The national machinery for gender equality in Uganda: institutionalized gesture politics?

JOY C. KWESIGA

Introduction

National machineries for the advancement of women are an accepted feature of many United Nations (UN) member states, having progressively gained ground during the 1975–85 UN Decade for Women and in subsequent UN Conferences on women which called for their strengthening. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has observed that lack of appropriate structures officially mandated to implement the agenda for the advancement of women is ‘a major explanation for failure to fully implement the 1985 Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women’ (African Centre for Women, 1995:3). As such, the Beijing Platform for Action gave prominence to the establishment of national machineries for women, which were defined as ‘the central policy-coordinating unit inside government. Its main task is to support government-wide mainstreaming of a gender-equality perspective in all policy areas’ (Platform for Action, para. 201. Report on Fourth World Conference on Women, 4–15 September 1995. UN). The *Report on the Fourth World Conference on Women* further notes that not only are these machineries ‘diverse in form and uneven in their effectiveness, but in some cases some have declined’ (para. 196). Indeed, ‘institutional mechanisms for the Advancement of Women’ is one of the Critical Areas of Concern in the Beijing Platform for Action.

This chapter focuses on Uganda as a case study. The analysis takes account of the checklist of the assumed ideal machinery, with the aim of assessing the strengths,

weaknesses and successes of the national machinery in Uganda. Suggestions as to how the machinery can be rendered more effective are analysed. Lastly some global approaches that could enhance the effectiveness of such institutions are assessed.

What constitutes the national machinery for gender equality in Uganda?

Historical background

At the time of Uganda's political independence from Britain in 1962, women's issues were handled by the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Sports. The situation pertained into the 1970s and early 1980s, although the Ministry's exact title changed from time to time. Specific attention to women was through the Department of Community Development, which worked through a network of Community Development Clubs, descending to grassroots levels. Through Community Centres, mainly at county and sometimes sub-county levels, women were trained in traditional women-related skills: basic hygiene, good nutrition, skills in production of better handicrafts and, sometimes, adult literacy. With the decline of the Ugandan economy and civil strife in the 1970s and early 1980s, the Community Centres lacked finances, became run down or were used for other purposes. However, since the late 1980s many Community Development Centres have been renovated and are in active use again (National Council of Women records).

The military government of Idi Amin (1971–79) banned all women's organizations. The UN requirement for member states to create national machineries for the advancement of women during the UN Women's Decade (1975–85) provided the opportunity for the regime to set up women's associations and to retain a strong hold on these associations. Through a Military Decree, the Uganda Council of Women (NCW) was created in 1978. The Council was charged with the duty of coordinating all women's activities in the country and all women's organizations were expected to be affiliated to this body. The NCW, a small

department within the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, ran on a very limited budget. It was not in a position to influence the planning process within the mainstream official system. Rather, the NCW geared its efforts towards working with grassroots women, utilizing the hierarchy of Community Development Clubs. Community Development Centres, under the jurisdiction of the Community Development Unit of the Ministry, provided venues for activities of the various Clubs. NCW Committees worked hand in hand with Community Development officials and any official mobilization of women by the Council used these channels. For example, at national functions to mark important days, women at district levels could be organized by a Community Development Officer (civil servant) and the NCW representative (woman volunteer).

The function of the NCW, primarily a government organ, was to coordinate women's organizations and groups, but it made little impact on changing the 'welfare approach' to solving women's issues. Its limited capacity can be illustrated by the fact that the UN Decade for Women left little effect on the Ugandan scene, compared with that of the neighbouring countries of Kenya and Tanzania.¹

It is therefore no wonder that there is little trace of planning for women in any other ministry during this period. The various 'Five Year Development Plans' (1960–65, 1966–70, 1971–75, 1976–80) did not address women's issues. These documents focused on increasing economic production and production of 'manpower', but did not address gender issues. Women's issues were expected to fall specifically under one relatively low-status Ministry of Culture and Community Development (the title varied in subsequent years as explained below). The next phase of Ugandan institutional change, which also encompassed women's machineries, started with the ousting of Idi Amin and the coming to power of President Museveni. The women's machinery has thus been activated in the context not only of the democratization process, but also of economic reform under structural adjustment policies.

