

BEYOND CATEGORIES:  
POWER, RECOGNITION AND THE  
CONDITIONS FOR EQUITY

BACKGROUND PAPER FOR THE WORLD DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2006  
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# 1 Introduction

The World Development Report (WDR) 2006 will reflect some important shifts in popular thinking about the relationship between inequality, growth and poverty. First, it will refute the Kuznetsian position that inequality has an invariably positive role and will, instead, assert that high levels of inequality can curtail the potential poverty-reducing impact of growth; conversely, where there is low or falling inequality, lower income groups will have a larger share of any increase in national income (Naschold 2002).

Second, following Sen (1993; 1999) and others, the WDR will stress the importance of equity, arguing that poverty reflects deprivation in income and consumption, as well as in capabilities, such as health, education and civil liberties. It will maintain that individuals have differing levels of advantage, which, in addition to income, could be understood as their capability and freedom to make choices, and to convert their incomes into well-being—by establishing personal goals and having realistic means of attaining them. Therefore, it will attempt to define those policies and institutional arrangements that will supply the assets—political, social and economic—and opportunities that people in poverty need to transform their lives.

Third, the report will draw on the ‘horizontal inequality’ thesis and, as Frances Stewart (2002) encourages, will expand its focus beyond individual preferences. Accordingly, the report will analyze how poverty and inequality affect different *categories* of people, recognizing that disparities—perceived and real—are among the fundamental causes of conflict, which often culminates in low growth.

Fourth, the report will emphasize the importance of political ‘agency’. Political agency is especially concerned with actions and interventions that are directed at making claims on the state. Fox’s (1996) description of the political construction approach to collective action outlines some of the key conditions. First, political agency and the collective action that supports it depend on available opportunities. ‘Associational life, Fox observes, does not unfold in a vacuum: state or external societal actors can provide either positive or negative sanctions for collective action’. Further—citing Tarrow—collective action emerges largely in response to changes in opportunities that lower the costs of association, ‘reveal potential allies and show where elites and authorities are vulnerable’ (Fox:1090). In ideal circumstances, reformist officials will not only provide positive incentives, they will block negative societal and state sanctions; both of these are important. Second, political agency reflects ideas and motivations, both those historically formed and those that are influenced/shaped by leaders and other actors. As Fox acknowledges, the action-oriented approach to collective action prioritizes those ideas and motivations that lead people—and particularly leaders—to persist despite the odds. Third, ‘scaling up’ is important. The most effectively represented claims are those that transcend the village level and gain higher levels of expression, particularly at the region. Regional representation is considered instrumental in representing the interests of ‘dispersed and oppressed’ people since it can ‘overcome locally confined solidarities, provide representative bargaining power and access to information’ (Fox: 1996:1091)

The outlined conditions suggest that there are institutional arrangements, policy responses and social and political alliances that support reformist collective action and political agency. The WDR is concerned with identifying these. It is also concerned with understanding the processes of interaction—between state and societal actors—that produce different policy outcomes. The Bank has outlined the following core arguments:

- ‘Inequalities in opportunity or capabilities can be a profound source of poverty, both within societies and across nations. Poor people are poor because of inadequate access to schools, health centers, roads, market opportunities, credit and effective

risk-management mechanisms.’

- ‘These [disparities in opportunity and capabilities] are, in turn, typically associated with inequalities of voice or influence both in the shaping of policy and in its effective implementation.’
- ‘Reduction in poverty (in incomes, education, health) is a product of both aggregate development and its distribution.’
- ‘Equity—which the Bank defines in terms of equality of opportunities and ‘fair group recognition—is a potentially important factor affecting both the workings of the investment environment and the empowerment of the poor’.<sup>1</sup>

## 1.1 Paper Overview

This case study is one of a number of commissioned background papers, which should help to illustrate the causes of inequality and the relationships and synergies between policies that promote equity and those that promote development and growth. The Bank has defined two specific objectives:

- To examine the development of inter-group inequalities in Uganda, with particular reference to ethnic communities and women;
- To address the theme of political agency around the relationships that structure these inequalities and the extent to which this agency has influenced policy processes and outcomes.

It is important to note that while the paper does not refute the importance of assets and opportunities or that there is a place for individualism (people are and can be motivated by self-aggrandizing objectives), it encourages more explicit consideration of the relationships that often have substantial influence on when and how these assets and opportunities work. Therefore, it seeks to locate people within social contexts and to emphasize *relational*, as opposed to solely categorical, explanations for poverty and inequality. The paper suggests the following distinctions: *Categorical* approaches to inequality and poverty focus on understanding and addressing the disparities that exist between different classifications of people, such as ‘the chronic poor and ‘the transient poor. *Relational* explanations recognise that inequality and poverty can result from the exercise of power: people can become and remain poor because of the deliberate actions and inaction of others. Therefore, relational explanations focus on the processes and power relations that produce and sustain poverty and inequality, even within defined categories.

The paper argues that a relational perspective exposes issues that are often overlooked but that are highly consequential for poverty and inequality. For example:

- *People, in their roles as social actors, might accept and uphold conditions that perpetuate their own inequality.* People are social creatures and actors. As ‘interdependent social agents’, they expect mutual accountability—which involves mutual susceptibility—and, accordingly, develop standards and processes for approval and disapproval. It may, therefore, be ‘sensible, judicious’; that is, perfectly ‘rational’ for persons to act in ways that uphold shared ways of living and agreed understandings, even where these actions do not serve individual interests (See Barnes 2000, Chapter 5). These relations might sustain a status quo, even an unequal status quo, but those whom outsiders regard as disadvantaged might place great value in the norms

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<sup>1</sup>Source: WDR Outline, 2004

that hold these ‘inequalities’ in place. An understanding of norms and relations of mutual accountability and susceptibility might help explain why people accept hierarchical group structures, where the elite have a clear material advantage; why there are women who not only accept but actively defend unequal relations; why many British subjects accept class distinctions, particularly between themselves and royalty, who have access to more and better opportunities and assets.

- *Power relations—coercive and non-coercive; visible and hidden; agreed and imposed—can cause poverty and help to hold inequalities in place.* As noted, norms of mutual accountability and susceptibility can underpin the status quo. However, what appears as overt agreement and deference may well mask a calculation to postpone resistance or to resist in less visible ways. The important point to note is that power relations—coercive and non-coercive; visible and hidden; agreed and imposed—can cause poverty and help to hold inequalities in place.
- *Power has important implications for political agency* As noted, popular approaches to constructing political agency focus on designing the institutional arrangements, policy responses and securing the social and political alliances that support reformist collective action. Accordingly, group recognition, inclusion and carving space for ‘voice’ are important for the construction of this agency. Further, as Fox notes, the action-oriented approach to collective action prioritizes those ideas and motivations that lead people—and particularly group leaders—to persist despite the odds. The action-oriented approach, with agency at its core, is used to motivate people to change their circumstances and is a source of encouragement for development practitioners: People will not remain in poverty if we give them the opportunities to move out. However, it is also used in ways that place responsibility squarely on people who fail to change their circumstances. It is well known that the agency language can provoke distinctions and inequality at the policy level, differentiating between the non-progressive or undeserving and potentially progressive poor.

Power analysis, appropriately, tempers the action-oriented discourse.

1. First, the analysis above suggests that it is not enough to emphasize those ideas and motivations that encourage people to defend their self-interests. Instead, policymakers should acknowledge that people, as social actors, may choose not to use their power to act in *this* ‘rational way.
2. Second, a realistic approach to promoting political action must seriously consider and confront the multiple ways in which power can constrain people’s choices and capacity for action.
3. Third, collective action and political agency may help to change institutions and policies in important ways; however, it is risky to assume that they will necessarily produce equitable benefits for all the people that associations claim to represent. Stratifications occur even among people who appear to share the same disadvantages. The bases for stratification and exclusions might include social, cultural, political or ideological differences.
4. Fourth and following point 3 above, power analysis encourages a critical approach to designing group-based solutions. Martha Nussbaum’s commentary on Jorge Valadez’s *Deliberative Democracy, Political Legitimacy, and Self-Determination in Multicultural Societies* outlines some of the ways in which groups sustain inequalities. Nussbaum is broadly appreciative of Valadez’s major and careful work on group rights and recognition. She does not doubt the merit of his case. However, Nussbaum outlines three important qualifications:

- (a) Groups [can] contain hierarchies of power: thus giving legal privileges to a group is usually tantamount to giving more power to those already in power within the group;
- (b) Groups have unclear and changing boundaries of membership; group rights often reify the current definition of a group and militate against change;
- (c) There are ‘dispersed groups’ that may be very important in people’s identity, but that do not figure in the usual discussions of group ethno-cultural rights.... Such groups are unlikely to win legal privileges but then, giving legal privileges to [recognised/mainstream] groups makes them more salient by contrast with the ‘dispersed groups’.

These ‘relational’ considerations raise important ‘political’ questions, such as: In what ways and to what extent should we recognize groups? Whose identities does recognition celebrate, and with what consequences? Whose does it deny? In what ways can/does the focus on ‘groups’ produce unintended social consequences, and what are the implications for equity?

5. Similarly, an explicit focus on power encourages an appropriately critical approach to commonly accepted policy solutions, such as inclusion. ‘Inclusion’ is almost always portrayed as a warm and noble ideal that is important for collective action. However, processes of inclusion can produce new exclusions. Much depends on who classifies the excluded and defines the terms on which people are included<sup>2</sup> For example, providing women with employment may result in greater exploitation if the power relations that contribute to subordination are not addressed.

## 1.2 Outline

The case study that follows uses historical data and current qualitative research findings to describe the power relations and processes that underpin gender inequality and inequality across select ethnic groups in Uganda. It seeks to demonstrate that power relations have important implications for political agency and that a comprehensive attack on poverty and inequality must address power. The case study discusses the advantages and limitations of the group approach and highlights what the analysis suggests for policy.

Section 2 summarizes key features of the development of identities and inequalities in Uganda. It starts with the pre-colonial period, and highlights the conditions that produced fluid and segmentary groups in the North and more centralized and class-based societies in the South. The section explains that norms of mutual accountability and susceptibility helped to sustain these groups, even where there were disparities in wealth. Later, elites were able to use these norms to their advantage, amassing assets and wielding power to secure the status quo. One should not overstate the role of consensus. For example, it is doubtful that women were broadly accepting of their positions, though many were acculturated to conform. The low place for women—arguably more severe among some cultures than others—still persists and produces gender inequalities. Section 2 provides a synopsis of how missionaries, anthropologists and colonialists used coercive and non-coercive forms of power to exacerbate inter and intra-group divisions, particularly in ways that laid the basis for explosive conflict. It then summarizes how the immediate postcolonial governments used

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<sup>2</sup>The act of classifying is itself an act of power’, which can produce social dislocation (Eyben 2004). In most countries, colonial history proves that the act of fixing ethnic and other identities and delineating boundaries—both those controlling place and, as Migdal (2004) describes, the mental maps and virtual checkpoints that delineate outsiders and insiders—can have substantial consequences for inequality and poverty.

their power in ways that deepened economic and social inequalities.

Section 3 uses select case examples to demonstrate how power relations at multiple and interconnected levels can cause and sustain inequality and poverty. It reinforces the key messages from the conceptual section of the paper and concludes with practical suggestions for including power in poverty policies. Specifically, the section agrees that there is a strong case for recognition, such as of women and minority ethnic groups; however, it also highlights the challenges and discusses the limitations to the categorical approach.

