

Uganda's Female Entrepreneurs: Challenges and Opportunities for Economic Development

Background

"A Transformed Ugandan Society from a Peasant to a Modern and Prosperous Country within 30 years" – this is the Ugandan government's Vision 2040, a long-term plan, full of high aspirations, whose implementation started in 2010¹. The document envisages transforming Uganda from the low income country that it is today, with a per capita income of \$506 to a competitive upper middle income country of per capita \$9.500 within less than 30 years².

Neoclassical economics, communism and/or social market economics agree that entrepreneurship and business development in Uganda is the only fuel of economic growth. In 2015, a Virgin Group survey revealed that Uganda was the most entrepreneurial country in the world. During the 2016 Youth Business International Entrepreneurship Awards, it was recognized that "Uganda has a huge challenge of youth unemployment, and we believe that entrepreneurship can play an important role in tackling this problem³". On the Global En-

trepreneurship Summit in Kenya, President Obama underlined the entrepreneurial potential for economic growth and investment in the region: "Despite its many challenges, Africa is a place of incredible dynamism, some of the fastest-growing markets in the world, extraordinary people, and extraordinary resilience"⁴. Academics and policy-makers, both in Uganda itself, but also within an international context, recognize that start-up businesses are one of the key engines of growth in Uganda and many other developing countries by contributing to employment creation.

Unfortunately, there is a fundamental inadequacy of conversations about the role of women in the entrepreneurship discourse in Africa. This paper therefore aims to elaborate on the role that women play in achieving Uganda's economic targets by actively engaging in entrepreneurial activities. Two assumptions substantiate this paper: 1. Entrepreneurship is an effective means to accelerate economic growth and job creation in developing nations; 2. Prospects for economic growth are generally higher in societies

¹ "Vision 2040 Is A Reality For Uganda's Strategic Plans". www.newvision.co.ug. N.p., 2016. Web. 16 Nov. 2016.

² Ibid.

³ "Kampala Gets Ready For Celebration Of Entrepreneurship -". Youthbusiness.org. N.p., 2016. Web. 16 Nov. 2016.

⁴ Tisdale, Stacey. "Uganda Prime Minister Discusses Entrepreneurship And Investing As Obama Visits Africa". [Black Enterprise](http://BlackEnterprise.com). N.p., 2016. Web. 16 Nov. 2016.

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V. where women have greater levels of economic empowerment and are equally involved in entrepreneurship.

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This discussion is highly relevant in the Ugandan context, as the country still faces massive poverty and unemployment rates. The World Bank places Uganda's youth unemployment rate at 80%, while the Uganda government claims it to be 62% - whichever statistic to credit, the situation is devastating⁵. Today, Uganda has more unemployed young people than at any other time in history. According to a combined report by DFID, UKAID and the Youth Working Group, the country would need 600,000 new jobs every year for the next 12 years to solve this crisis of massive unemployment⁶. With a population of about 25 million, more than half of the population is under the age of 15 years, which makes it the world's second youngest country, with a median age of just 15.9 years⁷.

Uganda as the most Entrepreneurial Country in the World

How do we interpret this information? Uganda is primed for entrepreneurial development! Uganda's youthful population and its increasing working-age population is a major opportunity for economic growth. The World Bank estimates that this demographic dividend could generate 11-15%

GDP growth between 2011 and 2030⁸.

In fact, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) just recently ranked the levels of entrepreneurship in 73 nations, surprisingly awarding Uganda, not Silicon Valley, as the world's most entrepreneurial place on earth. Uganda must foster the growth of small and medium sized businesses and start-up enterprises to fuel growth of business development. There is a bustling entrepreneurial spirit in Uganda, where 28 percent of the workforce has started their own businesses in recent years⁹. This entrepreneurial spirit provides Uganda with a powerful and rich resource for the country's future social and economic development – through entrepreneurship, Ugandans can not only take themselves out of unemployment, but, by growing their enterprises, offer jobs to other Ugandans.

