Secretary for women affairs. Administratively, women dealt with issues of recommending those people who had to join the NRA, and how to get food for the people and the soldiers. Notable women include Ms. Kasiku Angella of Kibaale, who was a member of the Council, and Ms. Teddy Sentamu (currently the Women Representative for Semuto).

In the army, women combatants also performed administrative tasks, for instance, by becoming heads of sections. It was reported though that none of them became a company commander. However, some women, including Ms. Nalweyiso and Ms. Agnes Senkubuge, became platoon commanders. Others became Second-In-Commands.

Women's participation also extended to evacuation activities. This took two forms: firstly, the movement of people both civilians and troops, from areas of danger to those of safety or to areas where they were needed. Secondly, they could move property and military equipment. In this field, women participated a lot in the moving children, elderly relatives and any essential items needed for survival, to 'safer' areas. Women carried those who were seriously sick and injured to the camps, where they could get medical treatment.

People were moved from Busiuro and Bombo, and converged in Kapeeka, from where they moved on to Kabogwe, Kansiri, Mayanja and then to Ssinga (referred to as Lukoola). In all these places, it was reported that the women were very instrumental in finding temporary shelter for their families. It was noted, however, that although cases of women's involvement in the movement of troops were minimal, they nonetheless participated in moving equipment.

Both men and women informants reported that women played a big role in administering treatment to the sick and injured people as well as to pregnant women. It was reported that health care took the form of traditional and biomedical forms, and in both cases women's work was commendable. There were a number of traditional birth attendants (TBAs) who helped women in childbirth. Notable among them were Emilina Selabidde, Namutebi, Nalumansi, Ebulaki (from Kifampa) and Seophroza Nalongo (of Kasambya).

Women also practised their traditional knowledge in herbal medicine, for treatment of the most prevalent diseases such as malaria, and they used a herb called akasero. Anaemic cases were treated with what is referred to as Mubiri, a reddish substance which, once cooked and taken, could restore blood. Other diseases such as coughs, diarrhoea, skin rashes, and swelling bodies were equally treated with herbal medicine.

There were also the bone-setters, who treated people who had sustained concussions, dislocations or fractures, for instance, due to beatings by the soldiers. Ms. Christine Namatovu of Kapeeka was reported to have been most useful among several others.

There were also women nurses who were brought from Nakaseke Hospital and taken to the camps. Notable among them was Betty Kiwanuka of Kapeeka. These nurses treated the sick and injured soldiers. At the same time, those civilians who were seriously sick would be taken to the camps for treatment. For instance, it was the women who usually dressed the wounds of the seriously injured people. Furthermore, the women nurses were involved in the preparation of the herbal 'blood concentrate' in the camps, which was given to the anaemic cases.

There is no doubt that it is the women who played the most significant role in the provision of food (its cultivation, collection and cooking), collection of water and firewood, and taking care of their family members. This role was even extended to the soldiers of the NRA.

Women of Kapeeka and Semuto provided foodstuffs to the NRA. In Kapeeka, top army officers to whom the women supplied food included Major Generals David Tinyefuza and Elly Tumwine, and the late Mbuga. In relation to food provision to

the NRA, one informant had this to say: We used to give them sweet bananas, cassava, potatoes and sometimes *matooke*' (bananas).

Furthermore, women also used to cook for the soldiers. For instance, during the first years of the war, they would cook in hide-outs for fear of being implicated in the guerrilla warfare, since this was a matter of treason. Ms. Teddy Sentamu reported having prepared food and tea for sometime for Museveni, the guerrilla leader and now President.

Women were very instrumental in the cultivation of food crops in the camp areas on the 'collective' farms, and this was meant to be supplied to the liberating soldiers. One female informant reported: "We had collective farms in Kifampa and Naluvule (in Kapeeka and Semuto sub-counties, respectively) on which we grew cassava, potatoes, beans, yams and maize meant for soldiers, who would harvest it once it was ready."

It was also mentioned that women had own farms on which they grew food for sale to the general population and to the soldiers. Evidence of women providing food on credit (such as beans and maize) and promised to be paid later was significant. Some reported having been paid, although others have not been paid to-date.

In Ssinga, however, it was reported that as the war intensified, people could not stay in one place for long, as they were always on the run. As such, there was no cultivation of food, and food was collected from some farms and gardens in far away places. During the period 1983-1984, women played a very important role of sustaining the lives of the people who were starving. Women gathered anything they came across, for instance, cow's skin, which had become food then, and blood from cows, goats and sheep, which was taken as food.

Cassava peels were also dried and ground to make flour for food and porridge. When the situation became more desperate women were again instrumental in availing tender grass, shoots and tree barks to feed their starving families.

