



ADRRRI JOURNALS (www.adrri.org)

pISSN: 2343-6662 ISSN-L: 2343-6662 VOL. 8, No.8(2), May, 2014

Assessment of Women Participation in Local Governance in the Kassena Nankana Municipality (KNM).

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Received: 29th March, 2014 **Revised:** 15th April, 2014 **Published Online:** 30th May, 2014

URL: <http://www.journals.adrri.org/>

[**Cite as:** Abubakari, A. A. and Ayuune, A.C. (2014). Assessment of Women Participation in Local Governance in the Kassena Nankana Municipality (KNM). Africa Development and Resources Research Institute Journal, Ghana: Vol. 8, No. 8(2).]

Abstract

This study was conducted to assess the participation of women in the local governance of the Kassena Nankana Municipality in the Upper East Region of Ghana, taking a specific look at women participation in the municipal assembly, the existence of opportunities for women participation, the challenges confronting women participation and also the strategies towards addressing the situation. A case study of the Kassena-Nankana Municipality was undertaken and a mixed research method employed. As such both probability and non-probability sampling procedures were used. Specifically, a cluster sampling and purposive sampling procedures were used to obtain 100 stakeholders from the municipality. Survey responses from questionnaires administered to the stakeholders were quantitatively analysed. Key informant interviews with key officers of the municipality were also carried out. It was found that there is very low level of women participation in the local governance of the Kassena Nankana Municipality. Further, not many opportunities have been created for women participation except a few manifesto promises which were hardly fulfilled. There was however the presence of some women activist groups in the municipality. Perceptions, unfavourable political climate, and low level of education, amongst others were notable factor affecting women participation in local governance.

Keywords: women, participation, local governance

INTRODUCTION

The overall development of a country depends upon the maximum utilization of her people, both men and women. In Ghana, women make up 51.2% of the total population (GSS, 2010 PHC). But the status of women is much lower than that of men in every sphere of life. Women are identified with domestic life while politics is viewed as a male-dominated public activity that is typically masculine in nature. With the advancement of time, the fact has now been recognized that without ensuring women development, the national development cannot be achieved.

Women continued to be marginalised in the formulation of the decisions that affects their livelihood and their existence in the community. Whilst the women themselves remain an integral part of the promoters of this problem, there are also external factors facilitating their continuous marginalisation in the economic, political, social and infrastructural decision making in the society.

Since 1960, women representation in National Parliament in Ghana has been very low. The representation has been characterised by fluctuations over the years, starting from 9.6% in 1960 and dropping to 0.07% in 1996 and then rising steadily to 10.5% in 2004 and in 2012 parliamentary elections, women stand at 10.9% (Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development/Institute of Local Government Studies (MLGRD/ILGS), 2013). At the local government level in Ghana, the figures are not better. Women's Participation as elected assembly members has been under 10% since the system started. In 1994, women constituted 2.9% of elected assembly members. In 1998, they went up to 5%. In 2002, there was a slight increase to 7.6%. In 2006, elected assembly women were just about 10% of members and in 2010, the figure dropped to as low as 7.4% (MLGRD/ILGS, 2013).

The participation of women in local government can have a particular influence on local and national development. According to Nzomo (1994), women's equal participation in political life is essential for social development. Various provisions in the design of the decentralisation process should have made the participation of women in public decision-making easier, but the participation of women in local government has remained low. It is against this background that this research was conducted to assess the participation of women in local governance in the Kassena/Nankana Municipality (KNM). In view of that, this study sought to achieve the following objectives.

- i. To examine women participation in local governance in the KNM.
- ii. To identify the existence of opportunities for the participation of women in local governance in the KNM.
- iii. To ascertain challenges confronting women participation in local governance in KNM, and
- iv. To explore means of enhancing women participation in local governance in the KNM.

The subject matter of this study in terms of scope, is to assess: women's participation in local governance and decision making; the challenges which they faced in participation in local governance and decision making; and opportunities available for supporting women as participant in the local level governance processes. The KNM was chosen for this study because not much research on women participation in local governance have been conducted and empirical evidence (Electoral Commission, 2011 & KNMA 2011) indicates that they are not better when it comes to representation and active decision making by women at the local level.

The major limitation of the study was the time available to the study. Given the limited time and funds, the study is delimited to only the Kassena-Nankana municipality. Notwithstanding these challenges, the researcher worked to ensure that the validity of the research findings is not compromised.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The low patronage of women in politics and public decision-making is a global phenomenon. Throughout history, men have monopolised and dominated strategic decision making positions. Despite the achievement of universal suffrage, increased education and incomes for women, and efforts to increase participation of women in public life, women everywhere remain marginalised and under-represented in those areas of public life where important decisions and policies are made. The few women, who hold relevant positions, often have values and ways of thinking that fit the status quo, therefore they are not always inclined to improve the status of women. Women form at least half of the population of all countries of the world and perform many important productive and reproductive roles (United Nations, 2005). Furthermore because of their numbers in population, women make up half of the electorate in all countries. By their numbers, women have the capacity to decide on political leadership if there are elections. However, women are not elected to political office and few are put up as candidates at top level of decision-making positions (United Nations, 2005).

The global literature on women's participation at the level of decision-making in governance is generally focused at the central government level, where there is an established trend of low participation. The characteristics of local governments suggests that women may play greater roles in decision-making at these levels, however, the expectation is contrary to the reality, in the sense that the literature, as well as the evidence from studies conducted in this area, suggests that women's participation in governance is also low at the local levels (United Nations, 2005). Gyimah and Thompson (2008) also noted that, in the 2005 report on World Development Indicators, the World Bank stressed that around the world women were under-represented in parliaments and other high level decision making bodies. The World Bank also indicated that, though women's presence in public life has been rising, women still occupied only 16% of the seats in national parliaments, and their representation at the ministerial and executive levels of government was even lower.

Factors that facilitate women's low participation in political processes – as voters, advocates, activists, and decision-makers – vary according to social or cultural circumstances, economic situation, geography, and political context and systems (Ohene-Konadu, 2001). The factors commonly identified as barriers to women's participation include gender stereotypes and outright discrimination, personal obstacles such as lack of confidence, culturally prescribed domestic roles, low leadership education, women's relative lack of financial and socio-economic capital to , “winner take all” electoral systems, and political institutions that are not conducive to balancing family and public life (Offei-Aboagye, 2000).

A related concept in this study is gender equality. Gender equality is defined as both equality of treatment under the law and equality of opportunity (Kabeer, 1997). Gender inequality is thus, constructed through society's formal laws and statutes, and, perhaps more significant, through unwritten norms and shared understandings. Gender inequality is pervasive across all societies and, covertly, the most prevalent form of social disadvantage within societies and cutting across class, caste and race. The argument for addressing gender inequality, therefore, is that it occurs in all societies (Kabeer, 1997). Millar (2001) argues that gender inequalities are the result of historic sexual division of power and not as it is commonly held, a sexual division of labour. Moser (1993) emphasizes the concept of gender planning as a tool for emancipation of women from subordination, and their achievement of equality, equity and empowerment.

