

Gender, Democratic Practice and Member Control in Agricultural Primary Co-operative Societies in Uganda

Edith I. Basirika

Gender Issues Research Report Series - no. 16



Organization for Social Science Research in
Eastern and Southern Africa

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GENDER, DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE AND MEMBER CONTROL IN AGRICULTURAL PRIMARY CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES IN UGANDA

Abstract: This study sought to assess the interaction of gender, the socio-institutional environment and structural phenomena in influencing the extent of democratic practice, member control, patronage and receipt of benefits amongst the agricultural primary co-operative societies in Uganda. The goal was to highlight implications for creating a self-reliant sustainable development of primary co-operative societies from a socio-institutional and structural perspective. Findings of the study are drawn from 150 male and 150 female co-operators, 24 executive committee members and from secondary sources using both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. The findings revealed that democratic practice, member control, and patronage were high amongst the primary societies. However, leadership positions (an aspect of democratic practice) and participation in decision making (an aspect of member control) were monopolized by members of higher social status in communities and primary societies, i.e., the elderly, wealthy, and male founder members. Implicitly, the management of primary societies was confined in the hands of a few members, which is contrary to the co-operative principles of collective participation of all members in the running of the affairs of their respective societies. This anomaly poses obstacles to creating a self-reliant sustainable development of primary societies that are responsible to the needs and aspiration of all members: for the younger members, women, poor farmers, and new entrants, whose concerns are not synonymous with those of the “elite” leadership and decision-making groups. Hence, they may not be incorporated in the societies’ plans, programmes and activities. This is likely to affect members’ feelings of ownership and responsibility to their respective societies, which could impact negatively on continuity, and sustainability of the primary societies.

Although the majority of members reported that their earnings had improved and that they received prompt payment for deliveries made, female members made fewer deliveries compared to males, due to the socio-institutional environment that limited their level of business transactions in their respective societies. It is, therefore, imperative that the structural phenomena that put leadership and decision-making into a monopoly of a few members and the socio-institutional factors that negatively impacted on women’s level of business transactions be addressed through awakening members’ consciousness to those phenomena and factors. It is equally important that members use the power of their general assemblies as the highest decision-making authorities in primary societies to pass by-laws that break up of the monopoly of leadership positions by a few “elite” members and enhance the access of all members to the societies’ economic benefits and opportunities, especially loans.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Primary co-operative societies are grassroots organizations of individuals and groups with similar social and economic interests who voluntarily bring together resources such as land, machines and labor with the aim of solving their social and economic problems using collective effort. Agricultural primary co-operative societies help farmers to sell their produce at reasonable prices. Historically, men who own the means of production, particularly land have dominated membership of agricultural co-operative primary societies in Uganda. Agricultural co-operative societies brought together farmers to ease production (acquisition of inputs, processing, storage), and marketing of their produce. Access to productive resources, especially land is a prerequisite for agricultural production. Males who owned land became the targeted members of the societies. Women producers (with or without property, especially land) who contributed enormous labor for agricultural production were largely ignored. By 1989, women constituted only 25% of the entire co-operative movement membership, and the majority were not active members (Muzaale 1989).

Membership of co-operative primary societies was further rendered less attractive by: the plummeting product prices experienced in the 1970s and 1980s; government control of the co-operative movement in general, and primary co-operative societies in particular, through setting low producer prices of the traditional export crops (coffee, tobacco and cotton); and the bureaucratic mismanagement of co-operative activities through embezzlement and nepotism by co-operative unions (Makonnen 1990; Katorobo 1993; Mamdani 1993). By 1990, most primary societies were dormant.

The 1989 liberalization of agricultural pricing and marketing by the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government has since restored the attractiveness of membership to co-operative societies. Liberalization entailed government relinquishing of its control over the co-operative societies which were freed to operate as competitive business enterprises undertaking their own pricing and marketing in a liberalized economic environment. Besides marketing, farmers' produce, co-operative societies also procure agricultural inputs such as chemicals, equipment and seedlings; and educate farmers on modern farming and management techniques. They also mobilize loans and farm produce and transport for their members (Kabuga and Batarinyebwa 1995; Obong 1996; Manyire 1996).

In a bid to enhance the socio-economic viability of co-operatives, the Uganda Co-operative Alliance (UCA), the apex of the co-operative movement in Uganda, has been sensitising co-operative societies on the proper management of their affairs, especially with respect to financial and administrative management. Further, women in development officers (WIDOs) in the UCA have also attempted to sensitise co-operative societies about "gender issues" in a bid to increase

women's effective participation in the co-operative societies. The overall goal is to create a self-reliant, sustainable development of primary co-operative societies which operate as democratic, member-controlled organizations, and simultaneously viable and competitive business enterprises providing economic and other services to their members, men and women alike (UCA 1990).

While female membership in the primary societies has increased (Kakande 1995) and some societies have started operating as competitive business enterprises (Kitandwe 1995; Manyire 1996), self-reliant sustainable development of primary societies will largely derive from democratic practice within, and member control of the societies. That is, the exercising of member rights, not least of which is to share in the surplus, take part in the society's business and policy making by way of attendance of meetings, to use one's vote and to run for election to office. Besides these rights, members ought to carry out their responsibilities which include supporting the society in every way possible, either by unstilted and honest work, or patronage in producer or service co-operative societies, or by maximum purchasing in case of consumer societies (Russel 1988). In turn, ability to exercise member rights and perform member responsibilities could be influenced by several factors located within the primary societies, the local communities in which the societies are situated and amongst the societies' membership. These factors could include; the structural set-up within the primary societies, members' gender, and members' social status within their local community. These acting singularly or in various combinations may facilitate or hinder different members' ability to exercise their rights and responsibilities within their co-operative societies.

Although co-operative societies are ideally founded on, and guided by principles of democratic practice, member control and equality of all members, they often mirror existing power and ideological (including gender ideology) structures and prevailing authority systems, which may lead to manipulation, inequality in distribution of benefits and subsequently greater disillusion for the less powerful and socio-economically deprived members. Particularly applicable to this category are females, who are not only new entrants into the societies, but whose socio-economic behaviour and opportunities are also constrained by social conventions within the matrix of "male" dominated social relations and structure in the household and wider socio-economy. The gender construed norms and beliefs associated with female and male specific social and economic activities, responsibilities and capabilities are likely to be replicated in the co-operative societies mostly to the detriment of females practicing their democratic rights, and exerting their member control. This may affect the extent to which they may have access to benefits generated in their societies.

Nevertheless, primary co-operative societies if member centered have the potential of acting as an engine for altering the social context of (including gender relations) peasant production and ultimately, the economic motivation of individual peasant households (Ellis 1993; Thorner et al. 1966). Because the "vertical co-operation" in the supply of farm inputs, delivery of improved

technology, and marketing of farm output would increasingly bind farm households together with common goals and practices leading to higher output and increased intensity of production.

It was the purpose of this study, therefore, to assess the gender, social-institutional and structural factors that facilitated or hindered men's and women's effective exercising of their democratic rights and responsibilities in the primary agricultural societies in Uganda.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The principles of democratic practice, member control and equality of men and women, with respect to access to economic benefits and other services agreed upon by the co-operatives are not "natural" or given. They are highly dependent on the power structures in the primary society, the institutional environment in which the societies are located, member characteristic, gender and social status differences. All of these, acting singularly or in different combinations determine members capacity to exercise their democratic rights, perform member responsibilities, exert member control and have access to the benefits and other services generated by their societies. Rural farmers are not a homogeneous category but are stratified, sometimes visibly, but often in a subtle manner along gender and social status, which influence their entitlements in the rural socio-economy. Similarly, there are important variations amongst rural communities with respect to production patterns, gender division of labor, property (especially land) ownership and authority structures, whether in the household or the community, which may affect members' economic behaviour and opportunities differently. Further, different primary societies have different power structures depending on whether they were recently formed or have been in existence for decades, whether the majority of members are new entrants or old members, whether the executive members are the founder members, variations in member interests, whether females (and poor males) are recent or old members and the activities being promoted, all of the which may influence the extent to which select members or the entire membership actively participates in the societies' activities.

Hence, the level of democratic practice, member control and equality of both male and female members of different socio-economic status in the primary societies is more likely to be influenced by these structural and socio-institutional phenomena than by the increasing membership (of both females and males) and the improving economic viability of primary societies. Membership may increase but may not have control, while economic viability may improve but the benefits may not be equally shared. Yet, given the inability of the majority of rural farmers to individually marshal the required resources for production, transportation and marketing, co-operative societies are better placed to provide these resources and services collectively. Co-operative societies are also in a better position to sensitise their members on modern farming methods and management techniques so as to take advantage of price and market incentives ushered in by agricultural liberalization. In sum, co-operative societies can create

a vigorous climate of social and economic change in the peasant economy in order to stimulate desired changes in the behavioural responses of peasant farmers.

It was in this regard that this study sought to investigate gender, primary society and community specific phenomena that influence the levels of democratic practice, member control and equality in primary co-operative societies, and ultimately, the prospects for self-reliant sustainable development of primary societies in Uganda. The following questions offered guidance in attempting to address the problem:

- i.) How high was the level of democratic practice and member control in agricultural primary co-operative societies in Uganda?
- ii.) To what extent did gender and social status determine individual members' capacity to exercise their democratic rights, perform their responsibilities and share the benefits?
- iii.) What was the nature of the gendered social structure, processes and relations that gave rise to women's lack of resources in the first place, and further posed obstacles to their effective participation in primary societies?
- iv.) How did gender interact with other socio-institutional and structural phenomena in shaping economic behaviour and opportunities in agricultural primary societies?
- v.) What were the implications for creating a self-reliant sustainable development of primary co-operative societies for socio-institutional and structural perspectives?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

- i.) To identify the extent of democratic practice and member control in agricultural primary co-operative societies in Uganda.
- ii.) To determine how gender and social status influenced the exercising of democratic practice and member control, and receipt of socio-economic benefits in agricultural primary societies.
- iii.) To ascertain the interaction of gender and other socio-institutional and structural phenomena in shaping economic behaviour and opportunities in agricultural primary societies.
- iv.) To highlight implications for creating a self-reliant sustainable development of primary co-operative societies taking into account the structural and institutional environments in which men and women operated.

1.4 Literature Review

A series of studies have been conducted on primary co-operative societies in Africa (Mayoux 1988; Muzaale 1989; Obong 1996; Brett 1970; Cossa 1988; Kabuga and Bitarinyebwa 1995). Most of these studies focused on gender inequalities in primary societies, particularly with respect to membership, management representation and access to benefits. Others concentrated on the power structure within the primary societies, while still some others examined the socio-institutional environments in which the primary societies were located and operated.

Muzaale 1989, Eshete 1988, Adagala 1988 and Manyire 1996, revealed that women constituted minority membership of primary societies due to gender discrimination in membership, male resistance and other female constraints such as lack of time, limited ownership of land, lack of capital and illiteracy. Domestic roles and the ideology of male dominance were argued to prevent women from engaging in rewarding participation and consequently confining them to mostly marginal roles. In support, Mayoux 1988 and Jallow 1988, noted that women's participation was particularly low in producer, marketing, housing and transport co-operatives, balanced with that of men in consumer co-operatives and outnumbered men in thrift and credit co-operatives which is a reflection that the gender division on labor for women participation appeared higher in "female skill" activities.

