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8 Gendered citizenship in rural Uganda

Localized, exclusive and active

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Introduction

This chapter scrutinizes ways in which practices in which citizenship is constructed are embedded and interwoven in local contexts and existing power relations (Holma & Kontinen, this volume; Robins et al. 2008; Gaventa & Barret 2010). From the pragmatist point of view, we contend that social experience is an arena for formulating and maintaining habits: the taken-for-granted ways of thinking and doing, which includes a "habit of making social classifications" by attributing distinctive characteristics (Dewey 1922/2012, 12), in this case, between the roles and responsibilities of those perceived as "men" and "women" in society. The notion of habit resonates with the much-discussed difference between citizenship as a status and as lived experience (Kabeer 2005), or between formal and substantial citizenship (Lister 2003). Understanding existing habits also has implications for designing interventions aimed at strengthening women's citizenship and, hence, narrowing this gap between legal status and lived experience. In this chapter, based on interviews conducted in two districts, Kiboga and Namutumba, in Uganda (Ahimbisibwe et al., this volume), we examine the experiences and perceptions of gendered citizenship articulated by rural inhabitants who had previously participated in some activities of a Uganda gender-advocacy NGO, Action for Development (ACFODE) (Kontinen & Ndidde, this volume). Based on the findings we argue that the lived experiences and daily practices of female citizens differ from their legal status in rural Uganda to date.

We begin by discussing the concept of gendered citizenship and some of the main critical debates concerning citizenship in feminist literature, followed by the discrepancies related to women's citizenship in legislation, policy and practice in the context of Uganda. We then identify and discuss localized, gendered habits of citizenship that emerged out of the various lived experiences articulated by both men and women. Women's local practices can lead to the reformulation of habits, thus creating spaces for a novel kind of active citizenship that references change in lived experiences that bring them closer to the idea of legal status with equal rights. These changes might not represent radical transformations in gendered citizenship, but they do constitute a disruption and trigger incremental change in these habits (Holma et al. 2018). Participation in groups and other community activities might gradually enable women to gain the confidence, capacity and opportunities to enjoy their legal status as citizens. In conclusion, we argue that from the perspective of habits and lived experience, citizenship appears gendered, contested and contradictory, but nevertheless, includes possibilities for reformulation of habits.

Gendered citizenship: Towards lived experience

One of the mainstream meanings of citizenship is membership in a state. In this approach, citizenship rights and duties defined in the national constitutions are perceived to apply equally and neutrally to all individual members of the nation, without distinguishing on the basis of gender, race, class, ethnicity or any other social relation that marks the everyday life of citizens (Meer & Sever 2004). The discrepancies between citizenship as a legal status and the lived experiences of citizenship have, however, motivated a wealth of development interventions whose aim has been to raise people's awareness of their legal rights in order to change gendered practices. When we understand change and learning from the point of view of reformulation of habits (Holma & Kontinen, this volume), it becomes important not only to highlight the discrepancies, but also to understand the habits in which the lived experiences are embedded; this facilitates exploration of the ways liberal imaginaries of a free individual enjoying citizenship rights fail to resonate with perceptions embedded in lived inequalities (Lazar 2013; Robins et al. 2008).

Feminist scholars have presented similar critiques of the concept of citizenship in general (Young 1989; Lister 1997) and the lack of gendered analysis in development contexts in particular (Meer & Sever 2004). One of the critiques revolves around how the notion of citizenship is tied to public and political spheres, thus excluding the domestic spaces and care work where much "female" activity has habitually been located (Preece 2002; Lister 1997). These gendered roles locate women and their concerns outside the realms of citizenship, and their contributions to society are not valued as worthy of membership in terms of decision-making and public processes (Chari 2009). Further, women are seen as passive citizens in need of protection rather than active citizens negotiating their rights (Bhargava 2005). Additional concerns in critiques of gendered citizenship relate to access to infrastructure, housing and livelihoods. Entitlements to ownership and property inheritance are also often divided in gendered ways that do not make economic agency equally possible (Chari 2009).

