'They think they are doing us a favor':
Persistent resistance to more women in parliament in Africa

Gretchen Bauer
University of Delaware
gbauer@udel.edu

Paper prepared for conference:
Resisting Women’s Political Leadership: Theories, Data, Solutions
Rutgers University
May 2017
Abstract

While several African countries are among world leaders in women's representation in a single or lower house of parliament, significant resistance to women's political leadership remains in many countries across the continent. For Botswana and Ghana and a dozen other African countries the percentage of women in parliament has rarely reached beyond about 10 percent. This paper, based on field research in Botswana and Ghana, examines the persistent resistance to more women in parliament in these two countries as well as several others. With no or only a gradual political transition in the 1990s, plurality majority electoral systems and no electoral gender quota, women candidates for parliament in both countries contend with often unsupportive political parties, a 'politics of insult,' in particular hurled against women candidates, a 'cost of politics' out of reach for most candidates, but especially women, and much more. The paper examines this persistent resistance as well as possible ways forward including alternative electoral systems, public campaign financing, more accountable and transparent party primaries, among others.
‘They think they are doing us a favor by creating a little space for us to participate in governance and so we should be grateful for the little space that has been created for us.’
Ursula Owusu Ekuful, NPP MP, 24 May 2016, Accra

Introduction

Across Africa women have made remarkable gains in access to halls of parliament. In early 2017, one African country, Rwanda, continues to lead the world in women’s representation in a single or lower house of parliament with 64 percent women in its chamber of deputies, and 15 African countries have 30 percent women or more in a single or lower house of parliament. Across the sub-continent electoral gender quotas for parliament have been adopted by two-thirds of countries and a ‘second wave’ of quotas are likely to be legislated rather than voluntary and for parity rather than for a lesser target. And yet in many African countries, including some of Africa’s most democratic nations like Botswana and Ghana, women still lag far behind men in access to parliament. Many of these countries have plurality majority electoral systems in which candidates vie for office as party representatives in constituencies, rather than as names on a party list. In these cases especially, African women aspirants and candidates face continued resistance to access to political office. This resistance manifests itself in a failure of political parties to recruit and support women candidates, and includes a debilitating ‘politics of insult’ that may be violent and a ‘cost of politics’ that may be beyond women’s means. Underlying the resistance is the enduring power of patriarchy. This paper explores this persistent resistance in Botswana and Ghana and some other African countries.

The paper proceeds as follows. First, we provide a brief overview of some the trends in women’s access to parliament in Africa. Second, the paper reviews the experiences of women aspirants and candidates in parts of Africa as presented in the literature. Third, the paper considers the Botswana and Ghana cases in particular, relying upon previous and ongoing field
research. Finally, the paper concludes by considering possible strategies for ameliorating the persistent resistance to women’s greater political representation in Africa.

**Trends in Women’s Access to Parliament in Africa**

Across Africa, during two waves\(^1\) of electoral gender quota adoption (Bauer 2016a), women have accessed parliaments in remarkable numbers and at a remarkable pace. Overall the average percentage of women in a single or lower house of parliament in sub-Saharan Africa in early 2017 just outpaces the world average, 24 percent versus 23 percent. Fifteen countries — all of which use some kind of effective\(^2\) electoral gender quota - have more than 30 percent women, while another 10 countries have between 20 and 30 percent women in their national legislatures ([www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org)). During the first wave of quota adoption in the early 1990s into the early 2000s, governments and political parties in mostly East and Southern African countries like Angola, Burundi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda adopted quotas in the wake of political transitions, often post-conflict, spurred on by mobilized national women’s movements, international norms, regional, continental and international organizations, cadres of capable and available women and diffusion effects across movements and borders (Bauer and Britton 2006). During the second wave in the 2010s, the first West African countries, including Senegal and Cameroon, began to adopt electoral gender quotas and the political opportunity structure was more likely a constitutional reform or review process; but the critical roles were still played by mobilized national women’s movements and regional, continental and international organizations working in concert. Second wave quotas are revisions of existing quotas or new quotas and are likely stronger than first wave quotas in that they are more likely to be legislated rather than voluntary and more likely to be for parity than for 20 or 30 percent (Bauer 2016a).
The continent has also seen increases in women’s representation in executives (cabinets) and judiciaries (courts) over the last few decades. In early 2017 women held 19.7 percent of ministerial posts in Africa (compared to 18.3 percent globally), a percentage that, however, was surpassed already in 2012 and marks a slight decline since 2015 (IPU UN Women 2017).