Evolution of the contemporary machinery

Most of the steps to make the national machinery effective have occurred during the regime of the National Resistance

Movement (NRM).² On 8 March 1988 (International Women's Day), the President of Uganda announced the creation of the Ministry of Women in Development (WID), a Ministry of its own, but housed in the Office of the President, under the guidance of a Minister of State. In 1992, under a general restructuring of government ministries, WID became part of the wider Ministry of Women in Development, Culture and Youth. In 1994, the Ministry was renamed the Ministry of Gender and Community Development (MGCD). Under yet further restructuring (June 1998) the Ministry was again renamed the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD), with an expanded function, encompassing wider employment issues previously handled by a fully fledged Ministry of Labour, in addition to the tasks of the previous Ministry of Gender and Community Development.

The structure and role of the machinery

The ever-changing structure of the Ministry is not only a destabilizing factor but it also changes the status of the gender component. This further complicates indicators that could be applied for its evaluation. Expansion of the ministry tends to downgrade the Machinery for Gender Equality, as demonstrated. Figure 2, which portrays the current structure, shows the many different units of the ministry, of which the official machinery is one part. The assumption of the government seems to be that if issues of social development are adequately addressed, then gender issues will have been considered.

One of the inhibiting factors in the gender mainstreaming process in Uganda derives from the mode of formation of the Ministry. In its initial years, the Ministry based its actions on presidential and ministerial pronouncements, as opposed to a clearly thought out plan. On 8 March 1988, when announcing the creation of the WID Ministry, President Y. K. Museveni stated: 'government policy aims at strengthening the position of women in the economy by raising the value and productivity of their labour and by giving them access to and control over productive resources'. The Minister of State for WID (J. Mpanga) then summarized the functions of the Ministry as follows:

Figure 2 The Uganda Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development macro-structure

Source: Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development records (2000).

to coordinate with sectoral ministries and relevant [non-governmental organizations; NGOs], to ensure that women are accorded their rightful place in the national development process, to cooperate in the planning of projects and programmes to benefit women, to provide relevant and appropriate data and documentation for planning and policy purposes, to mobilize women to participate in and benefit from development

activities by improving their economic position, their skills through education and training and their political and legal status and awareness. (Ministry of WID records, 1989)

The Ministry has also projected itself as coordinator and/or overseer of policy issues concerning women and other disadvantaged groups. This is especially so since the Ministry's mandate goes beyond gender considerations, as illustrated in Figure 2. This wider role is reflected in the Ministry's mission statement: 'To empower communities, particularly marginalized groups, to realize and harness their potential for sustainable and gender responsive development'.

Working towards clarity regarding the machinery's mandate is therefore an ongoing process. The biggest step in this process has been the publication of the *National Gender Policy* (NGP) (MGCD, 1997). Through this document, the MGLSD is 'charged with the responsibility of spearheading and coordinating gender responsive development, and in particular, ensuring the improvement of women's status' (MGCD, 1997:7).³ Its central role is to ensure that the national development process is gender responsive, including all national policies, reviews and other plans. Activities include liaising with other actors to eliminate gender imbalance; the provision of technical support in gender analysis and planning skills; conducting gender-sensitization forums; the collection and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data; and monitoring and evaluation of various interventions/policy implementations (see Figure 2 for an overall picture of the current functional units).⁴

Fulfilment of the national guidelines would go a long way towards achieving gender equality, but the Ministry's role remains amorphous and therefore not easy to fulfil and, as we shall see later, strong barriers stand in the way.

How effective is the machinery?