## 2 The Roots to Inequality in Uganda: The Pre-Colonial Period

At the end of the fifteenth century/beginning of the sixteenth, Nilotic Luo-speakers (from the southern areas of Sudan) migrated into northwest Uganda, and subsequently moved southwards. In the northern regions, they colonised Sudanic-speaking areas, spreading the Luo language, particularly in Acholi, Lango and West Nile. In the South, they joined and attempted to conquer Bantu-speaking peoples (who had started to occupy the area from around 500 B.C. ), establishing the Babito dynasty in Bunyoro and, subsequently, the kingdoms of Ankole and Buganda before proceeding to found others in northwest (mainland) Tanzania (Karugire, 1980). During the same period, another group of people—from among the Ateker—moved from their base in Karamoja and spread from the northeast to the southwest. The Ateker and Luo people intermingled at various points; there was a fusion of cultures and the creation of new ethnic communities, particularly the Langi and Kumam (Karugire,1980:7). Also, as a consequence of these movements, other communities—such as the Jo Abwor—became bilingual and adopted some new customs.

### 2.1 The early significance of the clan

Across the north, the Luo, Sudanic and Ateker speakers established basic forms of government, which gave precedence to the clan. Clans managed their own affairs independently, apart from occasions when it was necessary to collaborate with others, such as during wars or cultural festivities. Within the clans, the main social distinction that existed was between ‘elders and non-elders’. Elders were elected to serve on community councils but were not entitled to special tributes or other privileges. They were responsible for selecting clan leaders who, in turn, chaired the councils. Clan leaders were responsible to the council, and could not make war or peace without consensus. Similarly, elders had joint responsibility for resolving disputes. (Kanyehamba, 2002; Kasozi, 1999) These non-stratified social systems existed in much of North and Eastern Uganda (among the Lango, Madi, Lugbara, Karamojong, Acholi, Iteso, Sebei, Alur, Kakwa, Jonamu, Japadhola, Gwere, Samia, Bagishu Badama, Banyuli, Bagwere) and in some parts of the South (among the Bakiga, Bakongo and Bamba) (Kasozi:17)

Around 1680, Luo-speaking peoples (the Palwo) from northern Bunyoro migrated through Acholi and Karamoja and then to Bukedi and Western Kenya. The Palwo brought new methods of government, including the institution of kingship (with the attending regalia—stools, royal spears and royal drums) and more centralized political administration. However, these new institutions did not change fundamental Luo principles: ‘the belief and practice that all important decisions affecting the community could only be arrived at, not by a single person, but by the consensus of the elders representing the different clans constituting the community’. Therefore, these new kings effectively ‘reigned rather than ruled’, acting as spokespersons for the clan elders (Karugire,1980:9-11).

Across southern kingdoms, there were better environmental conditions, higher concentra-

tions of people and greater opportunity for sedentary occupations; thus, more bureaucratic forms of government emerged. Yet, even in these societies, the clan was of extreme importance. This meant that members defended the interests and integrity of the whole group, and accepted the consequences when one or a few of their kin caused offence. As in the north:

Some individuals were more wealthy than others just as some were poorer than others. The wealthy never lost sight of their obligations to the kinship group just as the poor members of such a group were never slow in claiming their due from them. The point is that nobody could become wealthy without reference to his kinship group for this must have helped him in numerous ways, although his personal merits may contribute towards his success. In such societies, there had never been room for individualism or impersonal governorships requiring equally impersonal regulations to service them (Karugire: 13).

## 2.2 The Development of Intra-Clan Inequalities

Principles of mutual accountability and susceptibility were at the core of clan relations in pre-colonial Uganda and, despite evident societal changes, still have important roles in many contemporary communities. There is a tendency to dismiss such group/kin behaviour as regressive and/or patrimonial. However, such easy categorizations overlook the weight and value of social and family mores, including the part they may play in sustaining visible inequalities and, conversely, the avenues they might provide for redressing them. Section 1.1 suggests that such norms can be upheld through mutual agreement but that there are also coercive and non-coercive relations of power that attempt to hold certain structures, systems, beliefs and practices in place and to dictate the pace and direction of change.

Norms, values and the power relations that underpin them can have long and lasting influence. For example, the gender inequalities that still exist—though among certain groups more than others<sup>3</sup>—have roots in pre-colonial practices and, in some contexts, deepened in the colonial period, as less hierarchical societies came into contact with more centralised and patriarchal ones. Roscoe provides a detailed account of gender relations in Buganda<sup>4</sup>: The ‘Baganda have a deeply rooted objection to women rulers: there has never been a Queen who sat on the throne and when a prince was too young to govern the country, it was the Prime Minister who was appointed Regent’. Kaggwa (1968) explains that ‘women were looked down upon and, in many respects, were completely segregated. They were not permitted to touch things that men were doing.’ Women were generally considered minors and men’s properties. They were unable to inherit property and required a male guardian who had full authority and had to represent them in legal proceedings (Schiller, 1990). Males had to consent and provide an escort when women traveled outside the home and women were required to kneel when saluting a man. Within the home, men enforced dominance, even regulating women’s diets. ‘In peasant households, men rather than women enjoyed all of the available high protein food. Even sitting positions were gendered. Women were always required to sit with their legs placed together and folded back from the knees so that the feet were together under the hips—*okufukamira*. To sit otherwise, such as with their legs straight in front of them or apart, was considered very unbecoming. (Musisi 2001: 174-175)

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<sup>3</sup>Note, for example, that former hunter gather societies, such as the Batwa, have traditionally maintained more equal gender relations.

<sup>4</sup>Buganda had a central role during the colonial period. Through colonial design, it was able to spread its Kiganda norms, including gender beliefs and practices, to the communities it administered

The state supported violent forms of domination: ‘No punishment was inflicted on a man who speared his wife or slave to death’ (Roscoe 1966:20). Women suspected of adultery could be tied and tortured until they confessed and were ‘put in the stocks when they displeased their husbands’ (Roscoe 1966: 23) Men only received like treatment if they seduced married women from the royal household (Musisi 2001: 174). Women understood that submissive behaviour was good behaviour, and this was reinforced through socialization of Kiganda norms and by force: the cultural construction of the good woman. In contrast, women who flouted this order were labelled bad women, and met the disapproval of both men and conforming women (Musisi 2001).

These observations reinforce that unequal relations can be sustained in multiple domains, such as through state and local level institutions; customs, standards and expectations within households and communities; and even by the disadvantaged themselves. Further, they provide a snapshot of the various ways in which power performs, including through more and less forcible processes of socialization.

### **2.2.1 The Development of Class Inequalities**

Even before the colonial period, class inequalities had begun to develop, particularly in the South. These helped to re-shape clan relations and expectations in some societies. For example, at the height of Buganda’s expansion in the nineteenth century, the relationship between the Kabaka and the clans began to change. Up to the seventeenth century, the county or *saza* was the prime unit of administration and clan heads had important political roles; the king relied on their support. However, as the Kingdom expanded, the administrative system grew more complex and the new units—the Bitongole—that developed at sub-county levels grew to have substantial control. As the Kingdom accumulated new territories—thus, not under traditional chief control—kings developed the leverage to reward their own appointed leaders at the expense of traditional chiefs. Therefore, by the time the earliest European explorers—John Speke and James Grant—arrived in 1862, Buganda had become a highly centralized and stratified society, in which ‘every functionary of the state held office at the king’s pleasure’ (Karugire:23).

New divisions and identities emerged as industries developed. Agriculture was the key to Buganda’s economic development and the chiefs’ authority extended to rights and control over land. Similarly, the Kabaka was vested with control over all the land in his jurisdiction, which, in principle, he should administer in the people’s interests. This allocation of land produced and was used to signify class divisions. From Roscoe’s description, the foremost chiefs were the Katikiro, who served as prime minister and chief justice and the Kimbugwe, who was responsible for guarding the King’s umbilical cord. The Katikiro and Kimbugwe were granted estates throughout the country. Neither was required to provide tributes, though they ensured that district chiefs collected and returned the correct amounts. Similarly, these favoured chiefs were not required to contribute labourers for the upkeep of royal buildings. Given the social distinctions, the peasants regarded the Katikiro and Kimbugwe as kings in their own right. Below these principal chiefs were the 10 district chiefs, who had responsibility for administering the country and had to account directly to the Katikiro and through him to the King. (Roscoe, 234) Chiefs had great stature within the villages where, like local kings, they enjoyed vast enclosures, with slaves, wives and men-servants. Even their close relations treated them with the utmost respect.

In contrast, Bunyoro’s major industries comprised both pastoralism and agriculture and, therefore, no special priority was given to land. Eventually, it was pastoralism that became the mainstay of the economy. As this did not require a complex administrative structure, Bunyoro retained a fairly simple system, though its rulers insisted that all administrative agents, many of whom served as military personnel, should own cattle. Eventually, rigid



social divisions developed between Bunyoro's pastoral aristocrats and agricultural serfs. Ankole, too, became a class-based society, in which the Bahima ruling class owned the cattle. However, while in Ankole and Bunyoro territorial leaders had the power to contest the kings' actions, the Kabakas of the more centralised Buganda had substantial authority and were known to frequently use their power over life and death.

### **2.2.2 The Role of Religion**

Therefore, even before the proper advent of colonialism, group identities had become fairly complex, particularly in the more bureaucratic kingdoms. People had begun to develop affiliations, obligations and aspirations beyond their clans, though, in most places the clan still had a prime place. As described, even at this early stage it was difficult to define and respond to the interests of the Baganda or the Banyoro, for example, since different subgroups based on gender and class had begun to emerge. Religion, too, was one of the most significant causes of intra and inter group divisions in Uganda. Religious tensions increased after the arrival of the first Anglican missionaries (in 1876) and the French (Roman Catholic) White Fathers (in 1879). As Pulford(1999) describes it, though both groups of missionaries had the same evangelical objectives, intense rivalries developed because they had fundamentally different interpretations of the scripture. The Protestant-Catholic discord caused deep disunity within Buganda; rivalries also developed between Christianity, Islam and traditional Kiganda religions. Eventually, the Protestants and Catholics were to form political parties, in opposition to the Muslim and traditional groups.

There were brief periods of Protestant-Catholic alliances. For example, when in 1888, Kabaka Mwanga plotted with the traditionalists to eradicate all foreign religions, the Roman Catholic, Anglican Protestant and Muslim political parties collaborated and overthrew him. Subsequently, the Muslims expelled the Christian groups from government and Buganda was turned into an Islamic state. Excluded from power, the Catholic and Protestant factions agreed that if/when they returned to government, they would divide power and resources equally between them; Muslims and local religious groups would be denied. Later, when Muslims were removed from power, Catholics and Protestants controlled state resources, as they had hitherto agreed. The Catholic and Protestant parties grew to have strong political links and to defend the position of the metropolitan powers they represented. However, this Christian collaboration did not last. In 1892, Catholics and Protestants fought to control Buganda. The Protestant victory relegated Roman Catholics to a secondary position and marginalized the Muslims. Anglican Protestantism became the prominent religion and, both during and after the colonial period, was the basis for favoured access to resources.