An imperative for promoting gender equality, then, becomes the creation of an enabling environment with equal access to available resource and productive assets through social, legal, and economic institutions. Sen (1999), advocates a gender perspective that recognizes that women stand at the cross roads between production and reproduction, between economic activity and the care of human beings, and therefore, between economic growth and human development. To Apusigah (2004) practical gender needs and strategic gender needs are most important. Practical gender needs are said to be met if the economic and social empowerments only enable them to cope with their socially accepted roles in the society and if they further ensure some economic and social equality with men then it means the strategic gender needs are being addressed. It has been argued that most past and existing gender frameworks tend to be narrow in focus and limited to addressing the problems of women in terms of sex, namely, their biological differences from men, rather than in terms of their gender, that is the social relationship between men and women, in which women have been systematically subordinated (Moser, 1993).

Strengthening women's participation in all spheres of life has become a major issue in the discourse of economic and social development. Practically 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 (United Nations, 1948). 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 Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995). However, throughout the world, women face obstacles in their participation in politics. According to a research by International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) in 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.

ABANTU for Development, an African regional non-governmental organization, in collaboration with civil society organizations and individual activists under the Women's Manifesto Coalition has produced a Women's Manifesto, which is an important action document on women's empowerment in Ghana (ABANTU, 2010). The Women's Manifesto represents the concerns and aspirations of women and provides recommendation on how key issues affecting women can be tackled. The Manifesto also calls on government to implement a legally enforceable affirmative action policy by 2012 to integrate women in all spheres of public life. In the constitution of Ghana (1992), women are recognized as having equal rights with men in all spheres of life. However, the cultural norms of Ghanaian society do not favour the inclusion of women in the political arena.

Decentralization has been defined as the transfer of power away from central government to lower levels of authority in a territorial hierarchy (Crook et al, 1998). According to Mukhopadhyay (2005), democratic decentralisation is critical for women not only because of the proximity of local government to their lives but because they are often excluded from government decision-making. Contrary to views that local government is the level that women can easily break into and thus serve as springboard to national politics, the hierarchical and embedded nature of local government in local social structures make it difficult for women to break in as independent political actors (Mukhopadhyay 2005). Stacey and Price (1981) argue that where power is, women are not. Moreover, if at all they are present, they are more likely to be found in less important and less influential positions. Tufte and Dahl (1974) argue that while decentralisation is invariably undertaken to increase the prospects of mass representation, including the neglected groups such as women, decentralised structures may not command sufficient authority, or interest. This statement is true even of the local government system in Ghana. Even with the current trend of women's greater involvement, women are less likely to be found in top positions in the district assemblies. Where women are given the opportunity to participate in local government, the terms of their inclusion determine the sustainability of their representation (Goetz 2002).

In analysing women's access to leadership positions and responsibilities of authority in community development committees in Ghana, Opare (2005) concluded that women are generally poorly represented in executive positions and even where women do achieve leadership positions, they are assigned nominal ones at lower

levels of the hierarchy which are less visible or influential, such as women's organisers and ordinary executive members. Tanga, (2010) in his study of women's participation in politics in South Africa, notes that before women are expected to fully participate in local governance, they must begin at the top. Political parties need to reserve a quota of their seats to women in party constitutions to correct the male dominance. The introduction of direct election to reserved seats for women in the Bangladeshi local government Law, for instance, is described by Khan and Ara (2006) as a breakthrough for Bangladesh women because they could not envisage any way women could have moved into these institutions. For these authors, at least the law has promoted women's access to government decision-making process in numbers.

Pandey (1990) contended that the small part played by women in politics merely reflects the secondary place which they are assigned by customs and attitudes within the society, and which their education and training tend to make them accept as the natural order of things. Tau (1996) argued that the desire to enter local government came as recognition by women that the current policies and programs by government are broad and does not adequately takes into account the numerous problems women face in the different sectors in the economy. Thus women felt that by entering local government they could influence government policies to be gender-sensitive because it is government policies that determine the direction of development.

In many instances, women representatives at the local level understand, through their own experiences, the unique needs of women. If these experiences are persuasively articulated, a position in local government could be a powerful vantage point from which to ensure that policies are planned and implemented in a manner that is responsive to the specific context and needs of women. Decentralisation of authority to local governments offers women the possibility of realising their right to participate politically as set forth in the covenant on civil and political rights (Konadu, 2001). It also offers them the possibility of influencing policy to consider the specific needs of women, and the possibility of developing a sense of ownership over programs, due to their inputs towards the formulation of these projects. While it is currently accepted that Ghanaian women have been integrated into the development process, and are contributing in a number of ways to developmental efforts, methods adopted to facilitate participation of women have been found wanting. There are no laws that directly or indirectly prevent women from participating in politics in the country. However, this has not led to a significant increase in their participation, and the numbers of women participating in politics continue to be low. This means that they are not fully integrated into national development.

The conceptual framework

The study is performed within the framework of Women's Empowerment first introduced by Sara Hlupekile Longwe (cited in Wallance & March, 1991). This framework is central to an understanding of women's participation and

mobilization, which brings with it the development of leadership for addressing and removing the many forms of gender discrimination and barriers, which presently leave women oppressed and marginalized. Longwe's framework is based on the concept of five different levels of equality as shown in Figure 1. The extent to which these five levels of equality are present in any area of social and 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. Empowerment and the creation of opportunities for women participation in local governance can significantly enhance the participation of women in local government as shown in Figure 2. An empowered woman will be able to find opportunities and if given the opportunities, women can be significantly empowered.

