

**EXAMINATION OF BARRIERS TO WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN  
SAVELUGU/NANTONG MUNICIPALITY, GHANA**

**Abdul-Razak, Abubakari** 

Department of Accountancy, Tamale Polytechnic, Tamale, Ghana

[kpanvomc@yahoo.com](mailto:kpanvomc@yahoo.com)

**Prince, Askia Mohammed**

Free Lance Social Worker and Educationist, Ghana,

**Iliasu, Issah**

Department of Secretaryship and Management Studies, Tamale Polytechnic, Tamale, Ghana.

[issaheliasu@yahoo.com](mailto:issaheliasu@yahoo.com)

**Abstract**

*Equitable participation of women in politics and governance is essential to building and sustaining democracy and Ghana is not an exemption. This thesis was conducted to examine the barriers to women participation in local governance in the Savelugu/Nantong Municipality of Ghana. Both quantitative and qualitative methods of research were employed in the study. The simple random sampling criteria was used to draw a sample size of 58 respondents made up of assembly members and other stakeholders and a questionnaire was employed in data collected and it was found that people's perceived inferiority of women coupled with non-commitment to strict legal and administrative (constitutional) provisions amongst others were responsible for the low level of participation of women in local governance. Statutory provisions need be reviewed to create more enabling opportunities for all gender to participate. People should also be educated on the benefits of including women in the governance at the local level. Through this, the potentials of women can be garnered towards local level development.*

*Keywords: Barriers, Women, Women participation, Local governance*

**INTRODUCTION**

Statistics on population censuses across the world has shown women dominance over the masculine gender. Evident to this fact is that of Ghana's recently held population census which revealed women dominance of 51.2% over men (GSS, 2012). Women's roles have become increasingly public; women today enjoy many of the same educational opportunities as men and

make up a significant proportion of the labour force. However, women make up just under half of the civil and public services and even in the private sector. Sufficiently, there is reasonable evidence supporting the assertion that women have potentials, which can be tapped to meaningfully enhance social, economic and political development of nations. This awareness has led to efforts by governments complemented by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), multilateral institutions and individuals at the micro, and macro levels to actualize these potentials.

The role of women in politics and public offices is one of the current burning governance issues because of the perceived and acknowledged potential and contribution of women to governance processes. Allah-Mensah (2005) however commented that, participating effectively and meaningfully in order to have an impact, is a process of empowerment that enhances the self-worth of individuals and groups. Whiles there are now more women than ever sitting in parliament, their numbers are still increasingly low. Fortunately, there are no legal barriers to women's participation in politics and government. Albright, (2012) concurred that every country deserves to have the best possible leader and that means that women have to be given a chance to compete. If they are never allowed to compete in the electoral process then the countries are really robbing themselves of a great deal of talent. Further to that, equitable participation of women in politics and government is essential to building and sustaining democracy.

Whiles there are no legal barriers to women participation in politics and in governance, there remain numerous imaginary barriers to women's participation in public life, which this research aims to address through the examination of the barriers women participation in local governance in Savelugu/Nantong District.

## **Research Problem**

In the modern era, women in government are under-represented in most countries worldwide in contrast to men. However, women are increasingly being politically elected to be heads of state and government. To the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2012), more than 20 countries currently have a woman holding office as the head of a national government, and the global participation rate of women in national-level parliaments is nearly 20%. More so, as of March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012, the global average of women in national assemblies is 19.7% (ibid).

All around the world, countries have fervently fought to increase women participation in governance and evidently, New Zealand which ranks at the 23<sup>rd</sup> position of the global ranking of countries with women representation has women comprising 32.2% of its parliament whiles Australia has 24.7% representation of women in its lower house and 29% in its upper house. Canada also noted among major English-speaking democracies has 24.7% of its lower house represented by women whiles its upper house has 39% representation of women (Inter-

Parliamentary Union, 2012). These figures point to the fact that, women representation and participation in governance is being highly upheld elsewhere around the world.

Ghana's is not admirable relative to other countries. With its exemplary trend in implementing and consolidating democracy, Ghana has a very low rate of women participation and representation in both local and national government structures (Parliamentary Centre, 2009). Notably, only 6.5% of the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives in the local government structure as at 2012 were women. Also, local governance in the area of District Assembly elections as at 2006, also recorded only 9.4% of the total candidates being women. Against this backdrop, this research examines the barriers to participation of women in local governance in the Savelugu / Nantong municipality.

### **Research Objectives**

The study examined the participation of women in local governance in the Savelugu / Nantong Municipality. The following specific objectives were studied in aid of attaining the overall purpose of the study.

- i. To identify the barriers that impede women participation in local governance in the Savelugu / Nantong Municipality, and
- ii. To explore strategies to improve participation of women in governance in Savelugu/Nantong Municipality.

### **Scope of the Study**

The study examined the barriers to women participation in local governance in the Savelugu / Nantong Municipality of the Northern region. The barriers hampering women participation and the systems that should be established to encourage their participation in the local governance of the municipality had been examined. More insight into the barriers that hinder participation of women in local governance was sought. Ultimately, findings from the study would serve the purpose of informing the stakeholders in governance on the issues deterring the Ghanaian woman from active participation in local governance. Also, the study would serve as a pool of existing knowledge on the subject matter for other researchers in a related field of study.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Fukuyama (2012) defined governance as government's ability to make and enforce rules, and to deliver services, regardless of whether that government is democratic or subject to the rule of law. Governance is about the performance of agents in carrying out the wishes of principals, and not about the goals that principals set (ibid). This further description of governance by Fukuyama (2012) is likened to the concept of management as defined by Williams (2007) that

management is getting work done through others. Related to that the, governance is a process while the bodies of persons (organisation) who get these processes done or accomplished are referred to as government. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2000), Hague, defined good governance as the transparent, responsible and effective exercise of power and resources by the government, in dialogue with the population. In this regard, the population refers to both male and female in the governance setting, their equitable representation is therefore very important in the governance process.