Two decades of utilizing national machineries in varied countries has brought to the forefront what should be regarded as 'good practice'. It is against previous analyses at national, regional and international levels that the MGLSD

will be assessed below. How does the Ugandan machinery rate against the recommended 'ideal'? Indicators for this assessment can be derived from various considerations.

Political commitment

Commitment to gender equality by top government leadership, including the head of government and Cabinet ministers, is arguably the most important issue affecting the functioning of the MGLSD. So far, the political leadership in Uganda has been positive on this issue. This is reflected in the official affirmative action programme, examples of which are:

- 1 *The District Woman Representative to Parliament provision*, which raised women Members of Parliament up to 18 per cent (1996–2001). (The number of districts is not static. In 1996, there were only forty-five administrative districts. In 2001 there are fifty-three districts due to further subdivision, and this will increase the actual numbers of women representatives when general elections take place again in 2001.) While women retain the right to contest parliamentary seats along with men, the district position is exclusively for women candidates only. In the 1996 general elections, seven women were elected to Parliament through constituency seats that are open to both men and women.
- 2 *The Constitutional requirement* for women to form at least one-third of local councils.⁵
- 3 *The position of Secretary for Women* at every local council level.
- 4 *Political appointments and recognition* of women's expertise that take account of the need for gender balance. At the top of this is a woman Vice-President, in position since 1994. Women form 20 per cent of High Court judges, 20 per cent of Permanent Secretaries (the top professional civil service position), and women are becoming more and more visible in the lower decision-making positions in the public sector. As a result of this recognition, women are also being elected to other offices, such as institutional directorships and academic leadership.

However, it is necessary to gauge whether this apparent commitment to gender equality has been effective in promoting

women's interests, and whether the existence of the MGLSD reinforces this commitment.

Adequate budgetary allocations

The apparent political commitment by the government top leadership is not always reflected in the amount of funds officially allocated to the MGLSD within the national annual budget. The Ministries of Finance and Economic Planning, Defence, Health, Agriculture, Education, Trade and Industry, and so on, receive proportionately much bigger amounts. Major activities of the MGLSD have so far been funded by international donors, including the Danish International Development Agency, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Development Programme. Thus the effectiveness of the Ministry is undermined by the constant threat of non-sustainability due to its weak financial base. This is a common complaint by ministers and other high-ranking officials of this Ministry. The catch therefore is that the government support described above, especially through the various affirmative action schemes, is not exemplified by relative financial support — an indicator of lip service.

Trained human resources

To implement and sustain programmes in gender awareness, training, analysis, planning, monitoring and evaluation, trained personnel are essential. The MGLSD has therefore had a rigorous training programme where many of its staff have been enabled to undertake specialized gender-oriented courses. These range from certificate, diploma and degree awards, including graduate level. However, this achievement is transitory as the turnover, especially among elected officials, is high. Training is a constant requirement that the low level of government funding cannot sustain. This, coupled with the fact that individual staff have multiple responsibilities beyond gender considerations, creates barriers to success.

High-profile government mechanism

The frequent relocation and renaming of the machinery throw doubt about the value attached to this machinery. More responsibilities are added to an already incoherent

structure, but with no commensurate real authority. In her analysis of five such national machineries Goetz (1995 and chapter 3 of this volume) found this to be detrimental: 'Promoted to ministerial status under one regime, brought under the chief executive's wing in the President's office in the next, or shunted from one peripheral ministry to another . . . no WID/[Gender and Development] unit has been able to consolidate a place in the national bureaucracy' (1995:14). This is why it is often suggested that such machineries should be under the Office of the President or Prime Minister (South African Report 1996).

