

Women Participation in the Local Governance

A case of Tamale Municipality in the Northern Region of Ghana

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Abstract: The demand for gender balance and elimination of all forms of discrimination against women has long been in existence in this country even before the 1995 women's conference in Mexico. The 1995 Beijing conference aimed at eliminating all forms of discrimination against women in all sectors of societal existence. The 1995 Beijing conference brought the slogan "what men can do, women can do, and even do it better. The Global concern is women all over the world have long been relegated and underrated in decision making both in public and private sectors of the economy. However, upon all measures such as the Affirmation Plan of Action, equal right granted each one in the 1992 constitution of Ghana as well as efforts of NGOs and women organisations to help bring on board women on equal pedestal with men in all decision making processes has still not yielded the needed result of the 30-40% women representation in decision making both at the national and the local level of which Tamale Metropolis is no exemption. The study sought to identify the various constraints serving as barriers to women participation in local governance. The study therefore revealed that, the problems confronting women participation in local governance include inadequate financial support, inadequate leadership position and men dominance over women. In order to improve women participation in local governance, the study suggested that adequate support in terms of finance, women in local government reservation bill, capacity building and intensify public education should be put in place and reinforced in order to achieve the desired 30-40% women representation in decision making. It is the researchers hope that, if the recommendations put forward by the study are well implemented, women participation in local governance will be improved in the near future.

Keywords: Women Participation, Tamale Municipality, Northern Region of Ghana.

I. INTRODUCTION

Gender equality and elimination of sex discrimination in all sectors of every economy has become general issues of concern for governments, international bodies, religious groups and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) over the years across the world. The aim is to ensure fair representation of women in economic, social and political activities through active and full participation at all levels in the economy.

The United Nations Organization initiative to ensure gender equality and elimination of discrimination against Women and the declaration of the year 1975 as "International Women Year (IWY)" sought to bring women onto equal status with men in terms of Political, economic and social responsibilities as one of the global efforts to promote women's right around the world (Osei-Kuffour, 2001: p1). This initiative stressed the need for governments, regional organizations and international agencies to incorporate within the context of Coherent development plans, to remove all constraints that prevent women from taking part in decision making in the interest of equality and maximization of national development (Nikoi, 1998:p4). After the declaration of the year 1975 as "International Women Year (IWY)" by the United Nations Organization, Africa accepted the initiative. This came to light when the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in 1975 established the African Training and Research Centre for Women (ATRCW) with long term goal of helping member states to improve the socio- economic conditions of African women to enhance their contribution to development (Nikoi, 1998: p4).

This effort by the economic commission for Africa (ECA) has attracted the concerns of many governments in Africa to ensure that women get the necessary platform to articulate their views and participate effectively in decisions which affect their livelihood, the nation and the local areas in which they live.

Ghana has started ratifying the convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against women (CEDAW) and has endorsed the Beijing Declaration and platform for Action as well as the Millennium Development Goals (3) with the aim of improving women participation in decision making (Daily Graphic, 8th April, 2008 p 11).

Despite the efforts made by successive governments to have fair women representation in decision making especially at the local level, women participation has still not been encouraging. Women participation in local government needs serious attention since governance is believed to start at the grassroots (local level). If women are able to fully participate in local governance, they can largely take national stewardship roles. For instance between 2001 and 2004 under President John Agyekum Kuffour, 7 women District Chief Executives were elected (MLGRD). Under President John Mills, 11 women District Chief Executives have been elected between 2009 and 2011 (MLGRD).

The study aims at exploring the causes that have over the years prevented women from actively getting involved in decision making process at local level and how best women can be encouraged to ensure that majority of them are fairly represented in the local governance structures in the country.

1.1 Problem Statement.

Over decades now, women have become capable in decision making since they are also integral part of the societies. Although these capabilities and capacities have been realized in almost every field of development but there is still low participation of women in decision making process in every aspect of the economy in the country. In 2000 population and housing census, the total women population in Ghana was estimated to be 51 percent as against 49 percent of men. In the 2010 population and housing census, the percentage of women population increased from 51 percent to 51.27 percent with the men decreasing from 49 percent to 48.72 percent (Ghana Statistical Service 2001 and 2011).