Evertzen (2001) asserted that, the scope of governance goes beyond technical (the simple delivery of basic services such as health, water supply, education) and political dimensions to civil society empowerment, processes of collective action, collective bargaining and social expression'. Includes a bottom-up process of participation in decision making which becomes meaningful as a system operating on democratic principles with values and practices that stress people's empowerment and participation, gender equality, legitimacy, transparency, accountability and effectiveness in which the civil society is an important actor. Hyden, Court, and Mease (2003) also defined governance as the formation and stewardship of the rules that regulate the public realm; it is the space where state as well as economic and societal actors interact to make decisions. Siyabonga, Benjy, Nzo and Hoof (2008) concurred that, governance is not just about how a government and social organisations interact, and how they relate to citizens, but it concerns the state's ability to serve citizens and other actors, as well as the manner in which public functions are carried out, public resources are managed and public regulatory powers are exercised. The quality of governance, therefore, is measured in terms of how well various actors handle the rules that make up the basic dimensions of the political regime. Thus, governance is a decision making process undertaken by an organized body of persons either elected or appointed or by any means to represent and manage the views of the people upon which it rules. Women representation in this regard is very important.

Underpinning the overall strategy of local governance is the hope that by bringing citizens and institutions closer to one another and allowing the citizens more agency in decision-making processes, there will be improved service delivery, social services, primary health, education, and municipal services, to name a few. This concept assumes that devolution is taking place within an environment that provides clear political, administrative, and fiscal authority to local governments and effective channels of accountability (Jawziya, 2007). Randal (2004) asserted that, local governance links the processes of democratization and decentralisation at a sub-national level. Although, strictly local governance does not require local democracy, it is believed that decentralisation without local democracy is quite simply less effective.

United Nations Development Programme (1999) noted that, local governance is a form of decentralized governance. Evertzen (2001) also defined the Local Governance to concern

the processes through which local stakeholders interact in determining the local development agenda and in managing resources to implement the development priorities. Decentralization, or decentralizing governance on the other hand refers to the restructuring or reorganization of authority so that there is a system of co-responsibility between institutions of governance at the central, regional and local levels according to the principle of subsidiarity, thus increasing the overall quality and effectiveness of the system of governance, while increasing the authority and capacities of sub-national levels.

In view of the above assertions therefore, local governance can be seen as a means to spreading authority and responsibility among all even to the local interest groupings towards ensuring the representation of the views of all concerned.

Women want and need to be able to participate in the decisions that affect them, their families, communities and countries hence the need for their involvement in the systems and mechanisms that make such decisions. It is against this reason that gender equality and women empowerment have become critical dimensions of the United Nations Development Programme's efforts to help meet the overarching goal of halving world poverty by 2015 (UNDP, 2000). The continued absence of women's voices in governance is largely due to inequitable representation and participation in institutional structures, from governments and political parties, to NGOs and the private sector. Boosting women's political participation needs to go beyond raw numbers to encompass the complex relationship between power, poverty and participation.

Parry, Mosley and Day (1992) defined participation as taking part in the process of formation, passage and implementation of public policies. Richardson (1983) and Cunill (1991) consented that, political participation is more associated with representative democracy and indirect participation. Mapuva (2010) put it that, in an effort to articulate local governance, the Charter employs decentralization "involving the delegation of a range of powers, competencies and resources from the central government to elected local (sub-national) governments" (Charter, 2007:2); de-concentration which is the delegation of administrative functions from the state to local non-elected public structures (Charter, 2007:2), as well as local democratic governance which espouses and encourages an equal participation of all stakeholders of a territory (state, citizen civil society, private sector), reinforces accountability towards citizens and responsiveness to social demands in seeking to satisfy the general interest.

Gaventa and Valderrama (1999) noted that, each of the concepts of participation carries with them differing methods for strengthening or enhancing participation. Traditionally, in the field of political participation, such methods have included voter education, enhancing the awareness of rights and responsibilities of citizens, lobbying and advocacy, often aimed towards developing a more informed citizenry who could hold elected representatives more accountable.

In the social and community spheres, however, we have seen the development of a number of broader participatory methods for appraisal, planning, monitoring large institutions, training and awareness building. Greater emphasis here has been on the importance of participation not only to hold others accountable, but also as a self-development process, starting with the articulation of grassroots needs and priorities, and building popular forms of organisation. Participation has included the realm of knowledge and direct action, not only the realm of representation and accountability (Siyabong, Benjy, Nzo & Hoof, 2008).

A fundamental prerequisite for realizing the strategically developed goals of any social or human institution is governance, a reason for which many have recognized leadership as the means to achieving strategic intents. To this end therefore, representation into the leadership or the governing unit becomes keen to many stakeholders just as much as the realization of the goals. Representation ensures the equitable sampling of the varied views that makes a unit. Agbalajobi (2009) posited that, if half of the world's population remains vulnerable to economic, political, legal and social marginalization, our hope of advancing democracy and prosperity will remain in serious jeopardy.

