

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE LOCAL GOVERNANCE: KWAHU**

**SOUTH DISTRICT**



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**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE LOCAL GOVERNANCE: KWAHU  
SOUTH DISTRICT**



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the award of the MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY DEGREE IN SOCIAL STUDIES**

**OCTOBER, 2016**

## DECLARATION

### CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this project work is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this University or elsewhere.

Candidate's Name.....

Signature.....

Date.....

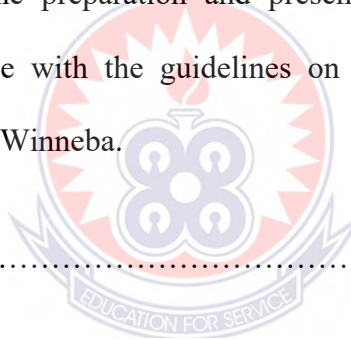
### SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the project work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines on project work laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

Supervisor's Name.....

Signature.....

Date.....



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was made possible through the assistance of a long list of people and institutions that cannot all be mentioned. The help was also received in variety of ways that cannot all be narrated here.

There are however a few people who are worth mentioning. These are Prof. A. Y Quashigah for his encouragement and directives, Baah Benjamin NCCE office at Mpraeso, Miriam Osei Berko at the Kwahu South District Assembly secretariat, Hon. Adzo assembly woman and all numerous friends who offered key information when I was stranded.

I am also grateful to Ps Arnold Ebongue for his immeasurable support.



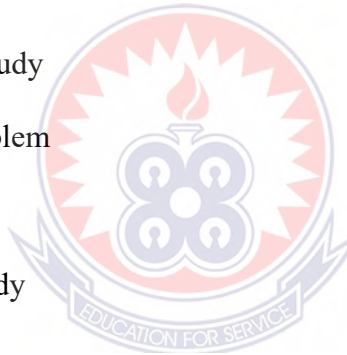
## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my children Kofi Adom and Yaw Adjei who suffered my absence during the period of my schooling.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
DECLARATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
DEDICATION	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	viii
ABSTRACT	ix
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background to the Study	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem	2
1.3 Purpose of the Study	3
1.4 Objectives of the Study	4
1.5 Research Questions	4
1.6 Significance of the Study	5
1.7 Limitations of the Study	5
1.8 Delimitations of the Study	6
1.9 Organization of the Study	6
CHAPTER TWO	8
LITERATURE REVIEW	8
2.1 Introduction	8
2.2 Theoretical Framework	8
2.3 Women's Participation in Governance	18



2.4 Challenges Faced by Women	47
2.5 Remedies to the Challenges	52
CHAPTER THREE	62
METHODOLOGY	62
3.1 Introduction	62
3.2 Research Design	62
3.3 Population	63
3.4 Sampling Procedure	64
3.5 Study Area	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
3.6 Sources of Data	65
3.7 Research Instrument	65
3.8 Evidence of Research Ethics	67
3.9 Validity and Reliability	67
3.10 Data Analysis	67
CHAPTER FOUR	68
PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS	68
4.1 Introduction	68
4.2 Demographic Trends	68
4.3 Participation of Women in Local Governance	73
4.4 Challenges Faced by Women	79
4.5 Stakeholders and Institutional Support	86
4.6 Ways of Enhancing Women's Participation	87
4.7 Observational Process	91
CHAPTER FIVE	96
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	96



5.1 Introduction	96
5.2 Discussion of Research Findings	98
5.3 Significance of the Study	106
5.4 Evaluation	106
5.5 Recommendations	110
5.6 Suggestions for Further Research	111
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>112</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>119</b>





## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Tables</b>	<b>Page</b>
Table 4.1: Age distribution of Respondents	69
Table 4.2: Occupational Analysis of Respondents	70
Table 4.3: Educational Status of Respondents	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Table 4.4: Marital status of Respondents	72
Table 4.5: Response on what Motivated Women's Participation in Local Governance Structures	73
Table 4.6: Trends in Local Government Elections (1994, 1998, 2002, 2006)- Elected Males and Females as a Percentage of Elected Persons in Ghana	74
Table 4.7: Success Rates in local Government elections in Ghana	75
Table 4.8: Number Contestants in district election in the Eastern Region, 2015	76
Table 4.9: Subcommittees of the Kwahu South District	77
Table 4.10: Unit Committees Membership in 2015 Kwahu South District	78
Table 4.11: Major Constraints Faced by Women	80
Table 4.12: Stakeholders and Institutional Support	86
Table 4.13: Observational Schedule of Aspirants	73

## ABSTRACT

Ghana as a nation has made moves to make governance structures accessible to all through decentralization. This is believed to speed development both at the national and local level notably district. Mainly, decentralization aimed at having men and women equally participate in the local governance structures and processes. But gender representation has not seen the much sought equality of men and women in these structures. Over the years, there has been a male dominance in terms of number. This study sought to investigate about the representation of women in the local governance structures in the Kwahu South District. To reach this objective, a case study looked at issues on gender equality, traced out the trends on women's participation, challenges faced by women, looked at institutional and stakeholders' support of women, and proposed some remedies to these hindrances.

The study revealed that though a quota system reserving 30 percent of the District Assembly membership to women is in place, this has not secured the much sought equal representation in the local governance structures. Since the creation of the district in 1998, the percentage of women elected and appointed has not gone beyond the quota mentioned above. Again, the trends of women represented though showing an increase has not seen women's presence crossing 10 percent in the assembly, its subcommittees and unit committees.

Among other remedies, the study proposed an intensive education of women on developmental issues and how crucial their role is. Also, policy makers are summoned to integrate women's concerns and gender parity in the developmental goals of the district.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

There is an increasing consensus among researchers in the area of local governance that women's participation has been persistently complex unusual and inconsistent in most developing countries (Allah - Mensah, 2005; Ofei- Aboagye, 2000; Ford, 2013). According to Karam (2010); The Beijing platform for action included a detailed set of recommendations to nations world-wide to enhance women's participation in decision-making structures. This new approach to governance includes all principles necessary for the consolidation of democratic management. These principles can be stated as participation, transparency, accountability, effectiveness, consistency, fairness and rule of law. Allah-Mensah (2005) pointed out that though the process of moving administrative authority from the center to the local level (known as decentralization) is non-discriminatory, the desired equitable participation of both men and women in various local government structures notably unit committees, zonal council, area council and district assembly; is yet to be achieved. For example, in 2002, out of 7,700 assembly members of the then 110 District Assemblies, only 5 percent were women nationwide (Allah-Mensah, 2005). As at 2012, out of 38 assembly members in Kwahu South District Assembly in the Eastern Region of Ghana, only 8 were women (Kwahu South District, 2012 statistics). Again, according to the District Electoral Commission following the 2011 district level elections for the 26 unit committees, out of the 175 contestants only 24 were women and 151 men.

This represents 10 percent females and 90 percent males across the local government structures.

This study sets to investigate the factors contributing to this under representation of women, with the aim of providing a more responsive participation of women in the local decision-making structures for development.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Provisions in the design of the local governance structures and decentralization process were to make it easier for women to be well represented. Regardless of their chosen path and strategy, women have worked over decades to gain access to the local government structures. In the Kwahu South District women constitute 52.6 percent as against 47.4 percent for men of the total population (Ghana statistical service: 2010 population and Housing census) out of the 130 members constituting the 26 unit's committee, zonal and area councils only 10 percent are women (Electoral Commission, 2011). Furthermore, the membership of the District Assembly indicates that 20 percent are females against 80 percent males (Statistical Department - KSDA, 2010). Conclusively, there is no doubt that though women form the majority of the population, they are under-represented in the local government structures.

Ofei-Aboagye (2000) posits that such low representation of women in decision - making structures at the local level is disturbing. Gyimah and Thompson (2008) expressed consternation about such historic exclusion of women from the formal arena of decision-making. The picture above raised some key questions which

motivated an investigation into the situation in the Kwahu South District of the Eastern Region in Ghana.

## **1.2 Purpose of the Study**

Ghana's democracy without the equal participation by women in decision-making and policies formulation is likely to be gender-blind, causing deleterious effects on the national and local development agenda. Women need to be represented equally at all decision-making processes in order to contribute their quota to the national development. Notwithstanding the desired gender parity in decision-making structures, women's presence has remained at its lowest for decades.

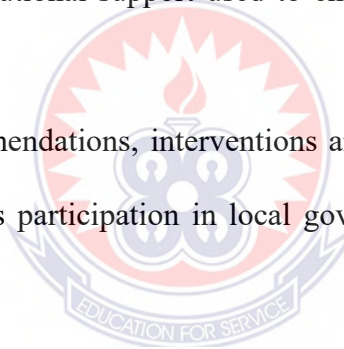
To delve in the issues being raised by the low participation of women in the local governance structures in the Kwahu South District the study purposes to:

- Examine the challenges faced by women and how they contribute to the under-representation of women in these structures.
- Trace out the trends of women's participation since the creation of the district in 1998 till date.
- To prompt stakeholders, institutions, agencies and civil society groups to act appropriately to enhance the participation of women in the governance structures in the district.
- To create a better environment through recommendations, interventions and initiatives for women to meaningfully contribute in the governance and development processes in the district.

