

State Feminism in Botswana

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ABSTRACT

Women are poorly represented in political decision-making positions in Botswana. More than fifty years post-independence, Botswana only has eleven per cent representation of women in parliament, an indication of women exclusion in economic development and governance. The state has done well in many areas of development exhibiting good economic performance and management, good policies, a virtuous public administration, good standing on corruption but failed to put up an equally impressive record on the promotion of women's rights and inclusive development. Botswana's economic growth has not been accompanied by gender equality. Women are poorly represented in parliament despite the establishment of the national gender machinery and the exemplary democracy status accorded to Botswana. The article adopts a qualitative and desk-based research approach to assess the role and relevance of the state in advancing the political interests of women; and to explore other factors that inhibit equal representation of women in political decision-making. The article finds that the state has not prioritized equal political representation, and its ability to promote women's interests is questionable. Although established to emancipate women, the national gender machinery reinforces state dominance and patriarchy and fails to address the systematic subordination of women. The political system, dominance of the state, lack of political will, weak civil society and women's movement, among other factors, contribute to the absence of women in political decision-making.

Keywords: State, Feminism, Gender equality, Political Representation, Women, Development

Introduction

In most parts of the world, governments have made it their responsibility to care for women and protect their rights albeit with varying degrees of success. This has led to the establishment and acceptance of the state as an agent for women. State feminism in Botswana is instituted in women's agencies. The establishment of women's agencies as state machineries dealing with the interest of women is widespread. These establishments were born out of the need for equality between men and women and the emancipation of women. Despite the presence of such establishments, women remain economically marginalized and absent in political decision-making positions.

The establishment of women agencies is a considerate measure of commitment to women's issues. Gouws and Hassim (2011) argue that national women machineries are a vehicle for fast-tracking gender-responsive governance. The presence of women in parliaments is critical but not adequate to represent the interests of women. According to Weldon (2002) women's policy agencies provide better expression for women and give a stronger voice in public policy compared with women in legislatures. Women in legislature often have an obligation to put the interests of their party first, sometimes at the expense of their constituent's interests. There is thus no guarantee that women in parliament will represent women's interests. In an effort

to address the disillusion and exclusion of women, governments and societies at large have resorted to nouveau strategies including gender mainstreaming, empowerment, affirmative action, and gender-sensitive planning and budgeting, among other mechanisms of resolving the perils of women. These measures have commonly been dispensed through state's women agencies.

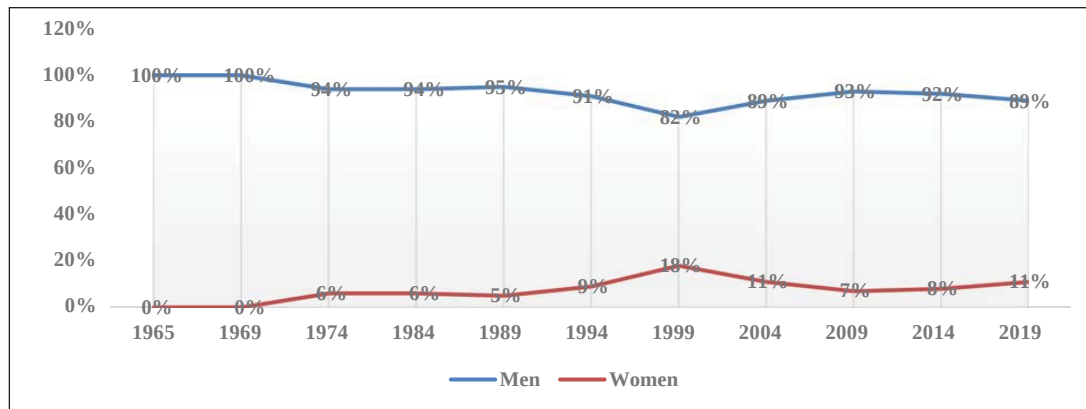
Despite being established to represent women's interests and improve conditions for women, it is not clear what the contribution of national women's agencies has been. In fact, the role of national women's agencies as an institutional source of representation is an under-researched area (Horowitz, 1999; Weldon, 2002). Literature points towards inadequacies of these machineries. For example, Gouws and Hassim (2011) point out that the machineries are often unsuccessful, ineffective and dysfunctional. As agents of the state, these machineries often act merely as implementers of government decisions, which means they only uphold that which is approved by government. Mazur (1999, p. 487) defines state feminism as a field that "examines whether state structures and actors can promote feminist notions through focusing on women's role in the state as policy makers, the gendered nature of women's policy machineries in a wide variety of government agencies and branches". State feminism thus helps us determine the efficacy of the state machineries in pursuing women's interests.