Building on the influence of the gender division of labor on women's participation in the co-operatives, Moepi 1988 and Cossa 1988, and Mulder 1988, reported that due to male migration to towns in Botswana and Southern Mozambique, women outnumbered men in the co-operatives. Women, which were largely responsible for agriculture, outnumbered men in these areas. Many were widows, or lived abandoned by their husbands who became migrant workers, or lived on their own because they had no children. At best, they had husbands who did not accept agricultural sector and had tilted the sexual division of labor, thereby enabling women to dominate in the primary societies.

Pacavira 1988, slightly deviated from the gender division of labor point of view and embraced the entire socio-institutional environment in which co-operatives were located in accounting for the over 90% women involvement in Peasant associations (equivalent of co-operatives societies) in Angola. Pacavira linked not only the overwhelming female dominance in the associations but also their active involvement with men in decision making at all levels of the associations to: agricultural work being largely females' work; absence of land shortage in Angola which, particularly in polygamous families was advantageous if women were to be fully involved in the associations; and absence of legal and cultural restrictions which could forbid wives from joining associations.

Further, the associations were based to some extent on traditional forms of co-operation that ensured the supply of consumer goods, means of production and sale of produce. In these associations, peasants retained individual or family ownership of their labor and other means of production while the state ensured technical, material and financial support to those peasants who joined. Besides,

the organization of Angolan Women (OMA) was cognizant of the role, which women could play in the transformation of the relations of production in the rural areas and to the need to organize peasants associations and co-operatives. Hence, the strategies to improve the situation of women in the co-operatives were viewed not as specific to the co-operative situations only, but in the wider context of having implications for women's roles and problems in society as a whole.

With respect to power structures within the co-operative societies, Chambers (1993) noted that most co-operatives tended to be captured by local elites to the exclusion or exploitation of small farmers, poorer people and women. Brett (1970), Kyamulesire (1988) and Mamdani (1993) added that primary societies in Uganda completely lacked appreciation of a democratic culture, and the essence of every member's duty to take an active part in the affairs of the societies. For most societies owed their origins to some of the more wealthy and educated farmers or landowners who were actuated by a desire to progress economically and to share the obvious profits available from primary marketing. Kitandwe (1995) further added that each society had a group of such men as its core and a rather vague mass of ordinary members whose function was to provide stability and assist in providing capital for the society. Benefits obtained thereby tended to remain in the hands of promoters, which made membership to primary societies less appealing to the majority of ordinary members.

However, Kamara (1988) demonstrated that the tendency of monopolizing power by a few members in co-operative societies was not a strictly male preserve. Citing examples from Sierra Leone, Kamara noted that due to the deteriorating economic situation, even literate women holding high positions had become interested in organizing women's co-operatives but for different motives. Some female elite formed co-operatives with the actual motive of benefiting themselves but used the rhetoric of co-operation and self-help for self-reliance in order to gain government recognition and registration, and therefore, the privileges and facilities given to co-operatives under the Sierra Leone Co-operative Act. Favouritism or impartiality, unfair disbursement of loans, unfair distribution of marketable commodities (e.g., rice, palm oil sugar etc.), poor loan repayments by favoured members, and misuse of office by leaders and those whom they favoured were other (originating from power imbalances) problems that plagued women only co-operatives in Sierra Leone.

Nonetheless, Mayoux (1988), Kamara (1988) and Katusiime (1988) highlighted primary society's intrinsic drawbacks, which further rendered primary societies vulnerable. Mayoux noted that the very issue of co-operation itself and how benefits can be distributed equitably without causing resentment on the part of those who put in most effort, skills and resources is an extremely contentious one. Mayoux added that this problem is acute where there are pre-existing social and economic inequalities and tensions between members. The problem became more contentious particularly in producer co-operatives because of the expectations that members should be active in decision making as well as production. Very rarely is this input remunerated except for paid officers. Thus, co-operators have

to weigh up the relative benefits of control over their working conditions and levels of income. Particularly for poor women, this was reported to be a very difficult decision to make in view of their very limited time and their desperate need for an income. Kamara (1988) added that female co-operative members in Sierra Leone at times asked for additional services which their primary societies could not afford which led to member withdrawal or becoming passive. Furthermore, the commitment of some members was inadequate. Not only did they fail to attend meetings or patronize their societies, but also made late loan repayments or even defaulted on loans, and made irregular savings. Katusiime (1988) further added that both mixed-and single-sex primary societies in Uganda were wrought with management problems. Strategic planning and basic control measures were not put into practice; hence the management was not cost-conscious, since it did not know what types of costs were involved in the running of the society. It is in this respect that Obong (1996) and Manyire (1996) summed up that most societies in Uganda did not operate in a business-like manner.

On the contrary, Brown (1988) and Vandi (1988) reported successful women co-operative societies in the Gambia and Sierra Leone, respectively. In the Gambia, the success of the Sukuta Communal Garden Scheme was attributed to the well-educated, respected and forceful female president who worked tirelessly to develop and promote the scheme. The president was supported by an enthusiastic committee drawn from every section of the village community and had widespread support. Besides, the women of Sukuta already had the skills in vegetable production, which was extended and broadened by the horticultural officer posted to the scheme. The scheme, therefore, fitted well with women's traditional responsibilities to grow food and undertake household and domestic duties. The women's co-operative group built on the long tradition in the Gambia of women working co-operatively in the fields, but also incorporated a contemporary trend to harness such groups as a vehicle for women's development. Similarly, Vandi (1988) reported that co-operatives were previously male-dominated and dogged with dishonesty, poor loan recovery and disregarded, the people's own approach to organization. In the late 1970s women begun entering the co-operative scene and it took a new dimension. Women worked harder, showed more perseverance and patience in doing small things and seeing them through and showed more magnanimity in dealing with other members. Male co-operative became no match for the mixed co-operatives. Because people at the grassroots were involved in the planning, implementation and decision making programmes, there was much more success.

It is probably in this context that Mbilinyi (1988), while accounting for why women in some regions of Tanzania were more enthusiastic than men in co-operative production programmes, said that women's (and men's) participation in communal production depends very much on the specific conditions in each village; such as the general locality, the crops grown, the nature of the co-operative leadership, the division of labor in farming and other activities and the political awareness and actions of different groups to protect their own interests.

The above reviewed literature offered useful insights into understanding the varying representation of women in the co-operative movements in Africa in particular, and in accounting for the success of some primary societies and failure of others. However, most of the reviewed literature is largely descriptive, concentrating more on presenting factors and less on underlying social processes, relations and structures that give rise to the presenting factors, which were examined singularly, yet their varying influence on women's and men's effective participation in the co-operative societies appear to be mutually re-enforcing. Further, fewer studies attempted to place the varying representation and degree of success or failure within the context of democratic practice and member control in these primary societies, and the latter's socio-institutional and structural determinants. As a point of departure, this study was based on the assumption that women's and men's effective participation in the primary societies is determined by the extent of democratic practice, member control, and access to the societies' benefits. Socio-institutional and structural environments, in which the members and societies were located, including their communities, in turn influenced these.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

This study was conceptualised within the framework of the gender approach, which seeks to transcend the narrow assumptions of the Women in Development (WID) approach in accounting for the marginalisation of women in the development process. The WID approach regards women's lack of access to productive resources as the root cause of women's marginalisation while the Gender Approach regards gender relations i.e. those dimensions of social relations that create differences in the positioning of women and men in the social processes as the cause of women's marginalisation (Razavi and Miller 1995). The central concern within the gender approach is the social structures, institutions, processes and relations that give rise to women's (and men's) disadvantaged position in society. Thus, while the WID approach identifies lack of access to resources as key to their under-representation in the co-operative movement, the gender approach raises questions about the role of gender relations in restricting women's access in the first place (and in subverting policy interventions were they to direct resources to women).

Given the much reliance on social relations analysis in the Gender Approach, other forms of social differentiation are also taken into account in this approach. For the Gender Approach takes into account the similarities and differences amongst both women and men. Other forms of social differentiation include ethnicity, age, marital status, length of marriage, occupation, educational level attained, social networks, family's social position, ownership of resources e.g. land, and possession of social resources e.g. prestige in the community, all of which determine one's power, hence the ability to take advantage of opportunities and incentives. Considering that the Gender Approach points to factors embedded in society, institutions and within and amongst women and men in determining the extent of their participation in development, we expected that the scope would be considerable for examining the socio-institutional and structural context in

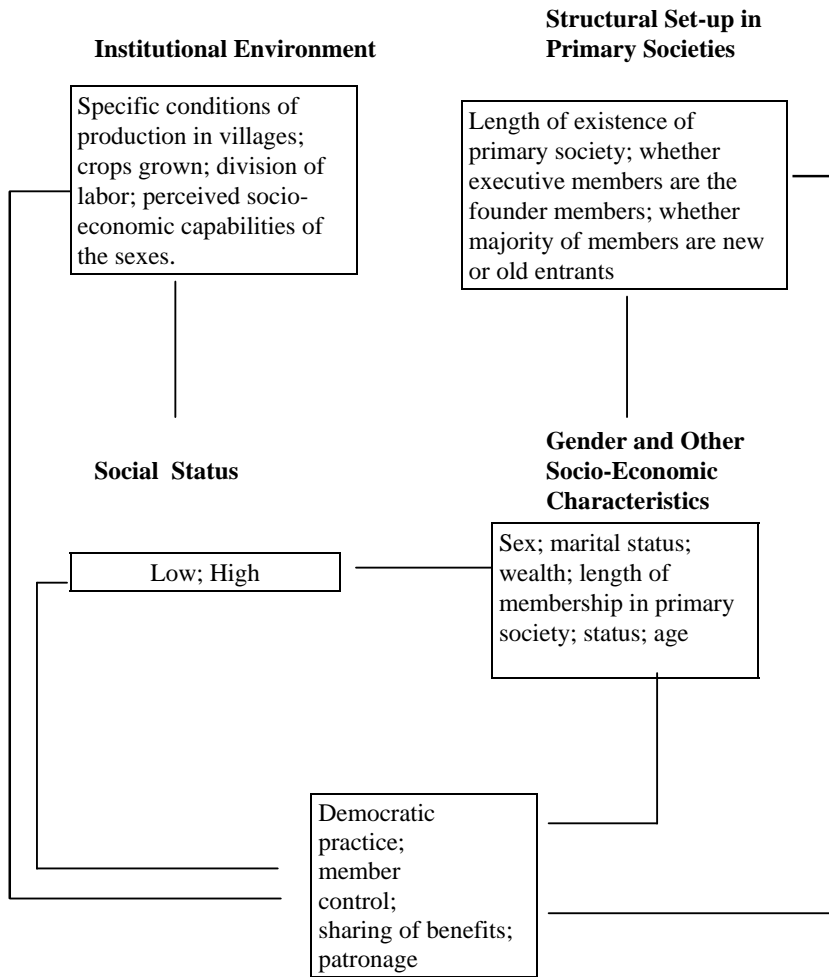
which women and men are expected to exercise their democratic rights, perform their responsibilities, and exert member control within their agricultural primary societies. The contextualised conceptual model of the study is shown in figure 1.