### **2.3 Summary**

This section described the fluidity of ethnic identities during the pre-colonial period. It highlighted the centrality of the clan and the norms of mutual accountability and susceptibility between elders and non-elders, young and old, wealthy and poor. Intra-group inequality existed and was allowed because both the poor and rich were aware of their mutual obligations. People believed that 'nobody could become wealthy without reference to his kinship group'. The clan had a powerful influence on its members' conduct. As social acceptance was important, people tried not to contravene the rules, as this would bring shame and retribution on the entire clan. This was the custom across clans. These were not individualistic societies; they were motivated by communal interests.

The section described the processes through which more centralized and class-based systems developed and how the powerful used their status to secure their positions, capitalizing on founding norms but recognizing that their legitimacy still rested on popular approval.

Even in these more centralized societies, people had a sense of belonging and upheld core clan principles. However, not all persons were able to determine the terms of their engagement. Traditionally, women and slaves had low status, though it is believed that women's positions and roles differed across cultures. The section provides important lessons on the nature of groups. First, it shows that people can uphold norms that sustain inequalities. Second, it confirms that groups contain hierarchies of power and multiple identities, which raises the important question of whose identity and interests are actually being represented and prioritized by group recognition.

## **2.4 Colonialism and the Cultivation of 'Group Inequalities' in Uganda**

Though inter-group inequalities and conflicts preceded the colonial period—groups seized and raided each other's territories and Bunyoro, then Buganda became the more wealthy and powerful states—there was also ample inter-group trade and group identities were fairly loose; in many places, outsiders could be absorbed and acculturated. Karugire (1980:30) suggests that 'even where hostile encounters occurred, the objective and, more importantly, the scale of destruction was never of such intensity or duration that they could create enduring enmity. In Uganda, there were no such phenomena as inter-ethnic total wars'. However, the colonial period capitalised on old inequalities, created new ones and attempted to 'fix' group identities in a manner that has proved costly in Uganda. The following subsections highlight the main sources and consequences of these divisions.

### **2.4.1 Colonial Administration and the Privileged Place of the Baganda Elite**

The colonialists favoured the Baganda, whom Henry Stanley described as 'an extraordinary people, as different from the barbarous pirates of Uvuma, and the wild, mop-headed men of Eastern Usukuma, as the British in India are from their Afridi fellow-subjects, or the white Americans of Arkansas from the semi-civilized Choctaws' (Pulford, 1999: 23) Buganda's centralised structure resembled the British administrative system in some respects, and the colonialists discovered that it was possible to pursue profitable relations with the state elite. Therefore, the principal parties to the 1900 Uganda Agreement (under which Uganda became a British protectorate) were the Baganda oligarchy (who wanted to retain their traditional power and desired long-term British military support to guarantee their security) and Johnston, the representative of the British Crown (who needed to secure the best arrangement feasible for Britain's economic profit).

The finalized Agreement: (1) stipulated the terms under which future Kabakas were to be selected and made recognition of Buganda dependent on its loyalty to the Protectorate, including its administrative systems; (2) defined the boundaries of Buganda; (3) imposed hut and gun taxes and declared that the Protectorate had prime rights to any minerals and sources of wealth discovered; and (4) reallocated land, such that the elite—particularly the 'great chiefs' and the Royal Household—retained political control (Karugire: 103) Peasants now became tenants of the new Baganda mailo (mile-owning) landlords, the majority of whom were Protestants. Sathyamurthy (1986) argues that the Uganda Agreement both legitimised the social changes that had already taken place in Buganda (among religious groups and among clan heads, peasants and the oligarchy) and triggered new tensions and conflicts within Buganda and between the Baganda and other ethnic groups. Among the Baganda, economic inequalities increased as the new landowners managed and exploited the peasantry.

#### **2.4.2 New Dimensions to Ethnic Inequalities**

Baganda chiefs were instrumental in ‘mediating British rule’ or, as Mamdani describes, in instituting ‘decentralised despotism’. Native administrations followed ethnic boundaries, except in areas where it was not feasible to form a district (such as West Nile, Bugisu, Bukedi, Toro and Kigezi). Rather than utilizing indigenous leaders, the British deployed the Baganda and its Kiganda (centralised and hierarchical) model of administration throughout Uganda. At the local level, appointed chiefs held judicial, legislative, executive and administrative power. Under the guise of native laws, they forced labour, crops, sales and contributions. Revolts against Baganda rule became common throughout Uganda. The Banyoro were particularly resentful, and not without cause: Baganda armies had helped the British to conquer the Banyoro (who were, reputedly, fiercely resistant to colonial incursions) and the Basoga. As a reward to Buganda, sizeable portions of Bunyoro land—the Lost Counties—were transferred to Buganda, and the residents made tenants of the Kabaka and his chiefs.

#### **2.5 The Development of Racial Inequalities**

Centralized administration (via direct rule) excluded native institutions and practices and demanded conformity with European directives. Kanyeihamba (2002) describes what this meant for legal administration. Up until 1920, all executive and legislative powers were invested in the British Commissioner. Subsequently, in 1920, a new Consolidating Order in Council was promulgated, and this provided for executive and legislative councils. However, up until 1926 when one Indian was appointed as an unofficial member, all the councillors were Europeans. The 1926 provision was designed to appease the Indian community and to coordinate the interests of the European and Indian commercial groups, though it was important that Indian involvement was, as far as was possible, restricted. (Indians were brought to Uganda as indentured labourers from the nineteenth century. After the period of indentureship ended, many remained and engaged in commerce.) Africans, despite their dissatisfaction with being excluded from government, were considered ‘too backward to contribute much to the development of the country’. Africans were not included until 1945, under the firm stipulation that representatives were to be ‘men of substance and authority, of ripe experience and possessed of a developed sense of responsibility that may be expected of those holding high office in the Native Governments and Administrations’. Further, ‘only Buganda and the Western and Eastern provinces were to be represented’. Northern involvement was denied since, as the governor claimed, ‘their tribal and administrative organisations have not yet in all districts advanced to the stage requiring the creation of centralised native executives’.

These attitudes eventually pervaded the churches. Pulford (1999) describes how churches began to charge fees based on race and how missionary schools taught the geography and history of the metropolitan countries. Museveni’s (1997) biography notes the ways in which religion fostered social distinctions: ‘Christianisation’ involved an element of modernisation and this demanded changes—which penetrated to the deepest aspects our traditional culture. It even affected our eating habits because keeping to traditional ways was considered pagan and ungodly’.

#### **2.6 New Dimensions to Regional Inequalities**

The British actively stratified the kingdoms. Though Ankole and Toro did not enjoy Buganda’s special standing, they were also given Agreement status; however, Bunyoro was treated as ‘enemy territory’. It was not until 1907 that the British adopted a more con-

ciliatory stance, though by now the Banyoro were deeply resentful, particularly of British discourtesy and ‘maltreatment of the royal family’ (Karugire: 108). The British had little use for the Northern regions. In 1906, Commissioner Bell described the north as ‘a grave economic liability’ and promptly downgraded its status to that of a district. Bell argued that ‘the communities of that region did not have any concept of institutional authority, such as was to be found in the Bantu kingdoms of the South. [Further], the Kiganda model of administration would neither be understood nor accepted in northern Uganda’ (Ibid: 113).

Subsequently, the North was used as a reservoir for labour. When, in 1925, the new Director of Agriculture started to encourage cotton production in the North, he was summarily advised that ‘the policy of government is at present to refrain from actively stimulating the production of cotton or other economic crops in outlying districts on which it is dependent for a supply of labour for carrying out of essential services in the central producing districts’. This economic zoning of the country perpetuated the neglect and underdevelopment in the North and fomented regional tensions. It also ingrained feelings of superiority in the South and inferiority (at least in terms of production) in the North.

The British also used the North to supply soldiers for its army. The Acholi succeeded the Nubians (Ugandans of Sudanese descent), who up until the Sudanese mutiny (1897) were regarded as the ‘best material for soldiery in Africa’. Lwanga-Lunyiigo argues that the British ascribed to a ‘martial tribes’ thesis that prioritised the Nilotic and Sudanese people of Northern Uganda. These groups were considered the most satisfactory fit for the theory that soldiers should be of a different race, geographically distant and even hostile to the main groups. The Acholi were recruited to the King’s Africa Rifles, with the mandate to ‘take action against any local group(s) in the Protectorate which engaged in active opposition to the Administration’. Lwanga-Lunyiigo is clear that ‘colonialism built up the army as an instrument of coercion as a pacifying army, not as a people’s force to ensure defence against external aggression’. Furthermore, much of Uganda, including the Northerners, came to believe that only groups from the North had the right to bear arms. He emphasizes that this was a myth that both Milton Obote and Idi Amin exploited, and the source of ‘the most bitter legacies of colonialism’.

## 2.7 Inequality and Language

The lack of a common Ugandan language helped to perpetuate inter-group and inter-regional conflicts (Kasozi 1999). According to recent estimates, 70% of Ugandans speak one of the Bantu languages. Bantu ethnic groups are concentrated in the South and include the Ganda, Soga, Ankole, Nyoro, and Toro. Western Nilotic speakers (Acholi, Lango and Alur) live in the North; Eastern Nilotic speakers (Karamojong, Teso, and Turkana) live in the Northeast and Sudanic speakers (the Lugbara) in the northwest. Though the British government had introduced Kiswahili into the primary school curriculum, it subsequently declared that all vernaculars, including Kiswahili, were subordinate to English. Meanwhile, the Christian hierarchy discouraged Kiswahili, regarding it as the language of Islam; the Baganda discounted it as the language of ‘prostitutes and thieves’ and, subsequently, as it was used with the army, it became known as ‘the language of violence’. Therefore, English became the official language for administration. Kasozi (1999) notes that as it is not common among the peasants, English is another ‘stratifying agent’, dividing society into ‘the privileged who speak it and the deprived who do not’.

## 2.8 The Post-Colonial Period

The previous section showed how group identities, particularly of the Baganda, became fractured and more complex, as people developed additional allegiances, such as to religion and class. This did not mean a rejection of the clan. Karugire is quick to qualify that clan principles were still treasured. However, the new exploitative roles of some clan leaders eventually ruptured groups. In addition to these divisions, regional inequalities intensified and racial and ethnic inequalities grew under the British's policies of favouritism. Yet, despite the colonial precedent, few would have predicted Uganda's considerable post-Independence decline or the violence and mayhem that accompanied it. Instead, there was an expectation that economic growth would continue, with a leading role for the Baganda elite. Up to 1986, when the National Resistance Movement (NRM)—under Yoweri Museveni's leadership—took over the government by coup, post-Independence political leaders, particularly Milton Obote and IDI Amin, substantially deepened the divisions in Uganda, using religion, ethnicity and politics to secure their regimes.

Kasozi (1999) analyses the social conditions that produced the violence in Uganda, and categorizes them as social inequality (generated by unequal trading relationships and local, regional, ethnic, religious and gender disparities); the existence of sub-states, ethnic and religious factionalism; poor conflict resolution mechanisms; absence of an indigenous property-owning class; the post-Independence decrease in national production; parochial, weak and poorly educated leaders; and the language problem. He notes the following:

- 'On the eve of independence, colonial Uganda was a resource-rich country' that 'had long been paying the costs of its administration and by 1916 was no longer a burden to the taxpayer';
- 'After independence, Uganda, unlike Kenya, attracted no substantial foreign investment or aid, and unlike other dependent ex-colonies Uganda's subsistence sector was not only self-supporting but very strong';
- 'Life expectancy was for a long time as impressive as that of some industrialized countries; the literacy rate was high, road and communications systems were good and medical services reasonable';
- By 1985, 'over one million Ugandans were killed; overall life expectancy' was reduced 'from over fifty to forty years; infant mortality increased from 91.9/1000 in 1973 to 100/1000 in 1984; maternal mortality increased; the ratio of doctors per population decreased from 1/10000 to 1/25000; 'ignorance, disease and poverty became the norm of many Ugandans of all social classes'.