The focus of this article is on the institutionalization of gender issues. In particular, the article addresses poor representation of women in political decision-making in parliament in Botswana. It considers the relevance of a state-based institution to advocate for gender equality in political decision-making. The article explains why representation of women in political decision-making remains low despite the presence of the state women's machinery and the exemplary democracy and development status accorded to Botswana.

Representation of women in political decision-making and women's rights

The latest Inter Parliamentary Union proportion of seats held by women in national parliament rankings places Botswana at position 168 out of 188 globally (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019). The ranking is a reflection of the poor representation of women in parliament in Botswana. There is a stark contrast between this ranking and others such as the transformation index governance ranking which places Botswana at position 6 out of 128 globally in good governance (Governance index, 2020). This contrast indicates a gap that Botswana must close to retain her position as a beacon of democracy and development as well as demonstrate a commitment to gender equality.

Representation of men and women in Botswana Parliament 1965-2019



Source: Adapted from Ntseane and Sentsho (2005) and Mosime and Kaboyakgosi (2017)

Representation of women in parliament in Botswana is consistently poor with almost nil prospects for improvement as there are no apparent efforts to change the situation. Women make only eleven per cent of the current parliament, an increase by three per cent from eight per cent in 2014. The graph shows a consistent disparity between the representation of men and women in the Botswana parliament since 1989, an indication of an imminent challenge facing the country. This article takes particular interest in the absence of women in positions of political power in Botswana as an indication of a deficient democracy, exclusion and misrepresentation of interests. Without representation of women in political decision-making, the ability of women to influence public policy is negligible. The absence of women means a female perspective is missing in decision making. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Gender Protocol 2018 Barometer (2018) indicates that the inclusion of women at all levels of decision-making is central to achieving human development and promoting human rights.

There is consensus on the legitimacy and ability of women to govern. Research has also shown support for governments to eliminate gender discrimination (Tripp, 2010). Success in increasing political representation of women has mainly been achieved through the use of legislative quotas. The greatest improvement within the SADC region between 2009 and 2018 was recorded in Zimbabwe where the proportion of women in parliament doubled from eighteen per cent to thirty six per cent following the implementation of a constitutional quota for women (SADC Gender Protocol 2018 Barometer, 2018). Women tend to be inherently disadvantaged and excluded in political representation, particularly in countries like Botswana, Mauritius and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). These are countries that perform poorly in the SADC regional ranking of women in parliament primarily because they have no legislative quotas and, in addition, use the majoritarian electoral system which is not favorable for women as compared to proportional representation. Countries that use the proportional representation and apply legally-binding quotas to enhance representation of women tend to perform better (Fallon et al., 2012; Gouws, 2008).

Gender Affairs Department

The government of Botswana established the Women's Affairs Division under the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs in 1981. The division was later upgraded from a unit to a department, thus the Women's Affairs Department. In 2013, the Women's Affairs Department was renamed Gender Affairs Department. Since its origins, the department has always worked closely with women non-governmental organizations.

According to Stetson and Mazur (1995), the extent to which women in the state and women's machinery lead to policy that benefit women, as well as the relationship between the state and civil society, can determine the success or failure of the national gender machineries. The location of the women's machinery in the governance hierarchy, clarity of mission and mandate, meaningful links with society, resources available, political will, state capacity and political stability, and cultural norms about gender equality are important factors that should be considered in the assessment of national gender machineries (McBride & Mazur, 2012). Some of these factors are discussed in the article.