1.6 Significance of the Study

A Socio-institutional analysis of the influence of social structures and social relations on socio-economic behaviour was of critical theoretical and practical significance to understanding variations between and amongst men and women with respect to exercising democratic rights, performing member responsibilities and exerting member control in agricultural primary co-operative societies. At the theoretical level, the analysis gave us an opportunity to examine closely the interaction and tension between social institutions, structures, gender relations and socio-economic performance. As an interesting departure from the WID approach, the analysis brought into focus elements of economic and social structure which located the impetus for change towards democratic practice, member control and equality of men and women alike within the primary co-operative societies as part of change for men and women in the wider context rather than in terms of women as a particular group requiring specific forms of assistance.

At the practical level, the findings bore great significance for creating a self-reliant sustainable development of primary co-operative societies. The significance became more critical considering that women constitute 52% of Uganda's population (Republic of Uganda 1992), provide the bulk of agricultural labor in farm households (UNICEF 1994) and female-headed households constitute 30% of Uganda's households (World Bank 1993). Hence, the question of women exerting control equally with males, exercising their member rights and performing member responsibilities within the primary societies was largely more rational and economic rather than equity-oriented. This has tremendous bearing on creation of self-reliant sustainable development of primary co-operative societies in Uganda.

Figure 1. Conceptual model of the interaction of gender, democratic practice and member control in agricultural primary co-operative societies



1.7 Methodology

The study was designed to be comparative and cross-sectional involving male and female members of agricultural primary co-operative societies, and was conducted in western, central and eastern Uganda, respectively. Northern Uganda was left out because it is insecure due to rebel insurgency.

1.7.1 Selection of Respondents

Two primary societies were randomly selected from each of the district unions of Banyankole Kweterana, East Mengo and Bugisu Co-operative Unions located in western, central and eastern Uganda, respectively. These unions were selected because of their representativeness in agro-ecological, geographic location and crop production pattern of Uganda. Banyankole Kweterana is located in Western Uganda, non-montane and produces Robusta coffee. East Mengo is located in Central Uganda, non-montane and produces coffee and cotton. Bugisu is located in the far Eastern Uganda, montane and produces Arabica coffee. The selected primary societies were Kyabandara and Abateganda in Banyankore Kweterana; Kayunga and Luwero Kezimbira in East Mengo; and Busamaga and Shitulwa in Bugisu. From each selected primary society, 25 male and 25 female members were selected by the systematic sampling technique. All in all, 300 members were selected, half of who were males and half were females. At least three executive committee members of each selected primary society in addition to at least one female (where available) were also interviewed.

1.7.2 Data Collection

Data were collected by three principle methods: personal interviewing using a structured questionnaire for members of primary societies; in-depth interviews for members of the executive committees using an unstructured interview schedule; and re-visit qualitative interviews for 30 male and 30 female members of the primary societies. Respondents who were revisited for qualitative interviews were selected from those who had given more informative responses to open-ended questions during the quantitative data collection phase.

1.7.3 Type of Data Collected

Types of data that were collected included:

- (a) the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the respondents;
- (b) structures of the primary co-operative societies;
- (c) socio-cultural rules and norms governing ownership of means of production, production patterns and relations, and control and marketing of agricultural produce;
- (d) perceived socio-economic activities, responsibilities and capabilities of men and women;
- (e) participation in decision-making in primary societies including attendance of meetings, formulation of rules and regulations, election of

- executive committee members, and making business plans e.g. programmes for buying and selling produce;
- (f) sharing of benefits including bonuses, loans and other benefits and services;
 - (g) participation in sharing roles e.g. in co-ordination of projects and ratio of men to women's business transactions in the societies; and,
 - (h) member control e.g. in demanding accountability, determining amounts of shares to be held by each member and the cost of the shares, influencing activities to be engaged in, and terms of acquisition of resources e.g. loans to the societies and to members, the repayment periods and interest rates etc.

1.7.4 Data Analysis

The qualitative data was entered into computer and analysed by the SPSS. PC. Initially, raw frequencies were generated. Where meaningful inferences were observed, this served as the basis for further bi-variate analyses. The tests of significance of the correlations between variables were the p-values, whereby p-values below 0.00500 gave us a 99% degree of statistical significance and p-values below 0.05000 construed an 85% degree of statistical significance. In a large number of cases, our unit of analysis was the district union because we realized that there were not many differences between primary societies in the same district union. Qualitative data were analysed along the themes of the emerging variables. Broad categories were later developed to differentiate and describe the ideas expressed by the respondents. These categories were further broken down to indicate the direction of democratic practice, number control and equality of the sexes in the primary co-operative societies.

2. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

2.1 Introduction

UCA (1990) describes the overall goal of its co-operative development programme as creation of a self reliant, sustainable development of primary co-operative societies that operate as democratic, member-controlled organizations which are simultaneously viable and competitive business enterprises providing economic and other services to their members, men and women alike. Entailed in democratic practice and member control is "members" exercising of their rights, not least of which is to share in the surplus, take part in the societies' business and policy-making by way of attendance of meetings and, using ones vote and offering oneself for election to office. To this end, the UCA, which is the apex of the co-operative movement in Uganda, has initiated several actions aimed at facilitating the achievement of its co-operative development programme. Key amongst these actions is instilling into primary co-operative societies the prerequisite of having at least one female member on the society's committee.

This was aimed at enhancing democratic practice through increasing women's political and administrative participation in primary co-operative societies. For due to women's subordinate status in society, women were being denied leadership roles in the primary societies. Secondly, male dominance in primary co-operative societies had, prior to UCA initiatives, negated the benefits that accrued to women through their membership of primary societies. Hence, UCA encouraged the initiation of women specific projects in primary societies and joint co-ordination (equal number of males and females) of every project in each primary co-operative society. Furthermore, the rules and regulations that governed primary societies had been discriminatory against women because women were not construed as household-heads or landowners. As a result, membership was open to mostly males. UCA, therefore, undertook to restructure the rules and regulations to become gender neutral, in order to allow women to join in their own right. And in order to enable women participate more actively in the activities of primary societies besides merely swelling the societies' memberships, UCA encouraged the inclusion of gender in the societies' plans. Both males and females alike aimed these initiatives and actions at both strengthening democratic practice and member control within the societies, including sharing of benefits. However, instituting and encouraging these initiatives and actions is not necessarily synonymous with their practice. It was in this regard that this study sought to identify the extent of democratic practice and member control in Uganda's primary co-operative societies.

2.1 Levels of Democratic Practice and Member Control

2.1.1 Democratic Practice

Democratic Practice in primary co-operative societies manifested largely in the form of using one's vote in electing committee members and offering oneself for election to committee office. Overall, 89.7% of the members of primary societies reported that they participated in electing members of their respective societies' committees. However, only 22.3% had ever offered themselves for election to committees. Even then, the majority of those who had ever offered themselves for election contested for positions on sub-committee which dealt with education, social welfare, dispute settling and managing specific projects within societies such as bakeries, selling borehole water and drugs and agricultural produce shops. The key positions on committees, that is, chairperson, secretary and treasurer were reported to be largely contested by influential members who mostly comprised of the founder members, the elderly and the wealthy who owned large tracts of land, made comparably more deliveries, and more paid-up shares and subsequently, were most active in the operations of their respective primary co-operative societies. These findings concur with those of 9(1983), Kyamulesire (1988), Kitandwe (1988) and Mandani (1993) all of whom reported that power in primary societies tended to be captured by the local elite. In Uganda's case, Brett (1970) Mandani (1993), Kyamulesire (1988) and Kitandwe (1988) argued that most societies owed their origins to some of the more wealthy and educated farmers or landowners who were actuated by a desire to progress

economically and to share the obvious profits available from primary co-operative marketing.

Nonetheless, attendance of general meetings was high, reported by 91.2% of the members. Implicitly, democratic practice as evidenced from attendance of general meetings and participation in electing members of committees was high although offering oneself for election onto the crucial positions on committees was low. For the general meeting, consisting of all members is the highest authority of a co-operative society. And any decision taken by the general meeting has to be reached at democratically through the one man-one vote method (Kabuga and Batarinyebwa 1995). That 91.2% of the members attended general meetings regularly was very important because when decisions are reached at during general meetings, they become binding to all members including those who did not attend the meeting or vote in favour of the decisions.

Further aspects of gender focused democratic practice in primary societies were elicited from 6 Treasurers, 5 Committee Members, 4 Chairpersons, and 9 Secretary Managers. Each of the aforementioned members of the executive committees availed data pertaining to their respective societies. As an indicator of gender focused democratic practice, all the primary societies that were investigated had at least one female member on the executive committee. Four societies had one female member each, while two societies had 3 female members. Thus, all the societies selected to participate in the study had fulfilled the requirement set by UCA of having at least one female member on the committee while 33.3% had more than the minimum stipulated number i.e. more than one female on the committee. The societies' rules and regulations were all reportedly gender-neutral, though in most societies, women were yet to be given loans to purchase coffee-the major economic activity in all societies. Implicitly, the rules governing availing loans for coffee purchasing were biased in favour of men. What were constructed to be gender neutrality were: allowing females to become members in primary societies; including at least one female on the executive committees; and, a precondition that to qualify as a member, one had to be both a farmer and not less than 18 years old. Male reluctance to avail women loans to purchase coffee-which is the major business activity in all the societies, attests to males' reluctance to share their power base (loans) with women, for males agreed that women were a lesser credit risk compared to males; when given smaller loans for other purposes e.g. payment of school fees which were in smaller amounts compared to coffee purchasing loans, women were said to pay back more promptly than men. The latter's property was at times attached to force them to pay back.

Only 2 out of the 6 societies had women specific projects. These were: a yeast producing project in Shitulwa primary society situated in Bugisu Co-operative Union; and, brick-making and potato cultivating projects in Kayunga primary society which is under the jurisdiction of East Mengo Co-operative Union. Interestingly, all the primary societies were cognizant of the requirement to initiate women-specific projects stipulated by UCA and some even deceived that

they had initiated them, for instance the Abateganda primary society located in Banyankole Kweterana Co-operative Union. The reasons forwarded for non-initiation of women-specific projects included lack of funds, lack of markets for the projects' products (which led to the collapse of some projects that had earlier been initiated for instance in Kyabandara primary society located in Banyankore Kweterana Co-operative Union), internal squabbles among the women members, especially between the young and the old, whereby the old did not participate, and "disorganization" amongst the women members, implying that women members lacked organizational skills and ability to manage their gender-specific projects.