Women’s representation in courts across Africa is not well or centrally documented. Still, Dawuni and Kang (2015, 51) report a steady increase in the number of women at the apex of judiciaries across Africa – as presidents of constitutional courts and supreme courts and as chief justices – between 1990 and 2014.³ Jacob et al. (2014, 322-323) argue that “a gender-balanced decision-making (GBDM) norm⁴ has become embedded, over the last three decades, in the world polity…” albeit with a greater impact on women’s cabinet representation than on women’s legislative representation – primarily, of course, because cabinet positions are largely appointed and positions in parliament are largely elected.

**Persistent Resistance to Women Aspirants and Candidates in Africa**

Persistent resistance to women aspirants, especially, but also women candidates takes many forms across the African continent. The most overt form may be violence against women in elections - an extreme form of what may be described as ‘the politics of insult’ - but other forms include the financial cost of standing for political office and unsupportive political parties.

*Violence against Women in Elections (VAWE)*

According to Burchard (2015), electoral violence – a form of political violence that seeks to influence electoral outcomes - has emerged as a significant problem across the African continent over the last quarter century, in the wake of democratic political transitions and the onset of regularly scheduled presidential and parliamentary elections.⁵ In her recent book, Burchard (2) documents that since 1990 more than half of all elections in Africa (around 57 percent)
“experience some form of violence or intimidation either before or after election day.” In cases of violent elections in Africa, pre-election violence is by far the predominant type, according to Burchard (27): “95 percent of violent elections experience pre-election violence, 24 percent of violent elections experience both pre and post-election violence, but less than 4 percent of violent elections are exclusively characterized by post-election violence.” Further, Burchard notes that the electoral context – in particular the type of electoral system – is a significant determinant of electoral violence. She shows that legislative elections using a proportional representation (PR) electoral system are “less prone” to pre-election violence than elections using a plurality or majoritarian electoral system. Moreover, she notes that legislative plurality elections are “marginally” more violent than executive plurality elections. Other factors influencing the incidence of electoral violence include the timing of elections and the political context (regime type) (51).

Burchard does not distinguish between electoral violence directed against men and that directed against women; indeed the discussion is mainly around ‘voters.’ That distinction has been drawn finely by Bardall (2011, 2015) and others (Huber and Kamerud 2016) who argue that women may experience electoral violence in a profoundly different way than do men. Bardall (2015) describes Violence against Women in Elections (VAWE) as a type of gender based violence (GBV)/violence against women (VAW) in which election violence is targeted against women because they are women. Bardall notes that there are four broad categories of election violence – all of which have specific gender dimensions – physical violence, social-psychological violence, sexual violence and economic violence. And each category of election violence may be considered a form of VAWE when used to disempower women on the basis of their sex (7). In a pie chart of ‘female victims of election violence,’ only a small minority
(around 9 percent) of victims are described as ‘political party leader/candidate’ with the vast majority being voters or supporters. This paper addresses VAWE against women aspirants and candidates in plurality majority electoral systems in particular.

*Experiences of Women Aspirants and Candidates around Africa*

The secondary literature is rife with examples of continued resistance to women aspirants and candidates across Africa, again, especially in plurality majority electoral systems. In one of the first books to explore the phenomenon of many more women accessing parliament in Africa, Tamale (1999, 93) recounted life on the campaign trail for women candidates in Uganda, in the early days of elections after the overthrow of decades of military rule. As she noted: “femininity and gender assumed center stage on the campaign podium”: “Women…encountered slurs regarding their marital status, sexuality and (in)fidelity. A married women was penalized for neglecting husband and family. A woman who was ‘unattached’ was put to task to prove that she was not a *malaya* (prostitute).” Further, Tamale (96-97) relates: “The campaign trail inducted almost all of the women in this study into the world of machination, shrewdness, deceit and aggressiveness – characteristics that Ugandan society does not associate with femininity. For example, women, like men, needed to use money and gifts in exchange for votes.”

Nearly two decades later, a comparison of the selection process for women’s seats in Tanzania and Uganda found that election violence and intimidation “with a gendered dimension” remained rampant in Uganda. The authors (18) quote one former woman MP: “Some of your political opponents can cut you and rape you just to embarrass you. So there are so many security risks involved with a woman campaigning and being exposed in this political environment.” In Tanzania, the authors report, physical violence is less likely but verbal abuse and intimidation are still to be expected. The authors also find women candidates to be “financially disadvantaged,”
when it comes to funding their campaigns; with less access to patronage and other resources…
“campaign expenses, which include a number of hand-outs to voters, contributions to various
formal and informal community projects, payments to campaign teams, transportation and
entertainment, are beyond the reach of many women.”