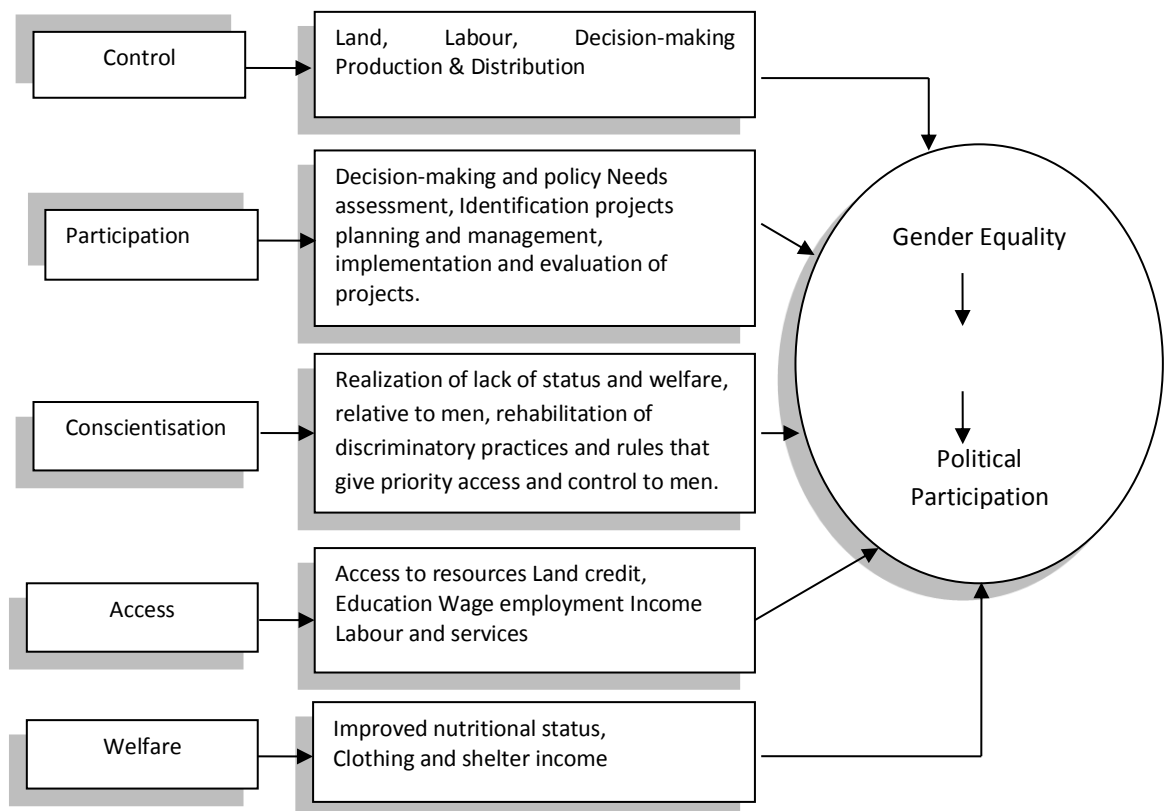


Figure 1: Women's Empowerment Framework
 Source: Longwe, 1961

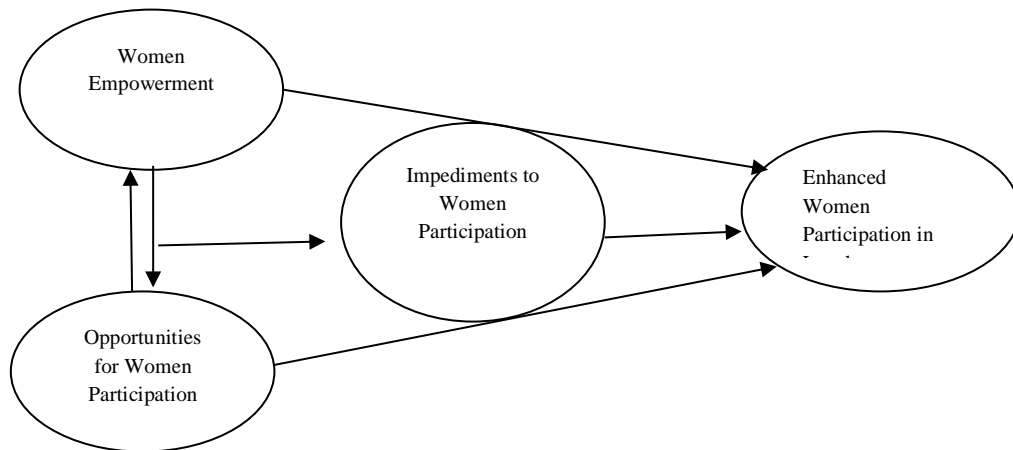


Figure 2: Authors' Construct, March 2014

METHODOLOGY

The Kassena Nankana Municipality is located in the Upper East Region of Ghana. The Kassena Nankana Municipal Assembly is one of the thirteen (13) assemblies in the Upper East Region. The District shares boundaries to the North with Kassena-Nankana West District and Burkina Faso, to the East with Bolgatanga Municipal Assembly, to the West with the Builsa North and Kassena-Nankana West Districts and South by the West Mamprusi District of the Northern Region.

It was upgraded to a Municipality in 2011. The Kassena Nankana Municipal Assembly is sub-divided into 6 Urban/Area Councils namely; Navrongo Urban Council and Manayoro, Kologo, Naaga, Pungu and Doba Area Councils. The assembly is made up of 35 electoral areas and 35 Unit Committees. Out of the 51 assembly members only 7 are females with 44 males. The district has one parliamentary constituency with a total of 99 communities. The population of the Kassena-Nankana Municipality is estimated to be 81,114 with a population density of 92 persons per square kilometer (KNMA, 2012).

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were employed. This was aimed at getting opinions from the targeted population. The researcher studied the case of the Kassena Nankana Municipality employing the mixed research design. The design was chosen because it provided opportunity for an in-depth analysis of many specific details that are often disregarded by other methods, it also demonstrates a causal argument about how general social forces shape and produce results in particular settings (Neuman, 2003). Semi-structured questionnaires and Key informant interviews were used. The target population for the study was citizens of the Kassena Nankana Municipality who are in a better position to understand issues surrounding women participation in local governance.

Both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were employed to arrive at a sampled size. The multi-stage sampling technique was used. The first stage

involved the use of cluster sampling to zone the town/area councils into 3 clusters. In addition to the Navrongo town council which houses the District Assembly, 2 area councils (Pungu and Doba) were purposively selected from the district. Simple random procedure was then employed to sample three communities (Navrongo, Pungu and Doba) from the sampled town/area councils for data collection. The sample was purposively drawn from a population consisting of opinion leaders (including area councilors, unit committee members, clan heads etc.), assembly persons, Municipal Assembly workers and women leaders/heads of departments to arrive at a sample size of 100 which was determined intuitively by the researcher.

Relevant information and data was extracted from various documentary sources in the country and websites. These sources included; Population and Housing Census reports, Annual Reports of Kassena-Nankana Municipal Assembly, Published and unpublished thesis and dissertations, Local Government Act, Development studies journals, and United Nations websites.

The primary data for the study was collected through questionnaire administered to respondents. Three (3) Town/Area Councils of the study district were selected; Navrongo which is the town council and houses the District Assembly and Pungu and Doba area councils were selected purposively to collect primary data, which also served as the main source of data. The town council was selected because of its role as the political capital of the district. The other two area councils, Pungu and Doba, were selected based on the fact that they were homogenous, close to the capital and are also representative of the two major ethnic groups in the district. This saved the researcher a lot of time and resources. For key informant interviews, responses were analysed, tabulated and coded. Data were presented using themes under study and also using content analysis. Questionnaires were checked and edited and coded. Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software programme and from this, tables and charts were produced.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Of the 100 respondents studied, it was realised that 62% were males whilst 38% were females. This depicts the dominance of males in the local administrative structure of Kassena Nankana Municipality as an evidence of low women participation in the local governance system. Table 1 shows data on the gender distribution of the respondents.