Joint co-ordination of projects (i.e., each project having at least one female and one male co-operation) was reported in 3 of 6 primary societies that were studied. Various reasons for the absence of joint co-ordination of projects were given. Luwero Kezimbira primary society located in East Mengo Co-operative Union intimated that her water project (selling bore-hole water) was co-coordinated by males only because the project was initiated before UCA set the requirements of joint co-ordination of projects. Following affiliation to the UCA, they could not bring themselves to dissolving the old committee and electing a new one onto which a female could jointly co-ordinate. In Busamaga, located in Bugisu Co-operative Union, the yeast project was not jointly co-project. It was added that there was also fear of men taking over the entire project. Only males coordinated the timber project in Shitulwa also located in Bugisu Co-operative Union because trading in timber was regarded as a "male" business. Some societies reported that forming sub-committees was a new phenomenon, which they were yet to try out, while the other societies reported that executive committee members manned projects only, majority of women were male.

2.1.2 Member Control

Aspects of member control in primary co-operative societies were elicited from both the committees and the general memberships. Amongst the committees, 90.0% reported that their members participated in formulation of their respective societies' rules and regulations. Of those who said that their members never participated in the formulation of rules and regulations, 6.7% were of the view that the co-operative movement formulated the rules and regulations, while 3.3% reported that the committees themselves formulated the rules and regulations.

Alternatively, participation in the formulation of rules and regulations governing primary co-operative societies was reported by 74.8% of the general membership. Amongst district unions, East Mengo (Kayunga and Luwero Kezimbira primary societies) were most active in participation (91.7%), followed by Bugisu (Busamaga and Shitulwa primary societies) of whom 70.5% said they participated, and the least was in Banyankore Kweterana (Kyabandara and Abateganda primary societies) where only 62.2% answered in affirmative when asked about participation ($p = .00491$). Reasons given for non-participation were:

- i.) that rules and regulations were formulated by committees and the co-operative movement said by 11.8%;
- ii.) absenteeism during general meetings in which formulation took place said by 3.4%;
- iii.) busy domestic and other schedules reported by 4.1%;
- iv.) and, poor communication between committee officials and the general memberships, which resulted in failure to attend general meetings, said by 5.9%.

With regard to participation in decision-making 93.3% of the committee officials said that the general members participated. The specific decisions in which members were reported by committee officials to have participated in making include:

- i.) increasing the prices of shares, said by 13.3%;
- ii.) approving budgets and the procedures for issuing and recovering loans, reported by 36.7%;
- iii.) setting the criteria for allowing new members to join the respective societies, reported by 6.7%;
- iv.) while 40.0% of the committee officials said that members participated in formulating the general rules and regulations that governed them (members).

Conversely, 82.7% of the general memberships answered in affirmative when asked whether they participated in making decisions in their societies. Asked about the specific decisions they participated in, 29.1% said all the decisions concerning their respective societies; 21.7% reported the decision binding all members to patronize (sell all their agricultural produce, especially coffee) to their respective societies; 16.7% reported decisions relating to diversifying their respective societies' economic and social activities; 9.3% said they participated in deciding how to spend profits and other financial concerns; while 5.9% participated in reaching the terms and conditions for allowing new members to join their respective societies.

Only 3.3% of the executive committee members were indifferent to including gender in their societies' plans. The majority, 96.7% were supportive, pointing out that including gender in their societies' plans led not only to progress of their respective societies, but also enhanced the meeting of domestic needs. However, 6.7% were of the view that women were constrained by domestic and marital responsibilities while 3.3% argued that women lacked capital, with or without including gender in their societies' plans.

Only 13.3% of the executive committee members reported that they had not included gender in their societies' plans and the multiple reasons were that they were yet to accumulate sufficient funds reported by 13.3%, male reluctance to

include gender said by 10.0%, while 3.3% reported that the women's projects had collapsed due to domestic overloads. Of those who had answered in affirmative with regard to whether they had included gender in their societies plans, half said the gender issues they had included in their plans were equal participation of women in the societies. A third said they had projects for both sexes, 26.7% reported having women as executive committee members, while 16.7% said that they had plans of initiating women's projects though they were yet to do so.

2.2 The Influence of Gender and Social Status

2.2.1 Members' Socio-Demographic and Economic Characteristics

Since gender is socially constructed, initial identification of members' socio-demographic and economic characteristics was crucial. Gender in combination with these characteristics varyingly shapes the following:

- i.) one's entitlements in society;
- ii.) one's level of interaction with others in primary co-operative societies;
- iii.) one's outlook towards society and its people.

and subsequently one's ability to exercise one's democratic rights and member control in agricultural primary co-operative societies. Table 1 overleaf, therefore, shows the socio-demographic and economic characteristics of the members.

Table 1 shows that female members were significantly much younger than their male counterparts. Whereas, over half of the male members were 50 years and above, only 18.6% of the females were over 50 years ($p = .00001$). Implicitly, old male members, majority of whom joined the societies when they were initiated in the late 1950s and early 1970s, dominate the primary societies. On the contrary, given that the majority of females were relatively younger (59.8 % were aged below 41), most were new entrants, following the UCA initiatives that were geared towards increasing the numbers of members of the co-operative movement in general and primary societies in particular. Table 1 further showed that married men were significantly more than their female counterparts ($p = .00000$). Whereas 96.3% of the males were married, females who were married constituted 62.9%. No male member was widowed, yet 13.4% and 10.3% females were separated/divorced and single, respectively.

With regard to length of marriage, males had been married for significantly much longer periods than females ($p = .00009$); 67% percent of the males had been married for more than 20 years compared to 32.8 % of the females. Alternately, 39.3 % of females had been married for 1 - 10 years compared to 16.5% of males. These findings coincide with our earlier remarks about age, for males were significantly much older than females. As for member of children, males had significantly more children than females; 26.2% of the males had more than 10 children compared to 2.2 % of the females, and 54.9% of the females had 1 - 5 children compared to 29.1% ($p = .00000$).

Table 1. Socio-demographic and economic characteristics of members, by gender

| Socio-demographic and economic characteristics | Gender | |
|--|----------|----------|
| | Male | Female |
| Age | % | % |
| Below 20 | 0.9 | 3.1 |
| 20 - 30 | 6.5 | 26.8 |
| 31 - 40 | 14.0 | 29.9 |
| 41 - 50 | 24.3 | 21.6 |
| 50+ | 54.2 | 18.6 |
| Marital status | | |
| Single | 2.8 | 10.3 |
| Married | 96.3 | 62.9 |
| Separated/divorced | 0.9 | 13.4 |
| Widowed | - | 13.4 |
| Length of marriage (years) | | |
| 1 - 10 | 16.5 | 39.3 |
| 11 - 20 | 16.5 | 27.9 |
| 21+ | 67.0 | 32.8 |
| Number of children | | |
| 1 - 5 | 29.1 | 54.9 |
| 6 - 10 | 44.7 | 56.3 |
| 11+ | 26.2 | 2.2 |
| Level of education attained | | |
| None | 16.8 | 24.0 |
| Primary | 53.3 | 56.3 |
| Secondary | 27.1 | 16.7 |
| HSC | 0.9 | 1.0 |
| Post-secondary | 1.9 | 2.1 |
| Resources owned | | |
| Land | 96.3 | 89.7 |
| Animals | 74.8 | 70.1 |
| Rental houses | 2.8 | 8.2 |
| Transport utilities | 4.7 | 3.1 |
| Total % | 100 | 100 |
| Total (n) | 155 | 145 |

Note: Total % for resources owned is more than 100 due to multiple responses.

Interestingly, there were no statistically significant differences in the level of education attained between males and females. ($p = .42505$). Probably, this was because of the near occupational homogeneity of the members of primary societies. Peasant farming accounted for 89.2% of the respondents while farmers-cum-formal sector workers e.g. agricultural assistants, teachers and nurses constituted only 5.9%. The rest doubled as farmers and informal sector workers e.g., as traders and students.

2.2.2 Gender, Social Status and Members' Democratic Practice in Primary Co-operative Societies

As earlier indicated, both males and females participated in overwhelmingly large proportions (89.7%) in electing committee members of their respective societies and both gender attended general meetings. However, only 22.3% of the members interviewed had ever offered themselves for election to committees. Even amongst this category, the gender differences were minimal, for males constituted 11.9% while females were 10.4%. Members of higher social status dominated the key positions of chairperson, secretary and treasurer. These are the elderly, the wealthy who owned large tracts of land, more paid shares and who simultaneously made or deliveries to their respective societies. Thus, social status played a major role in influencing members' capacity to offer themselves for election into committees.

Qualitative data obtained from committees further re-enforced these findings, when 83.3% of the committee officials interviewed reported that the wealthy were most keen to participate in the affairs of their respective societies because the returns to their participation were much higher than those of the less wealthy. For example, due to the former higher paid shares, they received larger bonuses. And because they made more deliveries, they also received higher profits, hence it were much in their interest if they contested for the key positions of their respective societies' committees for they would have personal interests in guiding the operations of their societies profitably. Interestingly, in-depth discussions with members of primary societies concurred with the committee member's assertions when they too reported that it was advantageous to primary societies to have wealthy men on committees. For wealthy men "would put in more time and effort in running the affairs of the societies since they had bigger stakes in the societies' growth than the less wealthy members". Hence, wealthy members were to be more committed to their respective primary societies, which made them the more eligible members to be elected onto the key positions onto committees.

2.2.3 Gender, Social Status and Members' Control in Primary Co-operative Societies

Of the 74.8% members who reported participating in the formulation of rules and regulations governing their respective societies, males constituted 40.6%, while females were 34.2%. The difference was statistically not significant. Similarly, there were no statistically significant differences amongst age groups, educational levels attained, marital status, length of marriage, number of children and assets

owned with respect to participation in formulation of rules and regulations governing primary societies. However, of the 82.7% members who said that they participated in making decisions within their societies, males were 47.0%, while females constituted 35.7% ($p = .00062$), indicating that women who participated in decision-making were significantly fewer than men. Further, younger members participated less in making decisions compared to older members; 56.3 % of the members who reportedly participated in decision-making were aged 40 and above, compared to 26.4% of their counterparts, who were aged below 40 ($p = .00000$). Since old age is associated with wisdom higher social status is accorded to older persons in rural communities. It is, therefore, most probable that older members were more listened to than younger members when important issues were being discussed, thus accounting for the high proportion of older persons in decision-making.

Furthermore, given the higher social status associated with old age, elder members of primary co-operative societies could be more confident than their younger counterparts, thus enabling them to participate more actively in decision-making compared to the younger members. Considering that 78.5% of the male members were above 40 years compared to 40.2% of female members. It is then less surprising that females who participated in decision-making were significantly fewer than males. Gender interacted with age and subsequently social status in influencing participation in decision- making.