Solutions to urban challenges requires that eligible individuals be made part of the problem-solving mechanism especially in affairs that affect their livelihoods and given a place in the decision-making process within their constituencies. The content herein is to ensure that, the local people in their varied groupings as communities and interest groups irrespective of their gender, tribe or affiliations are selected through a fairly determined criterion to represent their respective interest at the decision making table. This therefore demands that, the feminine gender is dully and equitably represented to enhance the effectiveness of decisions made concerning their interests. Matovu (2006) noted that increasing demands for local government transformation and decentralization have opened up spaces for better participation and representation in decision-making processes and administration.

### **Women Participation in Local Governance**

Whiles a few women caucus and activists such as the ABANTU for Development, United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre, Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF)-Ghana, and the 'We Know Politics' project amongst others, seem to be the organized mouthpieces and the propellers of the women involvement in decision and political life, it is of interest to note that many legal instruments including the constitution of the republic of Ghana (the 1992 constitution) which indicated the establishment of the local government and its service, the local government act 1993 (Act 462) and other related acts and legislative instruments of the country did not indicate the inclusion of women as a necessity for certain



positions and as such, it paves the way for any form of discrimination against women in their representation in such human institutions (UNIFEM, 2008). In attempts to bridge up the gap, Parliamentary Centre (2009) identified that there exist a gender strategy (i.e. Ghana Parliamentary Committee Support Project) which phases one and two (I & II) aimed at raising awareness among all members of parliament, men and women, of the importance of taking gender into account, understanding how a society's concept of man and woman leads to inequalities in all actions, from policy-making to budget preparation through implementation and evaluation.

The Women's Manifesto for Ghana (2004) also noted that, the problem of low representation of women in local government had existed since and as far back as 1998, only 196 women were seen among the 4,820 elected candidates for the district assemblies. And in 2002, only 341 had been identified out of 4,583 elected candidates. This is not to say parliament was better as a similar case exists and all these while, no structural policy documents have been written to accentuate the need for increased representation of women in governance both at national levels and local governance or district levels.

Though a poor representation of women on public boards, praises could be sung to the Public Procurement Act, 2003 (Act 663) and a few institutional boards which made it a 'must' to include at least a woman experienced enough to occupy a particular field of position in the board. The import herein is that, most national and local government legislations except a few manifesto promises failed to provide a minimum quota of representation to women and this has been the cause of the unequal and unfair representation of women in national and local policy and decision making processes. This view is buttressed by the Gender Studies and Human Right Documentation Centre (2012) when it stated that, Ghana has often been promoted as an exemplary country when it comes to implementing and consolidating democracy, but its rate of women's participation both in policy making and government representation is shockingly low. This assertion stands true as a result of lack or inadequate provisions for women involvement in governmental policy and decision making.

Tsikata (2009) identified that, affirmative action has been used in Ghana since independence to address gender and regional imbalances in access to education, health, work and politics and has had some success particularly in improving the male-female ratios in primary education, yet has been less effective for improving women's representation in political and public life.

### **Impediments to Women Participation in Local Governance**

There is no discriminatory law against women in politics, but there are overt and covert practices which hinder women's abilities to lead successful campaigns alongside male

counterparts for political positions. One such cultural limitation is the monetization of political elections since women rarely have the same personal economic advantages that men do. Another hindrance is the traditional belief that women are politically inferior (Gender Studies & Human Rights Documentation Centre, 2012). According to Evertzen (2001), women's often heavy workload of paid and unpaid work is a barrier to their ability to take part in decision making. Local government has an important role to play in providing affordable, professional and safe care services for children, older people and people with disabilities. As many women participate in organisations at the local level, it is often thought that decentralization is in the interest of women. But decentralization makes the local level more important, and with the growing of importance, the male interest in it is growing as well. Many barriers still hamper women, with the risk that they will not benefit equally to men (Byanyima, 2009).

The ABANTU report launched on women participation in Local Governance (2012) also noted that, structural inequalities, unfair ethno-cultural and religious practices, patriarchal family arrangements, lack of support and an unfriendly political climate have been identified as factors restricting women and other marginalized groups from political participation. Indeed, studies have suggested that at the rate of progress of women's representation in legislatures across the world, gender parity will be reached at 2047 (UNIFEM, 2008). However some legal pronouncements and instruments seem to have contributed significantly to the slow pace of progress made over the years. For instance, the constitutional provision which requires that majority of ministers must be members of parliament (Article 78 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana) also impede women representation and involvement in decision making. The import is that, until there are representations of women in parliament, women may not occupy ministerial positions and as such, may not be involved in national policy development. Now, if at the national level, things are this strict and not paving way for the needed equality, how much more at the local governance level?

Tsikata (2009) also argued that, while there appears to be consensus that Affirmative Action (AA) is useful for redressing intractable political and socio-economic inequalities arising from systemic discrimination, affirmative action programmes have often been fraught. Often, there are disagreements within governments and the society at large about their necessity, the particular provisions, implementation and their successes. Often, public officials tasked with their conception and implementation make pronouncements which can undermine the aims and objectives of particular programmes. While controversies rage, the beneficiaries of affirmative action programmes are often not in a position to make the case for sustaining interest in the programmes.



## Improving and Encouraging Women Participation in Local Governance

Women participation in local governance can be enhanced and achieved through best practices and through the all-inclusive approach to policy formulation which makes policy formulation and implementation a collective task to all stakeholders including even NGOs (UNDP, 2000). As such, attention has to be given to areas such as; Reviewing Constitutions, to guarantee equal rights for women and men and a gender-neutral language; Reviewing laws that discriminate against women; Legal and sociological research on current and proposed laws to investigate the (possible) impact of laws on the position of women.