### 1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study sets out to do the following:

- Identify challenges inhibiting women's efforts and interests to fully participate in the local government structures. The target group of women is 18 - 50 years of age.
- Analyze trends of women's participation on governance over the years in the district.
- Examine stakeholder's perspectives used to improve women's presence in the local governance structures.
- Look at the institutional support used to enhance women's participation in local governance.
- Provide recommendations, interventions and initiatives to policy makers to improve women's participation in local governance structures in the Kwahu South District.



### 1.4 Research Questions

The following questions guided the study:

- What identifiable challenges militate against the effective participation of women in the local governance structures?
- What are the observable trends on women's participation in the local governance from the creation of the district in 1998 till date?
- What are the institutional mechanisms put into place to address these challenges?

- What are some of the stakeholders' affirmative actions being used to address challenges contributing to the low presence of women in these structures?
- What recommendations, interventions and initiatives can be suggested to improve on the current situation?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study will be useful to stakeholders, institutions, agencies and civil society as they seek to integrate and involve more women in the development processes and decision-making structures at the local level. The research will enable women to surmount cultural, socio-economic challenges and correct anomalies created by a blurred understanding of stereotyped gender roles in local governance. This study will further serve as a useful document for more research and academic purpose. The research will offer insights for development policy makers to promote gender equality and support women would-be leaders within the locality.

### **1.7 Limitations of the Study**

The study faced a number of challenges among others, securing interviews time with some personalities. Also, the illiteracy rate of women (54.7 percent in the Kwahu South District) affected the administration of questionnaire.

In addition, there was lack of ready to hand information by some institution especially the district Electoral Commission. Furthermore, the change of dates for elections marred the observation process. Another short coming of the study was financial constraints, and the time frame within which the study needed to be completed. In

spite of these limitations, profound efforts were made in order not to compromise the quality of the study and meet set objectives and purpose.

### **1.8 Delimitations of the Study**

The study was conducted in the Kwahu South District of the Eastern Region in Ghana. Established in 1998 and located on the Kwahu Mountains scarp with Mpraeso as its capital, the district has a predominant agrarian population. Its total population is 69, 757 with males making up to 47.4 percent and females 52.6 percent (Kwahu South District Assembly, statistics Department). The study relied on the proportion of women who were willing to fill the questionnaire and avail themselves for interactions.

The tools used were observation of electoral process, interviews and rating scale, discussion with groups and civil education campaign outcome. The data thus collected were organized in tables for analysis that lead into the formulation of recommendations to enhance women's participation in the local governance structures.

### **1.9 Organization of the Study**

The study is organized into five chapters. The first chapter which is the introduction covers the background of the research, the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, its limitations and delimitations, organization of the study.

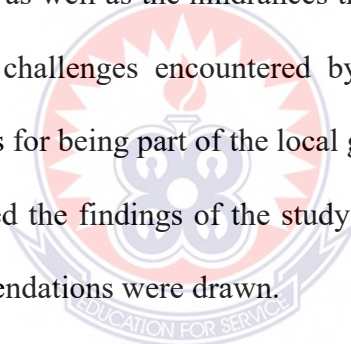


The second chapter examined the theoretical framework of the study and the review of relevant literature relating to the local governance system and the decentralization process, challenges faced by women in their bid to take part in the local governance structures, observable trends of women's participation and how these obstacles can be overcome.

The third chapter covered the research design, the population and sampling, instruments or tool used, the data collection procedure and data analysis.

The fourth chapter presented the findings on women's presence in decision - making structures in the district as well as the hindrances that impinged their participation. It also addressed those challenges encountered by women while recognizing the fundamental prerequisites for being part of the local governance structures.

The fifth chapter analyzed the findings of the study. On the basis of these findings, conclusions and recommendations were drawn.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Every research work is backed up by theories and concepts that shape it. This chapter comprises of four sections with the gender equality concept under pinning the study.

The review further covers the following sub-themes:

- Theoretical Framework
- Women's participation in the local governance
- Challenges faced by women
- Remedies to the challenges

#### **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

One of the current governance issues is that of gender equality. This study focus is to establish how gender can affect the functioning of the local government structures. For governance to be inclusive and effective, men and women must participate fully and equally take part in both processes and institutions. Equitable participation of men and women has the potential to reduce poverty, promote peace and stability, and speed up development. Furthermore, inclusive governance has the ability to build resilient communities. Bluwey (1993) lamented that existing literature either ignore or give peripheral treatment to basic concepts, institutions and processes of governance and gender. The persistence of inequalities in public life has been a great concern in the development agenda of many developing nations. Though there is a prediction that by 2047 gender parity would be achieved in legislatures, there are no indications that this would be same in the public life arena.

There are no conclusive definitions of gender equality. The plurality of definitions on gender equality testify of the versatility of the concept. Gender refers to the social interpretations and values assigned to being a woman, man, boy or girl. Gender is therefore an analytical concept.

Money (1973) defines gender from the role perspective as “all those things that a person says or does to disclose himself or herself as having the status of boy or man, girl or woman, respectively”. Explaining or understanding the term gender could be very challenging; most especially as many people seem to narrow it to its closely related term sex. While sex is biological, gender looks at socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers adequate for men and women. Thus gender points at what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or man in a specific context. Simply put, it refers to those differences between men and women that are not biological but social.

ITU (2004) has given a list of definitions that equally help to clearly grasp the meaning of gender:

- It refers to the social facets of culture, religion and classes that condition the way in which masculine and feminine roles and status are constructed and defined in each society.
- Gender is seen as the process by which individuals who are born into biological categories of men and women become the social categories of men and women through the acquisition of locally defined attributes of masculinity and femininity.
- Gender is the social organization of sexual difference.

- It is the set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed needs are satisfied.

There is a misconception that gender is all about women. This is probably the result of the focus of most gender-related interventions on women who are frequently marginalized. However, this concept is not interchangeable with women, but it refers to both women and men, and the relations between them.

To further understand gender, it is appropriate to explain gender roles, that is the different roles played by women and men. Gender role is understood as a set of perceived behavioral norms associated specifically with males or females, in a given social group or system. These roles are learned through socialization processes that are subject to changes. From birth a person is oriented to internalize some specific behaviors, perform some specialized tasks, and play some roles in the light of his or her biological make-up. As gender is socially and culturally constructed, gender roles are also dynamic and can change over time in response to varying socio-economic and ideological circumstances. The importance of gender roles resides in the fact that, these roles are the underlying basis on how both women and men could enhance themselves and support each other.

Closely knit to gender roles are gender needs. These are the requirements for bridging the gender gap between males and females. Gender needs are basically the difference between development or opportunities for men and women. In other words, in what ways do males have advantage over females or females over males, and to do we overcome them so that there will be parity and equity in all aspects and levels of development for both sexes.

Gender refers to the significance society attaches to the biological categories of female and male. Gender is evident throughout the world, shaping how we think about ourselves, guiding our interaction with others, and influencing our work and family. But gender involves much more than difference; it involves hierarchy, since men enjoy a disproportionate share of most social resources. The deeply rooted cultural notion of male superiority may seem so natural that we assume it is the inevitable consequence of sex itself. This notion is also known as sexism, that the belief that one sex is innately superior to the other. In Saudi Arabia, for example, the power of men over women is as great as anywhere on earth; in Norway, by contrast, the two sexes approach equality in many respects. Macionis (1997) is of the view that “sexism which is deeply entrenched in our society, has clear costs to women who are denied opportunities. He is also convinced that society loses out to the extent that the full talents and abilities of half the population will never be developed”. But society, much more than biology is at work here, as several kinds of research reveal. STAR-Ghana gives a working definition of gender as the absence of discrimination on the basis of gender in opportunities, allocation of resources or benefits, or in access to services. It is the full exercise by men and women of their human rights. It must be mentioned that most of the literature available on gender equality in Ghana or elsewhere in the world treats the issue from the perspective of sociology. The International Planned Parenthood Federation sees it as the measurable and equal representation of women and men ([www.ippl.org](http://www.ippl.org); Nov 29<sup>th</sup>, 2014). Some researchers and educators use the term equity instead of equality, since it is more comprehensive and flexible. Equity implies the concept of fairness denoting just and comparable but not always identical treatment (Klein et al. 1992). Waithanji and Grace (2014) posit

that gender equality means that different behaviors, aspirations and needs of men and women are considered valued and favored equally.

Pietela and Vickers (1990) see equality as both a goal and a means whereby individuals are accorded equal treatment under the law, and equal opportunities to enjoy their rights and to develop their potential talents and skills so that they can participate in the national political, economic, social and cultural development both as beneficiaries and active agents. For women in particular, equality means the realization of rights that have been denied as a result of cultural, institutional, behavioral and attitudinal discriminations. It is argued that gender parity can seldom be achieved in governance structures because discrimination cannot be self-corrected. In this regard, STAR-Ghana advocates gender mainstreaming which is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experience an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and social spheres, such that inequality between men and women is not perpetuated.

Proponents of the gender equality theory aim at reducing if not eradicating gender gaps between men and women. Thus gender activism in the area of public life over the world has been preoccupied with enhancing women's representation in governance structures. They argued that closing gender gaps has the potentials of enhancing economic growth, good governance and promote stability and peace (Prah; 2013). Naluwemba (2008) is also of the view that gender equity not only calls for a numerical increment of women in local government structures but equally addressing the gender mindset that reinforces patterns of gender inequalities. Albert Bandura

(1997) in this vein proposes self-efficacy as a way out. According to him, self-efficacy is a person's belief in their own competence. When men and women believe in their capabilities to participate fairly in structures and processes for human betterment, gender equality does not constitute an issue.