2.2.4 Gender, Social Status and Members' Patronage and Receipt of Benefits in Primary Societies

Members of primary co-operative societies are obligated to carry out their responsibilities which include supporting their respective societies in every way possible, either by non-stinted and honest work or patronage, especially in producer societies (Russel 1988). In turn, they have the right to enjoy all the benefits accruing from their membership in their respective societies. Patronage, which is also an indicator of participation, (active or inactive) was calculated based on the number of kilograms of coffee delivered to primary societies over the 6 months preceding the period this data collection was undertaken i.e. May and June 1998. Findings of the study revealed that the ratio of female to male business transactions (number of deliveries) ranged from 1:3 to 1:5 with the average being 1:6 denoting that women members were much less active in participating in their respective primary society business transactions by way of patronage. Several reasons were forwarded for females' lesser participation in their respective primary societies' business transaction. Foremost was that fewer women owned coffee fields in their own right. Coffee was regarded as a male crop; hence the control and ownership were mostly vested in males. It was largely the widows and the divorced/separated females who were reported to own and control coffee fields. Secondly, females were still denied substantial loans by their respective primary societies to purchase coffee from villages for sale to their primary Societies, yet males could obtain loans, which they used to purchase coffee, hence patronize their primary societies more often. Third, it was

mentioned that purchasing coffee from farmers involved a lot of mobility. For farmer do not pick and dry coffee in large quantities. Hence one farmer may have a few kilograms at a particular time. Thus, purchasing about 200 kilograms involves moving beyond one's village or residence to several other villages, which few women could manage to do on a regular basis due to domestic chores relating to home maintenance, child-care and cultivating for home consumption.

Overall, 12.7% of the members of primary societies made one delivery to their respective societies in a year, 44.7% delivered twice a year, 22.3% delivered thrice, while 20.3% delivered four or more times in a year. As already mentioned, males made significantly more deliveries to their respective primary societies than females as shown in table 2.

Table 2. Annual number of deliveries to primary societies, by gender

| Number of deliveries | Gender | |
|----------------------|----------|------------|
| | Male (%) | Female (%) |
| Once | 6.8 | 19.1 |
| Twice | 41.7 | 47.9 |
| Thrice | 28.2 | 16.0 |
| Four or more times | 23.3 | 17.0 |
| Total % | 100 | 100 |
| Total (n) | 155 | 145 |

Note: $p = .01442$.

Further, primary co-operative societies in Bugisu Co-operative Union made significantly more deliveries than the primary societies in the other district unions as indicated in table 3.

This was because unlike in Mukono and Luwero districts, which are covered by East Mengo, and Mbarara, Bushenyi, and Ntungamo districts covered by Banyankole Kweterana, in Mbale district covered by Bugisu Co-operative Union, almost every household cultivates coffee. Coffee was introduced in Mbale district in 1910, much earlier than in any other district in Uganda. Coffee production was embraced much more readily by the peasant farmers in the district than farmers in other districts. Further, Bugisu Co-operative Union was the only Union, which was authorized to export coffee during the 1960s, when the government-owned Coffee Marketing Board (CMB) was the sole purchaser and exporter in the rest of the country. Although the license to export coffee was cancelled in the late 1960s, coffee farmers in Bugisu had already reaped higher returns from their co-

operative membership compared to the rest of the coffee farmers in Uganda. Bugisu Co-operative Union was offering better prices than the government-owned CMB. This further encouraged the cultivation of coffee in Mbale district.

Table 3. Annual number of deliveries to primary societies, by district unions

| Number of deliveries | East Mengo (%) | Bugisu (%) | Banyankol Kweterena (%) |
|----------------------|----------------|------------|-------------------------|
| Once | 24.0 | 4.0 | 8.0 |
| Twice | 43.0 | 14.0 | 67.0 |
| Thrice | 19.0 | 30.0 | 15.0 |
| Four or more times | 14.0 | 52.0 | 10.0 |
| Total % | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Total (n) | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Note: $p = .00000$.

When coffee prices plummeted in the 1970s and 1980s due to government payment of low prices which led farmers to uproot their coffee fields and plant other crops instead, fewer farmers in Mbale district abandoned their coffee fields compared to other farmers in the rest of coffee producing areas in Uganda. The farmers in Mbale found memories of the returns from coffee they had received during the 1960s. Therefore, with the liberalization of crop marketing, which broke the monopoly of CMB in the early 1990s and enhanced the process of coffee, farmers in Mbale had more coffee to sell than farmers in other coffee producing regions. There were a significantly higher number of annual deliveries to primary societies in Bugisu compared to those in East Mengo and Banyankore Kweterana Co-operative Unions.

With regard to payment for the deliveries, 94.6% of the respondents said they were paid promptly, and 84.7% reported that their earnings had improved. However, of those whose earnings had improved, 47.5% were males, while 37.2% were females ($p = .00499$). The statistical significance in males higher reporting of improved earnings compared to females arose largely from males' higher number of deliveries made to the primary societies. For earnings were positively correlated with number of deliveries. Amongst primary societies, improved earnings were almost similarly reported; Banyankole Kweterena has 25% reporting improved earnings, while Bugisy had 23.5% and East Mengo had 20.0%. This was attributed to the liberalization of the co-operative movement, which enabled the primary societies to sell their products competitively to any buyer(s) who offered the highest prices. Before liberalization, the government, which was the sole buyer, offered low prices and was not paying promptly.

With respect to benefits obtained from their memberships, 87.3% of respondents reported that there were other benefits besides prompt payment and improved earnings that attracted them to maintain membership in their societies. The benefits included obtaining credit 43.1%, obtaining implements and or supplies reported by 19.0%, sharing of bonuses reported by 9.3%, receiving training in various fields reported by 7.8%, membership identity or group cohesion reported by 21.6%, and prompt payment, reported by 16.2%. There were no statistically significant gender differences with regard to type of benefits received from primary societies. However, the differences among primary societies were statistically significant. For example, primary societies in Bugisu accounted for 17.6% of the 19.6% who reported obtaining implements and/or supplies ($p = .00000$). Further, primary societies in Bugisu accounted for 6.3% of the 9.3% who reported receiving bonuses ($p = .00006$), while societies in East Meno accounted for over half of those who reported receiving prompt payment as a benefit that attracted them to maintain membership in the societies ($p = .00002$).

2.3 Gendered Social Structures, Processes and Relations in Agricultural Primary Co-operative Societies

Co-operative societies are ideally founded on, and guided by principles of democratic practice, member control and equality of all members. However, they often mirror existing power and ideological (including gender ideology) structures and prevailing authority systems, which lead to manipulation, inequality in distribution of benefits and subsequently greater disillusion for the less powerful and socio-economically disadvantaged members. Particularly applicable to this category are females who are not only relatively new entrants into the societies, but whose socio-economic behaviour and opportunities are also constrained by social conventions within the matrix of “male”-dominated social relations, social processes and structures in the household and wider socio-economy. The gender construed values, traditions, customs, habits, norms and beliefs associated with female and male specific social and economic roles, activities, responsibilities and capabilities are likely to be replicated in the co-operative societies more so to the detriment of females practicing their democratic rights, and exerting their member control. This tends to affect the extent to which they may have access to benefits generated in their societies. It was in this context, therefore, that the study attempted to identify the prevailing gender ideologies in primary societies. The ideologies were measured along the perceived biological, social and economic roles of males and females and the perceived capabilities of each gender.

2.3.1 Members' Perceived Biological and Socio-Economic Roles of Men

Only 19.1% of the respondents reported procreation as the biological role of men. Of these, 10.7% were male, while 8.4% were female. Further, of those who reported procreation as a biological role of men, 1.9% was from societies in Banyankore Kweterana, 6.8% belonged to Bugisu, and 0.9% was from societies in East Meno. Alternatively, 53.4% of members perceived farming as a biological role of men, 34.8% linked men's biological roles to meeting family

needs, while 25.0% associated men's biological roles with management of household. Paradoxically, the actual socio-economic roles of men were given lesser prominence. For instance, farming was reported as men's socio-economic role by only 21.5%, generating an income by 9.3%, management of household by 20.5% and rendering community services by 23.5%. However, responsibility for supporting family members i.e. wife and children ranked high, being reported by 54.9%. Perception of farming, family maintenance, management of household and meeting family needs as biological role of men by the male and female members of the primary co-operative societies attests to the engendered ness of the social structure within which the societies are located. The social-structure vests social power in the masculine gender to engage in economic activities like farming and income-generation and social roles like leadership as symbol of a socially successful male, husband and, or, father. The social-structure concretises the vesting of social power to engage in economic activities on to males by attributing it to biological determinism which, therefore, leaves no room for challenge, questioning and by proxy, change. Simultaneously 54.9% of the members reported responsibility for supporting family members i.e. wife and children. Men's social role highlights the dependent status of females on males within the socio-economic structure. For the masculine, social identity is re-enforced by the dependent status of females. This was replicated in primary co-operative societies whereby leadership was largely vested in males, albeit the wealthy and elderly ones.

Whereas there were no significant differences between male and female perception of the social role of men, there were significant differences amongst primary societies. Of those who reported that farming was a men's socio-economic role, 15.3% were from societies in Bugisu. Societies in East Mengo and Banyankole Kweterana had 2.9% each, reporting farming as a socio-economic role of men ($p=.00000$). Societies in Bugisu ranked highest (44%) amongst those who reported that generating an income was men's socio-economic role ($p=.02960$), and further ranked highest (9.3%) amongst those who reported management of household ($p=.00180$). However, societies in Banyankole Kweterana comprised 25.0% of those who were of the view that responsibility for supporting family members was a men's social role ($p=.00000$).

2.3.2 Members' Perceived Biological and Socio-economic Roles of Women

With regard to the known biological roles of women, reproduction was reported by 41.1%, of whom 18.1% were males and 23.0% were females. And of those who reported reproduction, 10.7% were from Banyankole Kweterana, 10.2% were from Bugisu, while East Mengo accounted for only 3.9%. Conversely, 27.4% of the members held that child-care was a biological role, 49.0% considered home maintenance as a women's biological role, farming was reported by 32.3%, while marital obligations were construed as women's biological roles by 8.3%. Interestingly, marital obligations as part of women's social roles were reported by only 3.9%, though home maintenance was reported by 57.4%. Child-care was mentioned by 36.3%, farming by 19.1% and rendering

community services by 21.1%. There were no significant differences between males' and females' perceptions of what constituted women's socio-economic roles. However, differences amongst primary societies were statistically significant. Of those who reported home maintenance as a women's social role, primary societies in East Mengo and Banyankole Kweterana scored highest with 18.1% each. However, primary societies in Bugisu most reported farming as a women's socio-economic role (13.7%), while the rest scored 1.9% each ($p=.00000$). Rendering community services as part of the social roles of women was reported by 4.9% in Bugisu, while the societies in the other unions had none reporting community services ($p=.00000$).

2.3.3 Members' Perceived Socio-Economic Capabilities of Men and Women

Considering the poor perception of men's and women's biological roles, it was not surprising to note that 79.8% of members believed that women behaved differently from men because they are biologically different. There were no significant differences between men and women members, and amongst primary societies with respect to the view. Reasons given for the view included women's physical inferiority reported by 30.9% of which 21.0% were male and 9.9% were females ($p=.01577$). Implicitly, women who perceived themselves as physically inferior to men were significantly fewer than the men who considered themselves physically superior to women. Similarly, much fewer women perceived their physical inferiority as the cause for their behaving differently from men, compared to their male counterparts.