In Uganda for instance, the Women's Caucus worked during the exercise of constitution formulation to ensure that the Constitution was written in gender-neutral language and that an explicit statement of equality before the law was included. The Caucus successfully lobbied for an Equal Opportunities Commission to guarantee enforcement of the constitutional principles. The Caucus was also successful in increasing the affirmative action quota from one in every nine local council positions to one in three. Women are guaranteed one-third of local government council seats (UNDP, 2000). This perhaps was achieved through the understanding and support of major stakeholders of state policy making machineries and could be replicated anywhere provided it is identified as needed.

Evertzen (2010) noted that, a gender analysis of government budgets can contribute to an increased transparency of government budgets, it can make visible what resources and services are allocated to what sectors, and who benefits. The analysis of budgets, started in Australia, where it was not successful because it was only an exercise of the government; it lacked pressure and interest from outside and in South Africa, the initiative started in 1993 and was far more successful, being a product from both the government and parliamentarians and non-governmental organisations. The civil servants provided data, the NGO carried out operational advocacy, and the parliamentarians lobbied. The import is that, when policies are advocated towards women participation in local governance, it is not only to remain the task of the women to realize it but the cognitive effort of all stakeholders makes the policy a reality. Other applicable strategies could include networking, lobbying and public pressure at policy-making levels to change the content of laws or design new laws. That is to build networks between women's organisations and gender sensitive politicians; create an umbrella organisation at the national level, to co-ordinate activities; and also networking with organisations of other countries (Geisler, 2007).

Having defined legal literacy as the process of acquiring critical awareness about rights and the law, the ability to assert rights, and the capacity to mobilize for change; AWEPA-African European Institute (2010) argued that, promoting gender-responsive legal literacy courses to the grassroots level for women and men can help enhance the interest of women to actively

participate and take up responsibilities in the local governance of their communities. This could be done through the designing and distributing of booklets for literate women and for women in alphabetisation courses; using of visual training material for illiterate women; setting up of Mass media campaigns; publishing and dissemination of scholarly work through popular literature and art forms such as comic books, posters, dance, brochures, theatre, poetry, etc. Centre for Legislative Development (CLD)-(2001) also advocated that, training of politicians, lawyers and paralegals can be a quick way to developing women's interest in local politics. Further, in Africa where many women are illiterate and where the radio often is the man's property, person to person contact can be a more useful training media. Also, engendering law school curricula and training future lawyers in the area of women's rights will go a long way to provide women politicians with training and information about legislation.

Abdul-Gapor et al. (2011) earlier identified three pillars of sustainable development with women participation as social development, environmental development and economic development. Further, one of the strategies for sustainable social development and democratic governance is political empowerment of women. The affirmative action on quota which enjoins parliament and even the executive arm of government to reserve specific number of seats and powers for women in order to reduce the level of competition with male candidates.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The study employs a mixed approach (qualitative and quantitative) and the essence is to enable the researchers draw the benefits of both approaches to the study. Thus Buber, Gadner and Richards (2004) also noted that, if one uses numbers in a research, interpretation is still involved and if one's data are texts, counting may still be appropriate. Therefore variables do not necessarily have clear-cut meanings; processes revealed through numeric analysis as well as through narrative, and so on.

### **Population and Target Population**

The population studied was women specifically in local governance and other assemblymen and well-positioned staff of other stakeholder institutions in the Savelugu/Nantong municipality. This was to allow women to tell their own story in order to reflect the reality of the barriers that affect their participation in local governance. The study however sought supporting views from men in the assembly so as to help establish the study of women in the context of a mixed environment of men and women in order to ascertain the barriers to women participation in local governance.

## Sampling

We limited the population of the study to assembly members and unit committee members and few stakeholder institutions due to their position/participation and knowledge in the local governance system. All the nine (9) assembly women were purposively sampled from whom data was collected through questionnaires. The essence was to enable all the women in the assembly to contribute significantly to the study by expressing their minds regarding their level of participation in local governance. The study also used the simple random sampling criteria as a probability sampling procedure to select forty-one (41) male members of the assembly on whom questionnaires were administered.

With the number of members being definite, the researcher used a sample size of 58 out of a total number of 68 members with a confidence level of 95%. This was derived from the working as follows;  $n = N / 1 + N (\alpha)^2$ ; Where  $n$  = sample size

$N$  = the Population

$\alpha$  = the error margin and

1 is a constant of proportionality.

$$\text{Therefore } n = \frac{N}{1 + N (\alpha)^2}, \quad n = \frac{68}{1 + 68 (5/100)^2}$$

$$\text{Implying that, } n = \frac{68}{1 + 68(0.05)^2}, \quad n = \frac{68}{1 + 68 (0.0025)}, \quad n = \frac{68}{1.17}$$

Therefore  $n = 58.12$  hence  $n = 58$ .

This was chosen using purposive sampling to cater for the nine (9) assembly women, and the simple random sampling to select forty-one (41) assemblymen in the municipality. Eight (8) key informants were also interviewed to get in depth information on women participation in local governance.