Table 1: Gender Distributions of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	62	62.0	62.0
Female	38	38.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, January 2014

In relation to the educational attainments of the respondents studied, it was observed that 3% and 10% of respondents had basic and secondary levels of education respectively whilst 81% had tertiary level of education. Also, 4% of respondents noted to have had technical education whilst 2% of respondents had non-formal education. It therefore suggests that, education among the respondents who constitute the representative body of the stakeholders of the Kassena Nankana Municipality are highly educated owing to the fact that, most of them had a tertiary level of education which include a university education or polytechnic education.

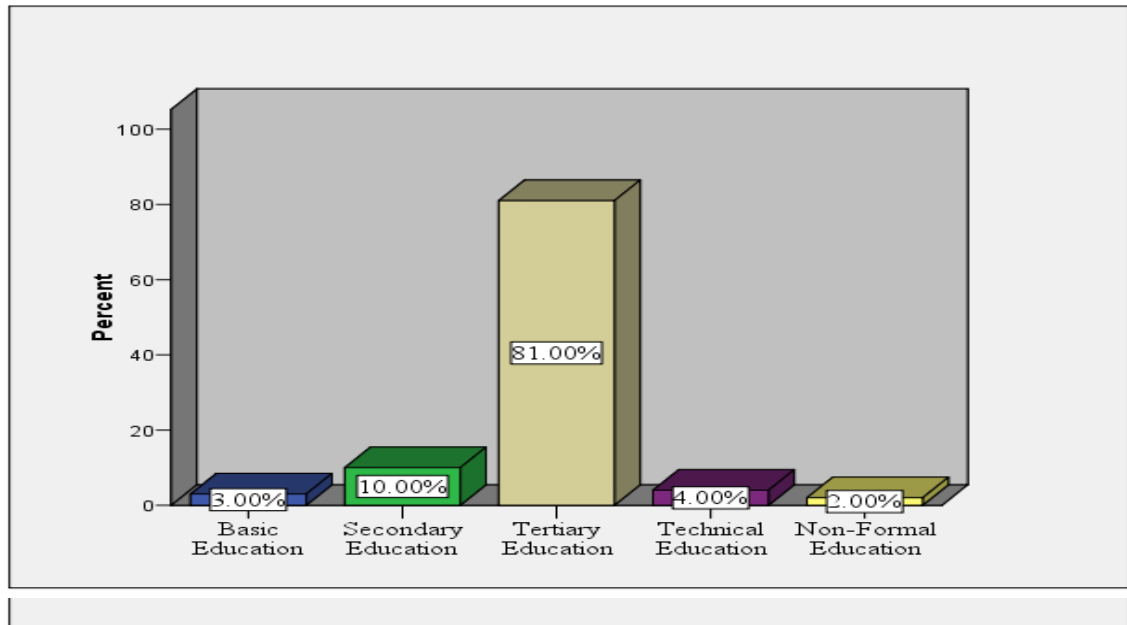


Figure 3: Educational Attainments of Respondents

Source: Field Survey, January 2014

Regarding the occupational distributions of the respondents, the survey revealed that 81% of respondents were government employees working in the public sector whilst 14% of the respondents are self-employed. However, 5% of respondents indicated to have been unemployed.

Women Participation in Local Governance

From Table 2, it has been confirmed that there is low representation of women in the Kassena Nankana municipality as 96% of respondents contended that 'yes', there is low representation of women in the municipality. In a further quest to determine the percentage representation of men and women in the local governance of the municipality, it was seen that 86.5% of those who concurred to the researcher's assertion of low representation of women in the municipality identified less than 10% of women representation in the assembly. Of the respondents who disagreed with low representation of women in the assembly, 75% noted less than 10% representation of women in the assembly.

A further probe however revealed that, 100% of respondents who noted low representation of women in the assembly were of the view that, more men than

women have occupied the reserved seats for government appointees in the municipal assembly. It further revealed 100% of respondents who disagreed with the low representation of women confirming that, truly, more men than women have occupied the 30% reserved seats for government appointees which could have been used to ensure a sort of parity in the gender wise composition of the assembly. This was confirmed by the data collected from the Municipal Assembly Office on the breakdown of assembly members.

Table 2: Confirmation of Low Representation of Women in the KNM Assembly

	Level of Representation	More men than women		Total
		True	False	
Yes	Less than 10% of the house	83	0	83
		86.5%	.0%	86.5%
	11%-20% of the house	11	0	11
		11.5%	.0%	11.5%
	21%-30% of the house	2	0	2
	2.1%	.0%	2.1%	
	Total	12	0	96
		96.9%	.0%	100.0%
No	Less than 10% of the house	3		3
		75.0%		75.0%
	30% + of the house	1		1
		25.0%		25.0%
	Total	4		4
		100.0%		100.0%

Source: Field Survey, January 2014

Women Participation in Decision Making

To determine the extent of women participation in decision making in the Kassena Nankana Municipality, the study required the respondents to indicate their level of agreement or otherwise with some assertions. The results are shown in Figure 4. This exercise revealed 25% and 17% of respondents respectively disagreeing strongly and fairly to the assertion that women in KNM are actively involved in community economic decision making. Whilst 9% of respondents remained undecided, 35% and 14% of respondents respectively agreed fairly and strongly to the assertion that, women in KNM are effectively involved in any economic decision regarding the municipality. With inference from the level of strong disagreement among respondents, it can be held that women in KNM are not effectively and consistently engaged in making economic decisions regarding the municipality.

Again, regarding decisions on governance and/or political issues, 12% and 24% of respondents respectively disagreed strongly and fairly to the assertion that, women

in KNM are actively involved in making decisions relative to the governance and political administration of the municipality. On the other hand, 42% and 9% of respondents respectively agreed fairly and strongly that women in KNM are actively involved in making political decisions about the municipality. However, 13% of respondents could not identify themselves with either of the positions. It implies therefore that, there is little involvement of women in governance and political issues in the municipality. However, it is not administratively and structurally planned, owing to its inconsistency and ineffectiveness as reflected by the level of disagreement among respondents. This is illustrated on Figure 4. Regarding the involvement of women in making social decisions, the study found 8% and 24% of respondents respectively disagreeing strongly and fairly to the assertion that, women in KNM participate actively in making social decisions. Whilst 6% of respondents were silent on their positions, 46% and 16% of respondents respectively agreed fairly and strongly that women in KNM are allowed to participate in taking decisions on social issues. It can be inferred from these responses that, there is relatively an encouraging level of women participation in addressing social issues in the municipality as shown on Figure 4.