A clear mandate

The Ugandan case is a good example of creating the machinery first and letting its role evolve. The varied restructuring it has undergone, the several attempts at streamlining its role are evidence of this. The Ministry is expected to perform wonders (judging from public comments), but these are beyond its remit, in resource as well as conceptual terms. It is expected to formulate policy, implement it and oversee other ministries and other actors, both at central and local government levels. Its mandate covers taking policy initiatives involving women's lives in both the public and private spheres, such as to eliminate domestic and other types of violence, change societal attitudes, and provide for legal literacy. As a result, the machinery is judged against unachievable goals. Any publicly voiced gender disparity is followed by the verdict — 'the Ministry has failed'. It is recognized that a clear, precise mandate is achievable in relative terms. Streamlining the current structure would lead to some positive changes.

Meaningful structures

Focal Point Officers (FPOs) were appointed at various levels soon after the Ministry was created, to interact with and influence other government instruments. Unfortunately, this position is not officially sanctioned in the public service structures and therefore these FPOs have little or no authority and depend on their colleagues' good will. There is no agreed channel for interaction between the FPOs and the MGLSD that these contact persons represent. The level of communication will therefore depend on how proactive

is the individual FPO. Many such officers are oblivious of what is going on in the MGLSD (personal interviews by the author with some FPOs).

At the district level a few Gender Officers have been appointed, and in some cases Community Development Officers (not necessarily trained in gender analysis) take up this task. Under the decentralized system, district committees appoint personnel according to their own priorities and Gender Officers may not be seen as a priority. The Ministry is therefore weak at the frontline, and it recognizes this (Ministry Plan 1996–2000:17 (b)).

Multiplicity of functions

The MGLSD has many functions with neither adequate finances nor conceptual connectivity. For example, the Ministry is responsible for varied boards and councils. These include the National Women's Council, the Public Libraries Board, the National Council for Persons with Disabilities, the Industrial Court, the National Council for Children, the National Social Security Fund and many others, as Figure 2 illustrates. Some of the units seem displaced, such as the Entandikwa Unit, which coordinates national credit facilities programmes. In some cases, it is not clear that these units utilize the principle of collaboration/coordination. MGLSD has, for instance, an ongoing project on Functional Adult Literacy, but this is run independently of the Women's Programmes Unit, a sub-section of the Gender Directorate, despite the higher illiteracy rates among women and the fact that most of the participants are women. While the National Councils for Women and Youth are relevant to the Machinery's function, their actual roles are not so well articulated. Worse still, they are virtually unfunded by the state. Conflicting messages about them abound (personal interviews with many district officials, May and June 1998). Therefore not only is the mandate too enormous, but some units are created without being provided with the necessary instruments to perform.

Mechanisms for research and dissemination

The MGLSD has collaborated with the Government Statistics Department in order to carry out research projects and to disseminate the outcome of these projects. In this

connection, a publication, *Women and Men in Uganda: Facts and Figures 1998*, was produced and revised in 2001 (MGCD Statistics Department, 1988). The Ministry Resource Centre, which is open to the public, is growing too. While all this is commendable, constraints lie at the local level, where structures for collection and analysis are yet to be concretized. How can those directly concerned see the need for this kind of data collection and research and attend to this as a matter of course? This presents a gap yet to be filled.

Mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation

The foregoing discussion shows that, in its present form, the machinery cannot fully carry out monitoring and evaluation roles. It lacks strong frontline staff at the different policy and formulation and implementation levels, within the official structure. This is exacerbated by fragile lines of communication with vital Ministries such as Planning, Health, Agriculture and Education. Feedback about the performance of the Ministry or the needs of various connected institutions is received only when districts or ministries are approached. In addition, collaboration with civil society is at best very weak. Various pressure groups, such as networks of women's associations, perform this role too, but since these are not part of the official structure their activities are not enthusiastically embraced. In general it can safely be stated that the mass media (especially the print media) voluntarily perform part of the monitoring and evaluation role through various commentaries, features and articles that are published from time to time.