An in-depth study of 15 women aspirants in the 2003 parliamentary elections in Nigeria
revealed a number of strategies used to undermine women seeking to represent their parties in
the general elections (Ibrahim 2004). These included: subverting affirmative action (arguing that
if women were paying no nomination fees they must not be committed to the party), labelling
women aspirants as culturally deviant (being too assertive and independent and so not team
players), undermining the moral standing of female aspirants (using abusive language to
demoralize and delegitimize female aspirants, referring to them as prostitutes and harlots, among
others), the indigeneity ploy (confusing from where – their homes or their ‘married’ homes -
women may stand), political party techniques for eliminating female aspirants (use of
‘godfathers,’ zoning, violence, thuggery, bribery, among others). During decades of military rule
in Nigeria (and neighboring Ghana), femocracy and a First Lady Syndrome had already
delegitimized, in some ways, women’s participation in electoral politics - as the role of women
in politics was seen to be one carried out by the wives of men in office only - rather than by
women as candidates for political office themselves.

Ibrahim (2004) sums up the experience for women aspirants in party primaries in
advance of the 2003 election in Nigeria: “Following the way political party primaries for the
nomination of candidates for the 2003 elections were conducted, it became evident that the
political parties systematically eliminated women, through a well-orchestrated process of
manipulation and pre-determination of the outcome of most of the primaries. Most of the women
that came forward to compete in the primaries were shut out through connivance, although the parties had previously promised that they would ensure that female aspirants would be encouraged and supported in getting party nominations.”

A decade later the situation in Nigeria had not changed. Indeed, Nigeria ranks lowest of all African countries in women’s representation in a single or lower house of parliament in early 2017 – at 5.6 percent. In the 2015 parliamentary elections women were 15 and 16 percent of candidates for the House of Representatives and Senate (Safir and Alam 2015); unlike Botswana and Ghana (to be discussed below), general election voters in Nigeria do seem to discriminate against women general election candidates, let alone women aspirants. Like Botswana and Ghana, according to Safir and Alam (2015), women are “dissuaded or prevented from entering formal politics” by the “prevalence of violence in Nigerian politics, the high costs of running a campaign, and a climate of sociocultural and religious conservatism…” Further, they recount that “violence against women in politics and in elections often goes unreported and unmonitored, but remains a troubling issue with far-reaching implications for democracy, human rights, gender equality and security.” Women in Nigeria may experience election violence as citizens, voters, members of political parties, wives, daughters or mothers of politicians or as politicians themselves. As candidates, “they face many challenges by the political party systems, including harassment, intimidation and even assault. Political parties make it difficult for women to fundraise and get their names on the ballot, often using this type of harassment to bar women from entering politics” (Safir and Alam 2015).

**Case Studies: Persistent Resistance to Women Aspirants in Botswana and Ghana**

From two very different regions in Africa, Botswana and Ghana have also experienced markedly different post-colonial trajectories, though both were British colonies/protectorates. Densely
populated with 26 million people in a sub region marked by intense European interaction for centuries and indeed the ravages of the transatlantic slave trade, Ghana was one of several West African countries to experience decades of military rule soon after independence. Since a democratic political transition in 1992, however, Ghana’s ethnically diverse population has participated in seven free elections, regularly alternating political party (and flagbearer) every eight years; steady economic advancement remains a more difficult challenge despite a wealth of resources. Botswana also inhabits a region of early European intrusion though was less affected, allowing strong chieftaincies to thrive. Widely lauded pragmatic leadership since independence harnessed diamond resources discovered after independence for significant health and education benefits for the country’s population of only two million, achieving middle income status for the country in the process. In contrast to Ghana, there has been no military rule; indeed the dominant party has been the ruling party uninterrupted through 11 elections since 1965. Despite these significant differences the two countries have been compared in the literature – especially on two dimensions: considered to be among Africa’s more successful political democracies and to value strong ‘traditional’ or ‘customary’ leadership and practices (for example, Conteh and Ohemeng 2009, Dunne 2007, Dzivenu 2008).