Although women outnumber men, women contribution to decision making is not been encouraged even though the affirmative Action Policy of 1998 provided for a 40 percent quota of women's representation at all government levels (Ghana, 1998; cited in Osei- Kuffour,2001). There is empirical evidence which shows clearly that, women are not fairly represented in decision making both at the national and local government levels in Ghana. For instance, in the 2000 General elections, 19 women out of 200 parliamentarians were elected into parliament. The number increased substantially in 2004 general elections when 25 women were elected into parliament. (Osei-Kuffour, 2001:p5). However, during the 2008 general elections, the number reduced from 25 to 20 parliamentarians out of 230 (Daily Graphic; Monday, February 11, 2009). In 2012 general elections, the number of women parliamentarians though increased marginally from 20 to 28 out of 275, the number is still not encouraging (Joy News; Monday, December 10, 2012).

Statistics from the ministry of local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD) shows that, for the total 170 metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies in Ghana, only 11 women were elected chief executives as compared to 159 men in the country. In 2012, the number of women chief executives increased from 11 to 12 out of 216 (MLGRD). Interestingly, there is no woman district, municipal and metropolitan chief executive in the northern region including the study area which is Tamale Metropolitan Assembly. In the 2006 district assembly level elections, 408 women assembly members out of 42, 224 were elected. (Daily Graphic, Tuesday, 3rd November, 2009). In the 2010 district assembly elections, out of 6,103 who were elected assembly members in the country only 412 were women (MLGRD 2010). Northern region elected 19 women out of 137 elected assembly members (MLGRD). In the Tamale metropolitan assembly which is the study area only 1 out of 64 elected assembly members is a woman (MLGRD). It is clear from the above issues that development still lacks in the Country due to low women representation and participation in decision making especially at the local level. The study therefore seeks to identify the major causes of the under- representation of women in decision making at the local government level in Tamale Metropolitan Assembly and how best women in the Metropolitan can be encouraged and supported so that they would be fairly represented in making decision at the local government level. Based on the above, this study specifically set out to.

- i. Find the barriers to women participation in local governance in the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly.
- ii. Find out the extent of gender gap between males and females in the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly.

In order to achieve the above objectives, the study sought to provide answers to the following research questions:

- i. What is the extent of gender gap between males and females in the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly?
- ii. What are the constraints faced by women in participating in decision making process in the local governance?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Trend of Local Governance in Ghana

Ghana (formerly Gold Coast) was ruled by the British through the indirect rule system which involved the use of native authorities, institutions and political actors to rule the indigenous people (Mohan, 1993; Asibuo, 1992). The Native Jurisdiction Ordinance was passed in 1879 when the indirect rule was established. It was policy of native administration which provided a statutory basis of the exercise of local government functions by the local chiefs and their councils of elders.

The chiefs were charged with the responsibility to collect taxes, settle disputes, maintain law and order and manage essential socio-economic services (Asibuo, 1992). The chiefs were representatives of the British Authorities at the Local level to only do what they have been asked to do without the powers to make decisions without the central government's approval. This was purely Deconcentration form of decentralization (Ayee, 1994).

In 1943, new Local Government Ordinance was passed which established elected town councils for the major cities like Kumasi, Accra, Sekondi-Takoradi and Cape Coast. The elected town councils were charged to manage the affairs of the local people whilst the central government takes in charge of the national affairs (Ghana, 1996:1).

The 1951 Local Government Ordinance was passed towards self-government status with the prime aim of broadening local level participation in government decision making. This Ordinance created the District and Urban and Local Councils which made up the two-tier structure of the local government system in Ghana. A total of 26 District Councils, 252 Urban and number Local Councils were created (Asibuo, 1992).

All these efforts were made to achieve devolution of power to the people at the grassroots but much success were not achieved since the central government still possessed much power over the local government institutions. The "Dual Hierarchy Model of Administration" which created two machineries of government was created bringing on board local government (district) at the local level and central government at the capital city (Ghana, 1996:8).

In 1961, this Local Government Act (Act 54) was passed and by 1962, the number of local authorities was increased from 59 to 66. This number swelled up again in 1964 when the local authorities were further increased from 66 to 155 and 183 in 1965. All these fragmentations of the local authorities by the CPP government were for political reasons (Asibuo, 1992:66).

In 1971, Local Administration Act (Act 357) was passed by the progress party (PP) to implement most of the recommendations that Sriboe Commission (1967) and Akuffo-Ado Commission (1968) proposed after the overthrow of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah in 1966 (Harris, 1983). This Act prescribed a three-tier structure consisting the Regional, District and Local Councils (Atinga, 1982). In 1974, the National Redemption Council (NRC) introduced a new Local Government system by promulgating the local Administration Decree (NRCD 258). The aim behind this decree was to bring the central government from Accra to the doorsteps of the local people through decentralized decision making functions (Ayee, 1994: 91).