Collection of water was done mainly by women and children, as the men feared to be killed by the Obote soldiers, while on the way to the wells. So the women had to travel long distances, especially during the dry season when the nearby wells and streams dried up.

Women took up the responsibilities of their home when their husbands joined the guerrilla forces, were killed, or had abdicated their family responsibilities. The effect on most households in Semuto and Kapeeka was that women took over the extra burden of caring for the children, the aged and sick, in terms of providing food, clothing, shelter and health. It is surprising to note that even the urban dwellers, for instance, from Kampala took their children to their villages in "Luwero Triangle", and these were looked after by the women.

#### **4.3. Women's Marginalisation in the Governance of Post-Conflict Society**

This issue has been analysed in relation to four sub-themes: appointment to political office; seeking electoral office; membership in the post-conflict Armed Forces; and participation in decision-making. Furthermore, where it exists in any of the above, marginalisation has been analysed vis-à-vis the factors that constrain participation in politics by women in general and by former combatants in particular.

#### **4.3.1. Appointment to Political Office**

Since the coming into power of the NRM government in 1986, after a five-year guerrilla war, there have been several avenues of participation in civic governance. These include, being Resident District Commissioners (RDCs), National Resistance Council (NRC) members, Directors at the NRM Secretariat, Constituent Assembly Delegates (CADs) and Ministers.

The primary role of the RDCs is to oversee the implementation of the NRM socio-political and economic programmes in their areas of jurisdiction (Districts) with specific regard to political mobilisation and ensuring security. Uganda is divided up into thirty-nine districts, each with a Resident District Commissioner (RDC) appointed by the President. Of these, only 6 are women, and of the latter, only one is a former combatant.

The NRM Secretariat does similar work as the RDC except that it is solely responsible for the co-ordination of the said activities in all districts. It is also charged with formulating NRM policy and can as such be called the ideological arm of the NRM. To-date, of the four Directors at the Secretariat, only one is a woman, and out of the seven departmental heads, otherwise called Deputy Directors, two are women, one of whom is a former combatant.

The NRC was the country's National Assembly between 1986 and 1996. While the majority of its members were elected, there were ten presidential nominees. After the 1989 NRC elections, the president appointed two women, both former combatants to the NRC. Secondly, throughout its life span, the NRC had special seats for former combatants, otherwise known as NRM Historical Members, and totalling thirty-four. Of these, only two were women. In effect, therefore, by the time the NRC closed shop in 1996, it had four appointed women members, all former combatants. Significant to note is that this was in recognition of their contribution to the war in "Luwero Triangle". In the Constituent Assembly, too, there were the delegates appointed by the President. Of these, only one was a former combatant woman.

Soon after the presidential and parliamentary elections of 1996, ministerial appointments were made. Out of the forty posts, only five are held by women. Two (10%) of these are Cabinet Ministers out of a total of twenty-one. One of these is a former combatant and another the country's Vice President. In the pre-election era, there were eleven women ministers, three of them former combatants, which shows a reduction of over 60%, in the case of women ministers who are former combatants.

Women were seen to be deliberately marginalised in the case of RDCs, where their representation is a paltry 15%. Former combatant women on the whole represent 4%, there being twenty-three former combatants who are RDCs.

The same is, indeed, true of nominations to the NRC and Constituent Assembly, where women had a representation of 9% and 20% respectively of the total number of former combatants nominated. For women in general, this brings to the fore the phenomenon of women's marginalisation in the governance of post-conflict society.

A similar trend is evident at the NRM Secretariat, where women Directors and Deputy Directors together form 27%. The difference, however, is that appointments in this case are based more on ideological commitment and high educational levels rather than on contribution during the war. For this reason, it cannot be conclusively said that former combatant women have been marginalised.

Marginalisation of former combatants is more evident at the ministerial level. Out of the 34 ministers, Deputies and Ministers of State, who are former combatants, only one (3%) is a woman. This is very unfortunate considering not only the prestige and financial rewards associated with such an office, but also the amount of power wielded and the ability to formulate and influence government policy.

#### **4.3.2 Seeking Electoral Office**

In Uganda, the populace participates in electoral politics by aspiring for political office at both the community and national levels.

At the local level, avenues of participation include local Councils (LCs), formerly Resistance Councils (RCs), Youth Councils (YCs) and Women Councils (WCs). They were formed by the NRM government with the aim of enabling people to fully participate in societal organisation and to have a hand in the management of community affairs. There are five levels of participation.

LC I is composed of all citizens aged 18 and above, resident in a village comprising 30–150 households, otherwise called the village Local Council. LC II is at the Parish level, LC III, at the Sub-county level and LC V at the District Council level. Each Local Council has 9 committee members, i.e., the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary for Information, Secretary for Women Affairs, Secretary for Defence, Secretary for Finance and the General Secretary.