This was the context in which the NRM launched its Ten-Point Programme in 1986, and outlined its plan to build an 'independent but integrated self-sustaining economy', which in turn required democracy, security and regional and global cooperation.

### Building Democracy

In order to build democracy, the NRM expanded Resistance Councils (RCs) to the entire country. RCs, which had previously been established in the areas under guerrilla control, operated on the principle that decision-making power, authority and policy-making responsibilities should also be located at the local levels and that citizens should be able to reach and influence their representatives and hold them to account for the quality of services. The Local Council (LC) system that replaced it operated on the same principles. Uganda's highly decentralized LC system comprises five administrative levels ranging from

the village (LC1) through the parish (LC2), sub-county (LC3), county (LC4) and district (LC5). Representatives are directly elected at the LC1 to LC3 levels; however, one third of all council seats are reserved for women and the Constitution allows for affirmative action for all marginalized groups. In order to ensure broad-based representation at the highest levels and to ‘de-marginalize’ select groups, the 1995 Uganda Constitution provides for a unicameral Parliament comprised of ‘members directly elected to represent constituencies; one woman representative for every district; such numbers of representatives of the army, youth, workers, persons with disabilities and other groups as Parliament may determine’.

### **Countering Sectarianism**

As stipulated in the Transitional Provisions of the Constitution, the NRM was instituted in government until the first elections were held under the Movement system in 1996. The Constitution differentiates between the Movement political system, the multiparty political system and any other democratic and representative political system. Under the Movement system, Uganda was to be a distinct no-party democracy and political parties were prohibited from appealing for membership on the basis of gender, ‘ethnicity, religion or any other sectional division’. The Movement defined itself as a broad based, inclusive and non-partisan political system, in which anyone can present himself for election, and in which decisions are based on merit rather than political affiliation. It sees itself as an effective mechanism for countering sectarianism.

The Movement has opened but regulated space. Though President Museveni has now agreed to multipartyism, his original argument was that a very poor country with such a divisive history needed to be protected from the political parties and sectarian tendencies that destroyed it; a multi-party system required a more mature level of development. For some time, the system worked, such that even more strident critics acknowledged that the Movement deserved to be credited for improving and sustaining peace and security in most parts of the country, allowing a fairly free press, and encouraging participation through democratically elected local government. This, much more contained though still unstable, context provided a suitable basis for Uganda’s Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP).

#### **2.8.1 The Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP)**

The PEAP originated in 1995 with the GoU’s recognition that economic growth was not benefiting the majority of the poor. A poverty analysis was commissioned in 1996, which revealed that 66% of Ugandans were not meeting basic needs. This, given its socialist roots and stated objectives, was very unsettling for the government. After wide consultation with different line ministries, local government, academic institutions and civil society organizations, the government formulated a poverty action plan, which it initiated in 1997. The 2000 PEAP/PRSP established four major objectives:

- Creating a framework for economic growth and transformation: Pillar 1 emphasizes rapid and sustainable economic growth and structural transformation (focusing on economic openness, and on modernising agriculture, manufacturing and services);
- Good governance and security: Pillar 2 addresses transparency of public actions, respect for human rights, zero tolerance for corruption, security and accountability);
- Increasing the ability of the poor to raise their incomes (through employment promotion and improved access to services and information);
- Enhanced quality of life for the poor (emphasizing health, education, housing, service delivery and information)

In principle, Uganda's poverty policies should be guided by other pressing and complementary objectives. For example, the 1997 National Gender Policy stipulates that all development planning, resource allocation and programme implementation should be conducted from a gender perspective. This was an important policy step that reflected the influence of—and provided further incentives for—women's lobby groups.

The LC system described above is central to the PEAP agenda. In principle, all levels of local government should participate in the planning and budget process. Views from the village level should feed into the sub county and then district plans. Therefore, the resulting district development plans (DDP) should be a true reflection of local needs.

## 2.8.2 Early Results

Up to the late 1990s, there were substantial gains in poverty reduction. The (national) poverty headcount index fell from 56% in 1992 to 49% in 1995 and 35% in 1999. In the rural areas, it fell from 60% (1992) to 54% (1995) and then to 39% in 1999 (Appleton 2001). Studies of 'Uganda's Recovery' since 1986 note that the government has provided a suitable context for growth: there is 'reasonable internal peace' instead of the widespread violence that existed. Second, the government has been able to check predatory taxation, particularly on exports. Liberalization of the foreign exchange rate and of coffee marketing is considered important for growth. Third, the government managed to secure fiscal discipline, which increased the predictability of the currency. These dramatic improvements benefited households, allowing them to gradually move from subsistence-based to market activities. Between 1992 and 1996, growth in cash crop production accounted for 48% of the reduction in poverty, compared with 14% for food crops. However, between 1996 and 2000, food crop production accounted for 43% of the reduction in poverty, compared with 27% for cash crops. (Appleton 2001; Morrissey and Verschoor 2003) Throughout the 1990s, the government's economic strategy had also begun to profit firms, though these were yet to recover from the Asian deportation in 1972 and the 'shrinking enterprise sector, dissaving and decumulation of assets' that occurred between 1971 and 1985 (Reinikka and Svensson, 2001). There was evidence that a more efficient tax policy was required, particularly for trade, and that corruption was having an adverse effect on growth. Nevertheless, Collier and Reinikka (2001) were assured that the government would be able to tackle these obstacles.

Improved security, health care, electricity and infrastructure were also important for improved incomes. Compared with much of the South, the Northern region remained more susceptible to the decline in cotton prices and agricultural opportunities, insecurity, low levels of education, welfare and infrastructure development (Deninger and Okidi, 2002). Reports also indicate that debt relief benefited poverty policy. Morrissey and Verschoor note that; 'the ratio of debt interest payments to exports fell from 35% in 1997/8 to 10% in 2000/1'; over the same period, the ratio of debt payments to tax revenue has also fallen from 22% to 11%.

However, MFPED recently acknowledged that poverty levels have increased from 35% in 2000 to approximately 38% in 2003, and that inequality has deepened. Among the more frequently cited concerns are the long-standing (North-South) regional inequalities; social inequalities, such as persistent gender disparities and perceived inequalities across ethnic groups; and deepening chronic poverty. There are varied explanations for why inequality and poverty persist, particularly among some groups of people, and policy recommendations tend to focus on supplying economic incentives and opportunities and on opening political space. The next section uses select case examples to demonstrate how power relations at multiple and interconnected levels can cause and sustain inequality and poverty. It reinforces the key messages from the conceptual section of the paper and concludes with practical suggestions for including power in poverty policies.

### 3 The Power and Processes Underlying Ethnic Inequality

#### 3.1 ‘Patrimonialism’ and Inequality: Two Views

It is difficult to gauge the actual inequalities across ethnic groups, as poverty data is not disaggregated in this way. Further, there is some reluctance to conduct this type of analysis, given fears of potential social and political costs. However, there are widespread perceptions of inter-ethnic group inequality and claims of ethnic favouritism at high levels of government. Participatory poverty appraisals also provide accounts of ‘ethnic bias’ at local government levels and there is evidence that despite the formal goals and principles of decentralization, resources are, in places, diverted to ethnic associates, at the expense of other groups. Hickey (2003:36) argues that the government’s project of ‘replacing ethnic politics and patrimonialism with accountable governance and citizenship has faltered if not entirely failed’ because of a number of policy lapses:

- *Its inability to insulate policy making processes from local elite pressure.* One consequence is that the government has succumbed to elite demands for local autonomy and increased the number of administrative districts (from 39 to over 56). Most of the new districts coincide with areas of high single ethnic group concentration which, Hickey contends, ‘marks a return to the ethnic-territorial basis of governance that the Movement claimed to reform’.
- *The failure to reform land ownership.* The current system combines state, customary and commercial land ownership. Consequently, Hickey notes, ‘the local politics of citizenship in Uganda is divided between the electoral and representative system whereby the rights of participation are accorded to all residents, and the politics of belonging that surrounds local land landownership, and which remains subject to ethnic territorialism’.
- *The failure to develop an entrepreneurial middle class that is not dependent on the state.*

Hickey provides an example of how these ‘policy failures’ have affected social and economic inequalities across ethnic groups:

In Mbale, land ownership is closely associated with clan membership, which in turn related directly to length of settlement in a given area. The 2002 local elections at both LC5 and LC3 levels saw power return to the dominant land-owning group. As such, the poorest groups are subject to a form of double-exclusion in both the local political economy of development and politics of governance.

Cases such as these are often used to explain how patrimonialism and corruption dispossess some groups and incur substantial economic costs. The customary recommended course of action is to design appropriate accountability mechanisms in order to expose and sanction such behaviour and, as Hickey maintains, to develop rules and procedures that are transparent and not susceptible to elite manipulation and capture. Furthermore, many policymakers envision a democratic environment, in which people value and celebrate their ethnic allegiances but also support and, ideally, prioritize a national Ugandan identity.

However, while claims of patrimonialism and corruption may be valid in many instances, these labels are in cases wantonly applied and, as a consequence, misinterpret and misrepresent relationships and norms that have been central to some clans since the precolonial period. Section 2 suggested that in some clans and among some ethnic groups, ‘responsibility to kin’ transcended the colonial and post-colonial periods despite the substantial



disruption. Thus, one interviewee described the shame of providing for the rest of the community before catering for the family (Personal interview, 2003), while a respondent in one PPA exercise explained that ‘when one is in a crisis and this person is your relative you are also in a crisis’ (PPA1: Kisoro Report). Such norms of kin responsibility and accountability have had an important role in checking intra-clan poverty, even though they may also contribute to inter-clan inequalities. While it is true that leaders can—and perhaps often do—capitalize on these norms for their own personal advantage and interests, it is important to understand that within some clans and ethnic groups, such long-held beliefs still hold and are considered legitimate standards for social relationships. As will be demonstrated below in the case of the Batwa, by discounting the value and role of these norms, policy-makers not only mis-recognize groups but they can uproot a key resource for addressing intra-group poverty and inequality. The value of the relational perspective is that it demonstrates the complex relations and processes that underpin inequality and poverty and suggests that multifaceted and sensitive responses may be required.