The study also found 24% and 29% of respondents respectively in strong and fair disagreement with the assertion that women are allowed to contribute in decisions regarding district infrastructural development. However, 23% and 13% of respondents respectively held fairly and strongly that women are allowed to participate in decisions of infrastructural development of the municipality and 11% of respondents were undecided on the issue. This shows that, very little of women participation or contributions are allowed in making decisions regarding the infrastructural development of the municipality, as shown on Figure 4. It can be inferred from these findings that, though women constitute a great number of the population of the KNM, they are woefully represented in making decisions that affect their daily lives. A situation in confirmation of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (2009) that, although women comprise over 50% of the world's population, they continue to be under represented as voters, leaders and as elected officials, and even at the local levels and as a result, women do not have equal influence over the policy decisions that affect their lives. It also provide credence for the call by the Beijing Platform for Action (1996) that, in any representative body, there should be a logical balance of men and women to voice the concerns of the society.

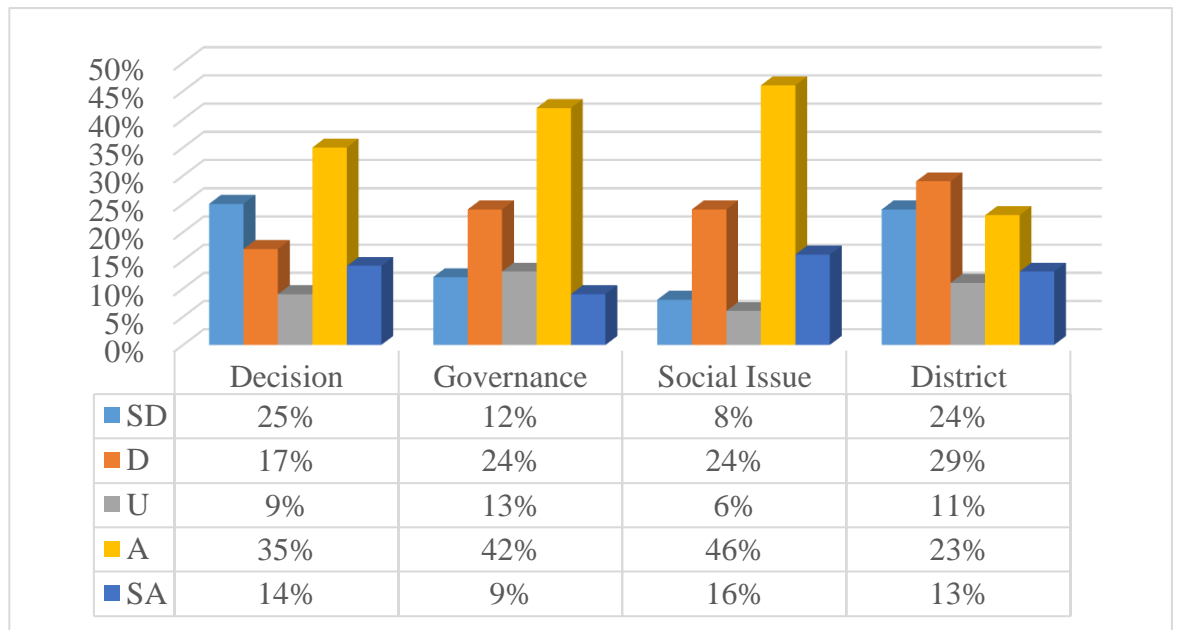


Figure 4: Extent of Women Participation in Decision Making

Source: Field Survey, January 2014

Women Participation in Leading Roles

To ascertain how frequently women are allowed to perform leading roles in the KNM, the study found 51% and 24% of respondents respectively noted that, women are not frequently and not very frequently allowed to play chairperson roles in the assembly's activities whilst 9% of respondents were silent on the issue. It implies that, women in the KNM are not frequently allowed to play leading roles as chairpersons in the assembly's administrative activities. This is shown on Figure 5. In a further inquiry to determine whether women in the KNM are sometimes made to play roles that position them as focal persons or persons of key interest to the process or the municipality, it was revealed among 24% of respondents that women frequently made to play such roles whilst 24% of respondents remained undecided on the issue. However, 39% and 13% of respondents opined that women in the KNM are not frequently placed in positions where they can be regarded as persons of interest or major stakeholder(s). It explains that, women are actually being marginalized in the community management processes despite the fact that, they bear the effects of such management outcomes equally if not more than their male counterparts who take the managerial decisions. Figure 5 illustrates data on that.

Regarding whether women are frequently made the presiding member of the assembly's meetings, it was found that 80% (that is 43% and 37%) of respondents reported that, women are not frequently made to preside over administrative issues of the municipality whilst 13% were however on the issue as shown on Figure 5.

Finally, the study sought to ascertain whether women play executive roles in the administration of the municipality and this revealed that 72% of respondents identified that women are not allowed responsibilities close to executive positions of the assembly. Again, about 16% of respondents remained neutral to this quest. It

however implies that, the executive power of administration which is usually seen at the helm of affairs in the administration system is restricted to men in the Kassena Nankana Municipality. This is shown on Figure 5.

As women in the KNM are not assigned key roles to, they are seriously being marginalized in terms of leadership in the municipality. These findings buttress the assertion of United Nations (2005) that, throughout history, men have monopolised and dominated strategic decision making positions thereby making women followers of their male masculine decisions.