The Gender Affairs Department is poorly resourced financially and in terms of human capital (Debusscher, 2019). The lack of funding undermines effective implementation of gender equality issues (UNDP, 2012). According to Debusscher (2019) staff appointed in line ministries as gender focal points tend to be isolated, inexperienced and junior. This undermines the capability of the department to accomplish its mandate. The focus and priority of the Gender Affairs Department is biased towards economic empowerment. Of all the areas of concentration including women and health, the girl child, gender-based violence, environmental issues, education and training of women, the department seems more focused on economic empowerment, perhaps because it is less controversial and well aligned to government priorities. The Botswana Country Report by Gender Affairs (2014) on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action indicates significant progress on eradication of poverty and improving the economic well-being of women but no substantive improvements or initiatives on improving the representation of women in political decision-making. In a recent update, the Government of Botswana (2017b) indicates that it has increased the budget for 2017/2018 to enhance women economic empowerment. However, on promoting women's participation in leadership, the government reports capacity building for women in executive positions in the public service but remains silent on efforts towards enhancing women's political leadership.

The Gender Affairs Department is not strategically placed and shows no indication of prioritization of gender issues by government. As is the norm, the department could have been strategically situated under the presidency as an indication of prioritization by government. In the past, programmes such as the housing appeal and poverty eradication have been run from the office of the President, an act interpreted as an indication of government commitment. The Gender Affairs report (2014) suggests that gender issues would be better coordinated from a position with the highest political power and with significant influence over finance and political power. The report's recommendation is in alignment with Bauer's (2011, p. 33) finding that the Women's Affairs Department was "housed in the wrong ministry, badly under resourced, severely understaffed, lacking in authority and highly demoralized". Despite the above, the most recent renaming Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs to Ministry of

Nationality, Immigration and Gender Affairs is an indication of progressive movement although the renaming without additional resources or commitment is ineffectual.

Botswana women rights paradox

Botswana has been declared a middle-income country and recognized as a successful democracy. Compared to other African countries, Botswana has been heralded a democracy and an icon of peace, stability and development (Tsie, 2017). Botswana has been viewed favourably in terms of good governance and controlled corruption (Robinson & Parsons, 2006). Sebudubudu & Mooketsane (2016) argue that Botswana has set herself apart from African peers by virtue of economic development and good governance.

The fact that Botswana is celebrated as a democracy implies participation, inclusion and good governance. However, a closer look reveals a different picture, one of exclusion and poor civic participation. There are identifiable pockets of exclusion and marginalization in Botswana, a case in point is the Basarwa, also known as the San, lesbians and gays and, of interest to this article, women. Amidst the country's renowned success in democracy, governance and economic development, women in Botswana are confronted by varied challenges including HIV and AIDS, gender-based violence, poverty, unemployment, and absence in political decision-making positions, among others.

Botswana's performance in relation to women's rights has been disappointing. Debusscher (2019) and Bauer (2011) report lack of concern for gender issues by the Botswana government. Tsie (2017) argues that Botswana's rapid economic growth was not accompanied by gender equality. These authors share the concern of Botswana's poor record on women's rights. The failure of the women's movement and the state to improve representation of women in political leadership could be a confirmation of what Allen (2007, p. 98) terms as a paradox of peace, which he argues resulted in "political stability at the cost of political consciousness". On a similar note, Lekalake (2016) argues that Botswana's stability comes at a cost of other political developments. While the absence of protests creates a positive image, some underlying social struggles which are snubbed by government persist. Some of these underlying challenges include government tightening control over the media, a parliament that is not representative of the social composition of the country, with women and youth under-represented, failure to recognize cultural rights of ethnic minorities and judicial killings, among others (Tsie, 2017).