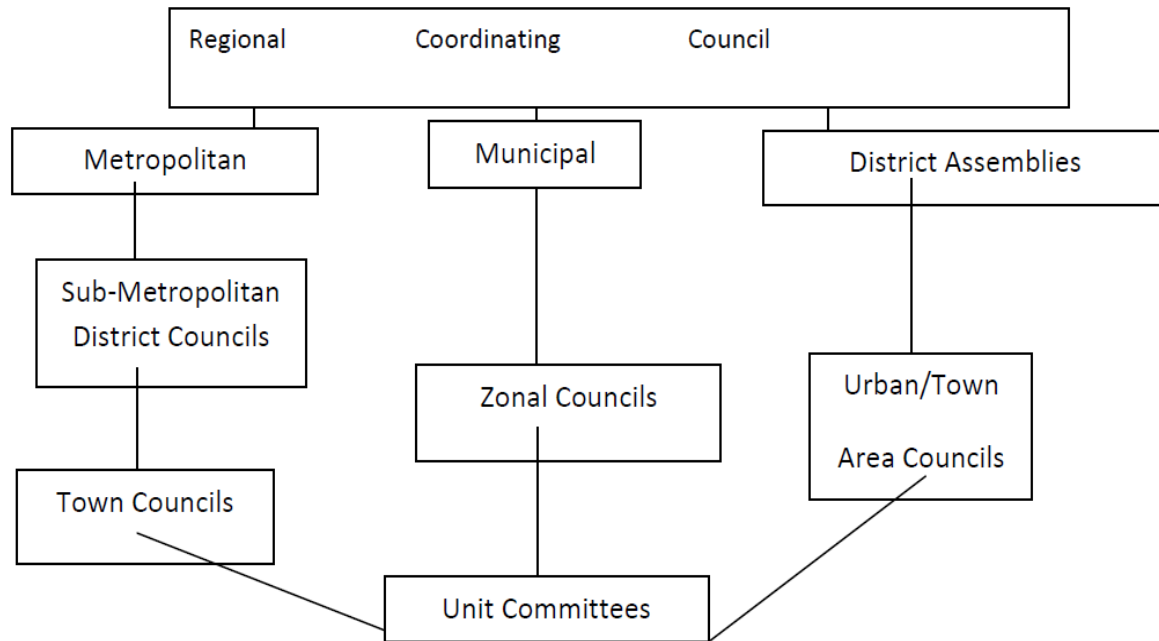
The current local government system was brought forth by the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) Law 207 in 1988/1989 which is now superseded by Article 240 of the 1992 constitution of Ghana and replaced by the Local Government Act of 1993, Act 462 (Ghana, 1996).

2.2 The District Assembly Concept

The "Blue Book" by Akuse group in 1983 outlined the structure, functions and the composition of the local government and placed the district assembly as the highest political and administrative authorities in the district. This therefore brought the "District Assembly System in Ghana (Ghana, 1996).

The District Assembly is the highest political authority in the district which manages the day-to-day administration of the district; oversee the development plans and activities at the local level. The Local Government Act of 1993, Act 462 brought the new local government system which is a four-tier metropolitan, three-tier municipal and District Assemblies structure.

2.3 The diagram below shows the structure of the new local government system.



Source: Ghana – The new local government system, 1996

The above diagram is the structure portraying the various steps through which decisions are carried out from the central government through the regional level to the unit committees which form the basic structure of the Local Government System in Ghana.

2.4 The Evolution of Women Movement from International Perspective

The United Nations Organization is recognized as an astounding body that has spearheaded the international movement to integrate women in decision making towards the achievement of development. The United nations has embarked on several strategies and policies such as, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the various declarations, plans and programmes of Action and strategies that have emerged from the three United Nations world conferences on women to ensure that women's status and rights are ensured, and gender discriminations are eliminated worldwide (Nikoi, 1998).

The full integration of women to participate in decision making was slow in the 1960s and the early 1970s. The UN on December 18, 1972 by its resolution declared 1975 as International Women Year (IWY) to focus attention on the constraints facing women world-wide and stress the need for governments, regional organizations and international agencies to co-operate, within the frame of integrating more women in decision-making process and development policies based on equitable maximization of national product (UN, 1972). In 1975, the world conference on international women year was held in Mexico City which adopted the Mexico Declaration which stipulated the need for the equality of women and the recognition of their contribution to Development and peace (Bernnard, 1999). The Mexico Declaration was followed by the world plan of Action in which the UN declared the years 1975-1985 as the UN Women's Decade. The world Plan of Action was declared to strengthen the implementation of the instruments and programmes that had been adopted on the status of women. The purpose of the plan aim at stimulating national and international action to solve the problems of under- development and of the socio-economic structure which placed women in an inferior position against men (Nikoi, 1998 : 14).