Both countries also utilize plurality majority, first past the post electoral systems, have no electoral gender quota for parliament and consistently elect very few women to parliament, despite moments of intense mobilization by national women’s movements/coalitions and two of the continent’s earliest Women’s Manifestos (Coalition on the Women’s Manifesto for Ghana 2004, Emang Basadi 1994). In early 2017 Ghana has 13.1 percent women in its parliament, the highest ever, and Botswana has 9.5 percent, exactly half of its onetime high of 17 percent in 1999. In both countries women appear not to be discriminated against during general elections,
in that they win in proportion to their candidacies or at an even better rate (see Tables 1 and 2). In Botswana several members of parliament are ‘specially elected’ (appointed by the president) and this has offered the opportunity, under some presidents, for more women to enter parliament. In both countries, however, women either don’t choose to stand in party primaries in large numbers or make it through party primaries only in small numbers.

As in other African countries, in particular with FPTP electoral systems, there are many challenges for women aspirants and candidates for public political office in Botswana and Ghana. Indeed, party primaries are the critical, often ‘fatal,’ moment for women aspirants (Hinojosa 2012), if women stand at all. The following interview snippets provide the voices of highly accomplished women from both countries on the persistent resistance, even violence, they have encountered while seeking political office.

*Physical violence:*

Bardall (2015, 9) describes physical violence in the course of elections as that which ‘causes direct bodily harm to a person in relation to their involvement in the electoral process, and/or bodily harm to a proxy.’ According to Bardall, physical violence during elections impacts primarily men – as both victims and perpetrators of such violence. In her exposition of the factors limiting women’s political participation in Ghana, Darkwa (2015, 253-254) describes an ‘inherent structural and non-structural violence that characterise the political landscape…..Even though some gains have been made in eroding the notion that a woman’s place is in the kitchen and the labour ward, it has not necessarily been replaced with the idea that a women can effectively represent her people and be at the helm of political leadership. In Ghana, the zero-sum nature of the political contest presents the competition for political participation as a do-or-die affair for the brave and strong. Political contest in Ghana has been reduced to brawns, devoid
of finesse and decorum, as insults, half-truths, blatant lies and bellicose behaviour have become part of the strategies employed to intimidate possible contenders out of the race.’

In a small sample of interviews from selectorates, aspirants, candidates and sitting Members of Parliament (MPs), one, then an opposition party MP referred to physical violence that she had experienced, as part of a larger context of patriarchy impacting women in politics:

Ursula Owusu: Patriarchy, that’s a huge obstacle…attitudes, the times at which meetings are held, balancing competing demands on your time. We are the primary caregivers in our homes, we are responsible for our homes and our kids and so to find time to care for the home and to engage in all the political activities is also tough and a disincentive to many people. The nature of politicking in this country, the aggressive, abusive nature of it puts off a lot of people. I have been physically assaulted, verbally assaulted and it is normal. Not many people can put up with that, and so of all that is a disincentive.

Social psychological violence:

Psychological violence is described by Bardall (2015, 12-13) as ‘the single most prevalent form of election violence experienced by women,’ with social psychological violence causing harm ‘by inflicting fear on its subject as punishment for their behavior or to coerce their behavior. It can include psychological intimidation, social sanctions and punishment, family pressure and character assassination.’ Women aspirants in Ghana, describe a ‘politics of insult’ as a norm in political campaigns, and character assassination seems to be a favored weapon in the arsenal against women aspirants and candidates.

Dede Amanor Wilks, CPP candidate in 2012 and selectorate in 2016, 2 November 2016, Accra: [paraphrase; waiting on transcription] Politics is a rough terrain, marked by ‘the politics of insult’ and women are not so good at that. You can’t win without money but money is not the only factor. Politics is also about who spends the most money and that is why I do not want to run again. Women are not schooled in spreading money around; politics a male terrain, people are used to men in power and men get more support.

Afia Appiah, NPP aspirant in 2011 and 2015, 4 May 2016, Accra: …..then they said I was too young, I was 35, and then they used the fact that I did not have a husband and I didn’t have kids. They said I was not an experienced politician and four years later they still said I was too young….. Incumbents will join forces to run against any challenger to an incumbent and can be quite nasty.
Irene Naa Torshie Addo, NPP MP, 24 May 2016, Accra: [There are many] cultural problems [that are obstacles to women running for political office]. When they see your confidence, they say you are not respectful, they expect you to be timid. You can’t win an election if you are timid. They don’t expect you to fight for your rights, you, know, that sort of thing. It’s rather very disturbing.