According to the UNFPA (2005), gender inequality is understood as the unequal and biased treatment between the two sexes. Materialist theories define gender inequality as a result of how men and women are tied to the economic structure of society. In most societies, there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities. Simply put, gender inequality is discrimination that is enforced either by law or social practice that results in differential pay, promotion, jobs, education, and other forms of representation of men and women.

The issue of gender inequality has been in public domain for decades, and has predominantly focused on women. Where inequality surfaces, it is usually women who are affected, excluded or disadvantaged in relation to decision-making and access to economic and social resources. Discrimination against women includes limited access to education, gender-based violence, economic discrimination, reproductive health inequities, and harmful traditional practices (UNFPA, 2005). Gender inequality holds back the growth of individuals and the development of the country. Gender equality, gender equity, gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment are models that have been used as a response to the problem of gender inequality.

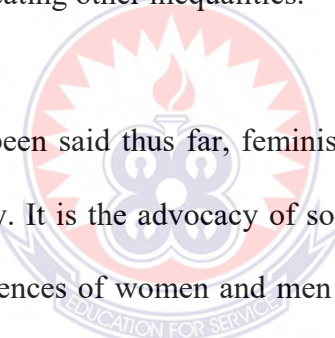
Gender equality refers to elimination of those differences which ascribe lower value to women's choices and perpetuate unequal power and resources. Gender equity on the other hand implies the condition of fairness and equality of opportunity whereby gender is no longer a basis for discrimination and inequality between people (Kwapong, 2009). In a gender equitable society both women and men enjoy equal status, rights, levels of responsibility, and access to power and resources. This enables them to make their own informed, realizable and free life choices. Gender equality means that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration recognizing the diversity of different groups of men and women. It seeks to achieve equal treatment of men and women in laws and policies. Gender equality must be seen as a precondition for, and indicator of sustainable people-centered development. Therefore, gender equality is not a 'women's issue', but a concern that encompasses men as well as women.

Equality between women and men has both a quantitative and a qualitative aspect. The quantitative aspect refers to the desire to achieve equitable representation of women such as increasing balance and parity; while qualitative aspect refers to achieving equitable influence on establishing development priorities and outcomes for women and men. Equality involves ensuring that perceptions, interests, needs and priorities of women and men who can be very different because of the differing roles and responsibilities of women and men will be given equal weight in planning and decision-making.

In comparison to equality, gender equity refers to fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between women and men. It is about



impartiality and justice, anything that is fair or equitable. Gender equity thus comprises a set of actions, attitudes, and assumptions that provide opportunities and create expectations about individuals. The distinction between gender equity and equality needs to be clarified. Equality promotes treating people the same. It does not recognize the very different conditions under which males and females manage to live and work in society, the prejudices and the failures. Meanwhile, treating people the same does not accommodate significant or natural differences which may affect the outcomes of equal treatment (Chalmers, 1996). So in promoting gender equality, there is the need to pay attention to equity issues so that absolute results will be achieved. That is gender equality interventions have to be supported with equity assurance to avoid the possibility of creating other inequalities.

The logo of the University of Education, Winneba, is a circular emblem. It features a central figure of a person with arms raised, set against a background of a sunburst or starburst pattern. The text 'UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA' is written around the top inner edge of the circle, and 'EDUCATION FOR SERVICE' is written around the bottom inner edge.

In the light of what has been said thus far, feminism was proposed as a way out to promoting gender equality. It is the advocacy of social equality for sexes. Feminism views the personal experiences of women and men through the lens of gender. How we think of ourselves (gender identity), how we act (gender roles), and our sex's social standing (gender stratification) are all rooted in the operation of our society. Feminism has three main divisions since people pursue the goal of gender equality in different ways. These are among others: liberal feminism which demands that society should end legal and cultural barriers rooted in gender; socialist feminism which advocates that women and men pursue their personal liberation together; radical feminism which holds that gender equality can be realized only by eliminating the cultural notion of gender itself. Feminism encountered opposition from both men and women primarily because of its socialist and radical variants. On balance however, while change is likely to proceed incrementally, the movement toward a society in

which women and men enjoy equal rights and opportunities seems certain to gain strength.

Feminists in their majority argue that gender equity can be based on two nations: equality and difference. Equality means equal treatment of men and women, whereas difference means treating women differently. In either case, there is a theoretical impasse with regard to gender equity. Nancy Frazer (1917) as cited by Gonzalez et al (2014) proposed that gender equity should be viewed as compound of various principle which include; anti- poverty and anti – exploitation principles, equality of resources allocation, equality of respect principle and anti- marginalization principle” (Gonzalez, 2014, Pp.8-10). These principles according to Nancy enable nations to dismantle the persistence of gender inequalities. Considering various studies on gender, all call for equity, but there is no common view of what gender equality means. Maria Nzomo (1994) in a contributory article on “Democratic Theory and Practice” has this to say about the perpetration of inequalities in Africa:

“Many years of societal indoctrination and psychological conditioning have led African women to accept the inferior and subordinate status accorded them, thus inhibiting from challenging the male-dominated status quo. Indeed, African women are aware that they have the same rights and responsibilities as men in the society; but they do not have the courage and self-confidence to exercise these rights. It is this acquiescence built sometimes on ignorance, and sometimes on lack of assertiveness that to a significant extent helps to perpetuate the paternalistic attitude men continue to have towards their fellow women citizen.”

Though there has been no specific roadmap to follow in achieving gender equality, yet some principles when applied can yield positive and desired outcomes. These

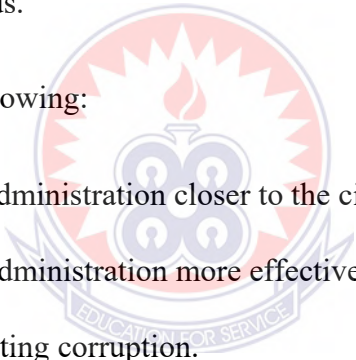
include: Collaborative efforts between government agencies, civil society and private sector in eliminating all forms of discriminations based on gender. The core call of the proponents of gender equity is the gradual or even radical change of aspects in culture which discriminate against women. Gender is at the mainstream of development and social transformation, which demands bringing down structural barriers that make it difficult for women to compete with men. Gender equality centered in human rights is critical in achieving sustainable development. By advancing gender equality and empowering women as agents of change, and leaders in the development processes that shape their lives, a more inclusive, sustainable and resilient world is envisaged. In addition to improving the lives of individual women, gender equality improves the prospects of families, communities and nations. It also eliminates barriers to women's economic empowerment; it supports the integration of gender considerations in social protective measures to enable men as well as women to participate in the economy; it ensures a gender-responsive governance of natural resource management; it supports efforts to increase women's access to goods and service. The achievement of sex equity goals in society by the reduction of sex discrimination and sex stereotyping is valued for a wide variety of personal, political, economic, and philosophical reasons. Some personal and societal reasons for supporting sex equity are to optimize human development potential so that all females and males are able to develop themselves as individual without limitations of gender-prescribed roles.

In conclusion, it is imperative to identify the socio-cultural practices and traditions, which define women's low social status and hinders effective participation in decision-making and governance.

### 2.3 Women's Participation in Governance

In this section, it is important to understand what governance means, what it does and its principles. Governance in public life indicates that the decision-making process is carried out in cooperation with the participation of all stakeholders and that leaders act in conciliatory, transparent, accountable, effective and responsible manner. In other words, government is run not only by a group of elected but also with the involvement of other groups such as civil society organizations, private sector and non-governmental organizations. Within the concept of governance, it is expected that leaders take decisions in ways open to the public, and that they involve all stakeholders into the process while demonstrating a government model based on information and consensus.

Government does the following:

- 
- brings public administration closer to the citizen.
  - makes public administration more effective.
  - Ensures combating corruption.
  - Ensures the participation of different stakeholders to government by voicing their opinion, which enriches the content of the decisions and improves the effectiveness of their implementation.
  - Strengthens democracy.
  - Improves the legitimacy of institutions.
  - Ensures that decisions are open and understandable.

The basic principles of governance are among others: consistency, responsibility, accountability, equity, transparency, participation and subsidiary, effectiveness and proportionality, and adherence to law.

- \* Consistency: of decisions both among each other and also through time ensures that the regulations brought in by the state are predictable and that citizens can realize their development investments for the future in a reliable environment.
- \* Responsibility: the government needs to have the capacity and flexibility to rapidly respond to social changes.
- \* Accountability: indicates how the public officials use public resources and the responsibility on how they are budgeted and reported so that public officials can give an account of the expenditures when necessary.
- \* Fairness: ensures that the decisions of the public sector do not result in applications that provide unbalanced benefits to any segment of the society, that the rules that the citizens are subject to are openly and clearly laid out and are applied uniformly to everybody which in turn reinforces the confidence of citizens to the state.
- \* Transparency: indicates that public officials carry out the decision-making processes and their implementation in an open manner and share them with other stakeholders.
- \* Participation and Subsidiarity: indicates that preparation, implementation and monitoring stages of decision-making process involve effective participation of civil society organizations and the public, starting from the individual. Taking public decisions in a participatory manner by involving all stakeholders to be affected from a particular decision increases the implementation possibility of that decision.
- \* Effectiveness and proportionality: indicates the application of decisions taken by the government equally to everybody simultaneously and that there is a reasonable correlation among the results to be achieved, the resources to be used and their negative impact on certain groups.

