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WOMEN IN POLITICS IN GHANA

A Study on Local Government in the Greater Accra Region

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ABSTRACT

Women's participation in politics in Ghana is low, both at local and the national level. This reflects the global trend of women's participation in politics. This paper examines ways of deepening women's participation as assembly members in local government. It examines women's participation in politics with the aim of suggesting ways of enhancing women's political participation. Primary Data was collected using questionnaires and interviews. Three major problems were identified as the main barriers to women's participation in Ghanaian politics. Women in Ghana earned low incomes coupled with low educational status. Also, lack of confidence was found to be a barrier because the women explained that politics is for men. The recommendation is that both men and women should be sensitized to erase the deep-seated misconception that politics is for men. Also, women should be empowered economically and educationally so as to be able to compete favourably with their male counterparts in politics.

KEY DESCRIPTORS: Decentralization, Assemblywomen, Women's Empowerment, Local Government, Political Participation.

INTRODUCTION

Strengthening women's participation in all spheres of life has become a major issue in the discourse of economic and social development in the last decade. Virtually every international and bilateral development agency has proclaimed policies to integrate women's interest into economic and social processes. This is perhaps in accord with one of the tenets of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which among others states that, "everyone has the right to take part in the government of his or her country" (UN, 1945). Improvement in women's political status and representation at all levels of decision-making is also seen as fundamental for the achievement of both transparent and accountable government and sustainable development in all areas of life (United Nation Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995).

However, throughout the world, women face obstacles in their participation in politics. According to a research by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

(IDEA) (2005) the rate of female representation stands at about 16% globally. IDEA attributes this to the prevailing social and economic regimes as well as existing political structures. Ghana is no exception to this phenomenon as women in Ghana are also under represented in both local and national politics. At the national level politics, the level of women's participation in national parliaments is low at about 18% (Awumbila, 2001). At the District Assemblies level, women are not only few at 7% but also majority of them are appointed rather than elected to leadership positions (Ofei-Aboagye, 2000).

Efforts have been made at international conferences to rectify the situation by calling on all nations to bring gender equity into all decision- making bodies. Ghana has not been left out of these international efforts to get women on board. For instance, Ghana has been signatory to many of the international conventions which call for increased participation of women in decision-making at all levels. In compliance, therefore, programmes have been developed to promote women's involvement in the decision-making process**.** For example, the then National Commission on Women and Development (NCWD), now Department of Women, was set up in 1975 to ensure that the objectives of the International Women's Year and those of the UN Decade for Women were achieved in Ghana. Thus, between 1975 and1986, Ghana initiated programmes, projects and activities to increase the level of women's participation in public life at the local and national levels, to enhance their access to formal education and professional training, improve upon their standard of living and their status in society by increasing their income earning capacity. These programmes were aimed at generating in women's confidence in their own capabilities; enhancing their self-esteem by making them participate actively in and contribute effectively to the development of their individual communities (Awumbila, 2001). Finally, the setting up of a full Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs by the Ghana Government in 2001 to co-ordinate and liaise with national and international organisations on matters relating to the status of women is another way of promoting and protecting the rights of women.

Efforts made by Ghanaian women themselves need to be mentioned. These women have organised themselves into groups for purposes of solidarity. Women Organisations such as the Federation of International Women Lawyers (FIDA), the Forum for African Women Educationalist (FAWE) and 31st December Women's Movement (31st DWM) have been able to advocate for the enactment and enforcement of laws militating against the inherent human rights of women and girls such as the 'Trokosi' system, female genital mutilation and educational reforms to promote girl-child education, among others. They also embark on educational campaigns that educate women on their roles in the democratic dispensation. They make use of the electronic media to organise talk show programmes. The 31st December Women's Movement also has interest in political activities. From the 1980s to 2000, its leadership had been very active in the political conscientization of members at the local level and beyond. ABANTU for Development, an African regional non-governmental organisation, in collaboration with civil society organizations and individual activists under the Women's Manifesto Coalition) has produced a Women's Manifesto, which has important an important action document on women's empowerment in Ghana.