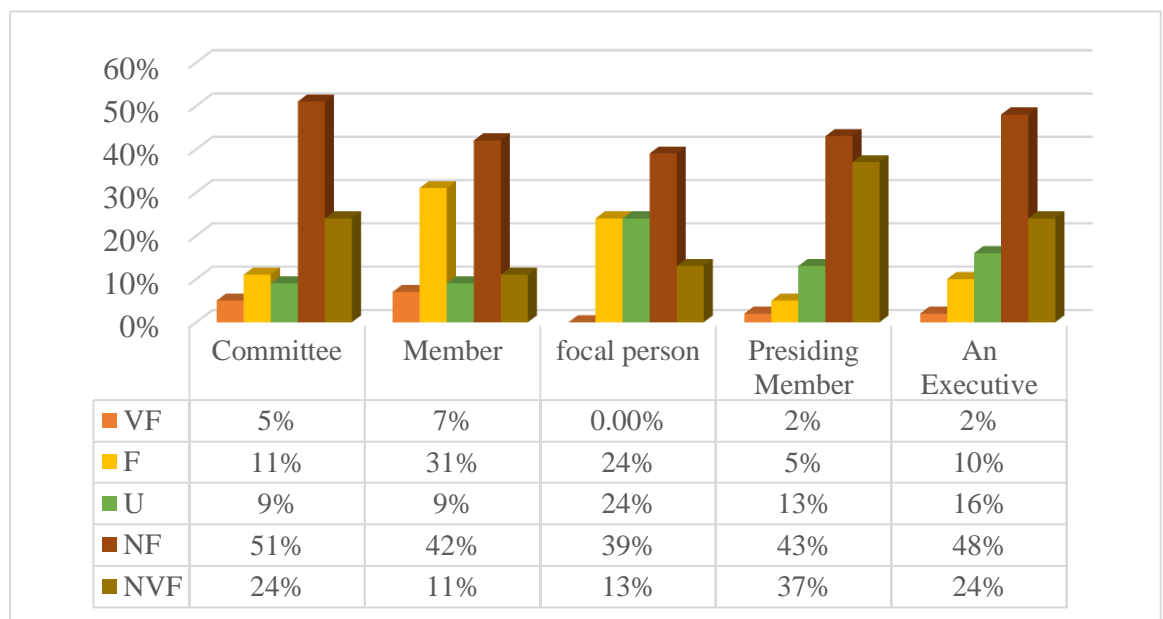


Figure 5: Frequency of Women Participation in Leading Roles

Source: Field Survey, January 2014

Potentials and Social, Economic Contributions of Women

From Table 3, it can be inferred that 93% of respondents agreed that women in the Kassena Nankana Municipality have the potentials to undertake political responsibilities. Furthermore, 53% and 28% of the respondents who agreed that women in KNM have political potentials also strongly and fairly agreed respectively that, women generally contribute immensely to the social and economic development of the society. On the other hand, the entire 7% of respondents who did not identify any political potential in women in the KNM strongly agreed however that women contribute significantly to the social and economic development of the society. These positions of respondents confirm United Nations (2006) assertion that, the World Bank in 1994 indicated that women’s contribution to the social and economic development of any society is immense. If this recognition by the respondents is anything to go by, then the continuous neglect and relegation of women to the background can only be said to be detrimental to the society.

Table 3: Potentials and Social, Economic Contributions of Women

Response		Women contribute to Social and economic Development of Societies					Total
		Strongly agree	Fairly agree	Undecided	Fairly disagree	Strongly disagree	
Yes	Count	53	28	4	7	1	93
	% of Total	53.0%	28.0%	4.0%	7.0%	1.0%	93.0%
No	Count	7	0	0	0	0	7
	% of Total	7.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	7.0%
Total	Count	60	28	4	7	1	100
	% of Total	60.0%	28.0%	4.0%	7.0%	1.0%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, January 2014

Opportunities for Women Participation in Local Governance

Of the 100 respondents studied, 52% noted that there are adopted and/or instituted structural provisions for women participation in local governance in the KNM whilst 48% of respondents held otherwise. This is presented on Table 4. According to the respondents, there exist such provisions as structures and regulations that must ensure the participation of women in the local governance system. One other typical provision is the 30% government appointees into the municipal assembly. Key informant interviewed revealed:

lack of political will to appoint more women into the assembly despite the fact that women with the potential exist in the district.

Table 4: Existence of Structural Provisions for Women Participation

Response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	52	52.0	52.0
NO	48	48.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, January 2014

In a multiple data response set, the 52% of respondents who noted the existence of structural provisions for women participation were required to identify as many areas of participation as existing currently in the KNM where women effectively participate as a form of involvement in decision making. It revealed 80% of the cases as problem identification which implies that, women in the KNM are mostly involved in identifying the problems of the municipality. Furthermore, 45.5% of the cases were in relation to project planning which also suggests that, women in KNM

are most involved in planning the implementation of government project in the municipality. About 52.7% of the cases also pointed out that, more women are involved in the implementation of the planned government projects whilst 25.5% of the cases identified women participation in the enhancement of government/the municipal properties. It implies therefore that, as broad as the governance process is, some specific areas of operation are mostly designated to involve more women in its planning and implementation processes. This perhaps is a form of support or invitation to women with political potentials to feature prominently in the political landscape through effectively engaging in such areas as identified above. Information discussed here is presented on Table 5.

Table 4: Existing Areas of Women Participation in the KNMA

Areas of Participation	Frequency of Response	Percent of Response	Percentage of Cases
Problem Identification	44	39.3%	80.0%
Project Planning	25	22.3%	45.5%
Project Implementation	29	25.9%	52.7%
Property enhancement	14	12.5%	25.5%
Total	112	100.0%	203.6%

Source: Field Survey, January 2014 (Total Number ≠100 due to multiple Responses)

Ensuring Gender Equity in the Kassena Nankana Municipality

Data from Table 6 shows 52% of respondents indicating that the municipality is committed to ensuring gender equity in the local governance of the municipality. It also shows 48% of respondents reporting that the municipality has no commitment to ensuring gender equity in the local governance of the municipality. Results of a further enquiry presented in a multiple response set however revealed 10.9% of respondents stating that there were manifesto promises and their fulfillments regarding specific allocations for women involvement in local governance. Also, about 58.2% of respondents also noted that the community has support for women in politics whilst 27.3% of respondents also identified that there are internal and external funding for women in politics. Furthermore, it was held among 54.5% of respondents that there are frequent skills and ability training and development programs for women in politics. Others representing 78.2% also noted that the municipality ensures that both men and women in the municipality have equal access to political platforms. From the assertions above, it can be realized that the municipality strives to ensure equal access to political platforms for both men and women in the municipality mostly through community support, and also skills and ability training and development of women in politics. This is illustrated in Table 6.

Table 5: Commitment to Ensuring Gender Equity in the Local Governance of KNM

Response	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	52	52.0	52.0
No	48	48.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, January 2014

Table 6: Forms of Commitment to Ensuring Gender Equity by the KNM

Forms of Commitment	Frequency of Response	Percent of Response	Percent of Cases
Manifesto Allocation and fulfillment	6	4.7%	10.9%
Community support for women in politics	32	25.2%	58.2%
Internal and External Funding	15	11.8%	27.3%
Skills and Ability training and development	30	23.6%	54.5%
Equal access to political platforms	43	33.9%	78.2%
Other forms of Commitment	1	.8%	1.8%
Total	127	100.0%	230.9%

Source: Field Survey, January 2014

Information from key informants in relation to the existence of opportunities for women involvement in the local governance system also revealed that:

Despite the presence of some women activist groups that educate and stand in for women when necessary, not much has been done as commitment to ensuring women participation but a few manifesto promises which were hardly fulfilled.

Challenges to Women Participation in Local Governance

About 80% of respondents widely held that, women lack the financial abilities to carry out their political dreams like their male counterparts. Figure 6 illustrates data to this effect. In a similar study in Suhum Kraboa Coal tar district of the eastern region of Ghana, Ladele et al (2013) also identified lack of money as a barrier to women participation.

The study also revealed that 63% of respondents agreed that women lack the self-confidence or the courage to do politics and that is what scares them from appearing

on political platforms and 79% of respondents held that, lack of moral support and funding from communities members remains one of the major confrontations to women in politics. Also, 61% and 67% agreed with the assertion that the unfriendly nature of the political climate and the monetization of the political environment, respectively, remains a major contributing factor to the low participation of women local governance as shown on Figure 6.

On the issue of workload, 32% of respondents noted that despite the domestic workload on women, it does not hinder them from actively engaging in political proceedings and participating in the local governance of their own communities. However, 61% of respondents were of the view that, the domestic workload on women, requiring them to be the mothers of the family and the society as a whole does not make available to them the needed time to engage in politics as their male counterparts do. About 76% of respondents agreed that the perceived inferiority of women in politics significantly underlies the low participation of women in the local governance of the communities as illustrated in Figure 6.