## Tools of Data Collection

Being a survey based research, a structured questionnaire with both open-ended and close-ended questions were used to collect data from the selected respondents. The close ended questions were expected to limit respondents view on a particular issue towards achieving the set purpose of the study; however, open questions were kept where necessary to provide the respondents the opportunity to present their opinion orderly. Data was coded and entered using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16 from which quantitative data was generated. Analysed data were presented on tables, pie charts and bar graphs in order to enhance reader or stakeholder understanding. An interview guide was designed in line with the research objectives to enable the conduct of the interview to elicit relevant information from the key informants.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Data discussed was collected from 50 assembly members including an Executive Committee Member, a Government Appointee, and Social Services Assistance. Also, 8 key informant were interviewed.

### Impediments to Women Participation in Local Governance

This section presents the barriers that impede women's involvement in local governance of the communities.

#### *People's Believe in the Potentials of Women*

Of the 50 respondents studied, 72.0% believed that women in the Savelugu/Nantong municipality have the potentials to participate in the local governance of the municipality whiles 28.0% of respondents also made known their disbelief in the potentials of women in political participation. Of the number of respondents who do not believe the potentials of women in politics, 10.0% noted that women lack the courage to get involved in politics whiles 4.0% of such respondents also noted that, most women lack the educational qualification to participate in politics. Again, 10.0% of respondents identified that, women do not have the financial tendency to participate in politics whiles 4.0% of respondents also expressed that, most women do not have the moral support from the community members as compared to their male counterparts. Whiles all the above positions of the respondents may be realistic, the basic among them is the problem of educational qualification. Evidently, the researcher spotted more women than men who were being assisted by interpretation in the administration of the questionnaires, Whiles women are perceived to have lack the courage and the financial tendencies to participate in politics, the needed moral support of the community from which women hail and contest was also lacking. Information herein is presented on Table 1.

Table 1: People's Believe in the Potentials of Women

Response		What do they lack?					Total
		Courage to get involved	Educational qualification	Financial tendency	Moral support from community members	They have the potential	
Yes	Count	0	0	0	0	36	36
	%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	72.0%	72.0%
No	Count	5	2	5	2	0	14
	%	10.0%	4.0%	10.0%	4.0%	.0%	28.0%
Total	Count	5	2	5	2	36	50
	%	10.0%	4.0%	10.0%	4.0%	72.0%	100.0%

In a further quest to determine why people believe in the potentials of women in political participation yet they have been neglected, it was observed among 16.0% of respondents that most women lack interest in politics. A section of respondents represented by 42.0% of respondents also believe that, women are neglected because of people's discrimination against women in politics. Also, 4.0% of respondents noted that women's burden of social responsibilities does not allow them to take up other challenging tasks such as politics.

It was also held among 10.0% of respondents that, the role of men in the family do not readily pave way for women participation in politics. This latter positions however confirm Byanyima (2009) and ABANTU (2012) assertion that, in Africa, structural inequalities, unfair ethno-cultural and religious practices, patriarchal family arrangements, lack of support and an unfriendly political climate have been identified as factors restricting women and other marginalized groups from political participation. This can be read from Table 2.

Table 2: People's Believe in the Potentials of Women (b)

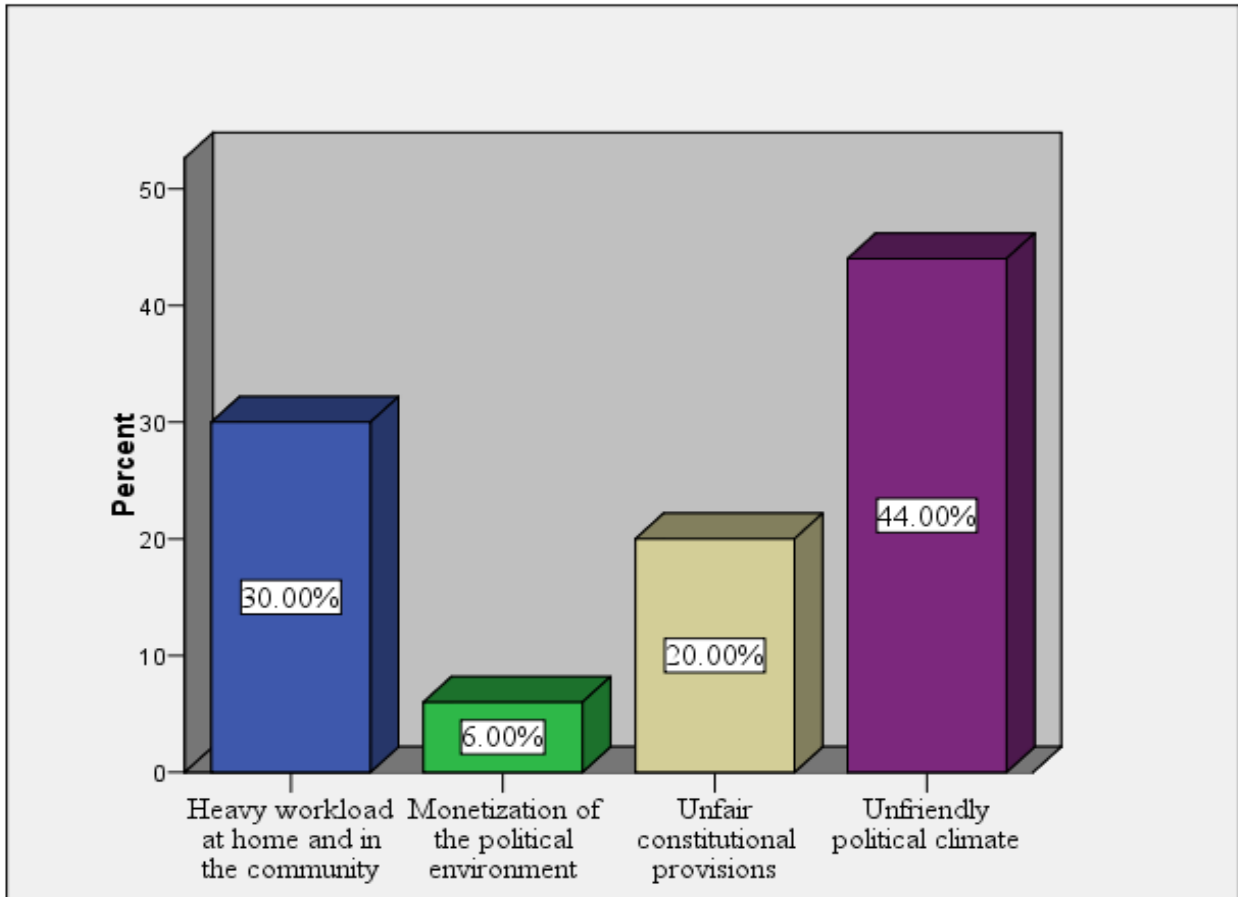
Variables		Why have they been neglected?					Total
		lack of interest in politics	People's discrimination against women in politics	women's burden of social responsibilities does not pave way	The role of Men in the Family do not readily pave way for women participation in politics	They lack the potentials	
Yes	Count	8	21	2	5	0	36
	% of Total	16.0%	42.0%	4.0%	10.0%	.0%	72.0%
No	Count	0	0	0	0	14	14
	% of Total	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	28.0%	28.0%
Total	Count	8	21	2	5	14	50
	% of Total	16.0%	42.0%	4.0%	10.0%	28.0%	100.0%