In Ghana, women aspirants and candidates refer to the persistence of patriarchy while in Botswana reference is made to a cultural idea about whether or not women can ‘lead.’ Based on a cross-national study of women’s representation in parliaments in ‘free and partly free’ countries in 2006, Ruedin (2012, 107) suggests that “cultural factors dominate in the case of gender representation – particularly attitudes towards women as political leaders.” Ruedin’s findings suggest a more dominant impact of cultural factors over institutional factors (such as electoral formula and voluntary gender quotas – though not reserved seats) than have previous studies. Indeed, the question of whether or not women may ‘lead’ or be ‘leaders’ is a constant refrain in Botswana.

Margaret Nasha, BDP MP and Minister of Local Government, 10 March 2009, Gaborone: There are several reasons [that so few women stand for office]: some people perceive politics as rough, tough and time consuming and if you are a family person you would rather not go there. If you don’t have the patience to be rough ridden then you stay away. And that is how women perceive it as a rough game that only men can manage….A lot of women really don’t believe in ourselves, we believe that leadership is the domain of men and therefore you raise the children, you stay back home, you even don’t count that as a job. That is how we were socialized….

Sheila Tlou, specially elected BDP MP and former Minister of Health, 16 April 2009, Gaborone: Politics are very dirty, as I said, it is dirtier than the president said. For example, I won Palapye, but they cheated. Apparently it is part of the game, but no woman wants to do that, especially when you are a professional…..I think it comes from our culture. In our culture chiefs were always men. It is only recently that people have gotten it into their heads that if a women is there and she is the first born in the family she can be a chief. But even then we know they will skip over a first born girl…..

Gladys Kokorwe, BDP MP and Minister of Youth, Sport and Culture, 3 March 2009, Gaborone: We grew up – everybody – knowing that a man is a leader, and a woman belongs to the kitchen, to the home, you know, to feed the children, you know domestic work. So we have to educate our people to say even women can lead. Women themselves are reluctant to run in primaries, because they think they will not be elected.
Moggie Mbakanye, specially elected BDP MP, BCWP Secretary General, and Parliamentary Women’s Caucus chair, 24 February 2009, Gaborone: It is a cultural thing…that women are not supposed to lead. They support this with some of our traditional proverbs. There is one that says women cannot lead.

Tshepo Chape Wareus, two term Gaborone City Councilor, BCWP publicity secretary, 11 April 2009, Gabane: I think the most important thing [reason there are so few women] is fear…fear of being insulted…fear of being manipulated and belittled and looked down upon; you have to be strong, you have to know all of the insults, standing there facing your opponent. People don’t have issue-based politics where you talk about what you are going to do for your people…instead they will just be on the character assassination all the time. There is that woman who is standing for politics who wants to be like a man…look at her she can’t even be ashamed of herself, she is busy making tea for other men…there are so many of those bad faith words that are directed against women when they try to stand for politics…

Rhoda Sekgororoane, Gaborone City Council candidate, BCWP past Vice President, 15 May 2009, Gaborone: I think some of the things [reasons women are reluctant to stand] are what happens to women who are standing. They face serious challenges, threats, they are intimidated by their male counterparts. You have to be brave to do that, seriously brave…..

Sexual violence:

‘Sexual violence is a unique type of harm in that it is both physical and psychological in nature, and of an intimate and degrading nature specific to the victim’s gender identity, setting it apart from other categories of violence,’ according to Bardall (2015, 16), with sexual abuse for electoral motives including politically-motivated rape, sexual harassment, assault and abuse with the objective of controlling, intimidating, humiliating and disenfranchising the victim. In Botswana and Ghana there appears to be overlap especially between social-psychological and sexual violence.

Ursula Owusu: And what really, really upsets me personally are the sexually explicit insults that are hurled at female candidates. In the minds of many of our political opponents – and that cuts across internal and external political opponents – once you are a woman, you are not here on merit, you must have slept your way to occupy any position. And they say it on air, off air, in print. It’s so offensive.” [And then relates a story of her son’s friends at school telling him his mother is a prostitute.]

Afia Appiah: people can be so mean. I remember I was at one campaign meeting and an assembly man got up and openly accused me of having an affair with the assistant secretary.
What was interesting was that they couldn’t find anything to use against me so they complained about my hair which I then had to braid, they complained about my age which I couldn’t do anything about, they complained about me not being married, I couldn’t help that, not having kids, I couldn’t help that….