All women resident in a village are members of the village Women Council (WC I) and the arrangement is hierarchically similar to that of LCs. However, each council has a committee comprised of only 5 members, i.e. the Chairperson, the Vice, the General Secretary, and Secretaries for Finance and of Publicity.

The Youth Council comprises all persons between the ages of 18 and 30 and has a hierarchy similar to LCs and WCs. Each Youth Council has a committee of 9 members, i.e., the Chairperson, the Vice Chairperson, General Secretary, Publicity Secretary, Secretary for Women Youth (a student), Secretary for Labour Affairs, Secretary for Sports and Culture, and Secretary for Finance. This study is, however, limited to the village and parish levels of LCs, WCs and YCs.

All the above are important avenues of participation in governance. Despite this fact, however, the number of women competing for elective office thereon is still very small in comparison with that of men. This is reflected in the small number of women on the committees as the table 2 illustrates.

Table 2. Women's participation on local, youth and women committees in Semuto and Kapeeka parishes

Parish	Semuto (7 villages)			Kapeeka (6 villages)		
	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
Local Committee I	11	52	63	9	45	54
Local Committee II	1	8	9	2	7	9
Women Committee I	35	0	35	30	0	30
Women Committee II	5	0	5	5	0	5
Youth Committee I	7	58	63	6	48	54
Youth Committee II	1	8	9	1	8	9

From table 2 above, it is evident that there are only 11 (17%) women committee members from all the 7 villages (LCs) in Semuto Parish and only 9 (17%) from the six villages in Kapeeka Parish. On the Parish committees (LC II), women have 1(11%) and 2 (22%) seats from Semuto and Kapeeka Parishes, respectively. A similar trend is evident in the youth committees, the difference being in the women committees, where they have 100% representation for the obvious reasons that the Women Councils and Committees Status (1993) established this structure specifically for women.

It must be noted that this represents women as a whole. For former combatant women, the picture is grimmer. Only one lady, a Vice Chairperson of LC II Kapeeka is a former combatant. For all the 161 posts available, former combatant women, therefore, have a representation of less than 1%.

Of the 44 local women interviewed, only 14, including 2 former combatants, have ever contested the LC elections, and only 5 of them did so on their own. Their friends or family encouraged the rest. Only one woman, also a former combatant was encouraged by her spouse, himself a former combatant. Fifteen women would have loved to contest but were discouraged or just feared to do so. Encouraging, however, is the fact that 35 (73%) are ready to contest the next elections, come June 1997, with or without spousal blessing.

During the voting for LC, WC and YC committee members, NRC Members, CA Delegates, Presidential and Parliamentary elections, women of all categories participated. This has so far been the most significant form of participation of women. Table 3 below bears testimony to this effect.

Table 3. Women's participation in voting for community and national political officers

Community level	Women	Men	Total
Local committees	50	23	83
Youth committees	29	11	40
Women committees	49	0	49
National elections	-	-	-
NRC	40	15	55
Constituent assembly	51	20	71
Parliamentary	57	24	81
Presidential	58	24	82

Apparently, women's participation in elections has been very high, ranging from 68% to 100%. Former combatants and UPDF soldiers registered a record high participation of 100%. It should be noted though that while table 3 shows low participation by women in the election for the Youth and NRC Councils. This is because a majority of the informants were above the statutory age limit (30 years) for membership in Youth Councils. Similarly, the last NRC elections were held in 1989, when some informants had not attained the statutory voting age (18 years and above).

In all the above categories of participation, former combatants, both male and female, featured more prominently than the civilians. This is because of the exposure they gained during the war and the post-war recognition they earned. The exception, however, is in seeking political office, during which they have been rebuffed by the electorate, this being applicable to both men and women.

An understanding of women's marginalisation in the governance of post-conflict society at the community level has to be analysed in the context of the factors that constrain women in general and combatants in particular. According to most informants, cultural beliefs and practices that hold women as unequal to men are to blame. These beliefs and practices have been enhanced by the socialisation process which demarcates, recommends and assigns spheres as either male or female in what has come to be referred to as sexual division of labour. It is for this reason that girls are socialised into a more apolitical role than boys.

The kinship system, according to some informants, recreates those conditions necessary for perpetuating male political dominance through the inheritance system. As one informant said, "It is very difficult for a woman to attain political power when she did not inherit any from her father". The above is in line with Kyokutamba (1984) who submitted that by form, nature and content, the kinship system is patriarchal, whose acts as a power broker in society, places women in those roles where political power lies not.

Cultural beliefs are particularly harmful because most people, women inclusive, believe that politics is a male field. Therefore, where there are two contestants, one male and another female, the former is favoured. Political participation is largely dictated by education. All informants said that low literacy levels and lack of professional skills among women is a major hindrance to political participation.