The UN convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women held in 1977 is also another strategic policy by the UN to promote the integration of women in the decision making process. The convention emphasized the importance of the promotion of equality between men and women and emphasized that the full participation of women on equal terms with men leads to development of the country. The important roles of women in rural development and the promotion of equality between men and women were also stressed (UN, 1977; Nikoi1998; Wangusa, 2000).

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The researchers adopted descriptive survey approach for this study. The target population of the study was made up of both educated and non-educated women in the Tamale metropolis as well as women in the district assembly. Ideally, the researcher should have used the entire target population of the Tamale Metropolis to enhance generalization of the outcome of the study. However, Best and Kahn (1998) as cited in Quansah (2007) stated that to study a large population to arrive at generalization would be impracticable, if not impossible. As a result, the researcher deemed it appropriate to make the study more manageable and practicable by using unbiased sample of the population. One hundred and twenty participants consisting of educated and non-educated women in the Tamale metropolis were selected using simple random sampling for one hundred women and purposive sampling to collect information from experts. In this study, the expert's information for the researchers was the metropolitan assembly where women participation in local governance is realized.

3.2 Instrumentation

The major instrument used in collecting data for this study was developed by the researchers. The instrument has two sections. Section "A" contained demographic data of the participants and section "B" consist of 8 items each on low women representation in the Tamale Metropolis.

3.3 Data analysis

Quantitative descriptive method was used to analyse the data collected for the study. The responses to the various items in the questionnaire were tabulated and analyzed statistically with the help of a computer software programme called Statistics Package for Social Sciences. Since the study adopted a descriptive survey design, the results were mainly in frequencies and percentages presented in Tables.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study are presented in Tables 1-6 and interpreted to provide clear information.

Table.1: Age Distribution of Participants

Age of Participants	Frequency	Percentage
18-28	63	52.5
29-38	40	33.3
39-48	15	12.5
49 and above	2	1.7
Total	120	100

Source: Field survey 2012

An analysis of age characteristics of women is very important for this study. This was to find out if the women were old or young when it comes to their participation in local governance. As can be seen in table 1, the dominant age group of women was 18-28 years with 63 Participants representing 52.5%. It was followed by 29-38 years with 40 Participants' representing 33.3%. The next age group was 39-48 years with 15 Participants representing 12.5%. The final age group was between 49-58 years with 2 Participants representing 1.7%.

In terms of age analysis, Participants within the age range 18-28 years formed the majority and since adulthood begins from age 18, it means most of the Participants were adult and are eligible to participate in governance as stipulated in the 1992 constitution of the Republic of Ghana irrespective of gender.

Table 2: Marital Status of Participants

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	42	35.0
Single	63	52.5
Divorced	13	10.8
Widowed	2	1.7
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey 2012

A cursory glance at the table 2, shows that about two-quarters of the Participants are single. Out of 120 Participants, 63 representing 52.5% were single. It was followed by 42 Participants representing 35.0% who were married. Nine Participants representing 7.5% were divorced while 4 Participants representing 3.3% were widowed. In terms of marital status, majority of the Participants were single. It therefore corresponds to the statement by Ferguson and Katundu (1994) that some men feel threatened with the possibility that their wives will interact with other men and others also feel that their wife's political pre-occupation will divert their attention away from the home. It is in this light that participation in local governance has been low on the part of women especially married women in the Metropolis.

Table 3: Formal educational background of Participants

Educational	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	78	65
No	42	35
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey 2012

An analysis of educational background of women is very important for this study. This is to find out if low level of formal education is reason for women under-representation of women in the Tamale metropolis. Table 3, shows an overwhelming majority of 78 of the Participants representing 65.0% responded positively to have had formal educational background while 42 representing 35.0% responded negatively to formal educational background. The finding that majority of the Participants are educated formally but still there is low women representation in the Tamale metropolis disagrees with Ferguson and Katundu (1994) that most of the time women lack formal education to run for office at the local level. This implies that low level of education is not necessarily the reason for women to run for office in the Tamale metropolis but they are rather relegated to the background when it comes to running for office. It is in this light that participation in local governance has been low on the part of women in the Metropolis.