The Women's Manifesto represents the concerns and aspirations of women and provides recommendations on how key issues affecting women can be tackled. ABANTU, as an independent gender and governance organization, also dialogues with governments, donors, civil society, traditional authorities and political parties on the promotion of women's political participation. The Manifesto also calls on the government to implement a legally enforceable affirmative action policy by 2008 to integrate women in all spheres of public life. Currently in Ghana women occupy various positions in national and local government. These

include for the first time in the history of Ghana a woman Attorney General and Minister of Justice and Speaker of Parliament. In addition, the present Ministers of Trade and Industry, Tourism, and Information are also women. Ghana is however yet to meet the policy of 40% of women appointees to local government. The worse of it is that the number of women in parliament has reduced from twenty-five (25) to eighteen (18).

In the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, women are recognised as having equal rights with men in all spheres of life. The constitution prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex, religion, gender and ethnicity. However, the cultural norms of Ghanaian society do not favour the inclusion of women in the political arena. Patriarchal practices and the current socio-economic status of women do little to encourage women's active participation in the political arena. These somewhat explain the difficulties women experience in accessing higher education and economic resources, and the resistance they sometimes face from men (or other women) in their own communities. These tend to disempower many women from effective political participation. To cap it all, other constraints and the demands of domestic duties leave Ghanaian women little time or energy to devote to political activities or public affairs.

The main aim of the District Assembly system in Ghana was to bring political governance to the doorstep of the people. However in 2002, only 341 of the 4,583 elected District Assembly members, representing 7%, were women. At the local level, many consider women to be better suited to focus on the concerns of children, the family, the community and the environment. Specifically, they can address issues like girl child education, child labour, rape, teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and domestic violence. However, these issues are not on the developmental agenda, because women are not part of decision-making bodies (Ofei-Aboagye 2000).

Ghana was the first country to attain independence in Africa south of the Sahara and many people think it has failed to be a trailblazer as far as women in politics is concerned. Fifty percent (50%) of the members of parliament in Rwanda, a country that recently emerged from several years of genocide, are women. Another progressive example is South Africa which has 29.8% of its parliamentarians as women. Other examples are Liberia and the Gambia which have a female President and Vice-President respectively.

The research questions remaining and of interest to this paper are: How does the socio-economic background of Assemblywomen influence their participation in local politics? How does the concept of empowerment translate into women's political participation? What are the barriers to women's effective participation in politics?

This paper discusses the dynamics of women in politics in Ghana with the aim of providing policy recommendations for deepening women's participation in decision-making at the local level. The study is informed by the fact that in a developing country like Ghana, tapping the potentials of everybody including women, for national development should be a national priority.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in the Greater Accra Region. Table 1 below depicts the situation of women in local governance in the Region by District.

Table 1: Women in District Assemblies, Greater Accra Region 2002 to 200**8**

District	Total	No of Female elected	No of Female appointed	Total no of Female	Percentage Female
Accra Metropolitan Area	102	10	12	22	22%
Tema Municipal Area	79	6	8	14	18%
Ga West District	41	1	6	7	17%
Dangme-East District	52	3	4	7	13%
Dangme-West District	52	4	5	9	17%
Greater Accra Region (total)	326	24	35	59	18%

Source: Compiled from records in the various District Assemblies in 2005

Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used in selecting the respondents. Primary data were collected in 2005 through the use of questionnaire and interviews. Due to the small number of the women (See Table 1 above) in the District Assembly structure, fifty-six (56) out of a total of 59 current Assembly women participated in the questionnaire survey. The remaining three were not available at the time of the research. Questions posed were about their role in the District Assembly processes, barriers to effective participation in politics and their opinions about politics. Interviews were used among the remaining sample comprising former Assembly women, presiding members and opinion leaders in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. These comprised five (5) past Assembly women, five (5) Presiding members (all males) and five (5) opinion leaders (2 females and 3 males) selected from each of the five Districts of the Greater Accra Region. Three (3) directors of civil society groups were also interviewed. These were Women's and Assistant Business Association (WABA), ABANTU for Development, Federation of International Women Lawyers (FIDA). In all the total sample size was seventy-four (74).

Secondary data were gathered from the District Assemblies, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, textbooks, journals, magazines, newspapers, television, internet, project documents and brochures.