Another major constraint is the nature of the LKC, YC and WCs systems themselves. On inception of these bodies, there was not much sensitisation regarding the same. It was for this reason that some men initially held the posts of Secretary for Women Affairs while some women held positions in the trio contrary to the law, and some others only compete for the women's seat; yet all are open for contesting.

Secondly, there is no pay associated with any of these offices at the village and parish levels, yet office holders at the parallel Local Administration structure have emoluments.

Lastly LC, YC and WC electoral regulations make it illegal for campaigning except for an outlining of their qualifications by the candidates. Most women consider this a form of torture, first of all because they have not been socialised into speaking in public, and secondly because their low levels of literacy do not give them much of a C.V. to declare in public.

Other constraints indicated included religious beliefs that male preponderance in politics is God-given; perpetual alcohol consumption; and dressing style; heavy domestic workloads; and lack of self-confidence.

Towards former combatant women in particular, the local people feel that their place is the security organs and not civic governance. Those who have dared to contest for posts at the community level have been rejected by the electorate.

From the foregoing, it is apparent that at the community level, women in general are unconsciously marginalised by the communities in which they live. Former combatants, on the other hand, are deliberately left out of holding offices at the community level by the predominantly civilian electorate.

At the national level, participation in governance has included seeking and occupying elective office in the National Resistance Council (NRC), the Constituent Assembly (CA), Parliament and the Presidency.

The participation of women in national elections as civic educators, election monitors, commissioners, voters and candidates has been phenomenal, according to *ARISE*, no. 19 (October – December 1996). Despite this, however, the levels are still low both in numbers and physical attempt.

During the 1989 NRC elections, most women competed for the 37 women district seats. Of the few who attempted the general seats, none was successful. Significant to note here is that none of the former women combatants contested these elections. At the end of its mandate in 1996, the NRC had 41 women (including 4 presidential nominees, all former combatants) out of a membership of 256, representing 16%.

For the Constituent Assembly, too, women competed mostly for the compulsory women district seats, which had since been increased to 39. However, there were six contestants here for the general seats, only two of whom, coincidentally former combatants, emerged victorious. These, in addition to the 39 women district seats, presidential nominees, youth, political party and disabled representatives, brought the number of women delegates to 51 out of 288, representing 18%.

A similar trend was evident during the presidential and parliamentary elections of May and June 1996, respectively. For the presidential elections, there was no woman aspirant out of the three contestants. Women, however, came out in support of the candidates of their choice. It was during the parliamentary elections that women came out in large numbers to contest for the available seats.

According to *ARISE*, no. 19 (October – December 1996), the 1996 parliamentary elections were seen as a qualitative leap forward for women in achieving a breakthrough into the male dominated bastions of political power because more women than ever before were elected to Parliament. Available records at the Electoral Commission reveal that there were 106 women contestants for the district seats, 26 for the general seats, 5 for the disabled, 2 for workers and one for the army. At the end of the exercise, women constituted 18.4% of the elected members of Parliament (MPs). Of these, four had competed for and won general seats. Women's representation in Parliament, however, still stands at 16%, the full house being composed of 268 MPs. This time round, there were four former combatants competing, three of who emerged successful, all for the general seat.

The number of women competing for national elective offices has increased over time, yet they are still low in comparison to that of men. Several reasons were given to explain this situation. These include lack of funds and of confidence, low levels of education, failure to reconcile domestic and political aspirations, cultural barriers, intimidation by male opponents, and lack of spousal and family support.

For women combatants in particular, lack of education was seen as a major hurdle to seeking national elective office. Many of these women joined the struggle with less education than is necessary for such offices. The constitutional minimum educational level for the NRC, CA and Parliament was 'A' level or Senior Six, which qualification just a handful of former combatants possess. Similarly, persons who felt secure in their jobs could not simply resign to seek elective office as demanded by the statute, the reason being that they were not sure of winning.

It is apparent from the above that a number of factors combine to constrain women's participation in governance. For this reason, marginality can only be explained in terms of unconscious sidelining, especially through cultural beliefs and practices. It is because of this that the socialisation process, together with emphasis on boys' education, leaves girls with very few options, including political aspirations, when they come of age.

#### **4.3.3 *Membership in the Armed Forces***

All members of Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF), formerly National Resistance Army (NRA), said they valued their membership in the army not only because it is a means of income but also because of the army's and indeed their individual role in national defence. The army is also important to them because of the prestige usually associated with such membership, especially in African politics, and because of the force's strategic position, which puts it in close proximity to the corridors of political power. Similarly, its monopoly of the instruments of coercion puts the army in a better position not only to influence national defence policy and government actions in general, but also to hijack political power if and when their interests and/or those of the groups they are sympathetic to are not met. In effect,

therefore, the army is one of the most important avenues of interest aggregation and a major power broker in society.