The potential of entrepreneurship in Uganda has incentivized many academics and policy-makers to research on ways to assist the growth of these enterprises and to direct efforts towards promoting these units. Research has focused on identifying problems in financing schemes and creating access to finance, on market information, entrepreneurial culture or managerial skills. But where are the women in entrepreneurship? Most studies, most policy initiatives as well as most private business support models lack a gender-sensitive lens to the reality in Uganda.

⁵ "Youth4policy". youth4policy. N.p., 2016. Web. 16 Nov. 2016.

⁶ Kwesiga, Eshban. "Youth4policy". youth4policy. N.p., 2016. Web. 16 Nov. 2016.

⁷ Myers, Joe. "The World's 10 Youngest Populations Are All In Africa". World Economic Forum. N.p., 2016. Web. 16 Nov. 2016.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Mark, Hay. "Why Uganda Is The World's Most Entrepreneurial Nation". GOOD Magazine. N.p., 2016. Web. 16 Nov. 2016.

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V. **The Role of Female Entrepreneurship is underestimated**

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Women make up 52.5% of the Ugandan labor force and are therefore an important pool of potential talent to help the country meet its development goals. However, women face more serious hurdles in starting, managing and growing their enterprises than men do. According to the ILO, Ugandan women are disadvantaged when it comes to necessary capacities, skills and resources as well as legal impediments, cultural norms, restricted mobility and domestic responsibilities¹⁰. Since the ILO's first national WED (Women's Entrepreneurship Development) assessment in 2004, the challenges facing women entrepreneurs in Uganda have not changed significantly¹¹.

Only 13.8% of working women are in formal employment, compared to 27.9% of working men¹². Even though the growth in the number of women-owned enterprises has outpaced that of male-owned businesses by 1.5 times and even though the proportion of women-owned enterprises has increased to 44 % since 2011, the survival rates of their businesses are also much lower than those of men¹³. Ugandan women are more likely to start their business out of necessity than men (30% of the women and only 21% of the men)¹⁴. Moreover, their businesses have significantly lower num-

bers of employees (38% vs 55% in established businesses)¹⁵.

Cultural norms and attitudes impede growth aspirations of women entrepreneurs, because entrepreneurship is not considered as an acceptable role for women in Uganda¹⁶. Moreover, gendered social roles assigned to Ugandan women hamper their capacity to spend time on enterprise development¹⁷. The sector distribution of enterprises by the sex of owners also reflects the social gender roles: women are mainly engaged in sectors perceived as being "female", therefore excluding enterprises involving technical skills, which are traditionally male dominated¹⁸.

Apart from a few initiatives, dedicated supports are not available to help women entrepreneurs with growth potential to migrate to employer-business; most support-schemes and organizations are not yet responding to the needs of women entrepreneurs, a group that is found to be underserved.

Enabling women to start up their own businesses and to create employment would bring major benefits to the country, turning Ugandan women into a strong asset. Acknowledging the role of women entrepreneurs in private sector development, poverty reduction, and sustainable growth and development in Uganda, this paper aims to identify ways to empower women for effective entrepreneurship. The question thus arising is the following: How can

¹⁰ Mugabi, Enock. *Women's Entrepreneurship Development In Uganda*. 1st ed. Geneva: ILO, 2014. Print.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Mugabi, Enock. *Women's Entrepreneurship Development In Uganda*. 1st ed. Geneva: ILO, 2014. Print.

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Ugandan women be empowered to successfully engage in entrepreneurial activities?