All responses were analysed at the uni-variate and bi-variate levels. At the uni-variate level, descriptive statistical techniques such as averages, frequencies in the form of tables and graphs were used. The chi-square and the correlation were used at the bi-variate level.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

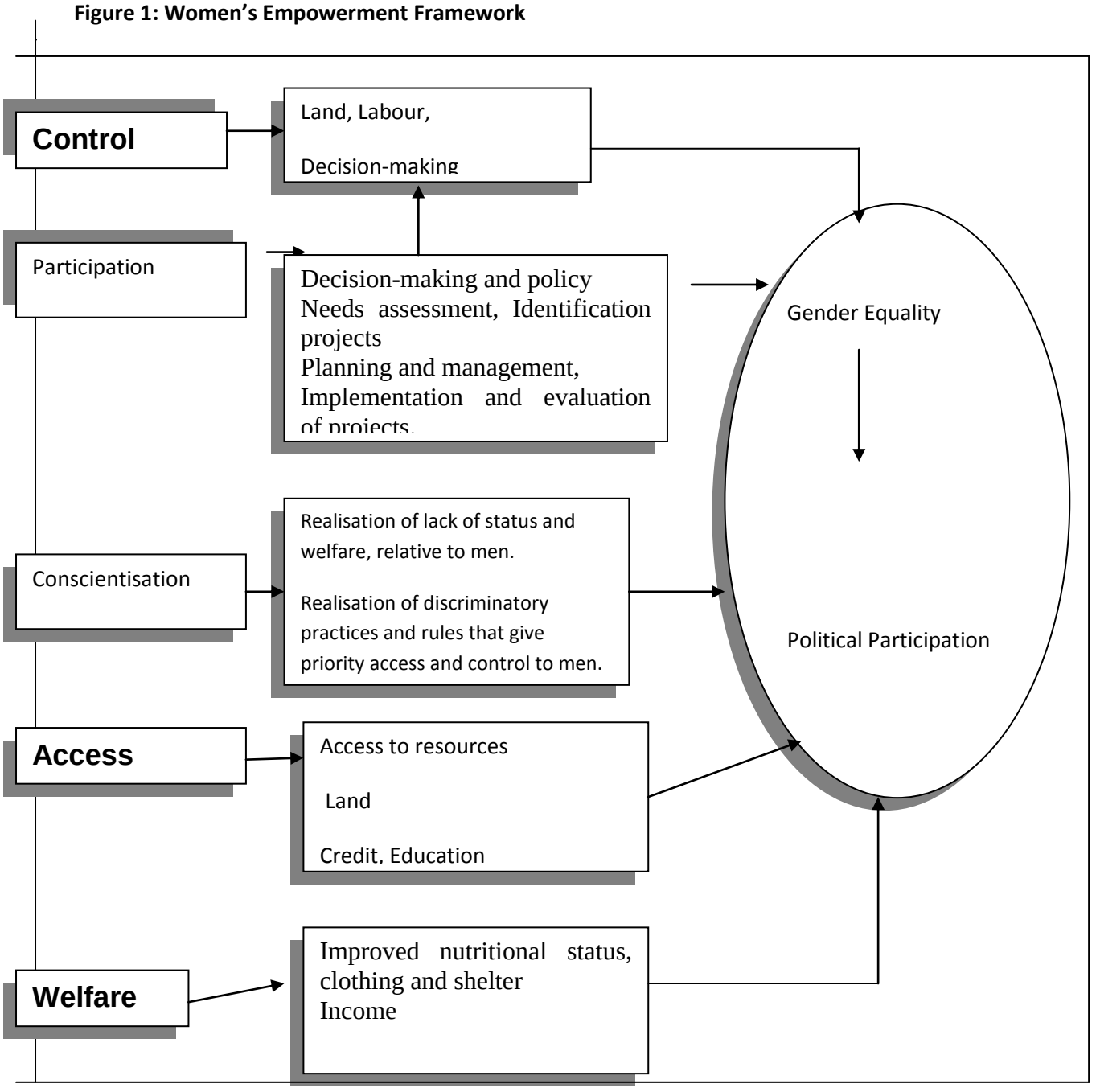
Process of Women's Empowerment

The main conceptual framework of this study is Women's Empowerment Framework (WEF). WEF was first introduced by Sara Longwe (cited in Wallance and March, 1991) a consultant

on gender and development based in Zambia. This framework is central to an understanding of women's participation and mobilisation, which brings with it the development of leadership for addressing and removing the many forms of gender discrimination, which presently leave women oppressed and marginalized. Such empowerment is women's route to changing the practices and laws that discriminate against them, and achieving an equitable gender division of labour and allocation of resources.

