



THE SUDD INSTITUTE

RESEARCH FOR A PEACEFUL, JUST AND PROSPEROUS SOUTH SUDAN

P. O. Box 34, Juba, South Sudan • Tel: +211 (0)956 305 780
Email: thesudd.institute@gmail.com • www.suddinstitute.org

Weekly Review

January 15, 2013

SPLM Politics of Gender Equity

Augustino Ting Mayai

Introduction

Discourses involving gender often cite the significance of considering women's interests in private and public affairs. Valuing women's lot in the society surely carries both moral and development import. For instance, one of the MDGs, MDG 3, adequately advances the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women. The Resolution 1325 (2000) of the United Nations Security Council emphasizes and recognizes similar themes. Gender balance advocacy is critical because it promotes equal opportunities for men and women, family and child health, and peace and stability. Research indicates that men who are married live longer than their unmarried counterparts, demonstrating the positive influence of women's roles on societal health. As well, improved recognition and engagement of women is essential for building healthy socio-economic, cultural and political environments in a country.

The need to advocate for women's agenda has been widely diffused and adopted in many nations and international bodies. A number of national constitutions, particularly in the developing societies, for example, apportion women's representation quotas in the government, though an effective implementation in majority of the countries remains sorely strained. In Africa, successful stories include South Africa and Rwanda, with parliamentary women representations ranging from 27 to 43 percent in South Africa between 1994 and 2009 and 48 to 56 percent in Rwanda between 2003 and 2013. These magnificent achievement stories of gender equity promotion in previously tormented African countries mainly stem from the efforts concerted by these nations' top leaderships, specifically the dominant political parties.

In the Eastern African region, Uganda and Kenya seem to be making considerable strides in gender balance. More specifically, women constitute about a quarter of the Ugandan parliamentary seats. The Kenyan constitution stipulates a one-third women representation threshold in all levels of the government, attaining roughly one-fifth in recent elections, a significant improvement from nearly 10 percent in the preceding government. Like its sister states (Kenya and Uganda), South Sudan, the world's newest state, is not behind in gendered politics. Its laws, both during the

interim and transitional periods, guarantee 25 percent women representation in all levels of the government. The Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), the South Sudanese governing party, leads in the design and catechism of gendered politics in the country. More recently, the party's Secretary General, Pagan Amum, announced the party's new plan to elevate women's representative quota to 35 percent, which is welcomed news. However, this decision to expand the women's quota does not seem grounded in any meaningful appraisal of the party's performance with respect to an-already existing 25 percent threshold. Alternatively put, before the ruling party ups the gender quota policy, it is fair to ask the extent to which the party has met the 25 percent threshold.

This week, the Sudd Institute reviews the SPLM's program of gender equity, considerably distinguishing between a mere political marketing strategy and a practical policy agenda. The party's recent announcement of an upgrade for women's representative quota is surprising as the party is lagging behind in meeting the 25 percent threshold that should be enforced in most levels of the government. With little to show for in terms of the progress made with respect to achieving the 25 percent apportioned nearly a decade ago, the party's recent declaration largely surfaces as sheer political calculus, perhaps aimed at promoting the party's platform in the 2015 elections. Here, we use the Institutional data to assess the SPLM performance in implementing the 25 percent threshold in key areas of the government. Generally, a careful policy architect first assesses the situation of existing policies before instituting any changes. Lacking informed policy appraisal, the SPLM's new decision to increase women's representative quota may at best be described as erratic and immaterial with respect to the promotion of gender equity in South Sudan.

National Commissions and Bureaus

The central government of South Sudan has 21 commissions and bureaus. Executive officers (chairs) of these institutions are president's appointees. Aware that the party is in control in the jurisdiction of appointed posts, an informed progress is expected here. However, existing data from the government show that, of the 21 chairpersons leading these public institutions, only 2 or 9.5 percent are women.

National Ministries

In 2011 when post-independence government was set up, only 5 women out of a total of 29 ministers were appointed. This is only 17.2 percent representation for women, which subsequently fell to roughly 14 percent when Madam Awut Deng resigned. Of the 28 deputy ministers, 10 are women, constituting 34.5 percent of the group's representation in the cluster. Women's total representation in the ministries becomes 26.3 or 25 percent, depending on the inclusion/exclusion of Madam Awut Deng.