In recognition of this fact, the NRM government allocated 10 special seats to the army first in the CA and now in parliament, to articulate the interests of the uniformed citizenry. The procedure of selecting army representatives to the CA and Parliament was in each case such that 20 names of capable persons were nominated from the whole force. These were presented to the President, who is also the Commander-in-Chief, undoubtedly for screening purposes. Approval thus complete, the lists were then presented to the army council for voting.

For the CA, information was not readily available, since army records are classified, as to whether there was any female nominee. Apparently, however, there was no female army representative among the ten. It was also found out that all the ten were former combatants, from both within and without the army. A similar procedure was employed during the Parliamentary elections, this time with 2 female nominees (both former combatants) among the 40, one of whom was finally elected.

Another area of participation in the army is the UPDF High Command. This is a highly exclusive organ responsible for formulation of national defence policy and placement in the army. It is composed of all Army Directors (8), all the 98 Division Commanders, the army Commander, the Chief-of-Staff and the Commander-in-Chief, bringing the total number to 19. This is a 100% male-dominated organ whose membership, due to historical factors, is from former combatants. Therefore, women, including former combatants, lack a voice in the UPDF High Command.

Another very important organ is the Army Council. This is concerned with the day-to-day management of the army. In addition, it advises the High Command and implements decisions by the higher body. It also acts as the army's parliament, whose decisions can only be countermanded by the High Command. It is composed of all Brigade Commanders, all Battalion Commanders, Army Directors, and all Senior Officers (these are all former combatants). There is no woman commander for any of the specified categories, but two are senior officers, one a major and another a captain (Rtd).

The last organ of importance in the army is the court-martial, one of whose members is a female former combatant. While the body is male-dominated, those women who have been heroines *Vireos* have a voice on the military bench.

"By the time of the take-over in 1986, women constituted about 800 troops in the NRA," according to a former Women's Brigade Commander. Presently, however, "there are approximately 500 women in the force, 200 of whom are former combatants", according to one Lt. Colonel. The reasons behind this drastic change are several. It was revealed that the demobilisation exercise that started in 1994 has been largely responsible for this trend. Others have since left the army through retirement and desertion.

Presently, all the senior officers in UPDF are men. These hold the highest ranks, from Lt. Colonel to Lt. General. There are three Major Generals, scores of Brigadiers and Lt. and full Colonels. The highest ranking female officer is a major and only one at that. There are 10 captains, three of whom are honorary (all the above being former combatants) and 25 second and full lieutenants, most of whom

are also former combatants. A majority of the women, however, belongs to the non-commissioned ranks.

By the time of the take-over in 1986, there were four women Lieutenants while the highest rank in the whole army was that of a Major. The significance of this is that the then most senior women officers have to-date been outranked, not only by men who were of less or equal rank, but also by men who did not register their contribution to the war that brought the NRM government to power.

In effect, therefore, the UPDF is a male dominated army in both its horizontal and vertical dimensions. A majority of the former combatant women said that they quit the army because they could not stomach being sidelined while the male counterparts were being sent to staff colleges, getting promotions and command positions in the army. This is in conformity with Kyokutamba's (1994) thesis that women have fallen prey to male superiority in the army. This, then, amounts to deliberate marginalisation of women in a force that helped to bring the NRM government to power.

As it were, however, a deeper analysis of how the army operates brings to light a better understanding of women's marginality therein. Promotions are based on three factors: educational levels reached, training undertaken and one's exceptional performance in a war, not necessary the 1981-86 one.

Some women belong to the last category. For this, they were commissioned Lieutenants at the end of the war. One has since risen to the rank of Major. The difference between women and men is that men have since then outranked their female counterparts. This stems from the fact that very few women had educational levels beyond primary school. This was confirmed by one female officer who said that "female university graduates and students did not join the NRA," yet there were many highly educated men. Moreover, many women who joined before completing school and college got married and never went back to complete their studies. Men under similar circumstances have since graduated, including "Kadogos" or kid soldiers. All this has weighed heavily against women's bids for promotion.

What is important, then, is whether less educated men have had similar experiences. Indeed, some of these have been more fortunate because they hold higher ranks and key positions in the army. Partly, this has to be explained historically. While many women participated in combat, very few had opportunity for challenging assignment (such as special missions) and a command post during the war. In this context, therefore, they could not meet the eye of superior commanders who could recommend them for promotion.

The contemporary situation also gives insights into women's marginality. Training is perhaps the most important avenue for promotion in the army. According to one male captain, "there is no discrimination in training in the army. Both men and women have equal opportunities". This view was also expressed by other soldiers who insisted that many women have been selected but they do not go for training. "Women who have undergone training do not advance because they concentrate more on their marriages than on duty", one woman major added.