### 3.2 People May Uphold Their Own Inequality: Examples From Buganda

There are many case examples which reinforce that group recognition must entail *knowledge* of values and norms. The historical overview outlined the development of intra-clan inequalities in Buganda and suggested that particularly since the colonial period, this has resulted in growing disaffection among the Baganda, as people contested and breached boundaries. One prominent Muganda explained her reluctance to support officials with the Kingdom:

The Lukiko [Buganda parliament] has transformed the progressive dynamic interest into self-interest. People are only there to rule, gain and to utilize us without acknowledging the resource. (Personal interview, July 2003)

However, the Baganda elite still maintains a substantial base of support across social classes and age groups. People place tremendous value on traditional norms and expectations. Wealthy and poor Baganda are willing to sacrifice their earnings and talents for the Kingdom and their Kabaka. During the recent debates on Federo, many Baganda demonstrated their fervent loyalty to the Kabaka. Federo restates the claims for self-government that Buganda has been making since 1900. Under a federal system, Buganda would handle its internal affairs, including poverty reduction programmes. It would also be able to preserve itself as a unit. As the Katikkiro explains:

If effective steps are not taken now to protect a culture of the Baganda, as more and more people settle in Buganda, Buganda culture may well become extinct while the cultures of other areas which are not exposed to mass migration, are preserved. Some areas of Uganda have resorted to other and more drastic methods of ejecting non-natives from their areas. Buganda, since 700 years ago, has always welcomed, and will continue to welcome with open arms all other people. But it is important that this will not mean other people overwhelming Buganda cultural heritage to the extent of making Buganda culture and its culture institutions extinct

The Baganda leadership have been strategic in promoting this. First, it has garnered substantial support among the people. In response to an initial Cabinet decision not to grant Federo, the Kabaka cancelled his 10th coronation anniversary celebrations and declared that his people will be mourning, not celebrating: ‘The Baganda shall wear blackcloth around their waists as a sign of mourning. [Further], the mourning will be marked by prayers in all mosques this Friday, and in the churches on Saturday and Sunday. There have been

numerous pro-Federo demonstrations and ‘study sessions, which have been widely supported by the young and old. Federo was so effectively politicised that ‘angry mothers threatened to undress and bare their breasts before President Museveni, which is a curse in Buganda, and people have been demanding that the Kabaka go into exile so that they can launch another ‘liberation struggle. People have demonstrated their loyalty to the Kabaka and the Kingdom in ways that some Western policymakers might consider ‘irrational’ . For example, in one interview<sup>5</sup>, the Katikkiro explained how people are willing to sacrifice for the purpose of the Kingdom:

When we were organizing the Kabaka’s wedding, we did not have the resources and the Kingdom cannot beg. However, we almost collapsed. People were fighting to give money. Similarly our Ministers in the Lukiko are not paid. They work for free. If we do not have money to run things, they put money in.

One commentator explained how these belief systems have undermined the goals of some early poverty reduction programmes.

When the poverty alleviation programme was first implemented, it was passed by the Kabaka and through him to the people. The people felt bad that the Kabaka was giving to them and so gave the money back to the Kabaka. This is because there is a principle that if you get some money, you should return it to the pool.

These examples reinforce the proposition outlined in Section 1: ‘people, in their roles as social actors, might accept and uphold conditions that perpetuate their own inequality’.

### **3.3 Political Agency and Interest Representation**

As the previous sections outline, Uganda has a history of ethnic inequality, which especially favoured sections of the Baganda elite. This distinction is important, for in determining policies for group recognition, it would not be prudent to view all Baganda as prominent, well-advantaged and capable of making claims on the state. This would overlook the subgroups, such as of class, religion, gender, age, political affiliation. As one respondent suggested: ‘the poor Batwa and Baganda might have many more similarities than rich and poor Baganda’.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, categorical definitions of ‘the poor’ hide the disparities among people in poverty; those normally classified as ‘the poor’ are not homogenous. Yet, group classifications and perceptions of homogeneity help to sustain inter-group divisions in Uganda; they prevent people from recognizing the ways in which their interests and identities coincide. Accordingly, there is tendency to regard all Baganda as possessing the influence and presence of prominent sections of the elite and as profiting, disproportionately from state favours. The issues are complex. All Ugandan governments have had to deal with the Baganda and have discovered that political stability and legitimacy in the Central region require sensitive and strategic political management. President Museveni has a sense of obligation to the Baganda, who suffered major losses in his liberation struggles. He is also aware that he needs Baganda support both to win elections and within the party. The President has, therefore, brokered an arrangement in which the Kingdom is, in principle, restricted to a cultural role in return for his re-instituting the Kabaka and returning some of his lands. Correspondingly, the President has restored the cultural authority of other kingdoms, such as Toro and Ankole. This select recognition has had political costs. To groups such as the Bakonzo/Bamba (the Banyarwenzururu), for example, the government has not

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<sup>5</sup>Personal interview with Katikkiro of Buganda, July 2003

<sup>6</sup>Personal Interview, July 2003

adopted a consistent approach to all requests for cultural recognition. They feel that they have been persistently marginalized and denied their human, political and cultural rights. Kabanankye (2003) notes that the majority of the Banyarwenzururu, and particularly the youth, support the Rwenzururu Movement and its demands for the institutionalisation of the Obusinga bwa Rwenzururu. People believe that official recognition of the Obusinga will promote social progress and improve the self-esteem of the Banyarwenzururu. There are fears that these unmet cultural requests will continue to provoke conflict within the area, and particularly among the youth.

As Van Acker (2000:166) concludes, ‘the current restoration bill in a sense reintroduced a duality created by colonial powers, in which they accorded formal powers to certain nations and none to smaller and more dispersed ones’. Northern communities are especially aggrieved and, according to Doornbos, many believe that their interests will not be acknowledged and addressed unless they achieve the prominence of the Baganda: ‘For some areas of northern Uganda, the formation of a state within the state of Uganda has been proposed in order to acquire a status comparable to that of Buganda when negotiating with the central government, while there has also been a call for recognition of Lango as a state within the future framework of Uganda’ (cited in Van Acker 2000:166).

Linz, Stepan and Yadav (2004) have produced detailed recommendations for building what they describe as a state-nation, as opposed to a nation-state. They argue that the nation-state approach, which has its roots in the French tradition of cultural and political homogeneity, is increasingly untenable in countries with ‘politically salient cultural and/or linguistic diversity’. They support constitutional arrangements that ‘respect the legitimate political expression of active socio-cultural cleavages; try to accommodate these without privileging any one claim; and seek to build a sense of political community by emphasizing multiple identities’. This stance is based on the view ‘that identities are not fixed or primordial; that even seemingly disparate groups may share common interests and objectives; that emphasizing these common bonds is critical for building tolerant societies; and that the more restrictive nation-state mindset may no longer be feasible in divided societies, where the issue of identity is being increasingly politicized. However, there is ample evidence that structural reforms may fail to bridge divisions, particularly in highly unequal societies. In ideal circumstances, governments would opt for constitutional arrangements that accommodate and respect diversity and, importantly, aim for socially just policies that preclude individual and group discrimination and deprivations’ (Moncrieffe, 2004:35)

### **3.4 The Mis-Recognition of the Twa**

It is clear that without measures such as these, some ethnic communities, such as the Batwa, will be persistently disadvantaged. Batwa (described in many parts as ‘pygmy peoples’) live in southwestern Uganda, eastern DRC, Rwanda and Burundi. The total Batwa population across all three countries is currently estimated at between 70,000 and 87,000. In each country, Batwa account for merely 0.02 and 0.7 percent of the population and, as Lewis concludes, ‘do not constitute a political force or constituency of any significance’ (Lewis, 2000:5). Despite some disputes, the Batwa are widely identified as the indigenous peoples in these areas and, accordingly, are entitled to rights under the United Nation’s human rights framework. However, the Batwa view themselves as people who have been colonized by agriculturalists, pastoralists and Europeans and denied fundamental human rights, including to the lifestyle and livelihoods of their choice.

Batwa are former hunter-gatherers who, despite having to change their occupations, still retain many of the characteristics of these older societies. Analysts suggest that there is a distinction between agricultural and pastoral societies—where work is often hierarchically organized and people have to invest their labour over a long period before accumulating

returns—and hunter-gatherer societies, where people gain immediate return for their labour and place strong emphasis on ‘obligatory non-reciprocal sharing’(Lewis:8). Individuals who have more than they need are required to provide for those who have less, and those in need often enforce their right to claim shares from those better off. As Lewis explains, ‘demand-sharing and other leveling mechanisms ensure the maintenance of relative equality’.

Contemporary Batwa tend to classify themselves as either foresters, fisherfolk or potters. Of these, the smallest group are the fisherfolk, estimated at between 3000 and 4000. The majority of these Batwa live in the DRC, around Lake Kivu and on Idjwi Island; others live around Lakes Tanganyika and Rweru (Lewis: 9). Foresters—known as Impunyu—now approximately 7000, live in southwestern Uganda, northern and southern Rwanda and throughout the Kivu province of the DRC. These Batwa are semi-nomadic people. They still have regular access to the forests, though local administrators consider this access illegal. Foresters tend to set up small camps, largely comprised of clan members. They hunt small mammals; collect tubers, leaves and honey; use medicinal plants; and trade forest products for food or cash. Foresters rarely engage in farming. It is common practice that when a member of the camp dies, foresters bury their dead and promptly move the site. The largest group of Batwa—some 60,000 to 76,000—describe themselves as potters. The Batwa resorted to pottery, craft work and farm labour, largely in an attempt to find different sources of livelihood, as increasing portions of the forests were turned into farmland. Initially, pottery was the women’s occupation but became increasingly popular and, eventually, ‘a symbol of Batwa identity’. (Lewis: 10) Yet, even pottery has substantially lost its value. Land pressures have forced many farmers to reclaim clay marshes; some have begun to charge for access to clay. Batwa also have less access to firewood and, in some areas, ‘risk beatings, fines and imprisonment if caught collecting the grasses they require for pot firing’ (Lewis:10). Thus, many Batwa—including children as young as 4 years—have had to resort to begging (demand-sharing) for survival.

### **3.4.1 Forest Conservation and the Batwa in Uganda**

According to historical records and oral accounts, the Batwa were the first to inhabit the high altitude forests in Kigezi-Bufumbira, southwestern Uganda; that is, up until the mid-sixteenth century when the first Batutsi arrived in the area. (Subsequently, nine Kiga Bahutu clans arrived in 1750; these were on the run from Batutsi rule in Rwanda) The majority of these Batwa were former hunter-gatherers, though some lived in savannahs and forest lake environments. While the Batutsi recognized Batwa ownership of these forests, they also demanded tributes, as representatives of the Batutsi king in Rwanda.

In the 1830s, a Mututsi prince, Mpama, was sent to rule in Bufumbira. His entourage comprised fierce Batwa archers, the ancestors of four of the contemporary Batwa settlements in Bufumbira. The Batutsi established their rule over the Bahutu clans, some of whom resisted, and the Batwa had a crucial role in helping to secure Batutsi command of the area. By the early twentieth century, some Batwa held positions in the royal courts and were rewarded with farmlands. Some of these Batwa—such as Semasaka, a wealthy Mutwa—became famous and influential. There are records of Batwa resistance to Batutsi rule and of such ferocity that the Batutsi rulers required Belgian assistance. In 1912, British colonialists took over the Kigezi-Bufumbira area. With Batwa assistance, the Mututsi prince, Nyindo attempted, though unsuccessfully, to resist British incursions.

By the 1930s, the Batutsi and Bahutu farmers had greatly depleted the Kigezi-Bufumbira forest areas and the British initiated a policy for protecting some of these as forest reserves. The Batwa were expelled from the forests in order to create the Bwindi, Mgahinga and Echuya Forest Reserves. Forest exploitation still continued under Amin’s rule (1971-1984), largely through non-Batwa led commercial hunting, timber extraction and mining.