The state for women or the state against women

The state can be both an enabler of women and a constraint to women's progress. Whether the state is perceived as an organ of patriarchy that perpetuates inequality or as a source of empowerment, the national women's machinery plays an important role as a medium through which the state can act for women. Women individually and as a collective can influence the outcome of their wellbeing. They can act to their own detriment by being docile and inactive in the pursuit of their interests, they may also be limited by the state through creating a state of dependency and an elusive sense of patronage and care. Women in groups are better placed to exert pressure as compared to acting as individuals. According to the World Bank (2012, p. 152) "women's collective voice can contribute to changes in laws, policies, services,

institutions, and social norms that eventually will increase women's individual agency". There is need for an agent to help pursue the women's agenda. Nonetheless, the value of a collective voice cannot be over-emphasized. When aligned, women's movements in collaboration with women agencies have improved political representation of women (McBride & Mazur, 2008). According to Tripp (2010, p. 224) "collective strategies make it possible to tackle structural dimensions of women's gender subordination within powerful political and economic institutions".

Lovenduski (2008) argues that alliances between women's movements and women's policy agencies can be said to be successful on the basis of outcome and participants of policy debates. Partnerships or collaborations between women and the state seem to bear better results, leading to a question on whether it is practical to expect the state to take the sole responsibility of the cause of women. Authors concur that states usually do not make feminist changes without pressure from organized women's groups (Viterna & Fallon, 2008).

Hoffman (1998) argues that states are inherently masculine and patriarchal. States have been dominated by men and run by men in the interest of men. A study by Debusscher (2019) identifies Botswana's governance as male-biased. All the national political decision-making structures in the country are male-dominant. While feminists are bound to see the state as inherently male and patriarchal and perpetrating subordination of women, there is a new recognition of the state as capable of emancipating women and promoting their interest. The state is seen as legitimate and capable of responding to women's needs. Considering the feminist critique of the state as patriarchal, Hoffman (1998, p. 163) argues that the state is conceptualized in a way which makes it unacceptable to feminist theory.

Women's movement

The question of agency seeks to establish if and how "women have organized themselves and have participated as activists to challenge, resist, overthrow or gain entrance to social structures and institutions that tended to ignore, exclude disadvantage or penalize them" (Lee & Logan, 2017, p. 1). Where there is limited collective force, it is likely that women will not make a substantive impact in advocating for their rights or change. Tripp (2010) points out that women's agency is central to addressing women's capabilities to assert themselves politically.

Rupp (1997) defines the women's movement as a group of people who share a collective identity informed by similarities in their interests, goals, identities and experiences. Operating outside the state, the women's movement plays a critical role in enhancing the effectiveness of women's policy agencies. The women's movement in Botswana was once considered the most powerful of the country's civil society. Admittedly, Botswana had a strong women's movement in the 1990s which influenced and witnessed legal reforms and civic engagement. The movement, led by Emang Basadi, registered various victories, winning the citizenship case, supporting women in politics and issuing the first women's manifesto in Africa, among others (Bauer 2011). In addition to a strong Emang Basadi, there were other associations such as the all-party women's caucus, where women across the political divide worked together to empower women and increase political representation of women. Bauer (2011, p. 29) describes the victories of the women's movement as "numerous and significant". This

description appears fit considering the following legal reforms which came as a result: the 2004 abolition of the Marital Power Act, the 1998 Penal Code (Amendment) Act, and the 1996 Employment (Amendment) Act. Emang Basadi also received credit for an increase in the number of women in parliament following their training and support for female electoral candidates in 1999 and thus broadening democracy.

Unfortunately the women's movement in Botswana has waned. Despite having been a force to reckon with in the 1990s, the women's movement has been noted as perpetually diminishing (Bauer, 2010). Over time the women in the movement realized that confrontation was not the best approach but rather that it was more strategic to work in cooperation with the state. This was mainly due to the Setswana culture which promotes cooperation over confrontation as well as the influence and dominance of the state. The women's movement in Botswana seems to operate from within the state's women's machinery. The women organizations work collaboratively with the government, implementing and complementing government's policies and programmes almost inseparably. They act more like friends with government than an agent that holds government to account. Bauer (2011, p. 26) cites the following as reasons for the decline of the movement: the accomplishment of many of the women's movements' early goals; challenges facing civil society in general in Botswana (such as lack of funding due to the exit of donors); an increasing ambivalence within a powerful executive towards a women's rights agenda; and, a constitution that is essentially neutral (rather than egalitarian) in terms of gender difference. A weak women's movement cannot assist the women's government machinery to push the women's agenda due to lack of influence.