Pressure points outside the government structure

Parliament, NGOs and the wider civil society are necessary links to the official women's machinery. Some of the civil and political women's associations include the Parliamentary Women's Caucus and the National Association of Women's Organizations in Uganda (NAWOU) as the recognized umbrella body for civil society. NAWOU has 70 NGO member organizations and about 1000 community-based organizations (CBOs) on its register. The MGLSD can reach members through NAWOU and at times directly, although not all NGOs/CBOs are registered with NAWOU. However,

this is not a two-way relationship. NGOs cannot easily summon or persuade the Ministry to enter into collaborative ventures and officials are unable to take up advocacy work without clearance from the top civil and political leadership.⁶

There are other policies and practices that limit the Ministry's effectiveness. These include a preference for working with individual consultants rather than with institutions. The opportunity to reach more potential partners is thus curtailed. The existing national and international base of 'experts' cannot be a substitute for a bottom-up transformation of society. Political commitment and dedication are often compromised by individual advancement.⁷

What are the achievements of the Women's Ministry?

Despite the constraints presented above, the MGLSD has had some notable achievements. First, it has formulated a National Gender Policy aimed at providing policy makers, and other key actors in the development field, with references/guidelines for identifying and addressing gender concerns. Second, it has provided training skills in Gender Planning and Analysis for all stakeholders. To date the training has targeted Permanent Secretaries, Heads of Departments, District Technical Staff, Magistrates and State Attorneys. In addition five training manuals have been developed for the different target groups. Results of face-to-face interviews with twenty-five key civil servants testified that this training had made a change in the general outlook of these officials, towards gender and other forms of inequalities (Kwesiga, 1994). The capacity of mainstreaming civil service staff to address issues of gender and WID has increased as a result of this training. Experts provide technical support in government ministries and development agencies. Third, Development Plans for five sectors have been reviewed from a gender perspective. The MGLSD has initiated a programme aimed at making sector policies and plans gender responsive, and it has examined whether women and men participate and benefit equally from the development process.⁸ Fourth, it has published extensive

sex-disaggregated data which have been utilized by various stakeholders, including women's NGOs, to substantiate arguments on the disadvantaged position of women *vis-à-vis* that of men and to feed into the policy-making processes. Fifth, it has been able to insist on gender mainstreaming in national and district programmes and budgets. The Ministry works through planning mechanisms at national and district levels to support the integration of gender and develop indicators on how women and men are benefiting. This is very important under the new decentralized system. The initial project was aimed at covering all the forty-five districts for the period 1998/99. Sixth, it has been able to provide some legal education for women. A programme to sensitize women on their legal rights has been ongoing since 1993. The programme creates a community-based source of legal information and para-legal workers who assist women and children seeking redress. Finally, it has been effective in advocacy and awareness raising on gender issues. A lot of awareness has been created among the Ugandan public on gender issues. This is reflected in the level of discussion that goes on both in the media and other forums. Evidence of this is the public outcry at current attempts to marginalize the gender component of the restructured Ministry. For example, the Uganda Media Women's Association produced a special issue of its monthly newspaper, *The Other Voice*, on the topic in 1998. Several letters have appeared in the two main national daily newspapers (*The Monitor* and *The New Vision*). Similarly, voices have been raised about the omission of an Article on women and land ownership in the Land Act enacted by Parliament in July 1998. The visibility of the national machinery has stimulated interest in gender inequality and in some cases this has led to action.

The overall achievement of the existence of the Ministry is that it has *legitimized gender*. The gender variable is progressively forming part of public decisions. Appointments to posts can no longer ignore gender imbalance. When Chairs of government committees/agencies or commissions are instituted, for example, the Chair or Vice-Chair must be a woman. Other strong dividends are reflected in the various Articles in the new Constitution (1995) that provide a framework for gender-sensitive laws. The Ministry's work has

strengthened and re-enforced other government affirmative action interventions, especially at the political level. Women councillors within the local government system are being trained and retrained, so that they can play an effective role in this field which they have only recently entered.