### ***Barriers to Women in Political Participation***

It was also held among 30.0% of respondents that, women's heavy workload at home and in the community is one of the major problems contributing to the low level of participation of women in politics. Also, 6.0% of respondents noted the monetization of the political environment as another hindrance to women political participation whiles 20.0% of respondents identified unfair constitutional provisions as another impediment to women in politics. Majority of respondents however accepted that, unfriendly political climate is the greatest barrier to women in political participation. These assertions of respondents however support their earlier responses regarding why women have been neglected by the governance system. This also confirms Evertzen (2001) position that, women's heavy workload of paid and unpaid work is a barrier to their ability to take part in decision making. It further responds to Tsikata (2009) argument that,

while there appears to be consensus that Affirmative Action (AA) is useful for redressing intractable political and socio-economic inequalities arising from systemic discrimination, affirmative action programmes have often been fraught. It explains therefore that, more needs to be done on the political environment and in people’s mind set, if the aim is to achieve equal participation of women likewise their male counterparts. Data relating to the above discussed barriers is illustrated on Figure 1.

Figure 1: Physical Barriers to Women in Political Participation



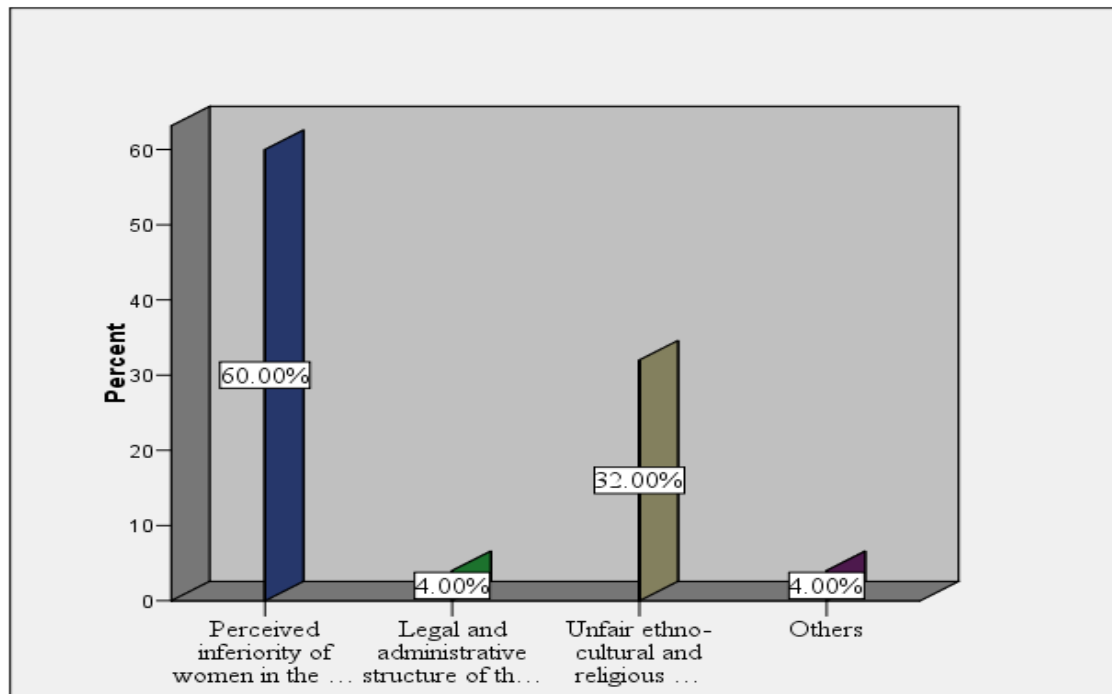
**Social Factors Militating against Women Participation in Politics**

In terms of social factors militating against women in political participation, 60.0% of respondents identified that, perceived inferiority of women in the political front is the major factor that pushes most of them back to the house. Also, 4.0% of respondents noted that, the legal and administrative structure of the local governance system does not support women, as it did not tie down the quantum of women in the local governance system to a determined quota. About 32.0% of respondents as shown on Figure 2. also reported unfair ethno-cultural and religious practices as another social factor hindering the participation of women in local governance.