Critical observations on the gendered nature of citizenship have been accompanied by suggestions that the notion of citizenship as legal status and membership in the state could be augmented through analysis of experienced citizenship and the politics of belonging in a variety of communities (Yuval-Davis 2012; Preece 2002). In this view, citizenship, rather than mere legal status and formal rights enshrined in legal and state policy documents, is seen as an active process and an identity based on the expression of one's membership in a variety of communities in different spaces in society (Chari 2009; Clarke et al. 2014). Citizenship is about negotiation, identity, experience and relationships that potentially promote participation and women's agency (Meer & Sever 2004; Mukhopadhyay et al. 2010; Yuval-Davis 2012); it is, however, important to keep in mind that communities that provide identity are themselves gendered, and often characterized by patriarchal habits and male domination (Meer & Sever 2004; Chari 2009; Mukhopadhyay 2007). For example, factors such as culture, religion and colonialism have affected gendered citizenship, both in practice and in legislation (Ramtohul 2009). Meanwhile, the efforts made by women's movements with the goal of transforming gendered roles that are considered unequal, have often been labelled "anti-social order movements", and accused of trying to appropriate men's positions in opposition to the dictates of "natural roles" (Mukhopadhyay 2015).

To understand these gendered debates has been considered a necessary condition for designing development initiatives, which require "both greater depth and greater breadth with regard to the ways in which gender (in)equality is conceived and addressed" (Staab & Razavi 2015). Acknowledging the gendered lived experiences of citizenship calls for grounded analysis of power and equality rather than understanding interventions as technical operations (Meer & Sever 2004) or as matters of simple awareness raising. Therefore, we opted for a grounded analysis of the understanding of notions of "citizenship" and practices in which women in rural areas participate. Before proceeding to the accounts of experienced citizenship, however, we first examine the "other side of the coin": the discrepancies related to women's citizenship in legislation, policy and practice in Uganda.

Gendered citizenship as status: Analysis of discrepancies in the Ugandan environment

When it comes to citizenship as a legal status, Uganda is, to date, regarded as one of the pioneer countries in the African region to spearhead and strengthen women's rights at all levels of society through legislation and policy formulation (UWONET 2018; Ahikire & Mwiine 2015); indeed, the state has legislated extensively to grant citizenship rights to both men and women. These include, for instance, entitlements to the right to protection, access to basic services including education, equal rights during marriage and at its dissolution, protection against gender-based violence and the right to political representation and participation.[2] In what follows we offer a brief overview of the legislation and policies geared to secure women's rights, and thus, determine their status as citizens.

Uganda's 1995 Constitution, in the section of principles concerned with the protection and promotion of fundamental and other human rights, categorically declares that "the State shall ensure gender balance and fair representation of marginalized groups on all constitutional and other bodies" (Principle vi), and "the State shall recognize the significant role that women play in society" (Principle xv). Within the same Constitution there are several articles emphasizing the human rights of women and other marginalized groups. Article 21 affirms equality and freedom from discrimination when it states:

> All persons are equal before and under the law … a person shall not be discriminated against on the grounds of sex, race, color, ethnic origin, tribe, birth, creed or religion, or social or economic standing, political opinion or disability.

Article 32, on the other hand, addresses affirmative action on behalf of women and other marginalized groups, stating:

> Notwithstanding anything in the constitution, the State shall take affirmative action in favor of groups marginalized on the basis of gender, age, disability or any other reasons created by history, tradition or custom for the purpose of redressing the imbalances which exist against them.

Article 33 is remarkable in that it is very specific about the rights of women and lists areas where the welfare and dignity of women shall be protected.

Through various ministries and in collaboration with civil society, the Government of Uganda has instituted policy frameworks, sector-specific policies and strategies geared towards the enhancement of the status of women and girls within this legislative context. Significant among the policies is the Uganda National Gender Policy (2007) which mandates gender mainstreaming in all planning, resource allocation and implementation processes by development programs in Uganda. The ultimate goal of this policy "is to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment as an integral part of Uganda's socio-economic development". All other national and sectoral policy/plan documents include an analysis of gender issues in their particular sectors and the formulation of strategies for addressing gender imbalances and inequalities.[3]