Gender Equality as a policy priority

The government of Botswana acknowledges women as an important part of society and the economy. The government has signed various protocols at regional and international levels and entered into obligations to protect women's rights. As a global player and a signatory to various human rights conventions, Botswana is under obligation to ensure that everyone is equal under the law and to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. In 1996 the government of Botswana signed and ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which protects women's rights and condemns all forms of discrimination against women.

Botswana has adopted CEDAW, the national policy on women in development, the national gender framework, and most recently signed the SADC gender protocol after years of refusing to sign. Although Botswana may have expressed her commitment to gender through conventions and legal frameworks, the country still faces challenges. The government of Botswana has not regularly reported on regional and international commitments, and it submitted a report to CEDAW for the first time in 2010 (BOCONGO, 2015). The country is a signatory to many other international declarations on gender equality and empowerment including International Conference on Population and Development (ICDP) 1994, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 1995, the Sustainable Development Goals, among others. The women's cause has been internationalized; however, indigenous reforms are likely to work better than externally influenced reforms which countries may implement to be seen as complying and ticking the boxes or which countries may ignore if they are not in line with their priorities.

Botswana has done well in other areas of gender equality such as accomplishing gender parity in education and in representation of women in leadership in the public service and the private sector. According to the Government of Botswana (2017a), about 47% of senior positions in the public service are occupied by women.

The government of Botswana has exhibited anti-affirmative action sentiments. There is no legislation that enforces equal gender representation in political leadership and the constitution is silent on affirmative action to improve women representation. The government of Botswana was amongst the very last countries to sign the SADC Gender Protocol. The country signed the protocol nine years later, an act that can be interpreted as lack of commitment to gender equality. Debusscher (2019) argues that the government is not very receptive to gender equality policies. Despite the absence of legislative quotas, the presidents of Botswana have at their own discretion appointed women into parliament as specially-nominated members. Former President Mogae appointed two women in 1999 and three in 2004 into specially nominated parliamentary positions. On the contrary, during his term, former President Ian Khama removed two women from cabinet positions and replaced them with men (Bauer, 2011). The current leader, President Masisi, has appointed four women into parliament through the special nomination dispensation.

Law, culture and patriarchy

Botswana uses a dual legal system which includes customary and common law. Both systems have been found to be discriminatory against women. In response to advocacy by women non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and through its own efforts, the government has reviewed and repealed some discriminatory laws. In 1997 the government carried out a review of laws deemed discriminatory towards women. The following were reviewed: the Marriage Act (CAP 29:01), Married Persons Property Act 8 CAP 29:03), Abortion: Penal Code Amendment (CAP 08:01), Deeds Registry Act CAP 33:03), Administration of Estates Act CAP 31:01), Employment Act (CAP 47:01), Matrimonial Clause Act (CAP 29:06), Adoption Act (CAP28:01), and the Abolition of Marital Power Act (2004). Notwithstanding the legal reforms, women, patriarchy, socialization, cultural norms and practices have been commonly cited as deterrents to women's political participation.

Chiepe et al. (2016) claim that the majority of people in Botswana live a traditional lifestyle which promotes the value of customary law. The enforcement of customary law inhibits gender equality and reinforces traditional order (Chiepe et al., 2016). The fact that Botswana has integrated its traditional system of governance into its modern system shows the sentimental value that the country attaches to culture. Some cultural practices permeate modern societies. However, culture marginalizes women.

Rights are not always freely given; sometimes they ought to be defended. Gender issues require a radical approach which involves strong advocacy. Botswana are generally conservative; the leaders and society are patriarchal. Gender equality challenges the norm and social structures. Men will not readily give away their privileges and power. Shifting dependence of women from men to the state is not helpful for women. Women must find and determine their own path. Rhode (1994) argues that decisions made by the state mainly reflect a male point of view and hence represent male interests; thus women's interests cannot be relegated to the state.