Entrepreneurship as a Motor for Growth

Entrepreneurship, defined as the "identification and exploitation of business opportunities for new products and services"¹⁹, is clearly essential if structural changes required for economic development are to be achieved, which is affirmed by a wide amount of existing academic literature. The assumption that entrepreneurship and economic development are positively related has a broad base of support, not only in terms of theory but also when it comes to empirical evidence. Entrepreneurship fuels economic growth by allowing the means of production in a country to be used in more effective combinations²⁰. Countries with higher levels of entrepreneurial activities also have higher levels of innovation and technological change, leading to development leaps in general²¹. Entrepreneurship is not a natural result of high levels of labor, capital, and knowledge, but a necessary mean in itself to drive the development of a country²². Some scholars even go so far as to state that "entrepreneurship is one of the most effective means

to alleviate poverty in developing countries"²³. The previous account illustrates that entrepreneurship has a significant impact on economic growth as has been generally established, indicating that a country should devote a part of its resources towards promoting entrepreneurship. However, all of the academic approaches enlisted above have been "gender-blind", leaving out the role that women and gender equality in general plays in achieving sustainable economic development, as Uganda strives for in its Vision 2040.

Women Empowerment for Economic Development

The equal participation of women in economic activities and their economic empowerment is beneficial for a country's development and therefore desirable.

Economic dependence on men has been proven to be a key structural factor for women's vulnerability²⁴. Therefore, improving women's access to the market and stimulating their participation in the economy has been recommended by several scholars. The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) Report on Uganda (2016), financed by Canada's International Development Research Centre, concludes that societies where women participate equally in economic activities and where economic burdens are shared, both women and men as well as their children enjoy better, longer,

¹⁹ Shane, S. & Venkatamaran, S. (2000). The Promise of Entrepreneurship as a Field of Research. *The Academy of Management Review*. Vol. 25, No. 1 (Jan., 2000), pp. 217-226

²⁰ Schumpeter, Joseph A. (1934). *The Theory of Economic Development: An Inquiry into Profits, Capital, Credit, Interest, and the Business Cycle*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934.

²¹ Versloot, Peter H. & C. Mirjam van Praag. (2007). What is the Value of Entrepreneurship? A Review of Recent Research. *Small Business Economics*, Vol. 29, No.4, 2007, 351-382.

²² Audretsch, D. & Keilbach, M. (2004). Entrepreneurship and Regional Growth: An Evolutionary Interpretation. *Journal of Evolutionary Economics*, Vol. 14, No.5, 2004, 605-616.

²³ Frese M., Gielnick M. & Mensmann. (2016). Positive Impact of Entrepreneurship Training on Entrepreneurial Behavior in a Vocational Training Setting. *Africa Journal of Management*. Vol. 2, 2016.

²⁴ Nyanzi, Barbara et al. "Money, Men And Markets: Economic And Sexual Empowerment Of Market Women In Southwestern Uganda". *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 7.1 (2005): 13-26. Web. 16 Nov. 2016.

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healthier and happier lives²⁵. GEM admonishes to recognize the social and economic potential of encouraging women to see themselves as equally competent in creating their own enterprises²⁶. According to UNDP (1999), society as a whole is strengthened by improving the position of women, and this enhances broader development prospects. In a joint publication of The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the African Development Bank (AfDB) in 2004, the potential of women-owned enterprises in Uganda was assessed, concluding that efforts are needed to create a more enabling environment for women to pursue enterprise growth²⁷. Moreover, the economic empowerment of women is a cornerstone of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Women's economic empowerment and gender equality is not only the right thing to do when it comes to basic human rights, but, as the UN Women Report (2016) emphasizes, also the "smart thing to do": persistent economic gender gaps cause enormous economic and human development costs²⁸. Economic gender equality can bring dramatic improvements for human development, economic growth and businesses.

The economic empowerment of women is associated with higher gains in terms of income, economic growth and national competitiveness. The potential gains

²⁵ Balunywa, Waswa et al. Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2012. Print. Uganda.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Assessing The Enabling Environment For Women In Growth Enterprises. 1st ed. Geneva: ILO, 2007. Print.

²⁸ Leave No One Behind - A Call To Action For Gender Equality And Women's Economic Empowerment. UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment, 2016. Print.

associated with women's economic empowerment are particularly relevant in the context of Uganda's continuously weak economic performance and its recent drop in GDP growth rates²⁹. A MFPED report projected that if the number of skilled women in the labour force increased by 5% every year, it would produce a 0.3% increase in national output³⁰.