\* Adherence to law: indicates that the government takes decisions based on objectives information within the rule of law, and that the decisions are supervised through legal channels.

Having grasped the meaning of governance, it is important to have an overview of women's participation in governance both globally and nationally.

### **2.3.1 Overview of the global and national situation**

Globally, women make a little more than half the population in most nations. Through their social responsibilities for production and reproduction, they contribute significantly to development. They sustain peace and stability in most societies, and suffer the harsh consequences of social unrest. In spite of their immense contributions, the process of governance has been male-centered, not until the twentieth century, women have been totally marginalized or absent in the governance structures at local and national levels in the world.

Until 1893, women did not have the right to vote in any country throughout the world. According to Newland (1979), New Zealand was the first country to give women the right to vote in 1893. This long period of political exclusion of women has resulted in the erroneous perception that the process of governance was the exclusive privilege and universal right for men. Finland was the first country to adopt both fundamental democratic rights to vote and be voted for in 1906 for women. In the United States, women were granted the right to vote in 1920 after decades of struggle by various women's groups.

In Europe, the situation was no better. According to Bruley (1999:82), in Britain for instance, the Representation of the People's Act 1918 allowed only women aged 30 years and over to vote. The Parliamentary Qualification of Women Act 1918 also allowed women to stand for Parliament as well as vote, but attempts to gain entry into the House of Lords failed.

In Africa, the struggle for women's empowerment and rights to decision-making process has been an uphill battle against patriarchy, poverty and autocracy (Nzomo, 1994). The marginalization of women in governance has been blamed not only on aspects of culture of African societies but on colonial administrators and religion (Couquery-Vidrovitch, 1997).

In Ghana, the role of women in public life arena can be traced to traditional political system where they wielded much influence in some ethnic groups. The period before the British colonial rule in the Gold Coast was characterized with people living in ethnic lines. Here women played various roles depending on the particular social organization and historical circumstances of their society (Prah, 2007). According to Aidoo (1995) cited by Prah (2007), a combination of factors determined the distribution of power, resources, status, duties and rights between men and women. These factors included: descent, succession and inheritance, paternity, affiliation, residence rule and economic potential. It is important to have a look at the traditional set-up, and the roles that women played. There are two traditional inheritance principles in Ghana: the patrilineal and matrilineal. In the latter, women could rise into prominence in public life as queens and chiefs. In the former, women rising to such pre-eminence is unheard of or rare. This is the first background to appraising the roles women have played in public life in Ghana. In addition, one should also bear in

mind what prevailed during the colonial era, and the relationship between women and public life or the roles of women based on the nature of the socio-cultural fabric of the society.

An overview of the political situation in the post-independence era brings out the roles women played in the then formed states that existed independently of one another prior to the development of the country, into what systematically was known as the Gold Coast Protectorate, colony and now Ghana. As mentioned earlier on, in the matrilineal system, women rose into public life eminence through inheritance. The Queen-Mother was then the highest public office position a woman could hold. Most often, she was the sister of the monarch who played a ceremonial role than administrative. According to A. K Busia (1951, pp.19-20), it is the queen-mother who advised the chief and requested from the council of elders a new leader whenever there was vacancy in the stool. Further, she was given the privilege to nominate from the royal lineage a possible replacement to fill the vacancy in the stool land. Dr Busia indicated thus that this gave her constitutional and legal rights for her power. This invariably made it possible for the queen-mother to take the seat as supreme traditional ruler. An example is queen-mother Dokuaa who in 1817 became the Okyehene when there was no male to inherit the throne. Another woman who rose to prominence is Yaa Asantewaa in the Ashanti state. She is known as the supreme ruler who led her people to resist the British imperialism in the 1900.

In the post-colonial and colonial eras, women played supportive roles at home especially during the fight for independence. Women did not occupy forefront positions in traditional leadership. Women however played important roles in top decision-making process in African societies. Among others, we can cite: Queen



Yamacouba of Sierra Leone, the Ethiopian empress Menetewab (1720-1770); Mnkabayi the first Shaka princess in 1780; and Yaa Asantewaa, the Ashanti queen mother who mobilized men to fight the British in 1900 in the then Gold Coast (now Ghana). It can be stated therefore that women have had access to governance in their traditional areas before colonialism. The situation was not the same in states where the patrilineal system of inheritance existed such as the Ewes and Northerners. Women were practically absent in public life administration. On women's political positions, Pearce (2000:72) posits that:

“The pre-colonial era came across as a period in which there was extensive variations in the political systems of various ethnic groups in Africa. Differences existed between the more egalitarian hunting/gathering and agricultural societies, centralized and non-centralized systems, formal office holding and informal domestic or community power”.

These differences notwithstanding, the general consensus was that women had important decision-making roles through the positions allocated to queen-mothers, upper class women in established kingdoms, and the authority embedded in occupations and leadership in the community associations. In addition, households were production units and women's economic contributions to households as farmers, traders, craft persons, healers among others, worked in their favor.

However, their participation in governance during and in the post-colonial era has been low. This has been attributed to the introduction of the western process of governance with its new institutional framework as well as combined pressures of traditional practices and conformity to western values. The arena of public life and decision making is one area where gender disparities are most visible, persistent and have proved hard to tackle. There are three reasons most cited to explain the poor showing of women in decision making structures:

- The impact of women's positions in other spheres of life as a result of the inequalities in the sexual division of labor, women's disadvantage in the control of resources and gender ideologies that naturalized and reinforce inequalities.
- The problems of the political system.
- The failure of public policy.

According to O'Barr and Firmin-Sellers (1995), as cited by Allah-Mensah (2005), in indigenous African societies women's political position varied extensively across the continent with some wielding extensive authority than others. This condition deteriorated with the onset of colonialism, and has persisted for several decades.

Again they remarked that:

“European administrators imposed a legal and cultural apparatus that undermined women's traditional basis of power; and women politically and economically subordinated and marginalized.”

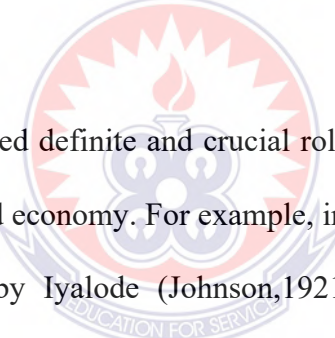
In many pre-colonial societies, cultural norms prohibited women from assuming most political roles as outlined by Kaberry (1952) as cited in Adams (2006:35):

“While informal constraints continued to limit women's access to formal political offices, a number of women were able to leverage their education and activism in women's associations into political power in the immediate post-colonial period.”

According to Shayo (2005:75), several studies show that prior to the establishment of colonial rule in most African countries, Tanzania included:

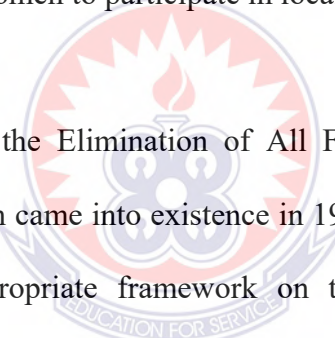
“Women enjoyed a much broader role in decision-making. Indeed, most hunting and gathering communities in Southern Africa were characterized by relative political equity between men and women. There was no continuous political leadership and each sex had its own sphere of activity over which it exercised control. Both men and women participated in ritual making and other cultural events.”

Uwineza and Pearson (2009) in furtherance remarked that, men in the royal family and their close associates dominated most leadership roles, but some women held some high level political positions. The Queen-Mother for example, co-ruled the nation with power and autonomy equal to that of her son, the king. A king was never enthroned alone; he became ruler with his mother as a co-ruler of the people. Female Chiefs who at time inherited their leadership roles from their husbands or brothers were not uncommon. These women managed to transcend gender norms. The Rwandan situation gave an insight to the fact that despite the discriminatory practices embedded in African traditional decision making structures, few positions reserved to women gave them the opportunity to exhibit their abilities and take very good decisions.



Yoruba women have played definite and crucial roles in the Nigerian society cutting across politics, culture and economy. For example, in several communities, there were women official headed by Iyalode (Johnson,1921 cited in Yaji, 1998). Women participated in the decision-making process and settled disputes in their wards and compounds. Thus, women assisted in the maintenance of law and order, peace and harmony in traditional set-up. A few women officials even constituted part of the membership of secret societies mainly responsible for the executive and judicial functions in several settlements among the Ijebu (Yaji,1998). In Ondo, the Lobun assisted in the appointment of the new Osemawe, settled quarrels among the male chiefs and officiated in the opening of new markets (Falola, 1999). According to Johnson (1921), the Oba's wives (Aya, Oba & Olori) were also influential in state affairs and there were occasions when women were employed to monitor and influence the foreign policy decisions in some Yoruba states (Yaji, 1998).