From the above, it can be held that several factors including lack of financing, courage, moral support, and the unfriendly political climate remain barriers to women participation in the local governance of the Kassena Nankana Municipality. Other confrontations include the monetization of the political environment, heavy workload on women, perceptions of inferiority on women politicians, patriarchal family arrangements and low level of education among women. These findings were however not different from the position of Offei-Aboagye (2000) who identified that many factors militate against women participation and paramount among such factors are lack of confidence, culturally prescribed domestic roles, low leadership education, women's relative lack of financial and socio-economic capital, the "winner take all" electoral systems, and political institutions that are not conducive to balance family and public life. Again, in a similar study by Gyimah and Thompson (2008) in the Nadowli district of the upper West region of Ghana, low level of education, inadequate funds, lack of confidence, intimidation, household chores and farming activities were identified as factors impinging on women's participation in local governance process in Ghana, congruent with the views held by the respondents in this research.

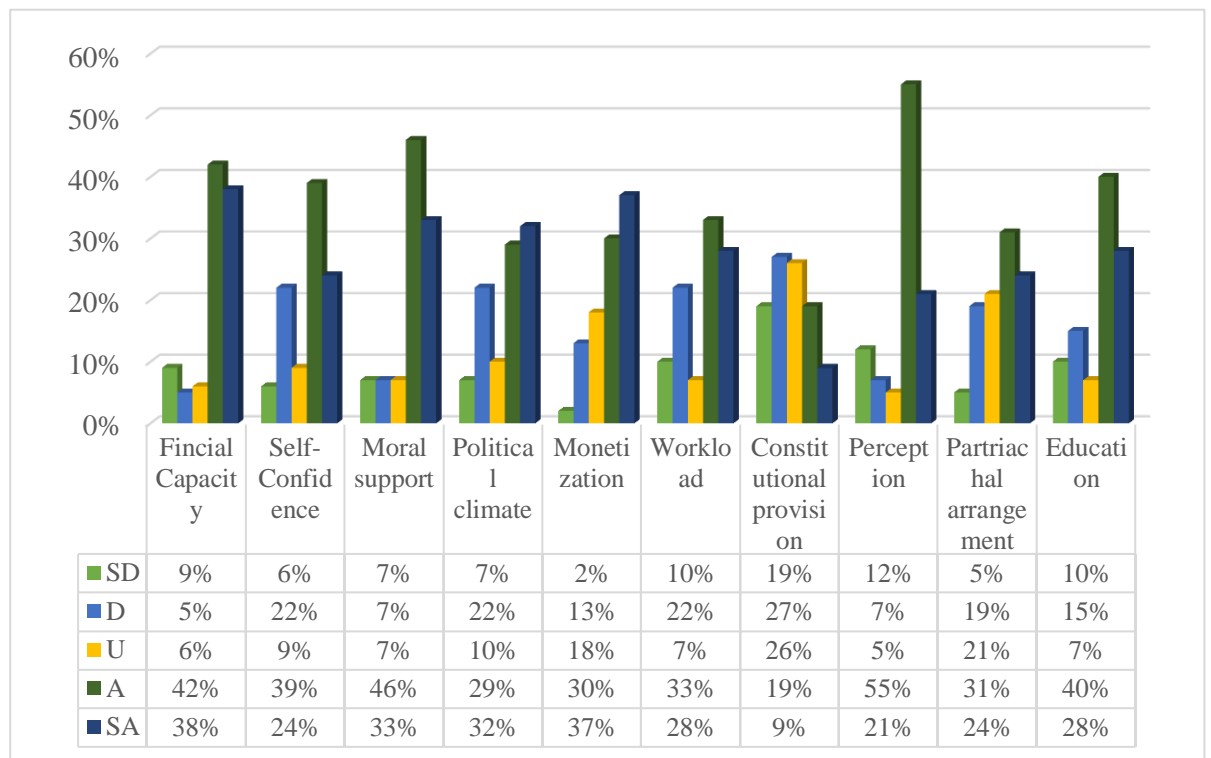


Figure 6: Challenges Confronting Women Participation in Local Governance

Source: Field Survey, January 2014

Enhancing Women Participation in Local Governance

Having identified the challenges confronting women participation in local governance, the study further explored the possibility of addressing these issues and this revealed 78% of respondents indicating that, women empowerment could be one of the sustainable strategies towards ensuring effective participation of women in local governance. It was also held among 70% of respondents that, the use of quota allocations to women in the local governance system could be another means to ensuring improved participation of women in local governance. It implies that, to the majority of respondents, quota allocations are very effective tools to improving women representation and participation in the local governance system.

Also, the study found 57% of respondents with the view that networking and lobbying among women may serve as a useful tool in increasing women participation in local governance. It suggests that, appropriate networking and lobbying through appropriate channels could enhance women participation in the local governance system. This is in conformity with the view held by Shamim et al (2002) when they stated that to facilitate the inclusion of women's issues in the political and public agenda, networking between the women's organizations and women politicians, in particular, is necessary. Figure 6 shows data as discussed. Furthermore, 82% of respondents held that correction of social prejudice against women in the community could also aid increased participation of women in local governance. Whilst 5% of respondents were neutral, about 13% of respondents did not subscribe to this strategy. Nonetheless, it stands to reason that, majority of

respondents identified the elimination of social prejudice against women as a tool to effecting improved women participation in the local governance system. This is shown on Figure 4.6. It may be for this reason that Longwe (1991) stressed that, women socio-economic position is imposed by system of discrimination which is socially structured which can be altered. Longwe (1991) thus proposed at stage 5 of the empowerment framework and equality of control which implies a balance of power (economic and social between men and women) so that either will not be in a position of dominance or feel inadequate to participate in governance.

Figure 7 also shows 74% of respondents of the view that conscientisation of all stakeholders would pave way for people to understand women and the efforts to participate in politics. As held by majority of respondents, conscientisation of the general public as well as all relevant political stakeholders of the role of women in the governance of the society would go a long way to prepare people's mind to accept women in politics just as their male counterparts. This view held by the majority of the respondents confirms the view held by Shamim et al (2002) when they recommended conscientisation as a way to raise the political awareness of people on women issues when they undertook a study in gender and local governance in India and Bangladesh. With reference to Longwe's (1991) analytical framework, when women are conscientised and sensitized, women tend to be enthusiastically involved in the development process, and ultimately the belief that their marginalized position due to systems of discrimination which is socially constructed could be changed because women are empowered to participate in public decision-making.

Other strategies agreed to by a majority of respondents towards improving women participation in local governance in the KNM are the grant of equal access to all (86%), ensuring the welfare of female politicians (59%), training and skills development of women in the politics (76%) and ensuring Cultural dynamism (76%). Figure 7 shows data as discussed. These suggestions are also in line with the propositions and recommendations of Gyimah and Thompson (2008) and as such, could be an efficient mechanism towards ensuring gender parity in the local governance system.