*Economic violence:*

Economic violence is described as ‘economic harm, coercion or abuse [that] comes in institutional as well as personal forms.’ According to Bardall (2015, 17) economic violence includes ‘harm or threats to harm a business, termination or threat of termination of employment, or other threats or theft related to one’s livelihood.’ In Botswana and Ghana economic violence against women might also be understood in terms of the exorbitant ‘cost of politics’ for all aspirants and candidates but which is particularly burdensome for women who have fewer resources or less access to resources.

In Ghana, for example, many scholars have commented on the cost of standing for parliament – as an aspirant in a party primary or candidate in the general election – with the cost often measured in terms of salaries and largely borne by individuals.10 Darkwa (2015, 255) notes that in Ghana “competitive elections tend to be capital intensive,” requiring payment of filing fees, illegal fees in return for party support or endorsement and the costs of wooing potential voters. Musah and Gariba (2013, 470) suggest that the cost of running for office can be an impediment for women candidates: “party dues, filing fees, funding campaigns, among others, require huge amounts of money which most Ghanaian women do not have.” In her examination of political parties in Ghana, Osei (2013) describes standing for political office as prohibitively expensive and Daddieh and Bob-Milliar (2012) suggest that it is so expensive to stand even for primaries that some aspirants and incumbents seek to raise funds overseas (205) – presumably from the substantial Ghanaian diaspora.
Afia Appiah: You have to raise money and more often than not you are raising money from men and they want to chase you around the room, and they make all sorts of funny comments but I must say, I must however admit, that they were in the minority. But also maybe just one percent of the total number of men you raise money from would try and get fresh with you but the vast majority don’t. And the thing is that people also don’t take women seriously when they are running and so they would give them less money than they would give men and as a rule women don’t have as many assets as men to trade off.

Roni Nicol, NPP aspirant, 1 June 2016, Accra: It’s getting to a point where delegates are demanding money before they vote for you, to where in some cases the highest bidder wins the day; that is the trend now. Whoever gives the most money wins the election and this trend has its positives and negatives. For me, it is a no, no. It doesn’t help but then the more you speak to people, the more you understand why they do it. Most of them feel when they vote for you and you get into office, you turn your back on them. So for them, some are very happy to take what they can now, even if you turn your back on them, so be it, at least they have gotten something from you.

Iddi Ziblim, NPP candidate, 19 May 2016, Accra: Let me put it properly, so if I go out there looking for money from a woman, she will not readily think about giving herself to me before then giving me the money…..but if a woman goes out looking for money from a man, to begin with, the perception the people will have about her but even the man that she is looking for money from, may think that he shouldn’t give her the money for free, there should be benefits attached to it and all that, so it is difficult, so I can imagine how difficult that will be. Even as a man, trying to raise money is difficult, and then you can imagine how more difficult it will be for women and of course you can add the constraints of balancing your activity as a politician and as a mother and the caretaker of the household and then all of those things.

Margaret Nasha: …..another thing that keeps coming up is the economics of it…..politics and standing for office is not necessarily a cheap thing. It is expensive, you have to spend money and if you are a woman and you don’t have it, it means to do it you are cut off.

Tshepo Chape Wareus: You decide as a women to stand for election [in the primaries]…you will get there and there will be so many obstacles: money for the candidacy, money for the cars, money for the whatever, you have to have money for that.

Rhoda Sekgororoane: …and one other thing is lack of funds. Women don’t have funds. The 2,000 pula to register and 1,000 for city council, it is too much for them, they don’t have money. From there you have to buy campaign materials, which is also expensive. You have to run your campaign, you have to have a vehicle. Some constituencies, they are wide, so you can’t walk.

**Conclusion: Way Forward**

In both Botswana and Ghana violence against women – indeed, killing sprees against women – though not women aspirants or women candidates – contributed to the galvanization of women
and their organizations into political action at the close of the 20th century. There has been a near epidemic of ‘passion killings’ (intimate partner violence) in Gaborone and other locations in Botswana beginning in the 1990s and continuing to this day and there was a rash (more than 30 women) of unsolved murders in and around Accra from 1998 to 2001.11 As mentioned earlier, women’s mobilization beginning in these years led to the adoption of Women’s Manifestos in both countries and significant collaboration between women activists and women politicians with some tangible results (the highest representation of women in parliament ever in Botswana in 1999 and the passage of the Domestic Violence Act in Ghana in 2007). But the resistance to women’s political leadership is more broad-based in these two and some other African countries. As noted at the outset of the paper, persistent resistance to more women in parliament manifests itself in a ‘politics of insult’ that may encompass physical violence, certainly social psychological violence, and sexual violence, and a ‘cost of politics’ (a form of economic violence) that keeps elected office out of reach for many women. Underlying the persistent resistance is the continuing power of patriarchy and a failure on the part of political parties to promote women aspirants through their political primary selection processes.