As a result of the gross under-representation of women in governance structures, efforts have been made by international and national bodies and civil societies organizations to ensure the participation of women in governance at all levels. For instance, in the preamble of the International Covenant on Civil and political Rights, it is recognized that “freedom from fear and want can only be achieved if conditions are created whereby every one may enjoy his or her civil and political rights”. Part 1 article 1 also emphasizes that all people have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right, they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development (Robertson, 1997:256-257). This provision guarantees the rights of women to participate in local governance in their countries.

The logo of the University of Education, Winneba, is a circular emblem. It features a central sunburst or starburst design in white and red, set against a blue background. Below the sunburst, there is a banner with the text "EDUCATION FOR SERVICE" in white capital letters. The entire emblem is surrounded by a blue border.

The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which came into existence in 1979, is one of the instruments that overtly provides an appropriate framework on the elimination of gender-based discriminations, corrective affirmative action and protection of women’s human rights. Nonetheless, Nzomo (1994:27) remarks that notwithstanding its existence since 1979, women everywhere are still struggling for recognition and upholding of their human rights. This is because CEDAW has received little or nothing more than a rhetorical support from governments that ratified it. Some of the nations that ratified this convention have not included it into the national legal provisions; and for those who did majority have not translated these provisions into action.

Further actions saw the introduction of gender quota. This is a fast tract strategy to redress the historic exclusion of women from public life arena. It involved the

introduction of specified minimum number of representation for each sex notably female. It was assumed that increased number of female's representation will enable women to influence policy making, and to challenge inequalities women are confronted with in governance structures in general.

Gender quotas are instituted within the context of gender disparities, which are structural and systemic. Without addressing the structural constraints to women's political exclusion, inclusion through gender quota cannot lead to effective representation. Yaji (2005) as cited by Barry (2005:76) has emphasized the same point by arguing that:

“Whiles quotas are important in addressing the exclusion of women from the public political sphere, they can only form a part of the multifaceted strategy for empowering women, which must together with increased political participation also involve a redistribution of socio-economic resources within the societies”.

In a lecture delivered on “African women and Political Participation, H.E Ellen Johnson Sirleaf asserted that:

“Governance cuts across all spheres of representation and decision making, from the community to the national level. Full political participation will become a reality for us, as women, when quotas and set-asides become a relic of the past; when our access to in participatory institutions at all levels is considered a right; and when we no longer feel compelled to wage campaigns and stage protests in order to have a say in the decisions that affect our lives- be it at the peace table, or in the political and economic arenas”.

The statement above echoes the ultimate aim of women in their struggle to gain equal rights as men in decision making positions in a state. It also shows that the quota

system, though it ensures women's participation in public life, it must be implemented for a period.

Hunts (1998) points out that opponents of quotas, who include both men and women argue that they are discriminatory and that will elevate under-qualified women to power, stigmatize beneficiaries, and that above all, they are unnecessary. There are also fears that the introduction of quota for women might pave way for other minority groups such as homosexuals, ethnic minorities, to claim some quota for themselves.

There is a need to change attitude towards women, and a new environment has to be created that will enable women to adequately participate in decision-making structures.

Ofei-Aboagye (2000) further proposed that two approaches should be adopted in promoting gender sensitivity in local governance and enhanced women's participation. The first is to build the capacity of women to aspire to, attain and perform in local government offices; and on women's groups to engage local governments. The second is to encourage stakeholder institutions such as the district assemblies, training institutions, and agencies providing services and implementing development initiatives to provide appropriate support to women's concerns by targeting positive action, creating an enabling environment for their participation, advocacy, education and provision of resources.

### 2.3.2 Local governance participation

Participation is a development approach which recognizes the need to involve deprived segments of the population in the design and implementation of policies concerning their wellbeing. The strengthening of women's participation in all spheres of life has become a major issue in the development discourse. "Socio-economic development cannot be fully achieved without the active participation of women at the decision-making level in society" (Fardaus, 2006:67).

Participation has been defined in various ways by scholars. Khan (1993) identified four kinds of participation interrelated but yet distinct as follows:

- Participation in decision-making which deals with identifying problems, formulating alternative planning activities and allocating resources.
- Participation in implementation deals with carrying out activities, managing and operating programs.
- Participation in economic, social, political or other benefits individually or collectively.
- Participation in evaluating activity and its outcome for feedback purpose.

According to Rogers (1993) cited in Biney (2011:28), participation means more than just collaboration. To participate can include the participant's group undertaking activity of the program with assistance and guidance, helping to decide on the program, helping in the evaluation of the program, choosing between many alternatives and sharing the responsibilities. This is what Bartten referred to as 'thinking or mental participation' (Biney, 2011:28). Fardaus (2006) indicated that:

"The overall development of a country depends upon the maximum utilization of her people, both men and women. 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's development, national development cannot be achieved. Women's equal participation in political life plays a pivotal role in the general process in the advancement of women. It is not only a demand for justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved". (Fourth World Conference on women,1995:1)

If local government is to meet the needs of both men and women, it must be built on the experiences of women and men through an equal participation at all levels and in all fields of decision-making, covering the wide range of responsibilities of local government. Fardaus (2006), further said that "the systematic integration of women augments the democratic basis, the efficiency and the quality of the activities of local government."

Weitz-Shapiro and Winters (2008), posited that perhaps the most fundamental purported individual level reward from participation is increased autonomy, which is a cognitive, emotional and behavioral sense of independence. According to Barber (1984) 'autonomy is not the condition of democracy; democracy is the condition of autonomy. Without participating in the common life that defines them and in the decision-making that shapes their social habitat, women and men cannot become individuals'. This means individuals can best realize themselves as autonomous entities by participating in the political life of their community. Shapiro and Winters (2008:18), remarked that:

"Political participation—whether voting for a president, participating in a party caucus or speaking during a town meeting—may provide individual with a sense of their worth as individuals, a



sense that their voice is valued, or relevant in some way. This sense of autonomy then should contribute to the individuals' overall well-being".

According to the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) (2007), both practicing ones and scholars agree that it is of utmost importance to have equal numbers of women and men in governance structures for the following arguments:

- the justice argument- women account for more than half of the population and therefore have the right to be represented as such.
- the experience argument-women have different experience from men and need to be represented in discussions that result in policy-making and implementation.
- the interest argument-the interests of men and women are different, and even conflicting thus women are needed in representative institutions to articulate the interests of women.
- the critical mass argument-women are able to achieve solidarity of purpose to represent women's interests when they achieve certain levels of representation.
- the symbolic argument-women are attracted to political life when they have role-models in the arena.
- the democracy argument- the equal representation of men and women enhances democratization of governance in both transitional and consolidated democracies.

In the view of the National Democratic Institute, it is imperative to support women because women's contributions have the potentials to build strong and vibrant societies. The Institute's argument is founded on the reasons that follow;

- Women are highly committed to promoting national and local policies that address the socio-economic and political challenges facing women, children and disadvantaged groups.
- Women are particularly effective in promoting honest government.
- Women are strongly committed to maintaining peace as they often disproportionately suffer the consequence of armed conflict.
- Women are strongly linked to positive development in education, infrastructure and health at the local level.

According to the African Center for Women (ACW) (1998), the empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of their social, economic and political status are essential factors in the achievement of both transparent and accountable government and administration, as well as the attainment of sustainable development. Achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making provides a balance that reflects the composition of society, and is needed to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning. Women in decision-making structures contribute in redefining political priorities, placing new items on the political agenda which address and reflect women's specific gender concerns, values and experiences, and provide new perspectives on mainstream political issues. Without the active participation of women and incorporation of their perspectives at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved.

Directly linked with the participation of women in governance structures, is gender stratification. This notion indicates that throughout the world, human activities, practices, and institutional structures are organized with respect to the social

distinction people make between men and women- by gender (Hughes & Kroehler, 2008). Over the decades, the functionality of the local government structures has been subjected to this reality of human society. This has had an influence on women's involvement in these structures.

Writing on "Increasing Women's Political Participation and Strengthening Good Governance in Indonesia" program, Leya (2010:97) points out that:

"The political playing field in Indonesia is still uneven, and not conducive for women's participation. Barriers to women's participation in legislature are numerous. They are political socio-economic and cultural. Structural barriers such as party regulations that prevented women from entering political institutions, and patriarchal values that discouraged women from taking up public positions were noted. Women's incentives to participate in politics and decision-making structures was inadequate even as most policies and decisions made in national and local politics were, in any case, insignificant to the improvement of the quality of life in local communities. Other barriers that women in Indonesia experienced among others are: the electoral system that is not favorable to women candidates, the absence of well-developed education and training system for women's leadership, poverty and unemployment, lack of adequate financial resources, multiple burdens of women within the house, lack of confidence, gendered traditional beliefs and ideology, the beliefs about politics being "dirty", the negative pictures of women by media, women hesitance towards corruption and money politics, lack of party support, as well as masculine standards in politics".

Reflecting on "Women, Politics and Power in Executive Branch", Martin and Berroli (2000) identified three barriers to the participation of women in public life; namely situational, structural and socialization. Situational barriers are those that exclude women because they lack the necessary resources (knowledge and opportunities) to obtain political careers. Structural barriers refer to the institution itself and its inaccessibility to women. For example, the white house inner circle is drawn from the

campaign staff, and women rarely play major roles in presidential campaigns. Socialization barriers refer to the processes whereby young women were brought up in environments that did not encourage public life careers.