Central Government's Executive

In the central government's executive representation, women constitute roughly 22 percent.

National Assembly

The National Legislature is home to a combined total of 382 lawmakers from the two houses. The members of the parliament assume office either as appointed or elected. Following the independence 66 members were appointed, with 22 percent representing women. Of course, the 22 percent parliament women's representation includes Mary Jervase and Jemma Kumba who are also part of the executive, ultimately distorting women's representative quota. Overall, women constitute 26.5 percent of parliamentary seats in South Sudan, indeed an extraordinary achievement, unlike in the ministerial realm.

Presidential Advisors

Currently, the President of the republic is supported by a total of 6 key advisors. Among these is one woman who constitutes 16.6 percent of the advisory team.

Foreign Missions

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs employs roughly 90 diplomats, both locally and internationally. Of the 22 missions abroad, only a single woman or 4.5 per is head ambassador (this is in Germany).

The National Judiciary

The South Sudan Judiciary system has 4 main branches, including Supreme Court headed by chief justice (man), Regional Courts of Appeal (run by 9 men), States High Courts with 20 judges who are all men, and County Courts with only 3 out of 91 or roughly 3 percent representing women.

State Governors

There is a single woman governor (in Warrap) out of 10 states or 10 percent of gubernatorial posts.

SPLM Political Bureau and the Liberation Council

Unfortunately, the SPLM struggles to achieve gender equity even within the party. For instance, the bureau and liberation council's membership data illustrate that there are 6 women out of 27 total members, representing only 22 percent of the total bureau's posts. In addition, 57 out of 275 or approximately 21 percent of the liberation council's membership constitute women.

Policy Interpretations

Except for the executive and the parliament where little progress has been observed, perhaps through sheer chance, the SPLM has failed to effectively enforce its gender equity policy of 25 percent, indicating that the party's recent proposed quota upgrade is incredibly strange. Indeed, a number of challenges may stand in the way of effective implementation, with a strategic leadership largely required to craft meaningful interventions. Research reminds us that traditional and cultural practices often, seriously hamper progress of gender equity programming. This means that for a patriarchal society like South Sudan, effective promotion of the importance of women requires strategic investments in social and political programs that make women's participation a priority. Most importantly, designing new gender-sensitive programs and investing in them should adequately cohere with routine assessments of previously designed and implemented activities or policies.

Of relevant strategy that the SPLM should adopt is the Rwandan model of women-only contested seats in the parliament. Still, little is understood about the absence of effective women's representation in the appointed positions in the SPLM-led government. This is where the party is more in control and can easily monitor progress. The underlying inconsistency in the SPLM gender equity policy demonstrates clearly the distinctive disconnect that exists between the political rhetoric and development intentions, with the party largely consumed in the former. Normally, these gaps between political catechisms and practice should serve fundamentally in determining new quota allotments.

References

Blyth, F (2013). New Constitution Helps Kenyan Women Gain Traction in Politics. In Global Observatory.

Devlin and Elgie (2008). The Effect of Increased Women's Representation in Parliament: The Case of Rwanda. In Parliamentary Affairs.

Hogg, C (2009). Women's Political Representation in Post-Conflict Rwanda: A Politics of Inclusion or Exclusion? In Journal of International Women Studies.

Powley, E (2005) 'Rwanda: Women Hold Up Half the Parliament,' in Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers.

Sanga, D (2008). Addressing Gender Issues through the Production and Use of Gender-Sensitive Information. In The African Statistical Journal.

SPLM (2013). Political Bureau proposes increase for women and youth quotas. In SPLM Today.

About Sudd Institute

The Sudd Institute is an independent research organization that conducts and facilitates policy relevant research and training to inform public policy and practice, to create opportunities for discussion and debate, and to improve analytical capacity in South Sudan. The Sudd Institute's intention is to significantly improve the quality, impact, and accountability of local, national, and international policy- and decision-making in South Sudan in order to promote a more peaceful, just and prosperous society.

About the Author

Augustino Ting Mayai is the Director of Research at the Sudd Institute. His major research interests include childhood mortality differentials in the Sudan and South Sudan, applied quantitative methodology (econometrics), applied development research, social accountability and public service delivery, and the demography of conflicts and violence.