Challenges to female entrepreneurship in Uganda

A plethora of factors which are both social, political, economic and natural in nature continue to hamper Ugandan women from becoming entrepreneurs and/or hindering female enterprises to attain sustainable growth. More specifically, these factors are related but not limited to the highly patriarchal nature of most societies, unfavorable legal and regulatory regimes and high dependence rate among Ugandan women to mention but just a few.

To have a vivid grasp of the challenges facing Ugandan female entrepreneurs, exploring the ever increasing size of the informal sector will provide a relevant compass for navigation. Gender, informal work, and poverty often co-exist, and the informal economy remains an important source of employment and income for women throughout the developing world³¹.

²⁹ "Uganda Economic Outlook". N.p., 2016. Web. 16 Nov. 2016.

³⁰ Balunywa, Waswa et al. Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2012. Print. Uganda.

³¹ A M, Spevacek (2010) Constraints to Female Entrepreneurship in sub-Saharan Africa KSC Research Series

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Globalization, as well as restrictive regulatory and legal environments, continues to push women (and other vulnerable groups) into self-employment in the informal sector³². This situation isn't a Ugandan but an African predicament. The informal sector contributes about 55 per cent of Sub-Saharan Africa's GDP and 80 per cent of the labor force; 9 in 10 rural and urban workers have informal jobs in Africa and most employees are women and youth³³. The prominence of the informal sector in most African economies stems from the opportunities it offers to the most vulnerable populations such as the poorest, women and youth. Even though the informal sector is an opportunity for generating reasonable incomes for many people, most informal workers are without secure income, employments benefits and social protection. This explains why informality often overlaps with poverty, for instance, in countries where informality is decreasing, the number of working poor is also decreasing and vice versa³⁴.

Compared to men, there are more women in Uganda engaged in the informal sector. Four out of every five women in Uganda are employed in agriculture, according to the 2008 Gender and Productivity Survey (GPS) in Uganda (EPRC, 2009). Women engaged in informal, small-scale cross-border trade, is now the new normal in Uganda.

³² *ibid*

³³ AfDB (2013). Recognizing Africa's Informal Sector

³⁴

Even in the 21st century, several barbaric sociocultural factors still account for the low women's involvement in the entrepreneurship landscape. Most of these factors stem from the deeply patriarchal nature of most Ugandan societies. These factors don't only limit women from accessing and utilizing factor of production like land but they also cause physical, emotional and social harms to them which in the long run affect their productivity. It is a systemic issue, where inequity in marital status and in property ownership intersects with cultural attitudes and beliefs to create formidable obstacles to change³⁵. Women's lack of decision making power – over land and other household assets, cash incomes, and when and how often to have children – is a direct cause of welfare problems like poor nutrition and health, excessive fertility, high infant mortality, overwork among women and drunkenness among men.

Even with limited access to productive resources, Ugandan women, just like women in other African countries have nonetheless strived to be at the epicenter of economic engagement. "Women of Uganda are at the center of production but at the periphery of benefit" Hon. Miria Matembe, a gender activist once lamented.

³⁵ C. Mark Blackden (2004). OUT OF CONTROL: GENDER AND POVERTY IN UGANDA A STRATEGIC COUNTRY GENDER ASSESSMENT (DISCUSSION PAPER)

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V. **Empowering Ugandan Women for Entrepreneurship: The Way Forward**

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In order to attain the Vision 2040's goal to become a middle income country, Uganda should encourage entrepreneurship in general and female entrepreneurship in particular. The central question is therefore how this empowerment can be achieved.

Gender-sensitive Legal and Regulatory Systems

In Uganda, as in many other parts of the world, women are less likely to be hired for paid jobs than men; moreover, they are not present in several sectors perceived as 'men's work'. This is partly due to labor laws that are totally gender-neutral. Furthermore, customary law, which is still recognized as a valid source of law according to the Ugandan constitution, discriminates women in their ownership and inheritance of land, which portrays one of the major resources for the establishment of entrepreneurial enterprises³⁶. In order to encourage women for entrepreneurship from a legal perspective, the Succession Law needs to be amended to remove discrimination against women and girls.