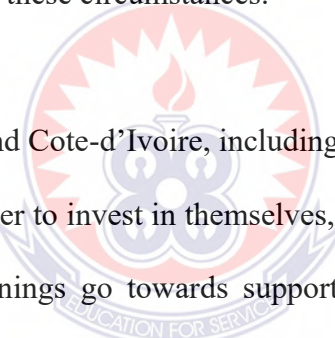
The Combined Research Report on Women of Africa Leadership Development Program for Kenya, Liberia and Cote-d'Ivoire (2008) identified among others: women's role, education, young parenthood, self-confidence, personal finances, competition instead of cooperation, decision-making and media attention, migration, employment and corruption, as the main barriers for the inclusion, advancement and continuation of women's participation in public life.

In all three countries, women are expected first and foremost, to be responsible for the family and cater for the home. They are challenged by the need to balanced three roles: home, community and work. In Liberia, women are considered to be the mothers of all. This translate into being responsible not only for themselves, their family and extended family, but often also for neighbors and community members. In Cote-d'Ivoire, similar roles are defined for women in the rural areas but less so for those in the urban centers. In Kenya, leadership is seen as a man's role and viewed as inconsistent with the value of a good woman. Spouses are generally unsupportive and may even sabotage the wives' leadership pursuits. Obligations to children and family roles hold sway thereby limiting opportunities for women. There is also a distinctly masculine role model of leadership in which women have to work extra hard to be recognized or given due respect, given that feminine traits are associated with weakness.

Across the three countries, access to education is limited and women's educational pursuits are often not encouraged. Instead, as mentioned above, early in life women

are expected to take on the responsibilities of caring and supporting their family. For example, taking care of aged parents or assisting in earning to pay for a brother's school fees. These responsibilities can be quite heavy and often deny women important experience needed for public life.

Furthermore, women often do not complete higher levels of education because they have children at a young age, and need to earn an income to support their children. Picking up studies at a later time is challenging as evening childcare options either do not exist or are prohibitively expensive. With child security being precarious in many neighborhoods, mothers require committed and trustworthy family members to provide childcare. Many women don't have the self-confidence or ambition to pursue leadership positions under these circumstances.



Also, women in Liberia and Cote-d'Ivoire, including career women, reported that they do not have money left over to invest in themselves, to save or to even buy something for pleasure. Instead, earnings go towards supporting the family therefore leaving women with no financial stand to be involved in public life. In Cote-d'Ivoire and Kenya, current laws make inheritance and accumulation of wealth more difficult for women. These laws severely limit the ability of women to invest or save towards any noble ambition such as being part of decision-making structures. In Kenya, women's financial resources are derivative of their lack of control or ownership of property.

Women are thus weakened in their quest to take part in decision-making structures. Additionally, both Liberia and Cote-d'Ivoire share the challenge of women's organizations and government programs working in isolation from or in competition with each other. Energy is being lost as people working in similar areas compete for

funding, recognition and power instead of pooling together their strengths to cooperatively create shared visions. In Kenya, jealousy towards powerful women is widespread- as is manipulation by junior staff or male counterparts. Violence, competitive politics, sexual harassment and exploitation at work are also rampant. Men are considered to be decision-makers, and these patriarchal societies are still uncomfortable seeing women in public decision-making positions. Even though women rise to executive level positions, decisions may still be made by men.

In Liberia and Cote-d'Ivoire, women are not part of the 'old boys network' and do not have the connections to advance themselves in public life specially. In Kenya, cronyism and patronage networks rule; and only well 'connected' women are pushed to senior leadership positions. Women often migrate to another community upon marriage where they are considered to be outsiders, and are not accepted as potential leaders even though they may be gifted and willing.

In Liberia, media attention in the form of event attendance and story writing is subject to costs. This creates more obstacles for large populations of unemployed wives and mothers. In Kenya, the failures and negative images of older women leaders overshadow young leaders and have created a poor precedent. This is coupled with the existence of gender-insensitive institutions and policies. This adds to long list of hindrances women face in their ambition to be part of decision-making structures.

Pondering on Arab Women and Political Development, Rowaida et al (2010) identified challenges faced by women in this other part of the world to include: cultural factors, stereotyped image of women, low self-esteem, lack of coordination

among women's organizations, ineffectiveness/inefficiency of women empowerment programs, shortcomings in the institutional and legal frameworks, practices of political parties and ambiguous election process, skepticism about the Agenda for Women Empowerment.

There are further challenges women faced that limited their level of involvement in public life directly some of which have transcended modern times. According to Taiwo (2010:15):

“In spite of the complimentary role women played to men, the dynamism that prevailed ipso facto, was that there existed the patriarchy system where men were still seen as the heads of the family and leaders of the society. This therefore shows that traditional Africa was not based on gender inequality but a complement of gender, because each gender had a role to play in contribution to societal development.”

Taiwo (2010), further asserted that one could say that women have played indispensable roles in traditional Africa. But in spite of the activities, roles, responsibilities and positions women held in traditional Africa, the man in pre-colonial Africa was still the head of the family as well as the leader of the society; society was purely patriarchal in nature. The man still controlled the family and women were supportive and complimentary in their roles.

According to Pearce (2000), a foundation for gender inequality was laid during this period within various marital systems. As noted by the Economic Commission for Africa (2007), the consensual system was largely democratic in their dispensation. However, the decision-making process is rarely inclusive of all members of the community. Women and young adults for example, though not formally prohibited by rule, are often presumed to be represented by their husbands and fathers, respectively, and are customarily excluded from participating in decision-making assemblies.

Although in some cases, women played various key roles, the matrilineal systems are particularly weak in protecting gender equality in decision-making on issues of public interest in nature. Among the Ibo, for example, disputes that family heads fail to resolve are referred to the umuada (married daughters) (Uwazie, 1994). Likewise, in the Eritrean village baito system, land is allocated to the household which is formed by marriage. In case of divorce, the household's allotment, along with other property are split equally between the former spouses (Mengisteab, 2003 cited in ECA, 2007).

Colonialism has been identified as one of the events in the history of Africa that had changed the socio-political and economic destiny of women. For instance, Nigeria's association with the British as its colonizers has left an indelible mark on the socio-cultural attitudes and patterns of behaviors of its citizens. As regards to women, Nigerian men have carefully selected and interpreted from the British, a model that relegates women to the kitchen; thus destroying the indigenous courage and capabilities displayed by their great grandmothers in service to the communities. Dadirep (1995), as cited in Jekayinfa (1999:25) pointed this out:

“The process of asserting authority and creating norms is one that involves groups in society, mobilizing to take advantage of shifts in ideology as new hegemonic forces overcome old centers of power. Men as a group were able to benefit from the Victorian sensibilities of the colonialists and their understanding of social relations. The Victorian mind-set situated men and women differently in social, political and economic relations. Men were expected to be in the public sphere, and women in the private. Men could hold positions of power, and women were expected to support them by taking care of the household. The fact that women had been active in producing, decision-making, trading and food processing, as well as in child-rearing, was not recognized.”

Due to the Victorian concept of women held by the colonialists and embraced by the African male, women were excluded from the new political administrative system. In



the past, most African societies had dual sex political system which allowed for a substantial female representation and involvement in governance and administration. The position of the Queen mother seen across Africa gave women prominent and visible political authority in running the nation. However, the chauvinist and misogynist colonial officers made no provisions in the initial administrative designs. It is only with women's protest like the case of the Aba Women's War, and the actions of the Mekatilili that a meager number of women's positions were created in the colonial set up. This marginalization of women led to an erosion in the position and influence of women in society. As this new status quo was maintained, African men actually began to believe that women were incapable of leading. This erroneous opinion is still held by many Africans to this day, and is reflected in the smaller number of appointment women receive in parliament and ministerial positions.

It is clear thus that colonialism led to a definite decline in women's economic independence and as well as their socio-political status in society. Colonialism managed to instill in African men a strange feeling of superiority over women despite the fact that for centuries prior to colonialism, this unfounded feeling of superiority was generally absent in non-Islamized African states. It is evident that even today, in modern Africa, women still have to live with the continued subjugation and abuse because they are women ([www.africaneye.com](http://www.africaneye.com)).

Shedding more light on the plight of women under colonialism, Du Plessis (n.d.) asserts that, when colonialists moved into the area from Europe, they claimed the land that had been cared for and cultivated by these women. The women were suddenly alienated from what had, for so long, defined them and their role in society. This had huge impacts on their economic situation as well as their access to food. However,

more than this, it also made these women more dependent on the men in their society, which led to a sense of male supremacy and dominance, and a loss of the female identity to some extent. Despite the blatant subjugation of women under colonial rule, women made attempts to liberate themselves. Du Plessis (n.d) confirmed that there are no doubts that colonialism presented African women with a variety of challenges and negative effects.