Longwe's framework is based on the notion of five different levels of equality, shown in Figure 1 below. The extent to which these five levels of equality are present in any area of social or economic life determines the level of empowerment. The levels of equality are hierarchical, in that programmes that focus on the higher levels are more likely to bring about women's empowerment than those focused on the lower levels. In other words, equality of participation or control between men and women is more likely to bring about significant change than equality of welfare or access. Equal welfare or access is not empowering in itself. One needs conscientization and participation in the change process, and preferably control of the process if change is to be sustained.

Figure 1: Women's Empowerment Framework



Source Sara Longwe's in Wallance and March (1991)

Control

Control is defined as equal power over decision-making, including the factors of production and the distribution of benefits. It means a balance of control between women and men, so that neither side dominates. This is related to the point about participation: participants in political administration need to have equal control of what they are entitled to. For example, a female head of department should have the same level of control as a male head over departmental budgets and other resources, and over decision-making within the department.

Participation

Participation refers to equal involvement in decision-making, whether in policymaking, planning, or administration. Within a political context, this could mean involvement in needs assessment, project formulation, implementation, or evaluation. It requires involvement of the women of the community affected by the decisions taken. For example, within a local administration setting, this relates to ensuring equality of opportunity for both men and women, in terms of staff-development, opportunities and promotion procedures, or equal voice for workers in the district assembly.

Conscientization

Conscientization is the conscious understanding of the difference between sex and gender, and an awareness that gender roles, including the sexual division in politics, are culturally determined and can be changed. Political institutions in Ghana usually reinforce gendered practices by the allocation of duties to female and male staff on the basis of stereotypical views of what is appropriate.

Access

Access is defined as equal rights to use the factors of production: land, labour, credit, education and training, marketing, and all public services and benefits. This level relates to equal opportunities and the need to remove all forms of legal, cultural and administrative discrimination against women. Access to education, particularly at the higher levels, is often very unequal with more girls than boys from poor homes denied any education or unable to go beyond the primary level.

Welfare

Welfare is the level of material wellbeing of females, relative to male in such areas as nutritional status, food supply and income. Here the gender gaps are described in terms of women as mere statistics rather than individuals capable of changing their lives. The "gender gap" can be identified through the disparity between male and female on indicators of nutritional status, mortality rate, and so on. Women empowerment cannot take place purely at this level; action to improve welfare will entail increased access to resources. It is more relevant to politics, but might be a factor when welfare is used as an encouragement to get women into Parliament.

Assessment of the Framework

Longwe's framework is intended to help policy makers, planners, managers, and evaluators assess the extent to which a policy, organisation, or programme is committed to women's empowerment, and if so, to what kind of empowerment and with what impact. Empowerment in this context is intended to mean the achievement of equal participation in and control of the development process and its benefits by men and women. It means enabling women to take greater control of their own lives. It encourages gender awareness in development projects, and helps develop the ability to recognise women's issues, whether in projects involving only women or those involving both women and men.

The first two of these levels of equality (welfare and access) primarily address women's practical gender needs, and the following three levels address women's strategic gender needs. However, Longwe recognises that the separation of practical and strategic is not helpful, as most development interventions have elements of both. Satisfying a practical gender need has an impact on strategic needs. It is also important to note that an intervention does not need to start with activities at the welfare level and work up through each level. It could be located at a higher level, according to its objectives.

In conclusion, for a Ghanaian woman to actively participate in local politics, she needs to be empowered in all the 5 levels. Equal participation of both men and women is essential for sustainable development.

DISCUSSION OF FINADINGS

Socio-Economic Backgrounds and Political Participation

The results obtained showed that the ages of women affected their participation in local politics. They revealed that majority of the assemblywomen were between the ages of 41 and 58 (67.8%) and the smallest group was between 29 and34 (1.8%). This is in line with an assertion made by Lee in Ohene-Konadu (2002) that women's reproductive role and other domestic burdens restrain them from playing active role in district assemblies. However an interesting observation was made that the higher the age of the assemblywoman, the less interest she had in pursuing a political career especially at the national level. Results of the discussion revealed that most of the women were willing to look after their grandchildren at that age rather than to remain politicians. Another observation was that of ill health; they complained that they felt sick often, so they did not want to stress themselves. Yet another reason was that they were becoming forgetful as they were growing older perhaps it was one of usual menopausal symptoms in women.