Autonomy or mainstreaming? Dilemmas for a national machinery

The checklist against which the Ugandan case has been evaluated points to the dilemma that faces many national machineries for gender equality. Should they be separate entities or should they be 'mainstreamed'? As separate entities, such institutions can easily be isolated and marginalized. As part of the mainstream they tend to be too compartmentalized to be effective. Is there a middle way? Is there an ideal situation?

While a ministry sounds attractive and powerful, it has been demonstrated that without a clear mandate, adequate resources and political commitment to gender equality, a ministry for women cannot by itself be effective and sustainable. In addressing the economic pressures on the country, the Ugandan government will continue to restructure its organs from time to time as long as it adheres to the World Bank/International Monetary Fund restructuring conditionalities. Constraints in funding will persist. Any efforts at streamlining and reshaping within the current framework will not bring about long-term positive changes.

In the current situation, the machinery continues to be vulnerable. It is in danger of disappearing under the pretext of restructuring and the exaggerated reference to what women have achieved so far.

Although the MGLSD has helped to raise women's visibility and the public political sphere has recorded some success towards gender equality, it is important to note that the private sphere is still dominated by men. In any case, the need to ensure transformation at the individual level is still clear, whether those in charge are men or women. For even when official structures for the elimination of gender inequalities are put in place, it becomes

imperative for the implementers to believe in them, for meaningful results.

Government ministries are under the charge of politicians whose turnover is high. This breeds discontinuity. A ministry, overloaded with so many councils and directorates, opens up more avenues for manipulation and mismanagement, and from reports gathered through interviews of staff by the author, this arrangement has enabled politicians to appoint relatives and friends who are not necessarily committed to gender equality to some key positions. There is evidence that efficiency is easily compromised under such circumstances. Because the MGLSD has many and varied responsibilities, at the time of writing the government had appointed six junior ministers (known as Ministers of State) to assist the senior Minister. This high number has inevitably led to disagreements and restrained working relations, as pointed out in several newspaper articles in 1999. Some new initiatives, such as the Equal Opportunities Commission, provided for under the new structure of the MGLSD are premature in that not enough ground work has been done to get them properly launched. In addition, these institutions are too expensive to run in relation to the meagre resources that are available to gender mainstreaming work. Without an extensive support in terms of legal education and gender-sensitive judicial structures, an Equal Opportunities Commission is likely to be ineffective.

One alternative to the Ministry, therefore, is to create a Commission for Gender Equality. Such Commissions already exist (Land, Education, Human Rights, Health and Communications) and others, including for Higher Education and Equal Opportunities, have been planned. A small Commission on Gender Equality, attached to a strong Office/Ministry (e.g. the President's Office or Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning) would possess the desired clout and have a manageable agenda. Such a Commission would be in a better position to raise its own funds. It would be able to phase its work and become more focused. This is because such a structure would be autonomous. It would face less bureaucratic bottlenecks. It would not be dealing with a conglomeration of units. It would consequently more easily reach its target groups through policy

changes and data collection, analysis and dissemination, than is now the case, since the current units under the Ministry inhibit such developments. It would be more effectively run than a Ministry that will continue to be charged with multiple roles. The Head of the Commission and its members would have a specific term of office. They would have the opportunity to focus on a coherent agenda. I would argue that such a body would be able to avoid the limitations of bureaucracy and related bottlenecks that so often inhibit innovation.

The merits under this apparent 'isolationist' approach outweigh the disadvantages which are so glaring under the current Ministry structure that purports to 'mainstream' gender while in effect only scratching the surface. This arrangement would also eliminate the practice of creating a ministry where units do not fit within the wider Ministry framework, where any government unit that does not respond to the function of a particular Ministry is appended to the Ministry of Gender and Social Development. Although the Uganda Ministry is given a high-sounding title, it is not so well regarded within the political system, judging from the meagre financial support it receives.