Nonetheless, it was important to note the presence in primary societies of "male physical superiority" and "female physical inferiority" perceptions which are part of the wider social structure that regards males as superior and females as inferior in most aspects of life. Members, who linked women's specific roles to biological differences between men and women thereby accounting for differences in the behaviours of the sexes, were 26.5%. Of these, 9.8% were males, while 16.7% were females ($p=.00817$). Further, women's physical inferiority was reported by 8.3% and 5.8% by societies in Banyankole Kweterana and Bugisu, respectively. Women's physical inferiority was least linked to biological differences and subsequently behavioural differences between men and women in Bugisu i.e. 1.9% ($p=.00000$).

Evidently, there was a general failure to differentiate between biological and social roles of the sexes, and women's biological role of reproduction was more accurately reported than men's biological role of procreation, i.e., 41.1% compared to 19.1%, respectively. Probably, this is because women's reproductive role is more evident considering the nine months of pregnancy they undergo, most of which is visible even to the most casual observer. However, it was interesting to note that although both men and women largely failed to differentiate between biological and social roles and argued that women behaved differently from men because of biological differences, women's physical inferiority was less reported by females compared to men as a biological related constraint to behaviour. Instead, women attributed the differences in behaviour to

gender specific female roles like child-care and home maintenance which though are social in nature, are linked to women's reproductive roles as mothers.

Asked whether women behaved differently from men because they have different social roles, 69.0% answered in affirmative. Of these, 30.8% were males, while females were 38.2% ($p=.00381$). There were no statistically significant differences amongst primary societies. However, when asked whether women were as capable as men in undertaking economic activities, 73.3% answered in affirmative and there were not statistically significant differences between male and female members' responses, and amongst primary societies. Further, 82.6% of the members accented that women were as capable as men in undertaking social activities and there were no statistically significant differences between male and female responses, and amongst primary societies.

2.3.4 Members' Attitudes toward Including Gender in the Plans and Programs of Primary Co-operative Societies

Attitudes toward including gender in the societies' plans and programs were positive, with 32.4% reporting that including gender in the societies' plans increased number in the societies' membership, 16.7% saying that it improved homes socio-economically and 43.1% saying that it helped improve women's economic status. Only 12.7% were against the idea of including gender in their societies' plans and programmes holding the opinion that it should not be encouraged. Given the high support for including gender in the societies' plans, it was not surprising that 94.1% reported that they had included gender issues in their societies' plans. The gender issues which had been included in the societies' plans were: encouraging women to offer themselves for election into executive committees, said by 13.7%; and, planned women's projects, reported by 21.6%. There were no statistically significant differences between men and women with regard to type of gender issues that had been included in the societies' plans.

2.3.5 Committees' Perceived Biological and Social Roles of Men and Women

Only 30.0% of the executive committee members of primary societies reported procreation as a biological role of males. Instead, social roles were much more construed as biological roles; 66.7% reported meeting parental and marital obligations as the biological role of men, 10.0% considered rendering community services as a biological role, ownership of a home was reported by 36.7%, while farming and/or cattle rearing were perceived as biological roles by 30.0%. Even trading in coffee was considered a male biological role by 20.0%. Interestingly, when asked about male social roles, the responses did not differ significantly from those relating to biological roles; meeting parental and marital obligations was reported by 73.3%, rendering community services was said by 46.7% farming was construed by 56.7%, engaging in trade was reported by 26.7%, and obtaining formal sector employment was said by 16.7%.

However, reproduction as a female biological role was perceived by more respondents, (43.3%, compared to 30.0% who reported procreation as a male biological role), although women's social roles were also reported as biological

roles. For example, 53.3% thought home maintenance was a female biological role, child-care was reported by 36.7%, rendering community services was said by 16.7%, while marital obligations, were figured as women's biological roles by 23.3%. Farming was reported by 43.3% and picking coffee by 56.7%. Employment in the formal sector was considered as a female biological role by 36.7%. Asked about female social roles, the following scores were given: home maintenance 56.7%, child-care 50.0%, farming 56.7%, marital obligations 10.0%, encouraging gender consciousness 20.0%, providing community services 26.7%, employment in the formal sector 10.0%, and trading, 6.7%. Evident in the confusion shrouding the distinction between biological and social roles of men and women is the cultural representation of gender. Masculinity and femininity were understood as the outcome of cultural ideologies, rather than of inherent qualities or physiology. Thus, the social construction of male and female gender was more powerfully reinforced by the social roles and activities that both define and are defined by men and women, and less by their biological roles.

Subsequently, 76.7% of the executive committee members were of the view that women behaved differently from men because of biological differences between the two sexes. The reasons forwarded for the perception were that the males were culturally superior reported by 41.7%, women were biologically weaker said by 24.0%, and that women's domestic roles constrained them, reported by 11.0%. Implicit in the reasons forwarded above is that culture rather than biological differences shaped most of the perceptions regarding gender. Hence, the cultural representation of the sexes, the social construction of the gender identity - pre-determined the behaviour and capabilities of women, though this was couched in biological differences, which took on cultural interpretations.

Further, 66.7% reported that women behaved differently from men because they had different social roles. However, 90.0% thought that women were as capable as men in undertaking economic activities. Sixty percent of the primary society committees further contended that women were as capable as men in undertaking social activities. Amongst the social activities in which women were considered less capable than men, leadership reported by 20%, generating income for family maintenance said by 6.7%, engaging in construction/physically strenuous activities said by 10.0%, and engaging in commercial farming reported by 13.3%. Reasons as to why women were considered less capable than men in undertaking these social activities were that women were physically weaker reported by 16.7%, women were biologically handicapped (especially by pregnancies) said by 6.6%, women's lack of capital was reported by 6.7%, while 9.7% argued that women's socio-economic dependence on men had led to their (women's) lack of interest in those social activities. Once again, notions of male superior social power (actual or assumed) to engage in social activities resurfaced this time amongst members of the executive committees. It is interesting to note that of the 4.0% who had said that women were not as capable as men in undertaking social activities, only half mentioned an actual social role i.e. leadership. The rest equated economic activities to social roles indicating that women's participation

in economic activities was sub-consciously downplayed, in part due to their perceived inferior economic power.

2.4 The Interaction of Gender and Other Socio-Institutional and Structural Phenomena

The interaction of gender and other socio-institutional and structural phenomena, especially age and wealth, in shaping economic behaviour and opportunities relating to number of deliveries made to primary societies, promote payment and improved earnings were earlier discussed in sub-section 2.3.4 sub-titled *Gender, Social Status and Member patronage and Receipt of Benefits in Primary Societies*. Below, we examine the interaction of gender and other socio-institutional phenomena in shaping other aspects of economic behaviour and opportunities in agricultural primary co-operative societies.

2.4.1 Influence on Increasing the Number of Shares Held by Members in Primary Societies

Asked whether the number of shares held in their respective societies had increased over the last 3 years, 65.0% of males and 18.0% of female members answered in affirmative ($p=.00008$). Reasons cited for not having increased the number of paid-up shares varied between males and females as shown in table 4.

Table 4. Reasons for members' not having increased their number of shares, by gender

| Reasons | Gender | |
|--|----------|------------|
| | Male (%) | Female (%) |
| Had not yet mobilized sufficient savings | 5.6 | 50.0 |
| Low profits | 16.9 | 23.7 |
| Not interested | 12.5 | 8.3 |
| Not applicable | 65.0 | 18.0 |
| Total % | 100 | 100 |
| Total (n) | 155 | 145 |

Note: $p=.00428$.

Evident in table 4 is that half of the female respondents had not mobilized sufficient savings to enable them to purchase more shares in their respective primary co-operative societies compared to only 5.6% of males. Similarly, 23.7% of the female members attributed their inability to increase their shares to low profits compared to 16.9% of their male counterparts. Interestingly only 8.3% of the female members expressed disinterest in increasing the number of their shares

compared to 12.5% of males. Female members inability to mobilize sufficient savings and their (female members) reporting of low profits is largely attributable to the low level of deliveries made to their respective societies. For the fewer deliveries made compared to the males in turn determined the profits generated and subsequently, the ability to mobilize savings from the profits made. And it was from the savings that were “banked” with their primary societies that funds for purchasing more shares were deducted because mobilizing savings through the primary societies was the easiest and surest way of accumulating funds amongst these groups of peasant farmers.

There were further variations amongst members of different marital status with respect to reasons as to why they had not increased the number of their shares in the preceding one year. This is illustrated in table 5.

Table 5. Reasons for members not having increased the number of shares, by marital status

| Reasons | Marital status | | | |
|--|----------------|-------------|----------------------------|-------------|
| | Single (%) | Married (%) | Divorced/ Separated (%) | Widowed (%) |
| Had not yet mobilized sufficient savings | 10.5 | 32.3 | - | 10.0 |
| Low profits | 26.2 | 19.5 | 25.0 | 15.0 |
| Not interested | 26.3 | 6.6 | 30.0 | 20.0 |
| Not applicable | 36.8 | 41.6 | 45.0 | 55.0 |
| Total % | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Total (n) | 19 | 241 | 20 | 20 |

Note: $p = .03181$.

Implicit in table 5 is that, whereas most of the married respondents reported having not yet mobilized sufficient savings, they simultaneously reported low profits and disinterest in increasing the number of shares held in their respective societies. Probably, the demands on profits made by domestic requirements such as school fees, health services and other spouses' and children's needs consumed a greater proportion of the profits to allow for accumulation of savings from which more share capital could be raised. However, only 6.6% of those married attributed lack of interest to their not having increased their shares compared to 26.3% of the single, 30.0% of the divorced/separated and 20.0% of the widowed shows that those who are married had a higher stake in their membership of primary societies than members of other social groups. Membership in the primary societies enables the married to meet more of their marital and

reproductive demands regardless of whether they had increased their share capital. Further, evidence to this is the fact that it was the married members who least mentioned low profits as the reason for having not increased their share capital indicating that their membership was conceived most profitable compared to the single, divorced/separated and the widowed.

Furthermore, there were variations amongst district unions with respect to reasons as to why there was no increase in the number of members' shares. This is shown in table 6.

Table 6. Reasons for members' not having increased the number of shares, by district union

| Reasons | District Union | | |
|--|----------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| | Bugisu (%) | East Mengo (%) | Banyankore Kweterana (%) |
| Had not yet mobilized sufficient savings | 21.0 | 37.0 | 24.0 |
| Low profits | 5.0 | 13.0 | 42.0 |
| Not interested | 6.0 | 9.0 | 16.0 |
| Not applicable | 68.0 | 41.0 | 18.0 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Total (n) | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Note: $p = .00014$.

Table 6 indicates that most members (68.0%) of the primary societies in Bugisu Co-operative Union had increased the number of their shares. This compares with 41.0% in East Mengo and only 18.0% in Banyankore Kweterana. This was attributed to the high turnover of co-operative society transactions in Bugisu. Table 3 had earlier shown that 82.0% of the members of primary societies in Bugisu made 3 or more deliveries annually to their respective societies compared to only 33.0% in East Mengo and 25.0% in Banyankore Kweterana.