Marriage is an institution which ensures perpetuation of society. It is very important in the creation of the family. In most societies it is the women who do the household chores and take care of the husband and the children, thereby leaving the women less time for public work, (Adepoju, 1994). It was therefore very important for the researcher to find the marital status of the respondents and see how marriage affects their participation in politics. It was observed that majority (57.1%) of the assemblywomen sampled were married, 19.6% were single, 12.5% divorced and 10.7% of them were widows. The indications were that the marital status of the assemblywomen did not in any way affect their participation in local politics. It must however, be noted that the assemblywomen who were married faced more challenges in the pursuit of the assembly work than their counterparts who were divorced, widowed or single. One of the assemblywomen commented thus: 'I have to seek divorce if I want to continue my political career due to my husband's persistent complaints anytime I

come from meeting late". Another married woman complained that even though her husband did not complain much, she could see from his attitude that he was not happy about her involvement in politics. Only a few (12.5%) women said their husbands were helpful and even sponsored their campaigns. This affirms a statement made by Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA, 1997) in their article 'Women on the Move', that most women have to obtain permission from their husbands before attending meetings or involve themselves in some activity outside the home.

CEDPA (1997) was also observed that the number of children a woman had had influence on her participation in the assembly work. It was revealed that all respondents had children. This implies that having children does not affect the women's participation in local politics. However, it came to light that majority (33.3%) have three children with a few (1.9 %) having as many as seven children. This is an indication that women with many children find it difficult to present themselves for public life since their domestic work will be much. Also those with grown up children can participate more than those with younger kids, this can be testified from the ages of the assemblywomen. Some of the responses suggested that the assemblywomen who had very cooperative children were more willing to pursue their political career than those whose children were less cooperative.

The study also revealed that where the assemblywomen operate was dependent on their participation in politics. Thus, the researcher observed that in terms of projects the rural assemblywomen had a different agenda from those in the cities. This might be so as the real needs of rural dwellers were potable water and electricity while those in the urban areas needed good roads and proper drainage system and refuse disposal. So these influence the projects done by urban and rural assemblywomen respectively. Also most of the urban assemblywomen were more highly educated than their rural counterparts. This suggests that the urban assemblywomen would participate more effectively than the rural assemblywomen.

Education is a very important variable to political participation. One needs to be well informed academically to be able to debate constructively. One of the barriers to women's political participation, according to CEDPA (1997), is that they have less access to crucial resources such as information and education. Lithur (2004) attributed the barriers to women's active participation in politics to low level of education. Nikoi (1998) pointed this out earlier when she said that low literacy rate of women impeded their development and political participation. To her women's ability to provide services effectively depends on their literacy and educational status.

In Ghana, educational statistics indicate that more male are enrolled and retained in school than females. Between the period 1994/95 and 2000/01, out of the total number of pupils in school, females formed only 46.5% at the primary level, 43.5% at the JSS level, 39.1% at the SSS level and only 27% at the tertiary level (Ministry of Education- SRIMPR Division, 2002). Majority (50%) of the assemblywomen studied had secondary education followed by those who had completed basic education (26.8%). A few (23.2%) had completed tertiary education. This conforms to the national pattern of female education. Most of the women participants expressed their willingness to continue their political carrier even to the national level. However, they all acknowledged the fact that they had to better their education. They were able to participate at the local level because the decentralisation system allows the use of local languages in the assembly. Another reason for the retention of women with low education in the district assembly was that the highly educated women shy away from local politics and would not avail themselves. They themselves mentioned

education among others as problems that hinder women's political participation. Allah – Mensah (2003) make a similar observation about South African women in local government. Were (1985) also remarked that "African women's primary education will continue to make them an underclass unless they themselves act to break the pattern".