Beyond the national level

The Beijing Platform for Action and, particularly relevant to this case study, the African Platform for Action, have guidelines as to how to strengthen these machineries at international, subregional, regional and national levels. In addition, the following avenues can be further explored:

- *Strengthen networking among existing machineries at the various levels.* This is not a new strategy in itself but it has not been vigorously utilized. The South African visit to Uganda in 1996, and the questioning and exchange of ideas this involved, was a point of self-evaluation for the Ugandan machinery. Similarly, the UN Expert Group Meeting on National Machineries in Santiago, Chile in August 1998 provided a good opportunity to analyse and compare various machineries worldwide. In the case of Africa, the ECA and the Organization of African Unity

can encourage regional networking. Subregional groupings such as the East African Cooperation Secretariat, the Southern African Development Community, and so on, could also work towards such goals.

- *Periodic research projects at different levels*, within national boundaries and beyond, will need to be carried out. This helps to 'actualize' issues and events on the ground and provide empirical evidence, which may lead to change.
- *Incentive schemes*. A specific fund for international recognition, either through competition for funding for successful innovations or prizes for 'good practice', may encourage ailing institutions to move ahead.
- *More effective ways in which donor funds can be utilized* without directing national agendas. Support should be for creating capacity and sustainability. For instance, training gender trainers for continuing transfer of women leaders would be money well spent.
- *Monitoring and evaluation* can be strengthened through periodic publications on progress made and constraints faced by the machineries, again reporting at different levels.

Conclusion

National machineries for gender equality are still a necessity and governments should take some responsibility to ensure their success. Existing machineries that are considered to be declining need resuscitation. Experiences gathered from different contexts, such as in this volume, show that it is possible to work towards closing the identified loopholes.

The national machinery structure must have meaningful linkages with related organs of government, line ministries, local government structures and with publicly known channels of interaction. This is to avoid it being either too inclusive or too isolationist. A clear, mandated, well-structured and financially supported machinery should be able to outlive periodic restructuring and dependency on individual key actors. It can be likened to a well-thought-out system that operates efficiently, irrespective of the personalities

involved. The expectation for such machineries is to transform women's lives, and without removing the obstacles on the way, such machineries can remain, but in name.

Also important is the contribution of the women's movement, on the local scene, through its varied tentacles — the executive, legislators, NGOs, CBOs, academicians and researchers, as well as individuals within these institutions. Pressure groups have an important role to play, which is not being adequately tapped in the case of Uganda. As this study emphasizes, the central issue of whether national machineries for gender equality should be separate entities or be mainstreamed within the government mechanism can be resolved according to national conditions. But until there is an effective political voice, either channel will not transform society in favour of women. The presence of gender-sensitive women and men in decision-making positions in various fields — political, civil service, religious institutions, local government, academic or the wider civil society — collectively contribute to this essential voice. This, in the end, can make effective and efficient either form of women's machinery. Signs of this development are beginning to appear in Uganda, through the mass media, publications, speeches of public figures and informal everyday conversation.

Notes

- 1 The World Bank (1989c) report on the economic contribution of women in Kenya illustrates how well the Kenyan women became organized in the 1980s to form numerous women's groups. Even the large numbers of women who attended the 1985 UN World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace in Nairobi from Kenya and Tanzania (compared with only the official delegation in Uganda) was evidence of better mobilization in those countries at the time. The women's networks formed in Kenya and Tanzania then, such as the African Women's Development and Communications Network, based in Nairobi, showed that here, women had started looking beyond national constituencies.
- 2 The NRM is the current ruling body. It came to power in 1986 after waging a five-year guerrilla war. The name refers to its revolutionary stand, when it was formed, to resist 'bad' government. Under the 'Movement' type of government, leaders are elected on the basis of individual

merit. The rationale for this 'no political party' system was to eliminate sectarianism created by political parties and reflected in tribe, religion and region, as opposed to 'issues' of development. Ugandans were given the chance to decide through referendum (2000), whether and when political parties could be reactivated. The Movement system was retained.