Given the high business turnover, it was not surprising that only 5.0% in Bugisu attributed their inability to increase their shares to low profits, compared to 13.0% in East Mengo and 42.0% in Banyankore Kweterana. Members of Primary societies in Bugisu further mentioned inability to mobilize savings i.e. 21.0% compared to 37.0% in East Mengo and 24.0% in Banyankore Kweterana.

2.4.2 Influence on Receipt of Bonuses in Primary Societies

With regard to receipt of bonuses, 42.6% of males reported having received in the preceding one year, compared to only 11.8% of females ($p=.00000$). Amongst district unions, most members in primary societies in Bugisu reported receiving bonuses (44.0%) compared to 27.0% in East Mengo and 12.0% in Banyankole Kweterana ($p=.00472$). The gender and district union variations were closely linked to number of paid-up shares; as a mechanism of accumulating capital, primary societies set a specified number of shares that must be paid up before members were eligible for receiving bonuses. For bonuses are profits accumulated by primary societies from investing the funds generated in form of share capital in the societies' business transactions. Hence, members who had paid-up to, or above the specified shares were entitled to receiving bonuses. And suffice to note that it was mostly males and members in primary societies in Bugisu Co-operative union who reported that they had increased the number of shares held in their respective societies in the preceding one year. Nonetheless, it is important to further note that the gender and district union proportions that reported having received bonuses were lower than those that reported having increased the number of shares held in the preceding one year. This was because some societies did not give out bonuses, having agreed at their general meetings to re-invest the bonuses in order to raise more operating capital.

2.4.3 Influence on Receipt of Loans in Primary Co-operative Societies

The number of males who had obtained loans from their respective primary societies was almost double (78.0%) the proportion of females 39.3% ($p=.00000$). Amongst district unions, receipt of loans was most reported in Bugisu (89.0%), followed by 54.0% in East Mengo and 35.0% in Banyankole Kweterana ($p=.00009$). Whereas there were no statistically significant differences between males' and females' reporting of receipt of loans in the primary societies in Bugisu, the gender differences in East Mengo and Banyankole Kweterana were statistically significant. This is illustrated in table 7.

Table 7. Receipt of loans in primary societies, by district union and by gender

| Received | Bugisu | | East Mengo | | Banyankore Kweterana | |
|-----------|----------|------------|------------|------------|----------------------|------------|
| | Male (%) | Female (%) | Male (%) | Female (%) | Male (%) | Female (%) |
| Yes | 88.0 | 90.0 | 68.0 | 40.0 | 50.0 | 20.0 |
| No | 12.0 | 10.0 | 32.0 | 60.0 | 50.0 | 80.0 |
| Total % | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Total (n) | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 |
| | p=.84291 | | p=.00036 | | p=.00004 | |

More females than males significantly attributed their not having received loans (a key economic opportunity in primary societies) from their respective societies to having not yet applied for the loans and for those who had applied, to having had their applications turned down. An almost equal number of males and females reported that their respective primary societies were not giving loans. This is indicated in table 8.

Table 8. Reasons why fewer females than males had obtained loans from their respective primary societies

| Reasons | Gender | |
|------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| | Males (%) | Females (%) |
| Application was turned down | 2.0 | 15.6 |
| Had not yet applied | 5.2 | 29.4 |
| Society was not giving loans | 14.8 | 15.7 |
| Not applicable | 78.0 | 39.3 |
| Total % | 100 | 100 |
| Total (n) | 155 | 145 |

Note: p= .00000.

Data desegregation by district union and gender showed that more females than males in Banyankore Kweterana attributed their not having received loans due to their applications not having been honoured. More females than males in both

East Mengo and Banyankore Kweterana said that they had not yet applied. Table 9 highlights the gender and district union variations.

Table 9. Reasons why some members of primary co-operative societies had not received loans from their respective societies, by district union and by gender

| Gender reasons | Bugisu | | East Mengo | | Banyankore Kweterana | |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-------------|------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------|
| | Males (%) | Females (%) | Males (%) | Females (%) | Males (%) | Females (%) |
| My application was turned down | - | - | 9.0 | 7.0 | 10.0 | 26.0 |
| Had not yet applied | 12.0 | 10.0 | 9.0 | 29.0 | 15.0 | 27.0 |
| My society was not giving loans | - | - | 14.0 | 24.0 | 25.0 | 27.0 |
| Not applicable | 88.0 | 90.0 | 68.0 | 40.0 | 50.0 | 20.0 |
| Total % | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Total (n) | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 |
| | p=.84291 | | p=.00436 | | p=.00000 | |

Nonetheless, all respondents who had received loans from their respective primary societies said that the loans had been useful. Loans received were used to purchase coffee from farmers for sale to the members' respective primary societies at a profit, to purchase seedlings of cloned coffee for planting, payment of school fees for children and in meeting other domestic requirements. Further, 94.6% had repaid back the loans received with 82.1% saying that they repaid back within the required and specified time period which ranged between 3 and 12 months depending on the amount, purpose of loan and rules governing loan repayment in different primary societies.

2.4.4 Influence on Member Patronage and Other Economic Behaviour in Primary Societies

Only 9.1% of the respondents reported that they did not always patronize their societies, for they sometimes sold their coffee and other agricultural produce to other societies or agents of buyers. Prompt payment and higher prices offered by societies other than their own and by the agents of other buyers were cited as the major reasons why this minority did not always patronize their societies. However, since the liberalization of the co-operative movement and by proxy, the

primary societies, most societies are operating as profitable business enterprises offering equally high prices in the generally competitive liberalized economic environment. That is why 90.9% of the respondents reported that they always did patronize their respective societies.

Asked whether their spouses/male-kin were aware of the female-respondents' membership in primary societies, 92.0% of the females answered in affirmative. Further, only 7.0% reported that their spouses and male - kin discouraged them from participating in the activities of primary societies. Alternately, 68.0% of the females said that their spouses/male - kin were supportive of their membership in primary societies, while 25.0% reported that their spouses/male - kin were indifferent. Implicitly, male resistance to female participation in primary societies was minimal.

2.5 Implications for Creating Self-reliant and Sustainable Primary Co-operative Societies

As a grassroots/peasant membership organization the creation of a self-reliant and sustainable development of agricultural primary co-operative societies required the societies to be responsible to the need and aspirations of all members. Secondly, there is need for all members to feel ownership of their societies, and as stake holders feel obligated to undertake their responsibilities within their societies and further collectively shape the societies' leadership, goals, plans, programmes and activities. The framework for creation of a self-reliant sustainable development of primary co-operative societies exists in the form of rules and regulations espousing democratic practice, members control and equitable access to benefits by all members, male and female alike. However, the structural set-up in the societies and the socio-institutional environment within which primary societies are located may pose obstacles, particularly in exerting member control and in sharing of benefits, especially loans and bonuses, which are the major economic opportunities in the societies.

Although the "one member one vote" system in primary societies and the vesting of power in the general assembly (consisting of all members) as the highest decision-making authority in the societies, portrays democratic practice and member control, respectively, the tacit power structures in the societies influenced the degree of exercising democratic practice and member control. For instance, the influential leadership positions of chairperson, treasurer and secretary in all the societies were reportedly a preserve of the elderly, wealthy and male founder members. Only 22.3% of the members had ever offered themselves for election and the majority offered themselves for election on sub-committees, yet 89.7% said they participated in electing executive committees. The elderly and wealthy members derived their influence and power from having more paid-up shares, making more deliveries and having been members of their respective societies for decades. Whereas there were no complaints amongst the members with respect to monopolizing executive leadership positions by the elderly, the wealthy, and male - founder members (actually the membership appeared to support the status quo), there is a danger to continuity/sustainability

of primary societies if younger members are not groomed early enough to take over leadership from the elderly members.

Secondly, there is a problem of personality cults emerging in primary societies with the societies successes and, or, failures being attributed to the elderly, wealthy, male groups instead of the general memberships. This further threatens the creation of a self-reliant sustainable development of primary societies. Thirdly, there is a danger of the elderly, wealthy, male-founder members taking over the decision-making machinery in primary societies. Although 82.7% of the general membership reported participating in decision-making, 56.3% were aged 40 and above compared to only 26.4% who were aged below 40. Females participated significantly lesser in decision-making than the males. As a result, it is safer to argue that a large proportion of the primary societies' activities and programmes were formulated and guided by the elderly, wealthy, male-founder groups instead of the entire memberships. Given that rural communities from which memberships of primary societies are drawn are stratified, sometimes visibly, but often in a suitable manner along gender and social status differences, these differences were cropping up in primary societies to the detriment of creating a self-reliant sustainable development of primary societies that are member-cantered. Mayoux (1988) referred to the replication of societal socio-institutional and structural set-up in the primary societies. Mayoux noted that the very issue of co-operation itself and how benefits can be distributed equitably, without causing resentment on the part of those who put in most effort, skills and resources (in this case the elderly, wealthy, male-founder groups), is an extremely contentious one. Mayoux added that this problem is acute where there are pre-existing social and economic inequalities amongst members, though it poses serious problems for sustainability of primary societies for it is not challenged by the entire membership who have accepted the status quo. In order to break-up the monopoly of leadership positions in primary co-operative societies, a by-law could be passed that restricts members to holding leadership positions for only two terms of not more than three years each.

Although the majority of members and executive committees of primary societies reported that females were as capable as males in undertaking economic and social activities, the majority simultaneously held the view that females behaved differently from males because of physiological differences. It was further held that females were physically and socio-economically inferior to males, especially with respect to executing leadership roles, generating income and engaging in commercial farming activities. It is probably because of these beliefs that fewer females than males had been availed loans for purchasing coffee for sale to primary societies, because even the coffee business was construed by one-fifth of the respondents as a male activity. Thus, the socio-institutional environment in the Ugandan rural communities in which the primary societies are located bestowed an inferior status on females which was replicated in the primary societies to the detriment of females' receipt of loan regardless of their being considered as capable as men in undertaking economic activities and being perceived as lesser credit risks. Interestingly, in primary societies under Bugisu

Co-operative Union, as many men as women had received loans, implying that the socio-institutional environment was more supportive to all members than was the case in primary societies under East Mengo and Banyankore Kweterana Co-operative Unions. The supportive socio-institutional environment in Bugisu is attributable to the long history of cultivating coffee, of receiving higher returns from the cultivation and of reaping more benefits from membership of primary societies.

Pacavira (1988) similarly attributed the overwhelming female dominance and active involvement with males in peasant associations (equivalent of primary societies) in Angola to the conducive socio-institutional environment in which the societies were located. In Angola, agricultural work was largely female work and cultural and legal restrictions, which could forbid or curtail wives from joining Associations, were absent. Besides, the associations were based to some extent on traditional forms of co-operation that ensured the supply of consumer goods, means of production and sale of produce.

Since the socio-institutional environment in Ugandan primary societies posed obstacles to females accessing of loans to purchase coffee (the key lucrative economic opportunity in primary societies), a by-law could also be passed amongst primary societies forbidding members from receiving the coffee purchasing loans more than once before all the other members who wish to receive the loans have had a chance. This way, females will also have an opportunity to be availed the loans.

