

How to protect women's gains achieved by NRM Government

On Sunday, Uganda joined the rest of the world in marking International Women's Day. This year's international theme is *Rights, Justice and Action*. The local theme is *Scaling up investments to celebrate access to justice for all women and girls in Uganda*.

By marking International Women's Day, the world is alive to honouring the achievements of women and promoting women's rights, considering the fact that women and girls were generally treated as inferior in almost all parts of the world.

In 1908, for instance, the unfair treatment of women forced 15,000 of them to march through the streets of New York City demanding more pay, better working hours and the right to vote. The attention their march caused forced the Socialist Party of America to declare the first National Women's Day on February 28.

At the global stage, the first idea of an official International Women's Day was first suggested by a German women's rights advocate, Clara Zetkin, in 1910. Her advocacy resulted in the holding of the international conference, attracting over 100 women from 17 countries. The conference welcomed her idea. Therefore, arrangements were commenced to celebrate the world's first International Women's Day. Eventually, in 1917, the official day was established as March 8. That was long before the United Nations (UN) was established.

Much later, in 1975, the UN celebrated International Women's Day for the first time. Two years later (in December 1977), the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution proclaiming a United Nations Day for women's rights and international peace to be observed on any day of the year by member states, in accordance with their historical and national traditions.

Uganda marked International Women's Day as an official holiday, starting in 1991. It was in the same year that the Asian state of Kyrgyzstan did the same.

Celebrating this year in Uganda is right and just, considering the several achievements women and girls have attained under the National Resistance Movement (NRM) Government headed by President Yoweri Museveni.

Women's achievements under the NRM have resulted from well-thought-out government policies. For instance, the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Universal Secondary Education (USE) enabled the girl child to obtain formal education. Past governments were focusing on the boy child, ignoring the education of girls. This was a big mistake that institutionalised the discrimination of the girl child. But the NRM Government has since resolved that historical mistake through UPE and USE.

It is also the NRM Government that gave women a leadership platform through affirmative action. The arrangement provided a way for women leaders in the Cabinet, Parliament, local governments and other government departments, among others. In light of the empowerment, it is now characteristic of women to compete with men for elective positions, and women end up winning. This is indeed a positive stride.

In areas of economic prosperity for women, the NRM economic policies cover women. Take, for example, the Parish Development Model, where women are beneficiaries. The Generating Growth Opportunities and Productivity for Women Enterprises Project is also meant to create capacity and promote women entrepreneurs.

Such initiatives explain why Uganda has positive ratings as far as Goal No.5 (Gender Equality) of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals is concerned. Goal No.5 aims at ending all discrimination against women and girls.

Now that the 2026-2031 NRM manifesto elaborates well how women's equality and prosperity will be enhanced within the aforesaid period, let all Ugandans support its implementation in the five years to come.



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