In 1991, the World Bank provided a grant of US\$4.3 million to establish the Mgahinga and Bwindi Impenetrable Forest Conservation Trust, which was intended to conserve the bio-diversity of the parks. Supplementary funding was provided by USAID and the Dutch Embassy and these increased the Trust funds to approximately US\$7 million (Zaninka:177). Of this, 20% of the funds were earmarked for park management; 20% for research and 60% to support local community projects. The Uganda National Park authorities now began to enforce the Batwa's prior exclusion from the forests. The Bank required that the government assess the impact on indigenous peoples and follow defined compensation procedures. However, the National Park authorities have only lately admitted that 'the process of evicting the Batwa did not take into account Batwa realities and left them with nothing' (Zaninka, 2003:170). The fundamental cause—which is of extreme pertinence to the theme of this paper—is that the Bank and local policy-makers presumed that the Batwa and their neighbours constituted a community. There was no attempt to understand the power relations beneath the broadly accepted categories. Zaninka (2001:171) records a reflective interview from one local park official:

All communities were considered as though they were a uniform group. Information was never segregated to reflect any unique characteristic and Batwa property was often included in that of their landlords. Batwa views on compensation were not sought. The valuing was flawed and the donors determined the procedure for compensation. They insisted on payment through the bank using cheques.

Instead of giving them cash, alternative land should have been bought for them as a group. The compensation was given with the view that they would acquire alternative land on an individual basis and yet the Batwa prefer to live in groups, maintaining kinship ties.

These observations raise important policy issues about how groups are defined and what constitutes recognition. As the 1996 assessment (Kabanankye and Wily) of the Batwa situation uncovered, this 'mis-recognition' of the Twa allowed their disadvantage to persist.

The 1996 assessment recommended that 'in view of the Batwa's very strong attachment to ancestral territory, any redistribution of land must take place in the actual areas where Batwa live...and that the Batwa's cultural and economic need to access their forests must be recognised and dealt with rapidly' (Zaninka:178). Therefore, the Trust included a special Batwa component in its programme. However, local people have resisted this perceived favouritism of the Twa and questioned whether '*conversation and development proceed through promotion of only one ethnic group of people and ignoring others?*' Though the Trust explained that '*the Batwa are being targeted separately because these funds have not reached them as a result of their way of life*', Zaninka (180) reports consistent obstruction to Batwa inclusion. In 1999, less than 10% of the Batwa had received land. Currently, despite legal provisions for Batwa to live within the national park, these rights are still being refused; local associations made up non-Batwa have consistently prevented Batwa from gaining access to forest products; Batwa still have not been given land to settle and subsist as squatters on their neighbours', government and church property; Batwa are marginalised from employment in the national parks, since non-Batwa locals do not like to associate with them.

### **3.4.2 Categorization and its Consequences**

This expulsion from the forests and persistent denial of Batwa rights to hunt and gather are one dimension of the pervasive discrimination that Batwa encounter at all levels of society.

Batwa are subject to negative stereotypes. In contrast to the history outlined above, the Twa are forced to bear an unfortunate legacy. In 1751, Edward Tyson published his study of *The Anatomy of a Pygmie Compared with that of a Monkey, an Ape, and a Man*, in which he described the intricate methods of dissection that had led him to conclude that pygmies are all either apes or monkeys, and not men, as formerly pretended:

‘I take him to be wholly a Brute, tho’ in the formation of the Body, and in the Sensitive or Brutal Soul, it may be, more resembling a Man, than any other Animal; so that in this Chain of the Creation, as an intermediate Link between an Ape and a Man, I would place our Pygmie’.

Subsequently, researchers discovered that Tyson had actually experimented on a chimpanzee, yet, this has not prevented the negative labeling of the Batwa; they are regarded as sub-human and primitive and are subject to discrimination at all society and state levels.

### **3.4.3 Batwa Experiences Within Communities**

It is easier to understand ‘group inequalities’ when they are manifested in contexts of marked disparities in assets and income. Studies, particularly of the non-economic dimensions of inequality in majority (income or asset) poor communities are still fairly rare. Kisoro District, which is located in the south-west of Uganda, borders the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Rwanda. The PPA1 report describes Kisoro as a majority poor area with the highest dependent ratio in Uganda. There, people are concerned about shortage of food, lack of and low education levels, inadequate opportunities, helplessness because of old age, sickness, disabilities and widowhood, lack of land, insecurity and lack of markets, among others. The three ethnic groups in the area are the Bafumbira, Bakiga and the Batwa, which is in the minority. The Kisoro site report (PPA1) describes the Batwa condition:

[Batwa] are a group of people who are despised, have no means of production, such as land, credit and training. They are regarded by other ethnic groups in Kisoro as a people with no rights. The Batwa are exempted from tax. However, instead of this exemption enabling them to accumulate something productive, it is interpreted by other ethnic groups as a symbol of non-recognition by the government. One respondent reported that a Mutwa can be beaten up and told that they have nowhere to report, because ‘in any case they do not pay tax,’ implying that government does not recognise their existence. Researchers were told by some of the Batwa children who had not gone to school at the time of the visit to the community that at times these children absent themselves because of the unfriendly school environment. They are despised by fellow children. When one of these children was asked what they would like to be when they complete school, she replied, ‘a cleaner’.

During the exercise of drawing the Resource Map in Kisoro Hill there was a debate about whether their village should be included on the map or not. None of the Batwa, even their chief, came to any of the meetings. They were not mobilised to come. When the researchers probed they were told that, ‘Batwa would never come to such meetings, so there is not point in mobilising them.’ Because of this attitude by other communities the Batwa are a marginalised group which is excluded from the mainstream of development. They constitute an ideal example of a group of people who are entangled in the vicious cycle of poverty.

In one community interview (July 2003), Batwa men and women summarized their experiences:

- *How do you live/survive?*
- We live by working for other people in the village and in other communities but if we had our own land, we would work for ourselves.
- *Are you paid in cash or food?*
- Sometimes in food, sometimes soap or other things.
- *When you're paid with food, is it enough?*
- It's not enough and children cry at night. When they pay with money we get 1000 shillings.
- *Why do you think you get 1000 shillings?*
- Because we are Twa. They say the Batwa are weak and because we don't have our own hoes, we are paid less.
- *Do you have any way of reporting this to the authorities?*
- No, we can't report this because we are poor and have no money. Only those with money can pay to open their case.
- *How are you treated?*
- During church services, we are welcomed; we don't have any problem. But outside people say the Batwa are dirty and badly dressed. They won't share with us. For that reason, we always ask ourselves how do we solve this problem in order to develop like others.<sup>7</sup>

Lewis (14) expands on some of the ways in which the Batwa are segregated by their neighbours:

Despite different ideological emphases, the types of segregation practised by the Batwa's neighbours are similar and equally extreme. Other people will not eat or drink with them, will not marry them, will not allow Batwa to approach too close, to sit with them on the same bench or touch cooking and eating implements. They must live apart from others, collect water downstream from others, remain on the margins of public spaces and, when selling goods in markets, can only sit on the outskirts away from other sellers'.

These excerpts describe some of the ways in which power can be exercised to enforce inequalities. On the one hand, the examples highlight the significance of group recognition; on the other, they demonstrate clearly that is it important to go beyond easy categories. Policies that are directed at women's empowerment, for example, will have different consequences for Bafumbira, Bakiga and Batwa women in Kisoro. Presumptions of 'community' obscure the deep power relations and processes, which prevent a Mutwa woman from taking advantage of—or even having access—to assets and opportunities. Accordingly, there are numerous examples of how the Batwa are denied services, including by the front-line services providers who should provide for all equally. In Kabananyke and Wily's 1996 assessment, for example, the authors note that the Batwa 'do not feel welcome' and that health workers reject the idea of visiting Batwa households: '*They just want everything free, how could I help a Mutwa*' (cited in Zaninka:178).

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<sup>7</sup>Community Interview, Kisoro, July 2003

### 3.4.4 Power and Political Agency

The Batwa have responded in various ways. With external assistance, some have begun to form associations in order to represent their claims and are hopeful that they will obtain the assets that will improve their circumstances. Others have internalized the negative perceptions. Golden and Edgerton (2003) argue that playing the part/reflecting the stereotype is also a key survival strategy. By remaining docile and submissive, Batwa evoke pity but also ‘reaffirm the social hierarchies to which other groups have assigned them’ and concretize their marginalized status’. Lewis (2000:13) notes that ‘some Batwa discriminate between themselves. A Mutwa who has acquired wealth or status may renounce the Batwa identity’. He gives an example from Burundi, where communities which have acquired land are offended at being described as Batwa and insist on being called ‘*Abaterambe*’, which means ‘people who are developing’. These divergent views and responses limit organization and collective action. Policymakers, in turn, blame this lack of collective action/failure to exercise political agency as the cause for the Batwa’s poverty.

As noted in Section 1, the action oriented approach ‘prioritizes those ideas and motivations that lead people—and particularly leaders—to persist despite the odds’. In that sense, it can avoid the power structures and relations that lead people to disengage, withdraw and resign themselves to their poverty. Such power relations often underlie chronic poverty and destitution. Fox argues that in order to build effective collection action, reformist state officials have an important role—providing incentives and blocking negative societal and state sanctions. However, state officials are not immune from the prejudices and belief systems that marginalize some groups versus others. As a consequence, the decentralized system of government has failed to improve conditions for the Batwa in Uganda and, arguably, have multiplied their experiences of discrimination and neglect. A further excerpt from the community interview demonstrates this.

- *Do you have representation on the local committee*
- No we have no representative.
- *Why?*
- We don’t have anyone who is educated. It’s because of ignorance.
- *If you have problems, how do you resolve them?*
- We keep quiet like birds who stay in trees. There is no one who can hear us.
- *During elections, do you vote?*
- Yes.
- *If during elections, you vote, do you expect the politicians to work for you?*
- Yes, but after voting, that’s the end of the story; we don’t have a voice. Sometimes, we hear of assistance at subcommittee level but when we go, we don’t get it. Its distributed to relatives of the representatives.
- *Among your societies, don’t you have anyone to speak on your behalf at sub-committee level?*
- In certain meetings, when we want we go but they don’t hear us.



- *Why don't you think they don't hear you?*
- Maybe because they recognize us as people who don't have any value.

Batwa also experience exclusion at the centre of government, where officials expect the Batwa to assimilate and express frustration at their intransigence. One government minister explained<sup>8</sup>:

I have had some interesting experiences with them. I was on a mission to promote agricultural food crops. I took hoes and seeds and distributed them. The Batwa sold all the inputs to pay for alcohol [*Note the Batwa are not agriculturalists*]. Also, in 1984, we built a community center in Bundibugyo district as a settlement home. They abandoned it. Very many tourists wanted to interact with these people. They would spend nights with them and give them clothes. Next day, they would sell all these to tribes in the districts. They prefer living around a huge tree with a fire in front of them. The issue is that we have 56 tribes. Each tribe is at its own level of social advancement. Life began here in Africa but Africa does provide a whole range of levels of civilization, from the most original to modern style of living. Batwa still live in primitive communal system.... Nothing we do for them works.