In the meantime, some strategies for bringing more women into politics, despite the resistance to women aspirants and candidates, have been proposed if not adopted. In Ghana two ad hoc strategies have been mooted though not adopted, much like voluntary party gender quotas in Botswana which have purportedly been adopted by political parties but are not in fact practiced (Bauer 2010). The two ad hoc strategies are a safe seats strategy whereby political parties may run women in seats they are sure to win, thereby assuring at least that number of women members of parliament, and a somewhat similar one by which a party pledges to stand only women in seats already occupied by a woman. The former strategy has been talked about in
Ghana though not necessarily consistently applied or applied at all by the two major parties; the latter strategy was mooted by leaders of the then opposition (now ruling) National Patriotic Party (NPP) during their 2015 primaries, strongly favored by women members of the party who also reminded Ghanaians of the government’s commitment through various protocols to at least 30 percent women in parliament, but then quickly denounced by male MPs from the NPP and therefore abandoned. A third strategy has been consistently adopted in recent elections in Ghana whereby both major parties have offered discounted filing fees to women aspirants during the primaries (and women candidates during the general election), such that women pay half the filing fees of men. While this may be a step in the right direction, filing fees, though expensive, are unfortunately only a ‘drop in the bucket’ compared to the overall cost of campaigns for parliament and so reduced fees are unlikely to have a significant impact.12

For more women to access parliament in countries like Botswana, Ghana, and Nigeria, political parties must focus on their party primaries, making sure primary selection processes are formalized, transparent and consistently applied rather than being regularly subject to conflict and manipulation. Political parties must ensure that more women aspirants stand in party primaries and that more women win party primaries; in Botswana and Ghana at least when women are candidates for parliament in the general elections they have as good a chance, if not a better chance, than men of winning their constituency. In 2009, Bauer (2010) found widespread inconsistency in party primary selection processes in Botswana and an inability of political parties (and the Independent Electoral Commission at the time) to even provide numbers of female aspirants versus male aspirants for their primaries. During the 2015 party primaries in Ghana, the then ruling (now opposition) National Democratic Congress (NDC) reformed its primary process, greatly expanding the primary electorate, in an effort to diminish the overall
financial cost of primaries to candidates (essentially by making vote-buying too expensive and therefore impossible); one significant result, according to Ichino and Nathan (2016) was to increase the number of women candidates to make it through the NDC primaries; in the general election there were 40 women NDC candidates and 29 women NPP candidates.\(^{13}\) This is a very important finding.

On a continent where legislatures remain perhaps the weakest branch of government, the worry about who sits in parliament and what substantive representation impacts they are able to achieve has sometimes been questioned. At the same time, it may also be argued that symbolic representation effects, that largely take place outside of legislatures, can play a critical role in ameliorating persistent resistance to women’s political leadership – to the extent that women’s increased presence in parliament may lead to: altering gendered ideas about the roles of women and men in politics, raising awareness of what women leaders can achieve, legitimating women as political actors, and encouraging women to become more involved in politics themselves as voters, activists, candidates, leaders (Franceschet, Krook and Piscopo 2012). In Botswana, Bauer (2016b) detected such an impact of more (though still few) women holding (or seeking) political office, namely, that more women were asserting the right to become chiefs, a role previously strictly unavailable to them (except as regents) and other symbolic representation impacts of having more women in parliament have been identified across the continent (Bauer 2012). Mitigating the persistent resistance to bringing more women into parliament in some African countries, in particular those with FPTP electoral systems and no electoral gender quotas, remains an ongoing project.
### Table 1. Women Members of Parliament in Botswana, 1965-2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election Year</th>
<th>Directly Elected</th>
<th>Specially Elected</th>
<th>Ex Officio</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent Women MPs</th>
<th>Percent Women Candidates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>4/57</td>
<td>1/4</td>
<td>½</td>
<td>6/63</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2/57</td>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>½</td>
<td>5/63</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>4/57</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>0/2</td>
<td>7/63</td>
<td>11.11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>6/40</td>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>0/3</td>
<td>8/47</td>
<td>17.02</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>4/40</td>
<td>0/4</td>
<td>0/3</td>
<td>4/47</td>
<td>8.51</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>2/34</td>
<td>0/4</td>
<td>0/2</td>
<td>2/40</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>1/34</td>
<td>1/4</td>
<td>0/1</td>
<td>2/39</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>1/32</td>
<td>1/4</td>
<td>0/1</td>
<td>2/37</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>0/32</td>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>0/1</td>
<td>2/37</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>0/31</td>
<td>0/4</td>
<td>0/1</td>
<td>0/36</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>0/31</td>
<td>0/4</td>
<td>0/1</td>
<td>0/36</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Table 2. Women Members of Parliament in Ghana, 1956-2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election Year</th>
<th>Number Women MPs</th>
<th>Number MPs</th>
<th>Percent Women MPs</th>
<th>Percent Women Candidates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1956 (1960)</td>
<td>0 (10)</td>
<td>104 (114)</td>
<td>0 (8.8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References