Table 4: Leadership position of Participants

Leadership position	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	28	23.3
No	92	76.7
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey 2012

It is shown in table 4 that 92 of the Participants (women) representing 76.7% were not in leadership position while 28 Participants representing 23.3% were in leadership position in the Tamale Metropolis. This implies majority of the

women were not in leadership position in the Metropolis. The finding that majority of the women are not in leadership position demonstrates a gloomy future for the country in terms of women in leadership and participation in the local governance.

Table 5: Number of Women interested in local governance Participation

Interest	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	116	96.7
No	4	3.3
Total	120	100.00

Source: Field Survey 2012

The study was to find out the interest of women in local governance participation. Table 5, depicts only 4 of the Participants representing 3.3% were not interested in local governance participation in the metropolis. 116 Participants representing 96.7% affirmed their interest in the local governance participation. With majority of the Participants willing to participate in local governance, the researcher disagrees with Ferguson and Katundu (1994) that most women feel reluctant to run office both at the national and local government positions for reasons such as fear of public criticisms and pressure. This implies women are willing to participate in local governance if they are given the opportunity by the society.

Table 6: The Trend of women participation in local governance in the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly

Gender	2002-2006	2006-2010	2010-2014
Women	6	4	5
Men	76	77	87
Total	82	81	92

Source: Tamale Metropolitan Assembly 2012

As shown in table 6, out of 82 participants, 6 representing 7.3% in 2002-2006, were assembly women both appointed and elected while 76 members representing 92.6% were men. In 2006 -2010, only 4 out of 81 representing 4.9% assembly members were women both appointed and elected while 77 members representing 95.0% were men. The table further reveals that out of 92 members of the Assembly in the Tamale Metropolitan in the year 2010-2014, only 5 representing 5.4% are women both appointed and elected while 87 members representing 94.5% are men. From the trends shown in table 6, women participation in local governance has not been encouraging in the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly. The number of women participation in the local governance is reducing after every four years. This implies men dominate women in local governance participation. This spells a doom for the country in the future in terms of fair balance in governance representation with respect to gender.

Findings

The study revealed that even though many women are educated in the metropolis, they are still under-represented in the local governance in the Tamale metropolis. Cultural factors were attributed to be the major factors hindering women from participating in decision making process at the local level. The culture makes it abnormal for women to lead men in terms of decision making. This cultural reason has greatly resulted in low women participation in local governance in the Tamale Metropolis.

The study revealed that, from 2002-2010, the number of men who are either elected or appointed by the government always outnumber the women. This is because most of the women lack self-confidence and inadequate support to either stand for local government elections or lobby for appointment from the government in order to actively participate in local governance. The study revealed that the total number of women elected and appointed into local governance in Tamale metropolis from 2002-2010 was 17.6% which is far below the desired 30-40% women representation in local government as stipulated in the affirmative Action Policy of 1998 (Ghana, 1998; cited in Osei- Kuffour, 2001).

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, a number of conclusions were made. One obvious conclusion is that cultural beliefs of the people in the metropolis. Also, other problems confronting women in local governance in the metropolis include inadequate financial support, inadequate leadership position and men dominance over women. These constraints impede women participation in local governance in the Tamale Metropolis.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Special funding assistance should be made available to women desiring to contest local elections since most women face financial difficulties to fund the cost of contesting local level elections which involve higher expenditure. This support should come from the Government, Non-Governmental Organisations and Private Organisations so that it will entice and motivate more women to participate in local governance.

Special seminars and workshops should be made available to women on regular bases to build their capacity and also sensitise them on the need to participate in local government. Such seminars and workshops should be spearheaded by the National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE) so that it will raise and instil confidence in women to contest local level elections in order to get involved in local governance.

Increase awareness among people in societies on the need for women to participate in local governance. The awareness should include students of all levels of education as well as the general public on the need for gender balance in all sectors of the economy. To achieve public awareness, the mass media should be used to disseminate information concerning women participation in local governance. The media should endeavour to put out success stories of best practices among women who are in local governance whether appointed or elected who are performing their duties and overcoming the challenges of the so called male dominated profession'.

The government should make effort to appoint 70% of women of the 30% government assembly members appointees that she is mandated to add up to the total assembly members since women are unwilling to contest local government elections due to fear and lack of self-confidence.

The government should introduce women's reservation bill that will be backed by law to reserve 1/3 of the total seats for women to be represented in each District Assembly.

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