One of the most important regulations concerning entrepreneurship is related to the requirements for formally registering businesses in order to obtain the numerous licenses and permits required to start operating. Registration of a business is a very important step

to enable the enterprise to grow and be profitable, as being registered is often necessary to access credit; business development services (BDS) or foreign markets. Due to the smaller size and turnover of women-owned enterprises, the process of registering the business creates a higher burden for women than for men, showing that neither business registration nor licensing procedures in Uganda are gender-sensitive at the present stage. Even though the cost of registration and licensing imposes burdens on all enterprises, there is increasing evidence that enterprises headed by women suffer disproportionate impact. Not only are women more restricted in their time, but also are women owned businesses more likely to become victims of harassment and paying bribes³⁷. Several barriers hinder women from registering their businesses, including geographical inaccessibility or simply a lack of awareness of the various advantages that registration will bring.

A gender-sensitive legal environment needs to be created that enables Ugandan women to claim the same economic rights as men. However, appropriate legal provisions are not enough – their unconditional enforcement is necessary in order to give them effect and ensure that women are not subject to customary practices that still prevail in Uganda.

³⁶ Balunywa, Waswa et al. Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2012. Print. Uganda.

³⁷ Ibid.

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V. Raising Awareness

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The conscientisation of Ugandan women on their economic rights and entrepreneurial possibilities is a core aspect of empowerment. For example, only one in five women entrepreneurs is aware of the benefits that registering their business might bring to them³⁸. There is no outreach strategy ensuring that women entrepreneurs are made aware of the required processes. But successful conscientization of women goes beyond the knowledge of formal processes; it includes the understanding of the difference between sex roles and gender roles, accompanied by the belief that gender relations and the gender division of labor should be fair and agreeable to both sides. Responsible agencies, including the Uganda Registration Service Bureau (URBS) should develop strategies for outreaching to (potential) women entrepreneurs with accessible information on the benefits and formalities of entrepreneurial activities.

Access to Finance

Access to finance is critical to the market entry of new enterprises and their sustainable growth, especially for SMEs. However, financial products and services provided by the different financial institutions in Uganda are at the present not sensitive to the specific needs of women entrepreneurs. Moreover, women entrepreneurs' knowledge of existing financial products is very low. One example of this insensitivity is that women, in contrast to men, are rarely considered as individual

borrowers in Uganda and are thus prone to group lending mechanisms, which is limiting and not appropriate for the needs of all women entrepreneurs. Moreover, the demand of formal banking institutions for the husband's consent further complicates the women's access to finance. The consent-requirement, introduced through the Land Act 2010, poses considerable challenges to women who do not want to consult their husband for different reasons, for example out of fear that the husband might divert the money from the original intention.

As a way forward, women entrepreneur's funds should be established that ensure stronger linkages between Micro-finance institutions and commercial banks. Loans for women entrepreneurs for both start-ups and the development of women-owned SMEs should be accompanied by awareness tools, educating also the staff of commercial banks about the specific needs of women entrepreneurs.

"Without the ability to access financial services, it is difficult for women entrepreneurs to start and expand their business enterprises and this is why most of the women entrepreneurs are running informal and small scale enterprises."

- GEM Report Uganda

Access to start-up and expansion capital for women in Uganda entrepreneurs remains a serious gap that requires special attention. Gender-sensitive financial services need to be developed that take into account the specific needs of women entrepreneurs in order to create an equitable par-

³⁸ Ibid.

participation of women-owned enterprises in the Ugandan thrive for economic growth.

There are positive examples of Ugandan banks possessing gender-sensitive financial products, including the Finance Trust Bank (FTB) and the Development Finance Company of Uganda (DFCU) Bank. According to the ILO report of women entrepreneurial development in Uganda (2014), these banks demonstrate good practices in gender-sensitive financial services and more banks should follow suit.