Patriarchy systematically disadvantages women and perpetuates inequality. Isaacs (2002) argues that patriarchy encourages women to accept a subordinate position in society and to see it as normal. Patriarchy refers to the “autonomy, power and privilege men enjoy over women” (Thoradeniya, 2015, p. 35). Hoffman (1998, p. 162) defines patriarchy as a system of power which serves the interest of men at the expense of women. According to Isaacs (2002), feminine socialization apparent in patriarchal societies makes women participants in their own subordination. Due to socialization women continue to perceive themselves as subordinate to men.

A strong and meritorious bureaucracy

States' efforts towards development are implemented through bureaucracies; therefore an assessment of the bureaucracy gives an indication of the capability of the state. Botswana has been characterized by a powerful and dominant bureaucracy (Molomo & Dithapelo, 2017; Sebudubudu & Mooketsane, 2016; Soest, 2009). The bureaucracy has also been identified as a central and strong actor in the country's public policy processes. Botswana's bureaucracy is notably considered professional and meritorious. According to Mosime and Kaboyakgosi (2017) and Soest (2009), Botswana's public administration machinery is considered amongst the most professional in Africa.

Public policy in Botswana has largely been a domain of bureaucrats and members of parliament, with limited intervention and influence from civil society. Civil society in Botswana has failed to influence public policy and exert pressure on the state (Carbone, 2005; Lotshwao et al., 2019). Danevard (1993) states that while the bureaucracy is strong, dominant politicians have a way of overriding them where they feel it is key to do so. He further argues that harmonious relations between politicians and bureaucrats may be due to the fact that the two have similar economic interests and that most senior politicians would have likely served as bureaucrats before. Although the level of dominance by the bureaucracy may have declined over the years, the bureaucracy still has a strong stance over public policy in Botswana especially so considering the ineffectiveness of civil society. Galligan (2006, p. 321) argues that “in countries where decision making is largely concentrated in a strong central state with a powerful bureaucracy, change is lasting when brought about through legal reform”. Soest (2009) confirms that Botswana's polity is highly centralized. This suggests legal reforms may be a viable response for gender inequality in Botswana.

The limitations of bureaucracies cannot be overlooked. The timidity of bureaucracy means it lacks flexibility to respond to changing gender needs. Women's policy agencies are state agencies established to improve the status of women. The state-led instrument has been found lacking in most areas particularly because women issues require strong advocacy. For example, issues like abortion, prostitution, marital rape, equal political representation and economic empowerment, among others, require strong advocacy as they challenge the norm. However, an advantage to it has been the trait to possibly “influence the agenda and to further feminist goals through public policies from inside the state apparatus” (Lovenduski, 2008:174).

An effective and strong state

The Botswana government is effective (Robinson & Parsons, 2006). This attribute has served the country and its citizens well. However, Thorandeniya (2015) argues that with improved living conditions and development indicators, people become mere beneficiaries of the welfare state and in the process make the state a patriarchal welfare state. This description is not far from what obtains in Botswana, where the state provides well and the citizens have become passive and complacent recipients, thus forfeiting their role as active citizens that ought to keep the state accountable.

Botswana's development, economic growth and performance has been exceptional and impressive, especially so in comparison to her peers. However, recent developments suggest a decline in ratings and good governance (Molomo & Dithapelo, 2017). Soest (2009) terms Botswana as a "stagnating miracle". Nonetheless, Botswana remains above average in terms of development and governance. According to Tsie (2017, p. 195), Botswana has over the years proved to qualify as a developmental state, exhibiting Leftwich's characteristic of a determined and developmental elite, relative autonomy, a powerful competent and insulated bureaucracy, weak and subordinate civil society, effective management of non-state economic interests and legitimacy and performance.

Botswana has as a state-centric society, with the state dominating almost all aspects of the economy and social life. The state dominates and imposes authority over citizens. Stetsdon and Mazur (1995) argue that state-centric societies allow the state to play a stronger role in narrowing the gender gap in the society, usually by enhancing women's socio-economic status as the state has great authority and power. The Botswana state has great leverage and opportunity in addressing women's issues compared to any other force in the country given its strength over other actors. The capability of the state in Botswana has reduced incentives for questioning the state; the prevalent non-questioning culture aggravates the situation, thus creating a monstrous state and a weak and dependent citizenry. This also implies that the state is left to address the societal problems with no or minimal input from other actors including the public. The non-questioning culture stifles civil society as its objective really is to question the state in pursuit of accountability and the protection of civic interest. Such a culture also has a negative impact on the relationship between the state and its citizens making it a traditional parent-child type of relationship where one instructs and the other obeys.