Marriage has been detrimental to women because some women go on self-transfer whenever their hubbies or boy friends are transferred to new units. Therefore, when

promotions are due in her unit, she cannot be considered because she deserted, and if it is the hubbie's unit, she is not known.

The situation of married women is made worse by the impact of marital duties, including pregnancy, having little children and heavy domestic workload. This leads to absenteeism, and impacts negatively on their performance, thus counting against them during performance appraisals. "Women", therefore, "rarely get to the eye of the commanding officer", one lady lamented. It also helps explain why few women are selected for staff courses in the army. It must be noted though that, while marginalization is not apparent in selection for training and promotion, unconsciously, women are sidelined because the male-dominated powers are gender insensitive, especially to the hurdles women face in general and during performance appraisals in particular.

Women's low horizontal representation has been explained in terms of three factors: general demobilisation, desertion and retirement. There are women, especially former combatants, who have quit the army voluntarily through retirement. A section of these had amassed wealth and either started or expanded already existing business operations. Others felt they had served for long enough. Other women, however, simply deserted, the largest percentage of whom are former combatants. They did this because of real or imagined marginalisation, especially in regard to financial and material reward.

A majority of the women left the army through demobilisation. This resulted from recommendations by the IMF/World Bank. This was done in two forms, voluntary and forced. In the former case, calls were made for persons who wished to retire. According to one female officer, former combatants were advised against leaving the army, but a majority did not take heed. In the latter case, persons considered deadwood and non-performers were forced out of the army. Even these, however, could apply to the court martial if they thought malice was employed.

Under these circumstances, women's low horizontal and vertical representation shows that indirect marginalisation is in play. This is mostly because no considerations were given to women's productive and reproductive roles that impinge on their performance, during performance appraisals, promotions, and the demobilisation exercise.

Local Defence Units (LDUs) are paramilitary organs charged with ensuring security at the community level. Despite this, women in the parishes of Kapeeka and Semuto are virtually unrepresented on the LDUs. This is because of several reasons. Historically, military and paramilitary organisations were a man's preserve. Most women, therefore, felt that it was out of the ordinary for them to serve on these organs.

Women's reservations about the LDU also stem from the fact that it is not associated with government pay. Their needs are instead met by the communities they defend. This has discouraged many women, former combatants notwithstanding.

The general feeling of former combatants in particular, was that it was belittling for them to join considering that they started as freedom fighters and have since served in the more prestigious army. This is more so because some of them set of small

businesses from their savings or retirement benefits. Those in this category felt it was a waste of time to involve themselves in the non-paying LDUs.

From the foregoing, it is apparent that former combatants were not being marginalised on this quasi-military organisation. It is a question of negative attitude rather than the community or government's rejection of women in that regard.

#### **4.3.4. *Participation in Decision-Making***

This has to be understood, first of all, in the context of women's liberation as an ideology. Women's liberation is a political process because it involves the use of power. Women's development capacity, therefore, lies in their ability to mobilise themselves in different political groups with the motive of attaining political power and freedom so as to gain platform to address other issues that affect them.

It has been established that in order to make a change, any minority group must be able to achieve at least one-third of the numbers of the majority. From the findings above, it is evident that this has not been achieved in Uganda. Women in general and former combatants in particular constitute a low percentage not only in elective and appointive political offices, but also in Uganda's armed forces.

Secondly, due respect must be given to attendance of meetings, contributing to debates, and initiating of policy both at local and national levels of participation as well as in the armed forces. At the community level, attendance of general meetings in the local and youth councils was quite high. Unfortunately, nil attendance of women council meetings was registered, because WCs are non-operational in the area.

It was established that 26 of the 48 local women attend meetings regularly, 36% do so occasionally while 10% never attend meetings. All former combatants said they attended regularly. Meanwhile, women's involvement in debates was seen to be low. Only 20% said they had never done so, half of whom were former combatants. This was explained in terms of negligence of the chairpersons, all men, to chose women to speak. Similarly, only eight informants, all former combatants, said they have never contacted a committee member, outside of meetings, on issues related to policy formulation. In effect, therefore, women's participation in decision-making is generally low. For former combatants in particular, this is exacerbated by the fact that they have been denied seats on the committees.

At the national level, women's attendance of the NRC sessions has always been high. Their contribution to debates, however, has been less than average. This stems from the fact that almost all had never trained in the art of public speaking. This, coupled with "gender bias in upbringing, creates uncertainty and lack of confidence among women Council Members", according to one former Council Member. This made many hesitate to contribute to debates. This was found to be true for former combatants as well.