Gender-sensitive Business Development Services

Vocational training and education that is designed to prepare Ugandans to starting their own businesses still lacks a gender-sensitive approach. For a number of reasons (level of education and experience, cultural factors), it appears that adapted approaches are needed when providing BDS services to women entrepreneurs in Uganda³⁹. Even though the National Development Plan (2010/11–2014/15) outlined a strategy to promote entrepreneurship development training targeting women and youth, the implementation is missing in practice. Increased efforts are needed to attract more women to use business-development trainings to close the gaps in service to women entrepreneurs. Ugandan women require more training in business skills and financial literacy training because of their lower level of education and work experience.

Most BDS programmers operate on the basis of gender-neutrality, when in fact; they show a lack of awareness of the constraints faced by women entrepreneurs⁴⁰. A large number of organizations are providing BDS in Uganda, including government agencies, NGOs, private sector consulting firms and training organizations, however, there are a few organizations targeting especially women with their BDS services, such as UWEAL (Uganda Women Entrepreneurs Association Limited). For example, in the 'Entrepreneurial Skills Development Project', only 586 out of 3.700 Ugandans trained were women (15.8%)⁴¹. In order to bridge this gap, BDS providers should review their programmes, including business management training, product upgrading, coaching, mentoring, financial literacy etc., for gender-responsiveness and redesign their services in order to meet the different needs that women face, including increased time demands of women entrepreneurs, the need for family support or the tailoring of training materials.

Access to Markets

The majority of Ugandan women entrepreneurs continue to sell their products on the street or in local Markets, often due to insufficient quality to access the competitive regional or international markets. Women entrepreneurs are often constrained by a lack of information, capacity, productive resources, product quality, market integration and ICT-enabling technologies, resulting in a poor

³⁹ Mugabi, Enock. *Women's Entrepreneurship Development In Uganda*. 1st ed. Geneva: ILO, 2014. Print.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V. access to profitable markets⁴².

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Even though the Ugandan government undertook some promising steps, including the National Export Strategy (2008), in practice, implementation lacks resources and proficiency. In order to promote the export of women entrepreneurs, women's awareness about market opportunities needs to be targeted and the qualities of their products needs to be made competitive.

The National Export Strategy identified key sectors in which the promotion of women-owned businesses could bring considerable economic benefits to the country. These sectors include primarily crafts, tourism and other non-traditional exports, as women dominate these markets. For instance, women provide over 90 % of the products on the handicraft sector and contribute over 70 % of the export revenues⁴³.

To support these women-owned businesses, their lack of access to modern technology needs to be addresses. ICTs have the potential to upgrade women's production capacity and quality in order to broaden their markets. Heightening visibility and gaining speed as a marketing outlet through using a website, for example, will increase sales of the women-owned enterprises. However, as a representative of the 'Council for Economic Empowerment of Women in Africa – Uganda' (CEEWA-U) put it in an ILO report:

"You cannot expect a woman who cannot read and write to learn how to use a computer."
- CEEWA-Uganda.

In Uganda, organizations like CEEWA-U and the 'Women of Uganda Network' (WOUGNET) need more support in exposing women entrepreneurs to the use of ICTs, training in ICT skills and enabling them greater access to the Internet, especially in rural areas of the country.

Moreover, government procurement can play a significant role in widening the scope of market-access of women entrepreneurs. At present, government procurement is largely inaccessible to micro- and small enterprises and tendering processes are complex and expensive⁴⁴. Tendering policies are neither gender-sensitive, nor are there actions to support women bidders. However, the Ugandan government, as in many other countries, is one of the largest purchasers of goods and services and thus possesses a potential market for women-owned enterprises. Women enterprises need to have the same opportunities as other SMEs to access government tenders. Procurement programmes actively targeting women-owned enterprises in order to help them qualify are needed.