3 The NGP document outlines the following role for the MGLSD:

- 1 To ensure that the national development process is gender sensitive. This means that the national machinery plays a coordinating and facilitating role and functions as a catalyst in support of all relevant players for gender-sensitive development planning.
- 2 To ensure that all policy formulation and reviews, action plans and other major national planning exercises apply a gender-sensitive planning approach.
- 3 To liaise with other actors in identifying and drawing attention to key gender concerns and related needs, for example property ownership, land tenure, credit and legal rights, as well as relevant options for addressing them, such as constitutional guarantees, law reform and literacy campaigns. The national machinery, together with other actors, plays an advocacy role in the promotion of gender equality.
- 4 To provide technical guidance and back-up support to other institutions. This shall include the promotion of gender analysis and planning skills among all relevant sections of society, in order to build their capacity to identify, analyse and implement gender-sensitive programme interventions.
- 5 To liaise with relevant agencies and coordinate the collection and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data necessary for national development planning.
- 6 To promote social mobilization for the purpose of creating gender awareness, and thus foster positive attitudinal and behavioural changes necessary for the establishment and maintenance of gender equality. The national machinery, together with other actors, plays an advocacy role in this regard.
- 7 In liaison with other key actors, to monitor the progress made towards achieving gender-sensitive national development targets.

4 The Directorate for Gender specifies its role under the following units (source: Ministry of Gender internal chart):

- 1 Department of Gender
 - ensures mainstreaming of gender;
 - policy reviews/formulation;
 - gender statistics/Research;
 - gender sensitization.
- 2 Legal Department
 - watchdog on laws, bills;
 - legal research;
 - legal education;
 - legal advice.
- 3 Department of Women's Programmes
 - promotion of women's status;
 - designing programmes for women;
 - training on all aspects, especially skills development;
 - literacy programmes for women;
 - income generation activities.
- 4 Women's Councils
 - autonomous body;
 - mobilize women into unified body for developmental purposes.

- 5 Local councils/committees are socio-political institutions. Every community is organized into a council along the lines of local government, ascending the hierarchy through village, parish, sub-county, county and district levels. These are usually designated LC I, LC II, LC III, LC IV and LC V, respectively. At the village level, members elect an Executive Committee comprising a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary of the Committee, and Secretaries for Information, Security, Mass Mobilization, Youth and Women. Up to 1995, these were known as Resistance Councils, having been devised by the NRM during the guerrilla war period.
- 6 For example, in the Christmas period of 1997 women's groups get together to publicize and protest against the handling of the case of a woman who was allegedly murdered by her husband. At the cremation, Ministry officials could not join other women in making protest statements or clarifying the Ministry's, stand because they had not been sanctioned by their Permanent Secretary.
- 7 For example, there are quite a number of national women's NGOs that would enhance the work of the Ministry, through closer collaborative efforts, than has been the case hitherto. The Uganda Women Lawyers' Association, the Uganda Women's Finance and Credit Trust and Action for Development (a multi-issues women's rights organization) could all be effectively utilized. The Uganda Women's Network was very active on women and land rights in relation to the 1998 Land Act, which is fully acceptable to women. Others could enrich the Ministry from an international point of view, such as Akina Mama wa Afrika's Leadership Institute or the Uganda Chapter of the Council for the Economic Empowerment of Women in Africa, based in Kampala. There are also other non-women-specific NGOs, such as the Development Network of Voluntary Associations in Uganda, the Human Rights Network and several others.
- 8 The Ministries include Education, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries, Trade and Industry, Marketing Cooperatives, and Cooperatives, and Local Government. This is ongoing for the Ministry of Health. MGLSD staff systematically go through the Plans of other Ministries with their key staff, making a gender analysis and thereby producing better Plans. One positive outcome of this process is the current policy of 50 per cent admission of girls to agricultural colleges. In the past, admission was on the basis of merit only, and since there are more qualified boys than girls, most training for agricultural extension workers benefited boys. This policy, it is hoped, will respond more to farmers' needs, the majority of whom are women.