Another key factor that was looked at was the link between the assemblywomen's economic status and their participation in local politics. It was discovered that most of the assemblywomen were in the informal sector of the economy. Their income level depicted that they were mostly in the small-scale businesses. This affects their level of participation as 21.4% of them indicated that one of the major problems affecting their participation was finance. In their day-to-day work as assemblywomen they need resources to support the numerous requests from the electorate and also for campaigning. This affirms the study conducted by Ohene-Konadu (1999) in selected district assembles in some regions in Ghana. She discovered that the respondents fell within the low-income group. This is also confirmed by Ofei-Aboagye (2004) and Lithur (2004) who also attributed women's constrains to entering local politics to lack of finances. The researcher observed that about 80% of the respondents wanted an increase in the assembly's sitting allowance to attract more women. This request by the assemblywomen hinges on the fact that in Ghana women lack the necessary resources that can enhance their economic empowerment. A case in point is that in most Ghanaian communities women do not own land to enable them embark on large-scale farming or other big time investment. Those in the public sector also earn little due to their low educational background. This came out clearly when the researcher related their type of occupation to their level of income.

Empowerment and Women's Participation in Politics

The concept of empowerment as conceived by Sara Longwe, as discussed earlier, has been based on the notion of five different levels of equality; these are level of control, participation conscientization, access and welfare. The extent to which these five levels of equality are present in any area of social or economic life determines the level of empowerment. The levels of equality are hierarchical, in that programmes that focus on the higher levels are more likely to bring about women's empowerment than those focused on the lower levels.

In other words, equality of participation or control between men and women is more likely to bring about significant change than equality of welfare or access. Equal welfare or access is not empowering in itself: one needs conscientization (awareness of the need for change and of the means to achieve it), participation in the change process, and preferably control of the process if change is to be sustained. In order to elicit the respondents' level of empowerment and participation in politics the researcher asked questions about their educational level, income earned, the committees they served on and their position on the committees. Also, the position they held in their communities before becoming assemblywoman was considered important to determine their level of empowerment. The researcher found out that at least all the respondents had had formal educational. Although most of them had not obtained the tertiary education, some had reached the secondary level. One interesting thing that came up was that the women themselves were aware that before they could proceed to do national politics they needed to better their education and read constantly for more information to enable them present arguments more constructively. This also came out when a question was asked as to why many women were

not into politics; the assemblywomen explained that most women lack educational empowerment. All the five presiding members also were of the view that the women assembly members did not do well at the assembly because of their educational background.

Committee system in the assembly constitutes an important decision -making process as important issues are referred to various committees for their expert opinion on them. Although all the women served on committees, none of them was the chairperson of any of the committees; only one woman was a vice chairperson. The women complained that the men wanted to monopolise the position of chairmanship of all the committees and would not willingly allow them to be chairperson. This may be attributed to cultural belief that women's place is in the kitchen and affirms the statement by Allah-Mensah (2003) that the typical Ghanaian traditional setting places the woman in the traditional subservient role in the home, where the husband takes the key decision and the wife is not expected to challenge him. Amadiume (1987) is of a different view as she attributed the lack of authority these days by women to western policies emanating from colonialism in Africa. She affirmed that the colonial masters relegated women to the sphere of domestic task and private life and perceived men as being equal to the task of shouldering the burden of public affairs.

O'Barr and Firmin-Seller (1995) also affirm Amadiume's claim by saying that some women in African societies were wielding extensive authority of political power until the Europeans imposed a legal and cultural apparatus that undermined women's traditional bases of power, which made them politically and economically subordinated and marginalized. Amadiume (1987) and Snyder and Tadesse (1995) also express the same sentiment. It was not surprising when the assemblywomen complained of financial problems, which also constituted an impediment to their effective participation in politics. It was found out that 41.8% of them earned below one hundred Ghana cedis per month. This confirms Ofei-Aboagye notion that women's constrains to entering local politics is lack of finances for campaigning and time needed to manage domestic responsibilities, income-generation activities and political work.

The level of assemblywomen's conscientization was deemed an important factor which attracted the researcher's searchlight. It was discovered that 55% of them showed enthusiasm to continue their political career and their willingness to encourage other women to get involved in politics. The assemblywomen acknowledged the fact that they have attended a lot of workshops, which have sensitised them and built their capacity. NGOs like ABANTU for Development had organised such workshops for assemblywomen. However one major problem the assemblywomen talked about was finance; they complained they did not get time for their economic ventures since the assembly work took much of their time thus making it difficult for them to find time, for their private work.