Challenges women face in their quest to partake in public life are summarized in this portion of a lecture by Liberia's President:

“Women have yet to see enormous payoffs in being elected into office and receiving political appointments. An important reason is that women often lack the resources, political experience, education and political connections to run for office. Popular perceptions are that a woman's place is in the home, and in the kitchen, rather than in politics and corporate boardrooms. Cultural attitudes which constrain women's involvement in politics persist among men and women. These oftentimes are reflected in voting patterns, media coverage of female politicians, as well as attempts to suppress women's assertion of their political rights and views. Such attitudes are not helped by the fact that women themselves are many times reluctant to run for office, stemming from cultural prohibitions on women being seen speaking in public in front of men or challenge them”. (Sirleaf, 2010)

Yet, there are common challenges shared by women in the Arab world. The most prominent of these is what Hisham Sharabi (1998) cited in Karam (2010:95), elaborated as 'neo-patriarchy'. Sharabi argued that:

“Neo-patriarchy is the mixture of both patriarchy and dependency, where the former is a feature of how power has consistently been exercised and manifested itself internally, and the latter is the interaction with external forces that is, pressures that come with the pursuit of modernization”.

Sharabi's main contention is that pressures of modernity which today would be more adequately referred to as the consequences of globalization in terms of the spread of

similar information, economic facets, as well as cultural and political frameworks have in fact strengthened patriarchal norms and values.

To be able to appreciate women's participation in local governance, it is imperative to grab the meaning of governance. Governance refers to all processes of governing, whether undertaken by a government, family, community, formal or informal organization or territory and whether through laws, norms, power or language (Enc. Wikipedia. Org: Dec 5<sup>th</sup>, 2014).

Alex Gyamfi (2004) sees government as a machinery set up by law to administer the affairs of the State. It is an agency put in place to direct and control the conduct of life, to promote peace and security. He points out that local government therefore is a sub-governmental body established by law to ensure local involvement in the political administration of the State. According to him, this is to ensure that government is brought to the doorstep of the people. These bodies or agencies include the district assembly, area council, and unit committee. Each local government agency consists of elected representatives who are generally councilors or assembly members as pertains in Ghana. In this vain, decentralization, the practice by which broad central government powers are dispersed to sub-governmental agencies to take decisions on behalf of the central government, was adopted in Ghana in 1988. It involves improving the process of decision-making at the lowest unit of government. This type of local government in Ghana is called the District Assembly. As at September 2008, Ghana had 170 Metropolitan and District Assemblies. According to Ofei-Aboagye (2000), the decentralization of government authority was embarked upon with some objectives in mind:

- To provide more responsive, equitable and participatory development.
- To bring government and decision-making nearer to the people and quicken processes.
- And to serve as a training ground in political activity.

She lamented that two aspects of the decentralization process have not been satisfied: the fiscal decentralization and the creation of a local government services. She believed that if these two aspects were attended to then this could accelerate local economic development. For governance to be inclusive and effective, women must participate equally in both processes and institutions, and benefit equally from services. This is achieved by:

- Promoting women's participation as voters and candidates, and their equal representation in decision-making structures.
- Strengthening women's legal rights and access to justice.
- Engaging women equitably in the prioritization and provision of local services including health and security services.

Oluwu and Wunsch (2004) view local governance as a rule governed process through which residents of a defined area participate in their own governance. In Ghana, the district is an example of such area. This calls for a direct participation of citizens of such area in public decision-making structures and processes that are directly relevant to their lives. Shah (2006) defines local governance as the formulation and execution of collective action at the local level. Chin-Peng Chu (2011) argues that the dominant condition in local governance is civic engagement. In this vain, local governance does not discriminate in terms of gender since its backbone is the equal participation of men and women in various local government structures and processes.

Allah- Mensah (2005) adequately investigated the number of women in both local and national government structures. Her thorough examination of some selected political parties and various government institutions revealed that women's presence is still below 20 percent. She took cognizance of the gender stratification in the public bureaucracy and calls for a departure from a mindset that views leadership as a male domain. Cohen (1997) fully reiterates Mensah's view:

“What has made women marginal has been the way politics has been defined in mainstream political analysis”.

She argues that cultural constructs to determine behavioral norms of men and women have created boundaries that hinder women's participation in local governance. Sweetman (1997) posited that electing or appointing few more women to leadership and decision - making positions was not enough, structure of the systems and political culture is still primarily designed for men. Longwe (2000) as cited by Sweetman (2000) gave an insight into the reality of women's under- representation:

“The average percentage of women in parliament is 8.7 percent and the proportion varies from 29 percent in South Africa to zero percent in Djibouti”. (Inter - Parliamentary Union, 1999).

Though there is no discriminatory law against women in governance, there are overt and covert practices which effect their participation. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's (President of Liberia) remark is to be noted in this vain:

“We are aware as a result of our fortitude and Struggle that there are fortresses of political resistance to this new force of women leadership but we are certain that the wind of change that has hit the West Coast of Africa will blow strongly”.

(Address opening the international institute of Democratic and Electoral Assistance - IDEA, Seminar on “Women and parliament”. 26 Sept 2006, Accra Ghana).

Sweetman (2000) opined that though women have set up thousands of vibrant, visionary organizations of their own, women are still marginalized from key political and economic institutions that shape most nations. Despite the many resolutions, declarations and political will exhibited by governments across the world. There remains an absolute veracity that women are under-represented in positions of governance at the local level. Sandra Pepera (1984:34) in a contributory article on “Political Parties and Democracy in Ghana Fourth Republic” laments equally that the governance system has failed women notwithstanding their active participation in both colonial struggle and post-colonial national politics. She writes:

“The importance of women’s participation has always been recognized, but this has brought little actual progress in improving their representation in governance structures in Ghana. The visible representation of women is both qualitatively and quantitatively low.”

Ghana has an open policy which gives both men and women who have the appropriate qualifications equal access to their participation in governance. Moreover, there is no impediment in the constitution placed in the way of women being appointed or contesting for any position under the 1992 constitution in Ghana. In 1998, out of the 110 Districts Chiefs Executives only 12 were women. Women also constituted 24 percent of those in the local government. In 1999, there were only three women (3.6 percent) among the 110 District and Metropolitan Coordinating Directors; and only three out of the 110 Presiding Members were women (Ofei-Aboagye, 2000).

In 2002, before the local elections out of the 7,700 members in the 110 District Assemblies, 385 (5 percent) were women; 7 out of the 103 DCEs were women and none of the seven Metropolitan and Municipal Chief Executives was a woman; and majority of the 30 percent Appointed Assembly members were men (Hagan, 2002). These figures indicate that there is still a long way to go in achieving a balanced participation of women in the decision-making process at the local level. Between 2002-2006, the introduction of the quota system saw a rise of women in the District Assemblies. That notwithstanding, women's presence compared to that of men remained lower.

In relation to gender inequalities, successive governments have made some efforts apparently aimed at promoting women's participation in decision-making structures and processes. Mostly, there was a creation of a gender ministry in 2001, the Ministry of Women and Children's affairs headed by a female Minister, along with the establishment of gender focal points in all ministries, demonstrates a degree of commitment to addressing gender imbalances in society (OSIWA and IDEG, 2007 cited in Abdul-Gafaru, 2007:6). Prior to this, cabinet has passed an Affirmative Action Policy in 1998, which established a 40 percent quota for women's representation on all government boards, commissions, committees and other official bodies, including the cabinet and Council of State- the highest advisory body to the President. Although largely an informal policy, specific laws have been promulgated to enhance the effective implementation of the Affirmative Action Policy by making it mandatory for a certain number or percentage of members of some government agencies to be women. Despite these efforts, implementation of the Affirmative Action Policy remains poor (CEDAW, 2006); and women continue to be under-

represented in national and local governance structures. While they constitute over 51 percent of the total population, women account only for 16 percent of Cabinet Positions, 15 percent Chief Directors in Civil Service, 8 percent Ambassadorial positions, and 12 percent of the Council of State membership (Pobee-Hayford and Awori, 2008 cited in Abdul-Gafaru, 2009).

Ghana's 230-member Legislature has been headed by a woman as a Speaker once since independence. It had only 20 female Members of Parliament in 2008, dropping from 25 in 2004. According to Asante (2011), there is the need for a wake-up call for women groups and civil society to review their strategies and efforts in such situation. Nkansah (2009), refers to this as a 'reversed journey' that the nation has made over the years in relation to women's presence in decision-making structures. The situation is worse when it comes to other appointments such as the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives. In the Kwahu South District since its creation in 1998, no woman has occupied the DCE's seat thus far; it is in 2014 that a female was brought in as the District Coordinator. The number of Assembly women has not crossed 10 percent, even it came below at 2015.

In a nutshell, the participation of women in governance structures has not seen an improvement over decades at the national and local levels. A situation that quite worrisome when it is obvious that the development agenda at the national and local levels cannot be realized unless it takes into account the needs of both men and women, and their full participation in processes and structures.



## 2.4 Challenges Faced by Women

The Collins Advanced Dictionary defines challenges as something which requires great effort and determination to deal with. Indeed, women's presence at the local government structures and processes is beset by a myriad of challenges. Sweetman (2005) rightly called for a summoning of courage to challenge accepted development orthodoxies. Allah-Mensah (2005) identified many factors impinging women's participation in local governance including: Level of education, weak financial backbone, stringent socio – cultural roles of women, low self – esteem and male chauvinism. She bemoaned the fact that the desired target for women's presence in governance is far from being attained.

Gyimah and Thompson (2008) also pointed out similar social and psychological barriers notably: Marginalization, institutional discrimination, subordination and lack of exposure and knowledge. They are of the view that though clear positive actions have been penned down, these are yet to be implemented. Furthermore, Ofei - Aboagye (2000) opined that lower economic and social status, multiple roles, lack of time, poor state of health and insecurity constitute a great chunk into challenges faced by women. She stressed also the fact that women lacked public arena skills, and their male counterparts intimidate them. To sum it up, she believes that until these obstacles are dealt with, women's presence in local governance structures will remain low.