Because equitability in accessing leadership positions and in sharing of benefits, especially bigger amount loans, are key to creating a self-reliant and sustainable development of agricultural primary co-operative societies since they largely foster feelings of ownership and enhance member commitment, it is imperative that the structural (power) and socio-institutional obstacles be addressed. Since the obstacles are embedded in the tacit rather than the explicit, awakening the consciousness of members through seminars to the structural and socio-institutional influence on the management of their societies and sharing of benefits is recommended. During such forum, the implications for creating a self-reliant and sustainable development of primary co-operative societies, which are responsive to the needs and aspirations of all members', should also be highlighted. Members could then be persuaded to pass by-laws (through their general assemblies) that seek to circumvent the obstacles posed by the subtle discriminative practices in their respective primary societies. This will pave the way for the creation of self-reliant sustainable development of primary societies which operate as democratic, member controlled organizations, and simultaneously, as viable and competitive business enterprises providing economic and other services to their members, men and women, young and old, new and old entrants alike.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Discussion

The exercise of the primary co-operative societies' guiding principles of democratic practice, member control and equality of all members is often influenced by several factors located within the primary societies, the local communities in which the societies are situated and amongst the societies membership. These factors include the structural set-up within the primary societies, the institutional environment in which the societies are located and, members' gender and social status within their local communities. Acting singularly or in various combinations, these factors influence different members' abilities to exercise their rights and responsibilities within their primary societies. Nonetheless, this study found the level of democratic practice in primary societies very high, for 89.7% of the members reported that they participated in electing executive committee officials. Attendance of general meetings was also high with 91.2% of the members saying that they regularly attended. However, only 22.3% had ever offered themselves for election onto executive committees and majority of these had offered themselves for election onto sub-committees. The influential positions of chairperson, treasurer and secretary seemed to have, by unspoken agreement, been left to members of higher social status in the communities and in primary societies. This group comprised of the elderly, wealthy, male-founder members of the societies, who simultaneously owned large tracts of land and made more deliveries to their primary societies. Interestingly, members of primary societies were content with the status quo arguing that the elderly, wealthy, male-founder members had more at stake in the affairs of primary societies, hence were most eligible for election onto executive committees. It was in this respect that (1993) noted that power structures within the co-operative societies tended to be captured by local elites to the exclusion of small farmers, poorer people and women. However, unlike Brett (1970), Kyamulesire (1988) and Mandani (1993) who reported that primary societies in Uganda completely lacked a democratic culture and the essence of every member's duty to take an active part in the affairs of the societies, this study revealed that it was only the leadership positions on executive committees that were monopolized by the elite. Members participated highly in other aspects of democratic practice.

Member control in primary societies was also high with 74.8% of the members saying that they participated in the formulation of rules and regulations governing their respective societies. Similarly, 82.7% said that they participated in making decisions in their respective societies. However, whereas there were no statistically significant differences between males and females with respect to participation in the formulation of rules and regulations, there were significant gender differences with regard to participation in decision-making. Female participation in decision-making was lower than males. Further, the elderly significantly participated more in decision-making than the younger members

pointing to the interaction between gender, age and social status in influencing the decision-making component of member control. Borrowing from Pacavira (1988), it appeared like the socio-institutional environment in Ugandan rural communities in which the primary societies are located was not conducive to females and younger male participation in decision-making. Age is revered, hence the elderly males were more confident and were more heard while discussing issues to which decisions had to be made.

With regard to patronage, males made significantly more deliveries to primary societies, while primary societies in Bugisu Co-operative union made significantly more deliveries than the societies in East Mengo and Banyankore Kweterana Co-operative Unions. Once again, socio-institutional factors accounted for the gender and co-operative union differences. Females owned and controlled fewer coffee fields than males. Females were further denied bigger amount loans that could be used to purchase coffee from farmers and later sell it to their primary societies at profit. For trading in coffee was regarded as a male business. Further, females were said to have less time to move around villages purchasing coffee due to their inordinate domestic workloads. As for the variations in primary societies in the different co-operative unions, societies in Bugisu made significantly higher deliveries because of the long history of coffee cultivation, marketing through primary societies and the higher return farmers received from co-operating in primary societies. Thus, the socio-institutional environments accounted for females and primary societies in East Mengo and Banyankore Kweterana Co-operative Unions' lower deliveries. Nonetheless, 90.9 % of the members said they always patronized their respective societies, which showed that members were keen on performing their responsibilities and obligations. In agricultural primary societies, non-stinted and honest patronage is a key responsibility and obligation of the members (Russel 1988).

Primary societies raised operating capital from selling shares to their respective members. In turn, the number of shares held by individual members signified the members' economic investment in their respective societies. For bonuses which are profits accrued from trading using the societies' share capital are distributed amongst members who have attained a stipulated minimum number of shares and the amount of bonus received by individual members is proportionately correlated with the number of shares held. Females who had increased their number of shares were only 18.0% compared to 65.0% of their male counterparts, implying that female economic investment in primary societies was much lower than males. Half of the females had not mobilized sufficient savings that could enable them to purchase more shares. Only 5.6% of the males had similarly not mobilized sufficient savings. Kamara (1988) had also noted that female co-operators in Sierra Leone made irregular savings. In the case of this study and partly in Kamara's study women's inability to mobilize sufficient savings was closely associated with the low level of business transactions they conducted in their societies due to the low level of deliveries that they (women) made compared to men. For low business transactions resulted into low profits from

which only insufficient savings could be made. Yet, it was from the savings that money to pay-up for the shares could be deducted.

Interestingly, the married respondents reported that they had not yet mobilized sufficient savings to enable them to purchase more shares and least reported that they lacked interest in increasing their number of shares. This appears to imply that married respondents spent most of the returns from their co-operative transactions on domestic demands thus not enabling them to accumulate sufficient savings, though they simultaneously were most eager to invest in their respective co-operative societies. For the returns from their participation in co-operative marketing helped them much in addressing their socio-economic needs. Members in primary societies in Bugisu had increased the number of shares held in their primary societies, while members in Banyankore Kwereterana had not increased the number of shares. This was due to the conducive socio-institutional environment in Bugisu, which enabled the co-operators to make significantly more annual deliveries, thus, generating more profits and subsequently, mobilizes sufficient savings from which more shares were purchased.

Overall, the socio-institutional and structural impediments to democratic practice, member control and sharing of benefits notwithstanding, the primary societies exhibited what Ellis (1993) and Thorner et al. (1996) alluded to potential of acting as engines for altering the social context of (including gender relations in) peasant production and ultimately, the economic motivation of individual peasant households. This was particularly true in primary societies in Bugisu Co-operative Union in which both males and females were receiving loans, had more members who had increased their number of shares and had received bonuses. The primary societies in East Mingo and Banyankore Kweterana could, therefore, borrow from their counterparts in Bugisu in addressing the structural and socio-institutional impediments that obstructed the sharing of benefits in their respective primary societies.

At a more general level applicable to all the societies, the structural and socio-institutional factors that influenced trends not conducive to democratic practice and member control (especially in as far as the monopoly of the key leadership positions and the decision-making machinery, respectively, by the elderly, wealthy, male-founder members are concerned) could similarly be addressed through passing of by-laws that seek to control the subtle power of these groups and redistribute the power amongst all members. Gender consciousness awakening seminars could also be important in enabling the co-operators differentiate between nature and nurture, thereby putting into practices their beliefs that females are as capable as males in under-taking economic activities. Whereas this belief is held, in their sub-consciousnesses, a significant proportion, especially of male co-operators related the sexes' physiological differences to "differences" in the sexes behaviour, capabilities and responsibilities which tended to relegate women to the fringes of the business transactions in primary societies. It was partly for this reason that women were denied bigger amounts of loans, yet they were simultaneously considered lesser credit risks. Paradoxically,

denying women bigger amount loans in part contributed to the lower deliveries they made to primary societies which in turn led to lower profits, higher inability to mobilize sufficient savings and ultimately increase the number of shares held in their respective societies and by proxy, invest more in the societies, thereby have higher stake there-in too.

3.2 Conclusions

Ugandan agricultural primary co-operative societies exhibited high levels of democratic practice and member control, especially with regard to attendance of general meetings and participation in electing officials into executive committees, and, a participation in the formulation of rules and regulations governing the societies, respectively. However, offering oneself for election into key Members of higher social status, especially the elderly, wealthy, male-founder members, monopolized offering oneself for election in key leadership positions and participation in decision-making. It is this group that guided the operations of primary societies largely to the exclusion of females, younger males and poorer farmers. This arose out of the structural and socio-institutional environment that reveres age and social status, thus bestowing critical constituents of democratic practice and member control into the hands of a few members. Although no tensions were evident and majority members appeared to be at ease with the status quo, monopoly of the key leadership positions and the decision-making machinery in primary societies poses problems for creating of self-reliant and sustainable development of primary societies that are responsive to the needs and aspirations of all members. . Ordinary members may not develop sufficient feeling of ownership, and belonging to their respective societies. Similarly, continuity is obstructed since the younger members are not prepared for leadership and decision-making roles.

Further, the “male superiority-female inferiority” social structure was responsible for females receiving lesser shares of benefits like loans, which affected the level of their business transactions. Therefore, creation of self-reliant sustainable development of primary co-operative societies which operate as democratic, member controlled organizations, and simultaneously viable and competitive business enterprises providing economic and other services and opportunities to men and women, young and old, new and old entrants alike, requires two approaches. First is consolidating the present positive trends of democratic practice and member control. Second, addressing the structural and socio-institutional drawbacks to total and effective democratic practice, member control and sharing of benefits by all members. It is in this respect that the following recommendations are made.

3.3 Recommendations

- i.) Seminars should be arranged for members and executive committees to sensitise them of the differences between nature and nurture with respect to the biological and socio-economic roles of male and females. During the seminars, the participants’ consciousness should be awakened to

- how their present perceptions of male and female biological and socio-economic roles place women in an inferior status, which affects their participation in primary societies, especially with respect to sharing of benefits.
- ii.) Members' and executive committees' consciousness to the structural and socio-institutional influences on democratic practice (leadership positions) and member control (decision-making machinery) should also be awakened through seminars. The dangers posed to sustainability and continuity of primary societies should be pointed out as well.
 - iii.) A by-law could be adopted by the primary societies' general assembly that restricts holding leadership positions to not more than two terms of three years each. This will break up the monopoly of leadership positions held by the wealthy, elderly, male-founder groups and pave the way for younger, less wealthy, new entrant members to be elected onto leadership positions.
 - iv.) A by-law could also be adopted by the primary society's general assembly that restricts members from obtaining loans more than once before all the other members who wish to obtain loans have done so. This way, women and poorer males could have a better chance of accessing loans, especially the bigger amount ones, that are key to trading in coffee.
 - v.) Affirmative action, especially for females and poor males should be instituted to facilitate more equitable-sharing of benefits and leadership roles.
 - vi.) Mobilization of savings should be encouraged to enable members to purchase more shares, which will raise the societies' share capital and ultimately more members receipt of bonuses and economic investment in their respective societies. The latter will enhance ownership feelings and members' commitment of to their respective societies.

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