However, structural forces – including power and politics (Ahikire & Mwiine 2015) and socio-cultural and economic gender dynamics (Asiimwe 2002; Babikwa 2003; 2004; Ndidde 2004; ACFODE 2014; UWONET 2018) – shape the realization of women's citizenship rights and gender equity in Ugandan state policy adoption and implementation, and the extent to which the policies are practiced. Politics of patronage and clientelistic practices (Ssali Lukwago 2016; Ahikire & Mwiine 2015; Tripp 2010; Alava, this volume), ignorance of the existence of the laws, and poverty, discrimination, subordination and social exclusion are key factors in Uganda that deny women access to, or the exercise of, their citizenship rights. Exacerbating this situation, sometimes law enforcement agencies, especially in rural areas, are not aware of the rights secured by Ugandan legislation (Khadiagala 2001). For example, a review of the implementation of the affirmative action policy in Uganda with specific reference to women's participation in politics carried out by ACFODE (2014) revealed that, despite the achievements, women's political participation and emancipation is still constrained by an interplay of factors arising from the internal functioning of the state but also embedded in socio-economic and cultural gender dynamics. Ahikire and Mwiine (2015), who have scrutinized the ways in which power and politics shape the realization of women's rights and gender equity in Ugandan state policy adoption and implementation, have examined the processes undertaken to adopt the Domestic Violence Act of 2010. They found that political patronage and "politics of compromise" have undermined the transformative elements contained in the Domestic Relations Bill of 2003. The DVA

> emerges as a more tokenistic form of legislation that has barely moved from the statute books and was perhaps offered more as a means to appease a more marginal constituency upset by the loss of more radical legislative reforms (around DRB) than through any genuine commitment.
> (Ahikire & Mwiine 2015, 28)

Additionally, the "implementation of UPE [is] largely cast as a presidential gift of patronage, rather than as a right". Overall, they conclude (ibid.) that the state views women "as clients and not citizens with rights".

Against this backdrop, what is experienced as gendered citizenship might not resonate with legally guaranteed citizenship rights in the Ugandan context. The status of citizen is not enough without the conditions to enable such citizenship to be experienced and practiced. Formal, legal equality is not sufficient to ensure women can access their rights. Moreover, not only does formal or legal equality not guarantee real equality, it also hides inequalities because legal entitlement to rights and resources may be seen as actually exercising those rights or receiving the entitlements in reality.

Lived experience of gendered citizenship: Localized, exclusive and active

In this section, we discuss gendered citizenship as experienced and articulated in the interviews we conducted with rural inhabitants who had previously participated in the activities of ACFODE, a renowned Ugandan gender advocacy NGO (see Kontinen & Ndidde, this volume). We interviewed 60 participants out of whom nine were men. We were interested in how gendered citizenship was constructed and articulated and the ways in which participation in localized practices as well as NGO activities offered opportunities and spaces for change in gendered habits.

The analysis showed that instead of referencing their status as a state member, the participants framed the notion of "citizenship" in terms of "community seatedness", which represented a meaningful sphere of belonging. Formal citizenship was often discussed in terms of how a "good citizen" was framed in a gendered way, often based solely on male characteristics. Moreover, while it was typical for women to exclude themselves from such citizenship, they nonetheless positioned themselves as belonging and being active members in multiple groups. These groups and other practices provided new ideas and ways of operating that eventually diminished, to some extent, the gap between lived experience and legal status. In what follows we discuss in detail the contestations and contradictions of citizenship that appeared when it came to localized citizenship, self-exclusion, community exclusion and multiple belongings.

"Localized" understandings of citizen and citizenship

An important aspect of researching the lived experiences of citizenship is identifying the ideas and words in local languages used to refer to the English-language notion of "citizenship". During translation of the research tool, the research team decided to adopt *omutuuze* as the direct equivalent of the word citizen in Luganda. Initially the tool was translated into Luganda[4] on the understanding that *omutuuze* would suffice in both Kiboga and Namutumba. However, when the research team went to Namutumba District in Busoga Region, the word *omutyamye* in Lusoga – the local language – was used to refer to a citizen. Literally, *omutuuze* implies someone who resides/lives in a given area (Kiingi 2007), while *omutyamye* implies one "who is seated". In practice, both words emphasize the importance of community "seatedness" and participation in the affairs of a given area. They further emphasize a citizen as someone who is settled and lives with an acceptable level of permanence in a given area, a state defined, for instance, by owning land and having a house and family, as well as engaging in community affairs.