Other factors as reported by 4.0% of respondents include patriarchal family arrangements, and lack of self confidence among others. The submissive and reserved nature of women as always demonstrated in the home, coupled with ethnic and some religious practices have made the community to look down upon women. These forces, for quite a long time do not seem to have found reasons to pave way for women to be placed in leadership position despite their demonstration of their unique potentials as family heads in the absence of their husbands, as well as roles in the community.

Figure 2: Social Factors Militating against Women Participation in Politics



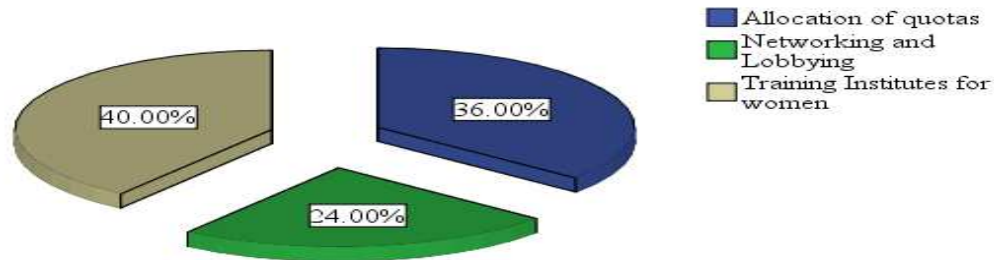
Regarding the barriers impeding the participation of women in local governance, interviewees noted that: *Lack of community support for women politicians coupled with lack of legal enactments in support of equal representation of women are the main factors contributing to the low level of participation of women in local governance. Further that, people generally perceives women to be inferior and cannot take up any leadership roles in the community, hence their role in the home as house-wives.*

### **SUGGESTED WAYS TO IMPROVE WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE**

Towards achieving improved women participation in the local governance of the Savelugu/Nantong municipality, 36.0% of respondents suggested that, quotas should be allocated for specific political positions in the system of governance in order to ensure women involvement in local governance. Also, 24.0% of respondents identified that networking and

lobbying in favour of women should be used by women activists to attract and sustain increased participation of women in local governance. Again, 40.0% of respondents suggested that, training institutes for women development and enhancement should be established to educate women on politics and representation as well as governance, so as to invoke their interest and preparedness to take up the challenge. This is demonstrated on Figure 3.

Figure 3: Suggested Ways to Improve Women Participation in Local Governance



### OTHER SUGGESTIONS BY RESPONDENTS

Further, the study revealed that 58.0% and 28.0% of respondents respectively agreed strongly and fairly that, the national constitution and other acts of parliament should be reviewed to pave way for women involvement in governance. On the contrary, 10.0% and 4.0% of respondents respectively also disagreed fairly and strongly with the assertion. Whiles the latter position of respondents depicts the attitude of people towards women in politics, the former is most appropriate if indeed, the nation is committed to including women in its governance system.

The study also revealed 32.0% and 42.0% of respondents respectively agreeing strongly and fairly to the suggestion that, equal rights should be guaranteed to men and women and the enforcement of a gender-neutral language for national policy documents and legal acts. Interestingly, 26.0% of respondents disagreed with this position indicating that, people do not readily buy into the idea of including women in governance even at the local levels due to perceived inferiority of women and/or the other stated reasons. It was further suggested by 86.0% of respondents summatively that, laws that discriminate against women should be reviewed. Again, 14.0% of respondents did not support this position. The study further proposed legal and sociological research on current and proposed laws, to investigate the possible impact of such laws on the position of women in the community. To this, 80.0% of respondents agreed whiles 20.0% of respondents disagreed with it. Finally, it was found that 90.0% of respondents agreed to the idea of correcting social prejudice and stereotypes on women participation. However, 10.0% of respondents do not agree with this position.

It can be said that, the level of disagreement received by these proposition represent the level of physical and social barriers which ought to be broken in order to pave way for women

participation in local governance and even in the national governance system. Table 3 shows information as highlighted.

Table 4: Other Suggestions by Respondents

Statement	SA	A	D	SD
Reviewing the constitution and other acts of parliament to reflect and pave way for women involvement.	29 (58%)	14 (28%)	5 (10%)	2 (4%)
Guaranteeing equal rights for women and men and a gender-neutral language.	16 (32%)	21 (42%)	10 (20%)	3 (6%)
Reviewing laws that discriminate against women.	33 (66%)	10 (20%)	7 (14%)	0 (0%)
Legal and sociological research on current and proposed laws to investigate the (possible) impact of laws on the position of women.	19 (38%)	21 (42%)	8 (16%)	2 (4%)
Correcting social prejudice and stereotypes on women participation	32 (64%)	13 (26%)	5 (10%)	0 (0%)

To buttress the aforementioned factors and strategies towards enhancing women participation in local governance, the key informants interviewed suggested that: *A major constitutional reform should be undertaken by the nation to make specific pronouncements regarding quotas and the reservation of specific political positions for women in the local governance system.*

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

It was uncovered that, many people do not believe the potentials of women in governance because, the women lack the courage to get involved into politics, and they also lack the financial resources to participate in politics. Reasons for which women politicians have been neglected include their lack of interest in politics, people's discrimination against them, and too many social responsibilities at home and in the society and also the patriarchal family arrangements in our communities. These factors made majority of respondents to declare their trust in the potentials of women in governance.