### 3.4.5 A Note on the 'Chronic Poor'

Batwa fall in many different categories of the disadvantaged: the chronic poor, the destitute, persons suffering multiple asset depletion and gross discrimination. These are the people who have least access to political space, despite the intentions of the PEAP. Uganda's PEAP is widely regarded as locally owned and many public documents attest to the genuine partnership between the government, the donors and technical personnel. Further, they claim that the PEAP has opened political space by facilitating the views of the poor through participatory assessments, CSOs, national level representatives and, crucially, their local councils. In principle, the chronic poor should be able to take advantage of these channels and feed their views into policy-making. However, Hickey's research (2003:12) shows that the level of influence depends on the group and the degree of threat it poses/is perceived to pose to the representative, both 'at the ballot box and in social/household life'. There is some stratification here, with youth and PWDs often the least influential. This is not surprising. There are some constituencies that have developed better resources and capacity to politicize issues, through both national and international networks; in most countries, gender inequality has managed to develop the presence and claim that issues such as disabilities and age are yet to muster. This, too, comments on political uses of agency, which place tremendous responsibility on groups and individuals to develop the connections necessary to impress their claims and, correspondingly, can allow for much less attention to those who lack the capacity and skill to do so.

At the national level, chronic poor groups can be represented through special representatives, committees and individual MPs. The special interest groups include women and PWDs; however, while women have been influential—despite their losses on some significant issues such as the Domestic Relations Bill and the 'co-ownership clause' in the Land Act—PWDs have made little or no gains. Hickey (2003:14) notes that their one significant accomplishment was 'ensuring that Parliament was adapted for wheelchair access'. MPs vary considerably in their ability to influence the political process. There are a number of vocal caucus groups, including the Parliamentary Advocacy Forum (PAFO), the Young

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<sup>8</sup>Personal Interview, August 2003

Parliamentarians Association, and the Acholi, Teso and Lango Parliamentary groups. These challenge the government on important areas of policy. However, Northern MPs are especially concerned that the chronic poverty and destitution in the North are being neglected, and frequently claim that this is for political reasons. (In 2003, MPs from these northern groups were involved in a parliamentary boycott, which was staged in protest of what they described as government inaction in the North<sup>9</sup>)

To what extent is chronic poverty viewed as an urgent policy issue and what political space does this provide? There is increasing attention to chronic poverty and the participatory poverty assessments have been especially influential in demonstrating its social and political dimensions. Much more work is required. There are, for example, large gaps in data disaggregation, very little data on the inequality and on the unequal relationships that can produce chronic poverty. However, within policy circles, there is some acceptance that people experience poverty in very different ways and some of the current research programmes are geared at understanding these.

In contrast to this positive direction, there is the countervailing discourse—linked to the concept of agency—which depicts the chronic poor as those who are ‘left behind’ (Hickey 2003:16) and incapable of taking advantage of the wider socio-economic opportunities. Researchers have discovered that the same debilitating discourse is used in other countries to prioritize assistance. In Bangladesh, Hossain (1999) reports that elites consider poverty an important but not urgent issue and that the language of international development agencies frames their understanding of poverty, particularly the priority given to facilitating ‘enabling environments’ at the expense of redistribution. Bangladeshi elites distinguish between productive (‘marginal farmers, landless labourers, rickshaw pullers’) and non-productive groups (‘widows, other female household heads, the disabled’, the elderly, prostitutes, beggars, children’) and, in the name of pragmatism, prioritise the former for income assistance. As depicted, this discourse can help to sustain inequalities in a direct manner (such as by channeling programmes to the progressive poor in expectation of the elusive ‘trickle down’) and indirectly (by diverting attention from the unequal relations that contribute to poverty).

### 3.5 The Power and Processes Underpinning Gender Inequality

As noted, women are among the more visible of those categorized as among the chronic poor. However, despite institutional and structural changes and progress on gender issues, recent analyses of the links between gender and poverty indicate that pervasive inequalities still ‘impose large efficiency costs on Uganda’s economy’ (Klasen 2003); result in higher levels of poverty and illness in Women Headed Households (Lawson 2003); undermine important PEAP initiatives (Booth et al. 2003) and prevents equal and fair access to justice (JLOS SPRP; Wengi and Kyasimire, 1995). Conditions are especially severe in Northern Uganda, where according to Lawson (2003), ‘greater proportions of women headed households are below the poverty line’ and significantly fewer women than men are aware of important issues, such as how HIV/AIDS is transmitted. Successive Participatory Poverty Appraisals (PPAs) demonstrate that beneath inequalities in assets and opportunities, there are substantial imbalances in power within households, the market and at the level of local government. There are other reports that show the limitations to political agency at state levels. Further, the second participatory poverty appraisal (PPA2), which was completed in 2002, provides evidence of how some women have internalized and even defend the unequal gender norms, and how this ‘tacit acceptance’ helps to sustain inequalities and poverty.

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<sup>9</sup>BBC News, Uganda MPs walk out Over Conflict, Thursday 20 November 2003.

### 3.5.1 Power and Inequality Within Households

PPA2 interviews conducted in Ntungamo, Wakiso, Mubende, Masindi and Rakai districts confirm that power imbalances within the home are among the major underlying causes of poverty among women. The report provides various examples of how women are consistently exploited and, as a consequence, impoverished. Across all sites, for example, women have prime responsibility for domestic duties, which include cleaning, cooking, fetching water and washing clothes; they are also involved in agricultural work for subsistence and commercial production, as well as other business activities. In many rural sites, women were responsible for providing food for the family throughout the year and for other households needs, including providing school fees. Men are involved in productive activities but also spend considerable time resting or at leisure, particularly drinking alcohol.

In urban communities, women generally had better opportunities for engaging in income generating activities, though some were restricted from working outside the home and from running businesses. According to PPA 2, ‘men reported that they fear their wives will become promiscuous, indulge in extra-marital affairs and become uncontrollable, unmanageable and unruly if they gain economic independence’ (PPA2: 27). The Cycle 1 reports from PPA2 provides some interesting case references. In Rwakayata, Masindi, men justify the unequal distribution of resources by asserting the importance of maintaining the status quo: *After selling the maize, the husband may buy a dress or lesu for the wife. If women are allowed to own property, they will be on top of men.* (Man, Rwakayata) Some women agreed. They provided examples of women who were allowed to own property and subsequently left their husbands, which, they argue, shows the difficulty of ‘*sustaining a husband and economic independence; one has to be foregone*’. In fishing communities, women are generally excluded from the lucrative activities: very few own boats and most are excluded from fishing. Cultural beliefs are at the root of this exclusion. In Ntoroko and Kasensero, for example, older women, in particular, are convinced that ‘*if a woman were to swim in the lake then the fish would disappear*’.

The report provides clear demonstration of the limitations of policies that focus solely on improving assets and opportunities, without understanding and tackling power. It shows, for example, that while women have benefited from government initiatives to improve their roles in income generation outside the home, many men have reinforced their control by ‘passing over to their wives some or all of [their] traditional responsibilities in the family’. The justification, as one man reasoned in Kiddugala, Wakiso, is that ‘*when a woman gets money she gets a big head and doesnt listen to her husband*’. Similarly, as one women from Arua argued, ‘*they have money but it is just a way of blocking our businesses from developing so that we do not go away. We spend too much [on household needs]*’. On the contrary, many men refused to change their traditional roles, even during periods of crises. In some of the more insecure areas, men still clung to old divisions between women and men’s roles and found it easier to resort to drinking rather than engage in new productive activities. In such contexts, women have taken on the responsibility of ensuring their family’s survival. Men are especially averse to domestic responsibilities and express the shame of being associated with women’s activities: ‘*How can a man be seen washing utensils?* These persistent gender norms have important policy implications; they demonstrate the weight of culture and ingrained belief systems and how these influence what is considered ‘rational and reasonable’ behaviour, even when people must make choices about their families’ survival.

In all the research sites—except for a few urban locations where women had managed to amass wealth and gain independence—it was men who controlled the major household resources, such as land, money and livestock. While women could gain access to the land, men decided how it should be used and whether it should be sold. Similarly, men controlled the use of livestock—except, in some cases, for small livestock, such as chickens—and agri-

cultural products. Widows were the most disadvantaged, since ‘when a man dies, it is common for his family to take his land as well as other household assets, leaving widows and children destitute’ (PPA2: 31) Men also control the income from agricultural sales. As women in Rakai commented: ‘*You grow crops but when it comes to selling, it is the men who sell and decide how to use the money. If you complain, he asks whether the land is yours and says: “Did you come with it?”*’

The PPA found that while some women were able to control their earnings from the sale of alcohol, men often control women’s earnings as well as their own. Such intra-household power relations contribute substantially to the differences that policy-makers now observe between how men and women benefit from/take advantage of differing economic options. The May 2003 gender review points out:

- Men and women have unequal access to liberalised markets and do not gain equally from them. Since men are likely to profit disproportionately from any increased incomes, women do not regard market-oriented production as a lucrative investment option.
- Movements from subsistence to market oriented production have different consequences for men and women. For example, given multiple responsibilities and roles, women have little time to devote to commercial production.
- Women, particularly the married and poor widows, have fewer opportunities for gaining non-farm employment and earn less than men do;
- There is significant gender inequality in ownership and control of land, which impairs the livelihoods of women and their dependants;

### 3.5.2 Violence and Acceptance: Different Manifestations of Power

In a number of sites, both men and women maintained that the cultural practice of making ‘bridewealth’ payments legitimizes men’s control, even over reproduction and justifies the domestic violence, which is used to secure order. Two quotations from the PPA reveal the real difficulties that women face as they try to control their bodies and protect themselves and their families against HIV/AIDS:

*“How can you begin talking about a condom, you will be beaten!”* (Woman, Nakapelimen, Moroto)

According to the Acholi culture, women are supposed to deliver until they finish their intestines (implying that women are supposed to deliver until they reach their menopause). *When you go for family planning, he beats you up, saying that you are killing his children.*

Violence restricts women’s capacity for resistance, particularly where women accept their condition. In Kigusa, Bugiri, one woman explained a commonly accepted perception: ‘*I was bought by the man, so my body is his asset to use as he wishes.*’ Correspondingly, in Katebe, Rakai, one man argued that *if you buy a cloth, do you not wash it any time you want?* while ‘the women agreed that as men have paid cows for them, they are property in the home to be used as the man wishes.’ (PPA2: 33) In other sites, such as Kamama Central, women argued that ‘*It is us women who make the men beat us. Once the man goes to the lake, a woman gets another partner because she wants money. Women, especially the younger ones, have refused to stick to one partner. When there is a dance, all the men one has slept with gang up and beat her.*’ (Woman, Kasensero report)

The Kansensero, Rakai site report (PPA2) notes that in this fishing community, younger women are beginning to challenge some of the norms that sustain gender inequality: *We have to rely on the men all the time because we cannot go to get the riches ourselves from the resource, the lake. Our poverty will be continuous until we are allowed to go to the lake.* (Young woman in FGD, Kasensero, Rakai) However, older women tend to uphold and enforce traditional norms, sanctioning those who flout the rules. Consequently, women remain marginalized from the lucrative fishing. Women, they maintain, *'should not go to the lake at all because they are always dirty'*. Since the young women had failed to observe this instruction, the gods would no longer bless the site; *'the fish stock has already begun to deplete'*. There is a tendency to attribute such views to a lack of education and exposure; however, there are prominent persons at higher policy levels that also accept their inferiority; some lack the power to resist. For example, one government official, a Muganda, explained<sup>10</sup> that her husband permits her to hold her position in government as long as she observes her customary position in the home, which entails not eating high protein foods, sitting appropriately, laying prostrate as is the custom for greeting male visitors, even though, in her occupational capacity, these individuals may be her juniors. In her view, these norms are important for maintaining family; she did not and could not object to them:

There are certain dishes that men take but not women: those that are very high protein. Women putting on trousers is still not accepted in villages. Women are not allowed to ride bicycles. Women are not supposed to argue or even suggest anything to their husbands. Women are not supposed to sit in chairs while their husband is sitting there. It is not accepted, especially when parents are there. Women should be kneeling down while men are sitting, especially in Buganda. All of us accept it. If the President comes to my village, I must kneel before him. Women are still inferior and still submissive. The government has brought in equality but it is not universally applied.