Omunansi is another term related to citizenship in both Luganda and Lusoga which literally means, "of the soil/earth". This term is generally and loosely used to mean a national, a person born in a given country. Conversations with the participants about the differences between *omunansi* and *mutuuze/mutyamye* revealed a distinction between what could be termed a "resident citizen" (*mutuuze/mutyamye*) and national or "freelance"[5] citizen (*omunansi*). The resident citizen is someone with whom community members can identify due to his/her shared residence (*butuuze/butyamye*) and engagement in all activities considered important for the survival and livelihood of the community. On the other hand, the national citizen, *omunansi*, is someone who is born and resides in the larger country/nation and is in possession of a national identification card. However, a national citizen (*munansi*) only attains local citizenship after having lived in a community for a long period of time, sharing its general identity, as one of the participants explained: "Like you [the researcher], you're a national [*munansi*] but not a citizen [*mutuuze*]. You are a Ugandan but you have no residence here since you have another place where you come from." In view of the above discussion, and as the focus of our research project lies on citizenship as lived experience and as something that takes place in everyday life, we decided to use the word *omutuuze* in Luganda and *omutyamye* in Lusoga to refer to a citizen.

The definition of citizenship as a condition related to rights and legal frameworks seems rather distant from subjective experiences, where the outstanding characteristics of a citizen which were articulated included permanent residence in a community and having a home, family in the area, as well as ownership of property, especially land. In addition, the definitions focused on localized citizenship obligations and less on rights, suggesting people "of good conduct [who] respect the community code of conduct; if it is road maintenance, [they] should participate, in case of any occurrence, [they] should assist other people. In other words, that is good citizenship [*obutuuze obulungi*]." In contrast, national citizenship was discussed mainly in terms of material artefacts such as a national identification card or being a registered voter; even then, however, belonging to the local area and having a local identification document was still emphasized:

> Citizenship [*omunansi*] is about one who is a Ugandan, in Uganda, who has documents that justify that [he/she] is a Ugandan. …That is citizenship … and if that person lives here at "Isegero B" must have another document that justifies he/she is a resident of Isegero "B". That is citizenship and [proves] that he/she is a true resident citizen since such a person has, for example, a village identification document which proves that that person is a bonafide resident of Isegero "B".
>
> (Research participant in Namutumba)

Clearly, the localized view of the notion of citizenship intertwines the national with the local. Often, too, the localized ideal of citizenship is linked to family history within a particular place of origin:

> A citizen must be permanently in one place [and work] together with the other people in the village. . . . My parents [are] from here, they produced me here, I grew up here, and when my father died, I married a woman [from here]. I have stayed on my father's land; I am still producing children on my father's land, and I am growing old expecting also to raise my grandchildren in this area.
>
> (Male participant in Namutumba)

The significance of family lineage connections with a certain localized place was also related to the membership of certain ethnic group, which, in Ugandan contexts, closely relates to the geographical division of the country (Alava et al., this volume).

> In my view, a citizen is a person who is born in a “tribe” [*ggwanga*], for example, like in Buganda. As long as you are born in that area [you are a citizen there], and more so when your parents were at one time citizens of that area.
>
> (Female participant in Kiboga)

In light of the above discussion, it becomes apparent that the basic understanding of the notion of “citizenship” in the rural communities and as translated into local languages in Uganda centres on community belongingness and identity, permanence of residence and participation in local community activities. These represent more significant and meaningful spaces of citizenship than the nation, where the latter is less acknowledged.

Women’s self-exclusion from being citizens

In this section, we discuss gendered citizenship habits and practices made apparent in the various lived experiences articulated by the men and women with whom we interacted. The gendered nature of citizenship was both explicitly and implicitly embedded in the participants’ views. Where a citizen was characterized as such by virtue of owning a permanent residence and/or property, especially land, in the area, and fulfilling family obligations like meeting food and clothing needs and paying school fees for the children, it implicitly referred to the characteristics of a male citizen. Additionally, both women and men participants referred to a woman as being part of the trappings of a good (male) citizen. As one female participant articulated: as a good citizen, “You have to have your home [house], you have to have a woman, you have to have children; also, you have to have animals in your home.” Thus, characterizations of a (good) citizen were largely built on sociocultural beliefs and practices in which owning a home and property and meeting family obligations are duties, rights and obligations attached to the men of the society. It follows, then, that the above views implicitly exclude women from the definition of citizens in the locality; indeed, the status of a female citizen was often constructed vis-á-vis her relationship with a male, either a father or a husband.