Physical Barriers to women participation in local governance as discovered by the study include: unfriendly political climate in Africa and its sub regions, heavy workload at home and in the community for women, unfair constitutional provisions and the monetization of the political environment. Social factors identified to be responsible for the low level of participation of women in local governance include people's perceived inferiority of women in the political front, unfavourable legal and administrative structure of the local governance system, and unfair ethno-cultural and religious practices.

Regarding the way forward, the study found most respondents suggesting the allocation of quotas and the establishment of training institutes for women, such that, when more women

are taken through lessons of governance and its related issues, appropriate provisions would be made for the absorption into the governance system. They further suggested that, constitutional and state regulations be reviewed to provide necessary grounds for women to dwell in the governance of their local communities.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The low level of women participation in the local governance system of the Savelugu/Nantong municipality is as a result of people's perceived inferiority of women coupled with lack of legal and constitutional provisions to strengthen the path of women in agitating for equal representation. The representation of women in the Savelugu/Nantong Municipal assembly is therefore woefully inadequate and ought to be redressed in order to ensure representative decision making for all.

To address this challenge, there should be collective stakeholder role in getting reforms in: the laws formulated in Ghana; the structure of governance; commitment of all in ensuring that women role is respected in the governance delivery at all levels in the municipality.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Several measures can be taken to enhance women participation in local governance in Savelugu/Nantong municipality.

First of all, there is the challenge of people's prejudice and stereotype about the inferiority of women in the community and especially in governance. This has to be battled fervently to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. Many people have been allowed to hold on to old tales and beliefs as well as ethnic and religious practices which have no grounds in today's world, to brainwash them from the realities and the developments of today. As such, they are being misled by olden day assertions about the status of women in the community and have in one way or the other sworn not to see to the elevation of the woman in the community. They tend to see women who make it to a public life as misfits among women. An intensive education and awareness creation about the potentials of women in the media and in the classroom will go a long way to enhance the efforts of ensuring gender parity in all aspects of life and in governance. School curriculums should be made to carry messages of the abilities of women in the community and how they can be achieved, so that people start to learn about gender parity at tender ages and it does not become strange to them when they are being challenged on public platforms by women. Sensitization of the girl-child in the form of enlightening them about the achievements some women around the globe may also help arouse the self confidence in the girl-child to aspire for higher heights in the society.

Regarding the problem of lack or inadequacy of constitutional provisions or policies towards the enhancement of women participation in governance, the study suggests that,

government makes a thorough review of laws and legal documentations such as the constitution in order to do away with existing laws and administrative structures which do not favour women. This can be done through the contraction of a research body to inquire into the impacts of existing laws and policies on women. When this is done, identified areas can then be edited and probably replaced with gender-neutral language to pave way for both genders to equally participate in the pronouncements of the law. It also entails that, policies of equal rights should be passed and backed by appropriate implementation mechanisms such as sanctions for people who disregard these policies. This will help safeguard the position of women in terms of administrative structure and environment.

Also, with the problem of women's lack of personal interest in politics, stakeholders are advised to design educational packages with women in mind. This should include women's political interest development and skills development and management among women. The package should go a long way to sensitize women on their potentials and roles in the community and the need to take up the challenge now and begin to dominate the political platform. Special institutes and training centers can be established for these purposes, to ensure structured acquisition of knowledge. The acquisition of these skills and knowledge will help encourage and invoke the voluntary interest of women in political participation.

There was also the problem of lack of courage among women to rise up and pick up political ambitions and contest for the leadership of the community. This can also be eliminated through the acquisition of the necessary skills and knowledge needed to participate in politics. Women are also advised to form networks that interact and take inference from each other at different levels in the country. These networks with representative bodies will form a strong force and a voice for women in lobbying for political positions which can rapidly accelerate the interest of women and to improve the general level of participation of women in politics and public life.

Again, towards increasing the representation of women in governance, government in collaboration with development partners and other local administrative bodies should help establish effective quotas for women in local governance, in parliament as members and as ministers of state. Allocating quotas and ensuring their achievement through strict constitutional mandates and enforcement agencies in itself, will signal potential women politicians on government's commitment to improving the representation of women in government and to encourage their interest in politics.

Furthermore, the problem of monetization of the political system can be addressed through policies that deter politicians from using financial resources to lure electorates into voting for them. This implies that, a special charter if necessary, should be written to spell out the rules of the game to which appropriate sanctions shall be applied. The charter should create

an equal ground for all to compete and contest and to ensure fairness of the game. This will remove all forms of financial barriers of women in participating in politics. In addition, government may establish special funds that caters for women and assists them in their political ambitions. This can be done through allocation in the district common fund or an entirely separate fund.

Finally, women politicians are also advised to conduct themselves in a manner that does not discourage people especially in their communities from trusting them with their votes. It is believed that, the source of the perceived attitude and nature of women is as a result of how most women in the society conduct themselves when elevated or when given the opportunity to lead. This is the argument that, women make up more than half of the population of every community and to elect a leader through people's view and belief in candidates, represented by votes, should not take a woman candidate too much stress to win. This is because, women in general do not even trust the potentials of each other and as such, have internal disagreements among themselves which makes it difficult to unite them for a common purpose. However, if elected and appointed women in governance endeavor to deliver good governance to the best of their people, especially women and children, greater heights can be achieved by women.

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