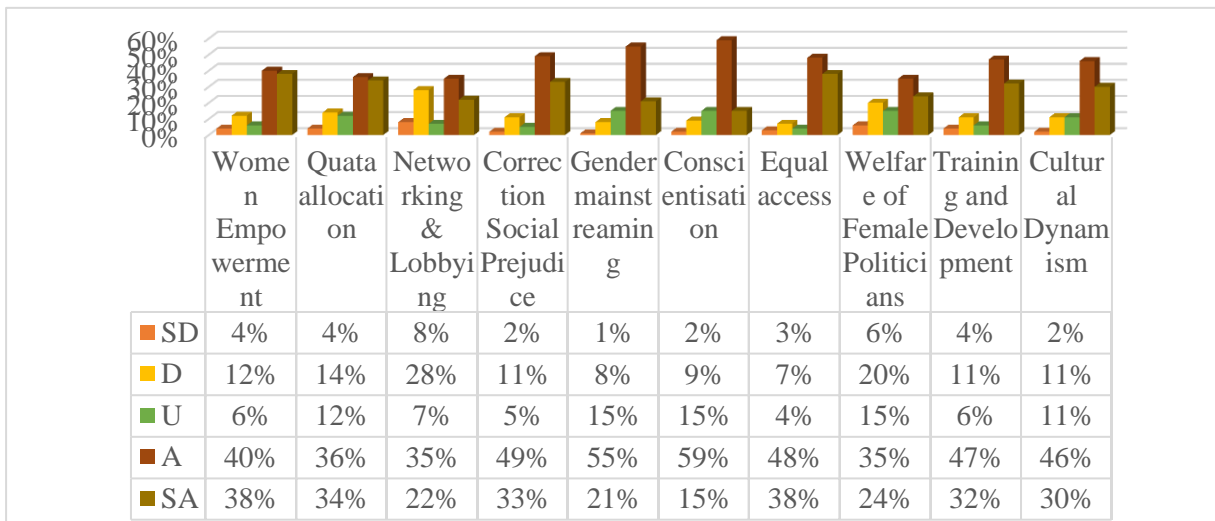


Figure 7: Strategies for Improving Women Participation in the KNM

Source: Field Survey, January 2014

As strategies towards ensuring improved participation of women in local government politics, the key informants also noted that:

Education and skills development should be made paramount to any other strategy towards improving the situation. This is because, women need to appreciate the fact that they have a role to play in the governance of their communities and their absence in the composition would continue to strengthen their marginalisation in the community and in government. So the more they are taught to know their importance, the more they will learn to take up the challenge and fight for their members.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Women Participation in Local Governance

The study generally revealed that there is low level of women participation in local governance with more men than women filling the 30% reserved seats in the assembly for government appointees. Despite recognising their immense potential and contribution to social and economic development of societies, respondents held that women featured very little in performing leadership roles as men continued to dominate the positions of key interest or executive positions.

Opportunities for Women Participation in Local Governance

From the study, it is noted that women are mostly involved in the problem identification stage of the community decision making and also in project implementation processes, as revealed in a multiple response data set. However, only a few women are engaged in the project planning and property enhancement processes of the municipality. The overwhelming consent by respondents that there are women with political potentials in the municipal is a great opportunity to enhance their participation. It was also found that, stakeholders endeavour to ensure

equal access to all on political platforms whilst developing and sharpening their skills and leadership abilities.

Challenges Confronting Women Participation in Local Governance

The study revealed that, lack of financial capacity, self-confidence, moral support and heavy workload burden on women are some of the challenges confronting women's effective participation in the local governance of the KNM. Other challenges identified include unfriendly political climate, the monetization of the political process, people's inferiority perception about women in politics and the patriarchal family arrangements which do not readily allow women to play leading roles in the family and in the community. Another challenge to women participation in local governance is low level of education among women in the Kassena Nankana Municipality.

Enhancing Women Participation in Local Governance

Towards improving the level of women participation in the local governance of the Kassena Nankana Municipality, respondents suggested women empowerment, quota allocations to women, networking and lobbying through appropriate channels of authority and also the elimination of social prejudice against women in politics. Respondents further suggested gender mainstreaming, conscientisation of stakeholders and the general public, ensuring welfare of women in politics, and promoting cultural dynamism among people to accept the new order of the world regarding women involvement in political administration of the local communities.

Conclusions

Per the findings of the study, it can be concluded that there is actually a very low level of participation among women in the local governance of the Kassena Nankana Municipality as even more men were noted to have filled the reserved municipal assembly seats for government appointees which could have been used to engage at least 15% of the number.

More so, there exist a few opportunities in the form of both local and international women groups which creates the awareness among women on the need to take up significant roles in the leadership of their communities. Commitments in the form of manifesto promises also existed to motivate women's interest in the local governance system of their communities. However, pertinent factors such as perceptions, the political climate, community and family arrangements or types amongst other things did not readily allow women to take up leading roles in the governance of their local communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Whilst the researchers strongly support the suggestions of the respondents towards improving the level of women participation in the local governance of the Kassena Nankana Municipality, the following suggestions can also be considered.

Due to the weak financial capacity of most women on the political front, the study suggests that appropriate policies including legislations are adopted towards minimising the use of money to influence the decision making process of the electorates. This can be achieved by educating the electorates about the significance of their electoral choices and their implications on the livelihood of their families and themselves and the need to make such decisions as objectively as possible without any form of influence from the political representatives. This approach will go a long way to build a sort of self-discipline and a sense of responsibility among citizens towards ensuring the best interest of the society rather their individual interests.

Regarding the unfavourable political climate which does not allow the free participation of women, the study suggests that the necessary steps in the form of effective implementation of the rules and regulations that guide the conduct of such activities, should be ensured at all levels of political activities so that the undue tension and misconducts that arises with political activities can be reduced or eliminated. Putting the rules and regulations to work effectively would ensure a levelled playing ground for all participants and attract other potential candidates (especially women) to join the political race.

Again, whilst the allocation of quotas for the representation of women in the local governance system would ensure the improved participation of women, there is also the need to educate and motivate women to develop interest in the governance of their immediate communities through the local governance system. Community women with the potentials should be identified and developed to become role models in the communities. Whilst this approach would help build women's interest and confidence in politics, it would also help to ensure the efficient use of the quota system. Leadership in all spheres of life must also show commitment by giving women the chance to participate.

Finally, the study also suggests that, community members (both men and women) should endeavour to give women politicians the needed moral support. So that, interested community women who are well developed and are ready to serve the interest of the people would be supported and elected to represent their voices in the local governance system towards the balanced growth of the municipality. Women should also be supported in leading functions, committees, boards and even projects in the municipality. This would send the right signals to others interested and even non-interested women to take up the challenge and take active interest in local politics for balanced decision making towards the growth of the local community.

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