Bauer, Gretchen. “‘Cows Will Lead the Herd into a Precipice”: Where are the Women MPs in Botswana?” Botswana Notes and Records 42 (2010): 56-70.


End Notes

1 Norris and Dahlerup (2015, 16) identify three global waves of gender quota adoption; the first was initially primarily among eastern European countries in the 1950s followed by western European countries in the 1970s and 1980s; the second began among Latin American countries in the 1990s with a high point following the United Nations conference on women in Beijing in 1995, and the third is more recent and typically involves a strengthening of original quota laws. Africa was not part of the global first wave of gender quotas; rather Africa’s ‘first’ wave of quota adoption largely coincided with the global second wave and Africa’s ‘second’ wave coincides with the global third wave.

2 International Idea (2014, 29) suggests that: “gender quotas are usually considered to be meaningful and effective when they: (1) include a specific, measurable numerical target, (2) are accompanied by well-designed quota rules such as ranking-order rules and placement mandates that match the country’s electoral system, ballot structure and list type, and (3) include sanctions for non-compliance.”


4 Jacob et al (2014, 325) note that the GBDM norm is about more than just quotas. It “has a broader scope. It implies that women face barriers to incorporation across different layers of states and prescribes that states should act to eradicate these barriers.” They further note that “the norm is interpretable and resistible. Actors use the norm in different ways, and some states ignore its prescriptions.”

5 Burchard (2015, 11) notes that electoral violence is not an “Africa-specific phenomenon,” but is [significantly] “more pronounced” there than elsewhere – found in 19 percent of elections globally and 58 percent of elections in Africa.

6 Both countries use a FPTP electoral system for constituency based seats, but also have women’s seats – called district seats in Uganda and special seats in Tanzania. The mechanism for selecting women into those reserved seats differs and in both cases has changed over time.

7 Mama (1995, 41; 1998), in writing about Nigeria in the 1980s and 1990s, describes what she calls femocracy, namely, “an anti-democratic female power structure which claims to exist for the advancement of ordinary women, but is unable to do so because it is dominated by a small clique of women whose authority derives from their being married to powerful men, rather than from any actions or ideas of their own.” The small clique of women refers primarily to First Ladies thus giving us the idea of a First Lady Syndrome. See also Ibrahim 2004.

8 Darkwa (2015, 252) makes this observation for Ghana as well based on tables showing percentages of male and female contestants and winners.

9 Darkwa (2015, 253) also makes mention of a lingering culture of fear leftover from decades of military rule – topic that deserves further research.

10 Party primaries are ‘cocoa season’ for party executives and the ‘time to chop’ for those who select the candidates. See Westminster Democracy Foundation 2016, Lindberg 2003 and Bauer 2017.

11 Manuh (2007) and others refer to the role of the unresolved killings in prompting women’s activism and the emergence of new women’s organizations, such as Sisters’ Keepers, around the turn of the century. Sisters’ Keepers was a coalition of individuals and organizations dedicated to resisting all forms of violence against women. See Leslie (2006) on Botswana.
In recent general elections in both Ghana and Nigeria (2016 and 2015) significant efforts were undertaken to attempt to mitigate more general election violence and in both cases were largely successful. In both countries Women’s Situation Rooms helped to ensure that elections were peaceful and that women and youth played a substantive role in sustaining the peace (Author observation, Safir and Alam 2015).

Before the NDC changed its primary process during the 2015 primaries both major parties had relied upon small ‘selectorates,’ ranging from 200 to 800 people per constituency, to select party nominees. The NPP had at one point also toyed with expanding its primary electorate though had never done so consistently. The expectation is that both parties will seek to continue to broaden their selectorates in future primaries. Ichino and Nathan (2016).