⁴² Mugabi, Enock. *Women's Entrepreneurship Development In Uganda*. 1st ed. Geneva: ILO, 2014. Print.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Mugabi, Enock. *Women's Entrepreneurship Development In Uganda*. 1st ed. Geneva: ILO, 2014. Print.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V. **Representation of Women in Policy-Dialogue**

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Generally, and particularly across developing countries like Uganda, the voices of women entrepreneurs are underrepresented in public-private dialogue. This lack of representation leads to regulatory impediments concerning women entrepreneurs and their issues of concern not being addressed. In most key businesses, sector and employers' organizations, women entrepreneurs only represent a small fraction of the members. In order to sustain the promotion of women in entrepreneurship in the long run, representation in membership-driven business associations should be increased. For Uganda, the most important associations in this regard are the Private Sector Foundation of Uganda (PSFU), the Uganda Small Scale Industries Association (USSIA), the Uganda National Chamber of Commerce and Industries (UNCCI) and the Federation of Uganda Employers (FUE)⁴⁵. Even though some of these institutions have made progress in the last couple of years, women-owned enterprises are still not well represented. This decreases the women's access to business-related information and impedes their relationships. Business associations can play a strong advocacy role. Collectively, organizations like UWEAL, CEEWA, NAWOU, WOUGNET etc. provide policy input and are included as members of government committees in order to advocate for women's empowerment in the private sector. Therefore, as a way forward, it is of high im-

portance that women entrepreneurs' interests and views become represented and consequently considered in the public-private dialogue in order to ultimately influence policy-outcomes in their interest. As most existing women-entrepreneurs organizations and business associations are urban-based, meaningful representation needs to be created for the women who are still left behind in the rural areas of Uganda. Public-private dialogue needs to recognize that women entrepreneurs face very different legal, regulatory and other constraints in their environment. They need effective representation which is given the chance to meet regularly with policy makers for the design and implementation of gender-sensitive policies. For future policies, strategies and programmes, the perspectives of women in entrepreneurship need to be taken into account.

Unfold the Ugandan Women's Potential

Clearly, there is a need to create more awareness among key stakeholders of the important role that women entrepreneurs play in improving on the Ugandan economy and the country's overall development. Empowering women to participate in entrepreneurship has the potential to contribute to economic growth and societal change. Even though there is an increasing recognition of the importance of women entrepreneurs in Uganda, as initiatives like the National Entrepreneurship Strategy illustrate, the next step should be to agree upon priority actions to ensure that Ugandan women are equally able to unfold their potential for Uganda's economy and society.

⁴⁵ Mugabi, Enock. *Women's Entrepreneurship Development in Uganda*. 1st ed. Geneva: ILO, 2014. Print.

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V. Make the media more gender sensitive

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Media in Uganda scores quite lowly when it comes to reporting gender issues. Many economic achievements by women seldom make it to the headlines. As a result, this insensitivity and blindness have an effect on the number of female role models because not many of them are 'out there'. When there are only pockets of successful female entrepreneurs on TV screens, Newspapers and radios, it creates a significant dwindling effect on the aspiration of other women to engage in economic development. At a recent women in media meeting organized by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, one women activist observed, 'imagine what it would be like if there were many more successful women on our screens at home. Our daughters, nieces, sisters would grow up aspiring to become better achievers'.

Conclusion

An African woman is by default destined to fail in the economic enterprise. Breaking the socio-economic and political glass ceilings that continue to block their participation in the economic sphere therefore requires genuine and conscious commitment by policy makers and other relevant stakeholders to break these structural bottlenecks. A lot more work is required to be done to reclaim the space of women in economics and make them constructive participants

As already seen in the previous discussions, social constructs like patriarchy seems to be the bedrock upon which women's eco-

conomic disempowerment is premised. All attempts must therefore be put in place to fight such social injustices which subsequently permeate through to the economic realms.

This paper also shows the extent to which economic dependence by women on men continues to be shrink women's voices and relegate them to a disadvantage status in society. The central argument here is that gender parity will to a large extent only be achieved if the participation of women in the economic space is enhanced and deliberately equaled to those of their male counterparts. This can be done by creating incentive structures like favorable tax policies and access to financial and business development services specifically tailored to the needs of the women.