Poverty analyses could do more to understand and plan for such social expectations and behaviour. As Kabeer (1999), in her reflections on measuring women's empowerment, argues, there is an 'intuitive plausibility' to equating power and choice, when the 'disempowered' use their power to improve their welfare. In contrast, analysts have much more difficulty accommodating those instances when women not only accept but also choose their inequality. Section 1 suggested possible reasons for this behaviour:

1. There may be genuine acceptance of social norms and willingness to observe cultural principles of accountability and susceptibility;
2. Power relations may become so ingrained that people either accept a condition that they know is unequal or fail to recognize the domination that exists. Bordieu (1989) defines this as *habitus*. *Habitus* describes those who fail to critically analyze their position and, therefore, become complicit in reproducing relations of domination. This condition presents major challenges to empowerment and to assumptions that given the assets and opportunities, people will act to improve their condition. People have different capacities for agency. These are not merely the cause of deep or long term deprivation in income and material assets but from other social and psychological (not easily quantifiable) sources of poverty (Moncrieffe, 2004:38)

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<sup>10</sup>Personal Interview, July 2002

### 3.5.3 Power Relations and Political Agency: Local and National Level Administration

As noted, local level reforms are meant to tackle gender inequalities by providing the institutional basis for women's inclusion, participation and empowerment. The reasoning is that with more opportunities for voice and agency, women will be able to transform their circumstances. However, the LC system has had mixed results. There is some evidence that women are growing increasingly influential in some districts (there are reports that women representatives have become more confident; they can now speak in public and voice concerns) and various communities report that women's participation has resulted in a reduction in domestic violence and more access to land (PPA2). However, women representatives commonly feel they 'lack the autonomy to pursue women's interests where they may conflict with either Movement policy and/or local male elite interests' (Hickey 2003:11). Brock et al (2002:42) observe that women are often marginalized in the political process:

The system of separate and parallel councils for women, people with disabilities and youth...is seen as a cure worse than the illness, at least with regards to addressing women's concerns at the local level. Being parallel and weakly linked to the LC system—where real power resides at the local level—and being imperfectly connected to the national-level women's political machinery, the local level Women Council structure effectively hives off women's concerns into a political cul-de-sac and ensures that the LCs remain dominated by men and their concerns.

The participatory poverty appraisals (PPAs) report that women are directly disadvantaged by the officials who should represent them. While PPA 1 corroborates claims that LC1 officials are held in high regard, PPA2 reports that women were more critical of these officials than men were. As far as many women were concerned, LC1 officials are biased against them, disregard their opinions and ignore women representatives. Additionally, there are allegations of corruption: In Wakiso, women report that men often pay LC1 officials to have complaints against them dismissed. PPA2 notes that 'in Moroto, men maintained that whatever they decided in the LC1 was for the good of the whole community, so they could afford to ignore the women's views'. Khadiagala (2001) states that one of the principal failures of popular democracy in Uganda is that though the NRM promised that local councils would provide 'culturally appropriate forms of justice', which would benefit poor rural and uneducated women, local elites have used their positions to reinforce social control. Further, the gap between theory and practice arises out of misconceptions about the character of local spaces, particularly the notion of community. 'Gender discrimination persists despite structural reforms and claims to the right to custom perpetuate inequalities and abuse.

At the national level, most analysts accept that the Movement's policy of broad parliamentary representation has increased the visibility of women and other interest groups. Tripp (2000) notes that organizations such as the Action for Development (ACFODE) in Uganda have been 'have been instrumental in healing societal divisions. Notably, they have challenged the politicization of ethnicity, race and religion and emphasized the common experiences among all women.' Women's organizations have had an important role in encouraging policy change and Tripp (2001) suggests that this has much to do with their ability to resist cooptation by the NRM and to advance a far-reaching agenda.

However, analysts also suggest that this increased presence and political agency have not produced the expected gains. For example, despite the recognised achievements of the women's movement in Uganda (and executive actions to promote equality), Tamale (1999)

suggests that the government has obstructed women's efforts to act as an interest group. Furthermore, ingrained sexism and patriarchy undermine effective women's representation in Parliament. Goetz and Hassim (2003) conclude that participation does not necessarily result in effective policy influence.

Various sector reports demonstrate the continued battle for women's rights at the policy level. For example, the (2003) Justice Law and Order Sector PEAP Revision Paper recognizes that gender-biased and gender-neutral laws cause inequity in access to justice. It notes, for example that: (a) Parliament has not approved the Land Act's proposed clause on co-ownership and this perpetuates problems with insecurity of tenure; and (b) the law stipulates different grounds for adultery and divorce. While men may have multiple sexual partners throughout marriage and not commit adultery as long as these partners are unmarried, women may be charged with adultery if they have sexual relations with any man apart from their husbands. Even where women are successful in bringing a charge of adultery, this may not be satisfactory for obtaining divorce. In addition, there are physical, technical and financial barriers to accessing justice, particularly in the rural areas, and this is especially disadvantageous to women. (Moncrieffe 2003:56)

### **3.5.4 Power, Processes and Gender Policy**

Therefore, power structures and relations within households, communities and from local to national levels of government help to define where, how and when policies work. For example, recent gender analyses indicate:

- Despite the substantial gains from the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme—UPE has significantly increased access to education and improved chances for girls—early marriages and pregnancy continue to limit girls' retention in school and to perpetuate poverty;
- Gender relations affect decision-making in matters such as sanitation. Perceptions of gender roles, patriarchal norms and community status [obstruct] efforts to increase women's involvement in community water management;
- There are gender inequalities in employment opportunities for road construction, and in provisions for different patterns of road use;
- Women do not participate 'effectively' in local government administration. There are insufficient numbers of women at the local government level and, compared with men, women lack the skills for representation;
- LCs do not have explicit 'gender agendas'; instead 'gender' is seen as the responsibility of Women's Councils and Departments of Community Development.

Current policies are geared to tackle these underlying structures and processes, only indirectly: that is, through increasing assets and opportunities. For example, as the gender review (May 2003) notes, most of the focus is on improving women's and children's health, though perceptions of the male role and masculinity contribute to health related behaviours in areas such as family planning and reproduction. Similarly, school curricula are generally not geared to confront and address the gender norms that sustain inequalities between boys and girls. Increased presence at local and national levels of government have proven insufficient for securing equality. Much deeper/far-reaching policies are required in order to prepare women to take advantage of the new opportunities, to reverse discriminatory perceptions, including the ways in which some women view themselves. The type of education required here goes well beyond formal learning; it seeks to influence lifestyle choices and as

Appuradai (2004) describes it, to ‘build the capacity to aspire’ among those who have internalized negative perceptions of themselves.

### 3.6 The Advantages and Limitations of the Group Approach

Policies that are designed to promote women’s empowerment and equality are important. However, it is dangerous to assume that the group approach will benefit all women equally. There is a marked lack of data in Uganda on how women’s experiences differ across ethnic and religious communities or other social categories. Much more work is required to understand the stratifications among differing classes of women, which allow some women to capture opportunities and to marginalize others. One should not presume ‘community’.

PPA2 indicates that women’s councils are not viewed favorably, even among women. Some community members insisted that Women Councils had not been useful and had offered no personal benefits. One respondent claimed: ‘Women leaders have only empowered themselves. They have made so many investments, which they got from our money.’ Some women were clearly reluctant to continue to elect representatives.

The preceding case study of the Batwa also shows how ethnic and other distinctions can pose added disadvantages to some women, as opposed to others. It demonstrates the importance of going beyond categories and of conducting the disaggregated power analysis that is necessary for responding to the special needs that some people may have and minimizing the blocks to their ‘agency’, many of which can come from members of their own ‘community’.

## 4 Summary: The Implications

The case study outlined the tenets of the relational approach to poverty and inequality and demonstrated its analytical advantages. It argued that while categorical approaches are useful for understanding and addressing disparities across broad classifications of people, the relational approach allows analysts to delve within the categories and to focus on the power and internal processes that sustain poverty and inequality. Further, the relational approach encourages analysts to rigorously probe the classifications and labels they adopt: to question assumptions of community and group and to investigate the differing experiences of inequality and poverty that classifications tend to mask and even enforce. Without this disaggregated approach, policies may profit some and exclude others. Further, the more powerful can manipulate policies in ways that deepen social, political and economic inequalities.

The empirical data reinforces the key messages from the introductory section:

1. People, in their roles as social actors, might accept and uphold conditions that perpetuate their own inequality.
2. Power relationscoercive and non-coercive; visible and hidden; agreed and imposedcan cause poverty and help to hold inequalities in place.
3. A realistic approach to promoting political action must seriously consider and confront the multiple ways in which power can constrain people’s choices and capacity for action.

The paper contends that assets and opportunities alone are unlikely to solve inequality. As the references to the Batwa and women in Uganda demonstrate, equity requires deep understanding and real recognition—meaning knowledge—of the groups, subgroups and



individuals that policy-makers aim to support and, importantly, of the relations of power that hold inequalities in place.

As a general principle, recognition must involve respect for people's lifestyle choices and preferences, with the important qualification that these choices and preferences should not contravene the human rights of group members—including the right to form new associations and develop new identities—and the rights of others external to the group. Such an approach might well result in more profitable engagement with groups, such as the Batwa. Rather than forcing assimilation, policymakers should, instead, recognize the Batwa's livelihood choices; work with the Batwa to ensure safe use of the forests; expand Batwa involvement in forest-based occupations; protect Batwa pottery industry and introduce improved pottery techniques; help to provide markets, while teaching marketing principles and techniques; suggest new opportunities/sources of livelihood; ensure that conditions are appropriate so that the Batwa can build their assets and expand their choices.

The case examples reinforce that for some groups and subgroups, poverty reduction depends, critically, on addressing power relations. Key strategies include education (designed to help people recognize and observe the fundamental rights and value of others and to help those who have internalized negative perceptions to begin to view themselves and their prospects differently); re-valuation (which may need to include re-presenting people's histories); containing discrimination (which should be visibly enforced at all levels, including through traditional authorities) and respecting and defending human rights.

These strategies require visible commitment at high policy levels and vigilant implementation from the centre to the household. They are not short term options and accordingly, do not suit the time-constrained project approach to development (Appuradai 2004). Further, recognition of the sort outlined requires what Wood (2003) describes as an anthropological insight into poverty. This anthropological approach is crucial for uncovering the relational dimensions to poverty and inequality. Understanding and addressing the adverse power relations that underpin poverty are, in turn, necessary for building capabilities and ensuring that assets and opportunities have the best prospects.

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