> Now a woman becomes a citizen of where she is living, so if she has been chased away, then she ceases to be a citizen. . . . Because men retain everything, even if you both worked so hard to get them; all of it remains his because it’s a woman who comes to live with him.
>
> (Female participant in Kiboga)

In addition to the implicit embeddedness of citizenship within the patriarchal register, women also explicitly excluded themselves from the definition of localized citizen. The following excerpt from a dialogue between a wife and husband illustrates the ways in which the localized citizenship of women is both flexible and transient, as it changes along with the change of spouse:

INTERVIEWER: So now, is a woman also a citizen?

WIFE: A woman! [Laughter] A woman! It is difficult. For example, like me here, Sarah, today I can say that I am a resident/citizen here. If a time comes that we separate [this man and I], I will get another man and go.

HUSBAND: Me as the man, I am the citizen [*mutyamye*] because I cannot leave this place to go and get married elsewhere. But for a woman, it is true, she can be a citizen [*mutyamye*] but when you get a disagreement here, she just leaves. So she can no longer be a citizen [*mutyamye*] here.

INTERVIEWER: But she may be born in that community. . .

WIFE: Even if I am born in this area, if something happens, I just leave.

HUSBAND: As a woman, she may have resident citizenship [*obutyamye*] but only short term. That is why they say that a woman has no religion, because she gets her religion where she gets married. When she marries a Muslim, she also becomes a Muslim. When she marries a Born Again she also becomes one.

WIFE: . . . and in the same way, they do not have citizenship.

HUSBAND: They do have, but it is limited.(Participant couple in Namutumba)

However, these perceptions also seemed fluid and in a process of change, as illustrated by the following example:

> Women are also citizens [*abatyamye*]. I am a woman but I have citizenship [*obutyamye*] here because I have my home here. I am also registered in the book of *bataka* [6] and they know that Betty is based here and she is a resident citizen [*mutuuze*] of this community . . . even when you may not be married, with a husband, or when the marriage has failed. Nowadays, women are also given land from their ancestral homes. Someone may say, "That land is for my girl child." So she also comes to settle and build for her children. That qualifies her to become a citizen [*omutuuze*] of a particular community.
>
> (Female participant in Namutumba)

Ultimately, given the lived experiences of the participants, we can conclude that citizenship and being a citizen was in the majority of cases framed in a gendered manner, often only incorporating the characteristics of a male citizen, with patriarchal attitudes influencing citizenship practices and women excluding themselves from the category.

Gendered exclusion in a community through habits and practices

In this section we discuss experiences of gendered habits and practices involving community restrictions and gender-differentiated citizenship activities.

While women consciously and unconsciously excluded themselves from their legal right to citizenship, they also reflected on the ways in which they were either included or excluded by the community wherein members' gendered habits, embedded in culture and religion, have been formed over decades or centuries of upbringing. For women, these habits include taken-for-granted assumptions and control over what they can and cannot do, and for both women and men, they are so deeply rooted that it is a challenging task to change them by means of government legislation (Asiimwe 2002; Sebina-Zziwa 1999). Some of the women participants in this study felt that it was extremely difficult for them to become citizens in a given locality as becoming a citizen depended on whether a person was settled in marriage or not. Women often held the belief that being a woman automatically disqualifies them from being an independent citizen of a locality. In Namutumba, this view was especially embedded in cultural norms among Basoga women and men, who believe in male supremacy. Hence the adage, *omwami kyakoba nzeena kye kola,* which literally means being subordinate or submissive to men's views and practices.

The community as a whole has a final say in whether a woman can be perceived as a citizen or not. Often, women's endeavours to assert themselves as active citizens are sanctioned as misbehaviour and a breach of society's norms (Mbire-Barungi 1999; Ovonji-Odida 1999; Asiimwe 2002), while other practices may even result in ostracization or exclusion from the category of citizen (*butyamye*). In Namutumba, behaviour in this category that was mentioned by the participants included adultery, pride, promiscuity, or failure to participate in community work (*Bulungi bwansi*).

> A woman might have what we call pride. When she is proud around the community, she is adulterous and goes out with every man. So sometimes, because of her behaviour, people may not regard her as a resident of that village. And so she might be denied settlement at that particular community for the reason that she goes out with people's husbands.
>
> (Female participant in Namutumba)

In conclusion, a woman's acceptance as a resident citizen is determined by the community as a whole. Such communities are themselves gendered, and often characterized by deep-rooted patriarchal habits and male domination.