The society expects a lot from the state and has become dependent on it. The private sector is relatively weak. Despite government's efforts to diversify the economy, the private sector remains underdeveloped. The Botswana government has deliberately taken a decision to direct the economy (Botlhale, 2017). Thus the government has overt control over the private sector. Due to the small population and limited market, private organizations thrive through doing business with government.

A weak parliament and a weak civil society

Botswana has been defined as a strong and capable state (Danevard, 1993; Tsie, 2017). The strength of Botswana's state is apparently drawn from an ineffective legislature and opposition, weak civil society and an effective bureaucracy (Danevard, 1993; Sebudubudu & Osei-Hwedie, 2006). Parliament in Botswana is dominated by the ruling party, which has been

the case since independence. The opposition has been noted as weak and fragmented. These factors weaken parliament, particularly in relation to other institutions such as the executive. According to Lekalake (2016), opposition parties in Botswana struggle to present themselves as an alternative to the ruling party. However, a weak opposition renders parliament ineffective (Molomo & Dithapelo, 2017). Parliament in Botswana has failed to represent the interests of constituents while opposition has neither provided a viable alternative nor adequately held the government of the day accountable. Parliament remains unduly dominated by the executive. One party dominance, a weak opposition, civil society and parliament reinforce gender inequality as there is limited intervention by some policy actors.

The performance of Botswana's civil society as a watchdog and an oversight agent has not been impressive. Civil society in Botswana remains weak (Lekalake, 2016; Lotshwao et al., 2019; Sebudubudu, 2017). It is underdeveloped and it has not been able to influence public policy or hold public institutions to account. A weak parliament and ineffective civil society means limited checks and balances, weak oversight and accountability, thus further brooding state dominance. This therefore creates a challenge for interests that the state does not support or consider a priority.

Critical of critics

Under the rule of former President Ian Khama, the government of Botswana was labelled as autocratic, repressive and intolerant (Molomo & Dithapelo, 2017; Tsie, 2017). The decline in freedom ratings and common complaints of curtailed freedoms are indicative. Carbone (2005) argues that the government of Botswana is notorious for threatening those that criticize it. Some examples of cases which suggest a negative attitude towards criticism during the Khama administration include: the declaration of Professor Good as a prohibited immigrant; lawyers representing the Basarwa on their case against government denied entry into the country; an outspoken South African politician, Julius Malema, placed on a visa requirement to enter the country though the same does not apply to other South African citizens. These illustrations further demonstrate the strength and undue dominance of the state.

Conclusion

Factors discussed in the article indicate that the state has not prioritized gender equality in political representation. Although the establishment of the Gender Affairs Department, the renaming of the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs and the signing of international gender conventions are all positive indications, they are not adequate without political will. The lack of political will, patriarchy and culture, a weak parliament, a weak and almost absent women's movement, among other factors reinforce poor representation of women in parliament. The state in its ambivalence towards equality in political representation renders Botswana's democracy a democracy for men and in its antagonism sidelines women.

The state is dominant and capable; therefore it seems realistic to expect the state to represent the women's interests. McBride and Mazur (2010) argue that in a state-centric society, the state has power and plays a stronger role in narrowing the gender gap in society. Given the dominance of the state in Botswana, the article suggests that feminist issues will

only be a policy priority when the state decides to pursue that agenda. This means that the importance of the feminist agenda will be determined by the state. However, it is apparent that currently there is no political will to pursue equal representation in political decision-making. Botswana needs leadership that is committed to gender equality, transformed rules of the game and a reinvigorated women's movement. Unless a sudden turn of events occurs leading to legal quotas for women or a renewed political will towards gender equality it is unlikely that the situation of poor representation of women in Botswana will change anytime soon.

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