This trend changed for the better during the Constituent Assembly and, now the parliamentary sessions. During the CA period, ACFODE, (Action for Development) a women's NGO, organised seminars for female CADs to arm them with tools of public speaking, public policy analysis and the importance of a women's caucus.

This has been strengthened to-date with the formation of FOWODE (Forum for Women in Democracy), an organisation that brings together women politicians.

With the above measures in place, women's contributions to debates and initiation of public policy, especially with regard to women's emancipation, came to a record high. According to one male informant, "in the women ranks, we have some of the most articulate MPs". No prejudice on the part of the Chair was reported, partly because the Vice-Chairpersons of the CA and Parliament are women. The result has been that women made great achievements in the country's constitution promulgated in 1995.

The preamble of the Constitution, for example, makes it obligatory for the state to ensure gender balance in all spheres while the article on Fundamental Rights and Freedoms affirms the equality of all persons before the law. Of particular importance is Article 36 that prohibits all laws, cultures, customs or traditions that are against the dignity, welfare or interest of women or which undermine their status.

While the numbers of former combatant women were insignificant, these constitutional achievements may not have been possible without the input of the gallant once-in-uniform women. This does not, however, remove the hypothesis that the negligible number of former combatant women makes their contribution to decision-making equally negligible.

This, indeed, is true at the ministerial level where there is only one former combatant. While there were no reports of prejudice in cabinet against the sole former combatant woman, of male ministers against their female deputies, the participation of women former combatants in decision-making remains largely low.

It is also significant to note that the quality of participation in decision-making is low. According to one lady Parliamentarian: "There is no preparation both at home and at school. So the few women who are at the top are ill-equipped to make sound decisions".

Women, moreover, face other problems such as bearing double burden, negative societal attitudes towards women in public and the fact that "the world of politics is very rough, intensely competitive and full of innuendoes", according to one female informant. All these practices were seen to be quite alien to women.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Summary of Conclusions**

It was found out that during the armed conflict in "Luwero Triangle", women played important roles. These included combat and non-combat duties. It was established that in their performance of combat roles, women's participation was limited to actual fighting, where some exhibited exceptional performances, spying, guard duties and laying of mines. Women were, however, not assigned the so-called risky duties such as special missions where the risk of being arrested or where mortality was expected to be high.

It was further established that women were involved in those activities related to and/or in support of combat such as recruitment and training. However, participation in recruitment was not done by women until late 1982 after a full year's lull. Similarly, the women involved in training were the exception rather than the rule.

Women were also involved in both civil and military administration. Civil administration involved being a member of the Resistance Committee (RC). Military administration, on the other hand, involved being in charge of a command post, but women's involvement was limited to being section or platoon commanders. Bigger positions, starting with companies, were a male domain.

Similarly, both civilians and soldiers were involved in evacuation, by moving both property and people from insecure to safe zones. Similarly, women were instrumental in hiding guerrillas as well as in mobilisation work.

In the area of health, too, women played significant roles. These ranged from nursing the sick and wounded, administering drugs and setting broken bones, to providing antenatal care, an area in which Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) were invaluable.

In the domestic sphere, both civilians and soldiers were seen to have played a big role. They organised communal gardens from which food for use by guerrillas was got; cultivated their own food; searched for food during the 1983 famine; cleaned, collected water and firewood, and did cooking.

All the above efforts by both civilians and soldiers, in one way or another, were instrumental in giving the NRM/A victory in 1986. These efforts have not, however, been significantly rewarded, a situation equal to marginalisation, be it unconscious or deliberate.

The involvement of former combatant women in decision-making was seen to be low because they do not constitute a "critical mass". This is not only in the military but also in elective and appointive offices. In the army, most former women combatants were seen to have quit through demobilisation, desertion and retirement. While demobilisation was seen to have affected both genders more or less equally, it was established that desertion and retirement resulted from the apparent marginalisation of women in the army.

Deliberate marginalisation was seen in the area of promotion. Presumably, women do not possess the prerequisite qualifications, yet men under similar circumstances were not equally affected. Indeed, some of them have been assigned significant responsibilities in the army in addition to promotions.

Unconscious marginalisation was seen to be in play in selection for training due to gender insensitive panels, during performance appraisals, that do not consider the situation of married women and/or working mothers.

While women's representation in the Local Defence Units (LDUs) was nil, this could not lead to the conclusion that women were being marginalised. This is because, after having served in the more prestigious armed forces, former combatants, both men and women, tend to demean LDUs.

Former combatants rarely seek elective office at the community level because the predominantly civilian electorate rejects them. This, then, leads to the conclusion that former combatants are deliberately marginalised in the governance of post-conflict society at the community level. This was, however, seen to be applicable to both men and women.