"Localized" practices and multiple belongings as spaces for disruption in gendered habits

The formal and legal status of being a citizen allows Ugandan women to make claims as citizens in their own right (The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995). However, analysis of the narratives of the participants revealed that, for a woman, being recognized as a citizen, or further, an "active citizen", does not come on a silver platter; in reality, it is a struggle.

Women must negotiate between different categories of citizenship that are themselves continuously evolving: “Women are now recognized as citizens through their own efforts”, said one of the participants of the recent changes. The existence of multiple identities and belongings, and participation in the different activities of formal and informal groups and organizations, characterize this struggle. If one regards learning as the reformulation of habits, it is essential to ask what might function as a disruption that would trigger changes in the habits of gendered citizenship. On the basis of the analysed narratives, changes seem to result from an aggregated engagement with, and participation in, a number of groups over time rather than any specific event or intervention. Two participants’ reflections on the results of their taking part in various community activities were as follows:

> All the above have changed my way of thinking as a woman. I no longer sit back and wait for my husband.
>
> (Female participant in Kiboga)

> When there are meetings, I participate in those meetings. Usually when someone participates in a meeting with three or five people, you cannot leave with the same brain. Something special happens… the brain changes.
>
> (Female participant in Kiboga)

For instance, one of the key steps in gaining recognition as a local citizen is by joining and participating in Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) (see also Kilonzo et al., this volume). Each of the women participants belonged to at least two or more VSLAs, engagement with which enabled them to accumulate savings, which would, in turn, be loaned out with interest. The savings and interest on the loans would be shared at the end of the year. The VSLAs enabled women to invest in other income-generating activities, the acquisition of assets such as land and the construction of buildings for different purposes, both residential and commercial. Economic empowerment gained through the VSLAs also strengthened women’s agency and their experience of being competent citizens. As noted by two women in Kiboga:

> Before I joined TukolereWamu, I depended so much on my husband. He was the one to provide all the basic household necessities. I would feel helpless in case he was unable to provide for us. But when I joined TukolereWamu, we learnt how to work. … I could not contribute to the school fees of even one of my children. But now, the things I have learnt in TukolereWamu have provided me with the capacity to pay fees for at least one child.
>
> (Female participant in Kiboga)

> [B]ut the most important thing is that this group has made me develop as a person. Truly, before I joined it, I was badly off: poverty, sickness and even ignorance. Yes, I used to survive as a person but there was something missing [that would allow me] to be a good citizen among people, a person fit to live in a community. But now, I can stand and teach my colleagues; I can even "teach" community members.
>
> (Female participant in Kiboga)

This economic struggle for identity and belonging has enabled women to gain financial empowerment, which is exhibited in their ability to contribute to meeting family obligations like school fees for their children, medical bills and other home requirements. Furthermore, the entire process of struggling for identity and belonging through economic engagement has enabled women to gain confidence and assert themselves in the local community. Consequently, the overall process has enabled women to gain knowledge and diverse skills in leadership, public speaking, financial management, saving and investment.

Other practices that provided meaningful participation included, for instance, involvement in local politics, with the majority of women leaning towards the ruling National Resistant Movement Party (NRM); religious affiliation, especially Anglican, "Born Again", Muslim and Catholic; and community based socio-cultural groups. According to the experiences of women in Namutumba District, the process of gaining recognition as a local citizen involved going through certain "rites of passage", occurring when a woman gets married and is coached by a senior woman citizen on the practices of a "proper local woman citizen" over the period of a year. Once accepted as a *mutaka* (local citizen) she is required to fulfil specific, gender-differentiated duties, obligations and responsibilities:

> Here as women we also make local contributions [*Ife wano ewaife tuwayo obutaka*]. We women, we carry food and fetch water when we lose a member of the community … that is what makes us [women] recognized as citizens in the area … The men contribute money, construct shelter and dig the grave; we, the women, we carry food and fetch water – that is how we fulfil our community obligations [*n'obutaka bwaife bwe tukola*].
>
> (Female participant in Namutumba)