The Barriers to Effective Participation of Women in Local Politics

Women in local politics are persistently confronted with various perennial problems that militate against their smooth, active, and effective participation in politics. In the Women's Manifesto for Ghana (2004) some of the barriers to women's participation in politics were identified. The following, among other things, were identified: traditional prejudices; beliefs and perceptions; gender discrimination; and low levels of literacy. Others are the lack of political will and commitment by political parties and the executive arm of various governments to facilitate women's effective participation in politics and decision–making. This corroborated the information the researcher obtained from the respondents.

Another problem faced by the Assembly women was their inability to meet financial request from the community members. This problem was due to the fact that most of the community members were ignorant about the functions and responsibilities of the assembly members. As a result of this ignorance, they continually bring their personal problems (especially financial problems) to the assembly member for solutions. One assemblywoman reported that most often before she got out of bed there would be a long queue of community members who had come to seek solutions to their problems. She made it clear that she found the situation very uncomfortable and embarrassing. The second problem mentioned was intimidation from community members. They reported that the cause of this intimidation was their inability to meet the numerous demands of the community members and their ignorance of the assembly work. Another cause of the intimidation was engineered by their male competitors in the electoral race.

According to them the defeated male counterparts hired people to spread defamatory information about them to make them unpopular. They called them all sorts of names and even to the extent of branding them as prostitutes and witches. These account for the reasons why some men and family members fail to allow wives/relations to enter into local politics. Some (25%) of the assemblywomen bitterly lamented thus “they try to sabotage any good thing you plan for the community.” This confirms what Dolphyne(1991) describes as “the deep-seated cultural perception about women as inferior compared to men.” Another major problem mentioned by the respondents was the lukewarm attitude of the staff of the assembly. They intimated that this was very frustrating since it delayed projects they had planned for the community. They added that while their community members put pressure on them to get their projects done the assembly would frustrate them by continuously delaying the progress of work. In the end you would realise that all the money had been used on transportation. According to them, “this makes the assembly work tedious since we do not have much money and time to accommodate the delay. One assemblywoman complained bitterly that “I have to close down my big shop, my only source of income due to assembly work; I also lost my husband out of the assembly work.”

In the mist of all these problems the assemblywomen were determined to forge ahead and suggested some solutions which can help increase their effective participation so as to attract other women into the assembly. These are:

- Economic empowerment for women;
- Massive public campaign through the print and electronic media and in other institutions such as churches and mosques to educate both men and women on equal rights for both sexes, and on the effects of gender barriers;
- Good incentives for assembly members to attract more women to involve themselves in politics;
- Give key positions to women in public life; and
- Workshop on gender sensitization for both men and women.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the researcher is convinced that women can be good politicians, effective and efficient public officers who can be entrusted with greater responsibility in public affairs.

However there are some perennial social and cultural perceptions and misconceptions about women's participation in politics. These compel many women to shy away from politics for fear of intimidation from their male counterparts. This situation is unfortunate, since it leads to the loss of the invaluable contribution women can give to society if they are encouraged to enter into politics and participate actively. If men alone do politics good results may be achieved but if women join their male counterparts in politics better results may be achieved. However, if many women are encouraged to participate efficiently in politics with their male counterparts, society will derive the best benefits.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the foregoing, the following recommendations are made to help to increase the number of women in politics; and help them to participate effectively to bring about sustainable development:

- All stake holders should team up to promote ensure economic empowerment of Ghanaian women in a coordinated way so as to guarantee effective results. Women could be empowered through giving them proper orientations in modern technology to enable them embark on viable economic ventures. Government and nongovernmental organisations should site cottage industries in communities where raw materials can be obtained to give women employment opportunities.

- District assemblies should increase their sitting allowance to sustain the women in the assembly and also to attract more women.

- Advocacy programmes and campaigns should consciously involve men so as to disabuse their minds from the misconception they have concerning female in public life.

- Participatory workshops should be organised in local communities to sensitise both men and women on the need for female education. Such workshops could involve female role models who have success stories to motivate other women to be up and doing.

It must be pointed out that the government alone cannot solve all the problems; therefore all other stakeholders must put their hands on deck so that in a concerted effort the best possible result of empowering women can be achieved.

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