At the national level, similar findings were registered. The exception was that former women combatants are, as are indeed other women, constrained by several factors. These include cultural beliefs and practices, the socialisation process, low educational levels, lack of social networks and heavy domestic work-burden. More important was seen to be the high financial costs of electioneering. Under those circumstances, society in general was seen to be unconsciously marginalising women in the search for elective office.

It must be noted though that there was no evidence of marginalisation by government in case of elective offices. Indeed, the NRM established an elaborate system of political participation at both national and local levels. These include youth, women and local councils. Others are the NRC, CA and Parliament. In all cases, there is a mandatory woman's seat or post. Moreover, women can compete for the other positions as well. In addition, the NRC and CA had seats for one district women representative. This is also true of Parliament to-date. Whatever the case, women, including former combatants, are free to participate in electoral politics in all capacities.

Deliberate marginalisation on the part of the government was seen to be at play in the case of appointive offices. At the level of RDCs, appointments have, due to historical reasons, usually gone to former combatants. This situation exists to-date except that women former combatants constitute an insignificant percentage.

At the ministerial level, male former combatants represent more than 60% while women have a miserable less than one per cent. While this was explained in terms of low levels of education among women former combatants, it was found out that there was a significant number of highly qualified and competent non-former combatants who could have been appointed to offset the imbalance among the former combatants, if only to put women generally at par with men.

Because of the above reasons, it is concluded that women former combatants do not participate significantly in post-conflict decision-making. It further confirms the hypothesis that while women play significant roles during armed conflict, they are marginalised in the governance of post-conflict society.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

It has been established that women's participation in post-conflict governance is significantly low, and to be able to increase their participation, the following recommendations are suggested.

- (i) Post-conflict governments, in Uganda in particular, should recognise, the various roles played by women during situations of armed conflict, since it is clear from the findings that they fought side by side with men. Such recognition would give women their rightful place in Uganda's history.

- (ii) As regards the appointive office, women in general, and former combatants in particular, should be given due consideration. It is important that those who may have the qualifications for appointive office should be allocated positions therein, as is done to their male counterparts with similar qualifications. This concerns those appointive positions as Ministers, Directors of the NRM Secretariat, Resident District Commissioners and Members of Parliament.
- (iii) In case of elective office, it is the government and NGO's responsibility to carry out civic education seminars, throughout the country before and during the election period. These should be geared towards sensitising the masses about the need to create gender equity in society, especially in the political arena where most decisions about society's development are made. This would enable as many women as possible to seek elective office without fear, but with confidence. The menfolk on the other hand would be in position to give support to women candidates without prejudice.
- (iv) There is need for the government in general, and the Ministry of Gender and Community Development in particular, to recognise the importance of women councils, in the local politics of the country. It is through these councils that women can articulate their views about important policies concerning the communities in general and women in particular. Thus, women councils need to be revitalised to enable women have a stronger voice, starting right from the local communities.
- (v) In the local councils, it is important for the civic educators to encourage as many women as possible to campaign for all posts that exist on the local councils, other than just for the women's seats. There is also a need to sensitise the electorate about the need to change their attitude towards the women combatants. This would enable women combatants to feel free to join the race for elective office.
- (vi) Government should recognise the commendable work done by women during armed conflict, and combatants in particular. Due consideration should be given to women combatants when it comes to promotions in the army. And where they seek early retirement, they should be provided with financial assistance to enable them resettle in the civilian circles.
- (vii) Whereas the Local Defence Units (LDUs) may seem belittling to the ex-combatants, it is important for the local communities to recognise the importance of such people in their areas, and make consultations with them on issues related to security within such areas.
- (viii) It is, therefore, important to increase the number of women both in elective and appointive offices, as this would enable them to participate in decision-making at both the national and community levels.
- (ix) It is necessary to provide some form of education to the women ex-combatants. This is because lack of education has been seen as one of the factors hindering them from seeking national elective office. Once they have attained a certain education level, they may feel confident enough to

seek elective office without fear. The same may also be applied to women in general since a majority of them have very low educational levels.

- (x) There is a need to intensify the work of those organisations, such as FOWODE, which are intended to educate women in public speaking, so that even in Parliament and other forums, women can make significant contributions during debates.

### 5.3 Areas for Further Research

Since this study was restricted to the roles played during and after conflict situations, it did not go into details of looking at how the people who were involved are settling down in their communities, after a long period of destruction. Thus, further research is needed to examine the survival strategies adopted by both men and women in their efforts to sustain themselves and their families.

It was also observed that women's marginalisation in post-conflict society decision-making is rooted in historical factors. During the war, women were rarely allocated pure combat duties. It, therefore, becomes imperative that an analysis of gender role stereotyping during armed conflict situations is made.

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