As with economic empowerment, women gain recognition in community groups through being subjected to a complex specific process quite different from that of their male counterparts. It is clear that the identity ascribed to women is still, in reality, often shaped by their relations to a man, whether as a mother, daughter, sister or wife. Nonetheless, religious affiliation as an avenue to recognition as local citizens involved women both as part of the laity but also as active participants in church-related activities, while filling different roles in the church. Some were choir members, others occupied positions as deaconesses, chairpersons of women church groups and secretaries; still others were members of church youth or women's groups. While many said that there were no tangible benefits, the prayers and blessings were very important for their survival and the success of their day to day activities:

> [I]t is true, if you put something first, it should be religion. Without God, all these other activities/jobs can collapse. Therefore, when I go to the church, I go there to pray, and I have other church activities which I can do … My expectations of St Cecilia are not high. But I belong to it for a reason: you cannot manage the group's business on… when God is not there. For that matter, I belong to the church mainly for proper guidance in all these other activities I do. Because if you do not have religion here, all the other activities do not go well.
>
> (Female participant in Kiboga)

The ways in which women struggle to gain recognition as citizens do not form a single trajectory but, rather, a nexus of multi-membership whereby, on the one hand, they engage in different practices in each of the communities/groups to which they belong, behaving differently as they construct different aspects of themselves and gain a range of perspectives; on the other hand, the latter notwithstanding, the overriding requirement of identity-formation is the ability to participate, interact and influence each other, leading to the reformulation of habits. Overall, taking part in local practices, belonging to multiple informal community groups and to churches and religious groups, and participating in local politics and formal organizations has led to the gradual reformulation of taken for granted habits and, thus, created spaces for women's visibility, agency and active citizenship.

Conclusions

Our analysis has showed that Ugandan women, especially in rural communities, are still struggling with discrepancies between citizenship as a legal status and their lived experience, between entitlements granted in government legislation and social controls exercised in everyday life. We contend that it is not a question of women's intentional reluctance to enjoy their incontestable rights, nor of their being unaware of them or scared of cultural reactions if they practice them more actively (Mbire-Barungi 1999; Meer & Sever 2004; Wyrod 2008); rather, their lived experience is the result of gendered habits formulated over history. When it comes to learning as a reformulation of these habits, there is no abrupt and direct shift from one condition to another, from a socially-constructed, gendered citizenship to a universally equal one. Instead, prevalent concepts undergo incremental change whereby new ideas, actions and processes act as disruptions, generating additional perceptions of different kinds of citizenship. Furthermore, it is not enough to assume that gendered citizenship in society can be transformed by means of written statutes, or by allocating positions for women, designing policy instruments or delivering authoritative speeches wherein citizenship is primarily discussed in national terms: not as long as the experienced citizenship mostly revolves around localities. The notion of citizenship should be sufficiently contextually relevant to accommodate negotiated, experienced, localized perspectives. Consequently, interventions aimed at strengthening citizenship should recognize and take advantage of the complex nature of women's multiple relationships in their local contexts, using them as entry points for holistic transformation.

Notes

1 The first author has had overall responsibility for the chapter. The first and the second authors have conducted the fieldwork presented, initiated the overall idea and contributed substantially to each section. The third author is a PI of the project. She has contributed to the theoretical content and the overall structure.

2 Refer to the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995); the Local Government Act (1997); the Land Act (1998), the Education Act of Uganda (2008), the Uganda Domestic Violence Act (2010); the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act (2010); the Equal Opportunities Act (2010).

3 Some of the sector policy/plan documents include Uganda Vision 2040, Second National Development Plan 2015/16–2019/20, Social Development Plan (SDIP-2), Agriculture Sector Strategic Plan 2015/16–2019/20, Health Sector Strategic Plan, Education and Sports Sector Strategic Plan 2017/18–2019/20

4 Luganda is the local language of the Baganda of central Uganda but also widely spoken across the greater southern part of the country.

5 In the understanding of the participants, *omunansi* acts like a freelance person with neither community attachment and responsibility nor permanence in the community. Some of the examples given included casual and/or migrant labourers, distant visitors and in some cases women.

6 Bataka is the plural of Omutaka. Omutaka according to Basoga social practices is a registered member of a local community who is obligated to fulfil prescribed community maintenance roles. To be registered as a member (mutaka) one pays an agreed sum of money to the treasurer and is registered in the "book of bataka".

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