Khosla (2008) identified further barriers, precisely: poor electoral process fraught with corruption, violence, bribery and attacks on the dignity of individual candidates;

and also, perceived corruption in decision making structures that tarnishes the credibility, respect and status of local government in the eyes of the public.

Ford (2013) is of the view that some challenges women face stem from the lack of understanding by women themselves about gender and governance. More so, she sees the long entrenched gender – roles and relationships as being the most difficult hurdle women have to cross if their presence is to be enhanced in the local governance structures. It involves the breakdown of powerful sex stereotyping, which prevents women from filling their rightful place in positions of leadership.

Pietila and Vickers (1990) point out the continuous devaluation of women's productive roles where women are regarded as secondary and the lower priority assigned to enhancing women's participation to governance as a historical challenge. They remarked that regardless of some gains made, the structural constraints imposed by a socio-economic framework in which women are second - class persons are still a strong hurdle to dismantle. In addition, they also bemoaned the low level of awareness by women themselves of how important it is for them to participate in decision - making structures.

Baah et al (2005) outlined the political exclusion of women by nations worldwide as being a psychological challenge. They lamented that this exclusion has resulted in women having the erroneous perception that the process of governance is the exclusive privilege and universal right for men. In Africa, they further stated that the battle for women to be included in the decision - making process was upset by aspects of culture notably the patriarchal system and autocracy, colonial administrators and

religion. Another obstacle in their opinion is the demanding nature of the local governance structures' work. Some religion out rightly prohibits women from speaking in public in front of men.

On the other hand, Ofei-Aboagye also identified constraints that limit the system's ability to respond to gender concerns. According to her, the Government of Ghana and its partners, local and European, need to address these hindrances to ensure that local governance and economic development includes and benefits women alongside men. These constraints include:

- Lack of sufficient gender-sensitivity of both assembly members and administrators.
- Lack of expertise on how to do gender analysis and to assess the differential impacts of programs and policies on men and women (even where there is awareness and acceptance of gender differences). There is also a need for expertise to undertake gender differentiated data collection, planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation.
- Persisting gender stereotypes and social limitations about what women can do and cannot do.
- The inability of women's groups and individual women to engage the assemblies and call them to account on their responsibilities towards women.

This to a large extent has been attributed to lack of awareness about the responsibilities of the assemblies, lack of information about opportunities available and not recognizing that assemblies are accountable to them as women. Assisting assemblies to work purposefully towards bridging the gap between men and women should be a high priority.

Tsikata (2009) also identified numerous hindrances; among others;

- Strong socialization of men and women to see men as natural leaders and women followers.
- Low gender consciousness of the electorate.
- Failure of women aspirants to win elections which engenders fear and discourages other women from vying.
- Violence during elections and harassment of women: pressurizing them to step down and defacing of posters.
- Acts of intimidation directed to female candidates.

In relation to the local government, several issues arising from the 2006 elections have raised fundamental questions about its democratic promise, and the principle of subsidiarity it is intended to embody. Two of these, the issue of partisanship and the role of chiefs are particularly challenging for efforts to improve women's representation. Again, failure of successive governments to make good their international commitments, manifesto promises and policy commitments is an important element of the failure to achieve full and equal participation of women in local decision making structures.

House-Miamba (1990), cited in Sossou (2011) also argued that women's under-representation is based on the fact that few of them hold political offices or participate in formal political organization. In her view, this low presence of women in local governance structures is rooted in two inter-related factors: public life is seen as a quintessential male sphere of action in which women are both unwelcome and

ineffective; and most women involved are members of an elite group. These women do pursue a political agenda that reflects their class rather than gender.

In emphasizing the ordeal women go through as they try to take part in the socio-economic and social order, the Ghana Statistical Service, in its Population Data Analysis Report in 2005 remarked that:

“Male dominance is a key aspect of the Ghanaian social system and the woman’s role and status are recognizably inferior to those of man in almost all aspects of social, economic and political life. Custom, law and religion have been used to rationalize and perpetuate these differential roles to the extent that women themselves seem to have accepted and internalized them” (p.39).

Adams (2006:42) corroborated this assertion as he remarked that:

“Colonial encounters between African and European women have frequently been studied through the lens of domesticity. This perspective emphasizes that colonial and missionary institutions played an important role in diffusing Christianity, European languages, and Western norms throughout Africa.”

The focus of domesticity also emphasizes the role that colonial and mission policies played in socializing African women into European gender norms and ‘appropriate’ forms of social organization. In general, this literature argues that European influences—including colonial administration, mission, and informal organizations—narrowed women’s sphere of activities and increasingly confined them to the home and family (Mama, 1996 cited in Adams, 2006). These influences propagated ‘an ideology of female domesticity that laid stress on women’s reproductive and nurturing roles above their autonomy and productivity. The major focus of this literature is on how the colonial state and Christian missions contributed to the ‘housewifization’ of African women (Adams, 2006). Supporting this view, Manuh (1991:53), emphasized that:

“The education given to girls during the colonial period emphasized on good behavior and skills such as needlework and cooking. This form of training aimed at making the girls ‘better wives’ for the emerging educated men who were made up of clerks, teachers and few professional men.”

In a position paper on Education Post 2015, UNESCO cited persistent intra and international conflict and social unrest, widespread of infectious diseases such as HIV-AIDS, scarcity of resources as being part of challenges women encounter in their quest to participate in decisions -making structures at the local level. From the foregoing, it is clear that the poor showing of women in public life has many elements which need to be tackled.

## **2.5 Remedies to the Challenges**

The foundation of the many challenges faced by women in their quest to participate in the local governance structures and the possible remedies is portrayed in the words of Paul Kagame (President, Rwanda) while officially opening a gender –training workshop for parliamentarians in Kigali in 1999:

“The abrupt shift to monetary economy, formal education and modern technology played a key role in restructuring gender relations to the disadvantage of women. These imbalances are not only an obstacle to the country’s development but constitute a form of social injustice. It is imperative to our lawmakers and implementers to have an objective and correct analysis of the gender question in order to design appropriate corrective policies and program. The question of gender equality in our society needs a clear and critical evaluation in order to come up with concrete strategies to map the future development in which men and women are true partners and beneficiaries. My understanding of gender is that it is an issue of good governance, good economic management and respect of human rights”. (Matumba and Izabiliza, 2005:9)

The statement above is a clarion call for a change of mindset when it comes to women and their quest to partake in decision making structures. It also demands that a mental re-orientation be undertaken by both men and women. Bandura (1997) argued that it is ironic for women to clamor for gender equality when they themselves are under the yoke of inferiority. He advocated for self-efficacy as women need first and foremost believe in their own capabilities. Ofei-Aboagye (2000) called for a focus on building the capacity of women to aspire, attain and perform in local government office. She further encouraged stakeholders, institutions such as the district assemblies, training institutions, and agencies providing services and implementing development initiatives to provide support to women's concerns by targeting positive action, creating an enabling environment for their participation.

Kwapong (2009) proposed an equal sharing of responsibilities and harmonious partnership between men and women. She viewed this as critical in the move to attain gender equality. As another way out, she praised the enactment of legislations such as the intestate succession, laws against female genital mutilation, ritual servitude and harmful traditional practices injurious to women's health. To improve women's economic status, she reiterated the call of many others on the implementation of the millennium development goal on poverty reduction targeting women.

At the UN general assembly in 2011, "the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women" was adopted. It basically aimed at removing barriers to women's equal participation in public life in nations through constitutional and legal reform. Ridgeway (2011) remarked however that there is some resistance in the attempt to remedying the challenges faced by women in participating in local

government. Nonetheless, she is of the view that there is a gradual progress towards leveling gender issues in governance.

Some affirmative actions were also recommended to enable enhance women's participation in local governance structures. These include among others:

- Promoting cooperation amongst women assembly members across districts and regions;
- Advocacy for the creation of institutional support mechanisms that will promote women's interests and concerns at the district level.
- Organization of programs that target spouses of women assembly members.
- Examination of socio-cultural practices that affect women's ability to enter public office.
- Lobbying chiefs and traditional authorities and using the existing structures of influence to promote the cause of women.
- Extensive collaboration with women in the media to break barriers to women in public life.
- Establishment of consultation mechanisms between the Ministry of Local Government and other government departments on gender issues at the district level.
- Incorporation of gender sensitivity sessions on all training programs.
- Extensive public education and sensitization in local communities using community-based organizations to facilitate the process.

Writing from a human rights perspective, Eides (1995) cited in Nkansah (2009) noted, that the aim of human rights has been to safeguard basic concepts of



‘human integrity, freedom and equality’. He further observed that ‘in principle everyone is a beneficiary of rights’ but in practice, some groups are more vulnerable to human rights abuse than others. To address the vulnerability of certain groups like women, affirmative action should be used. This he noted, has culminated in specific instruments such as the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979). Eides’ position is in line with advocacy groups in Ghana who argue that due to the vulnerability of women, they can only get to public office through affirmative action measures effectuated by their governments.

In the area of women’s political empowerment, it is increasingly becoming recognized that women should empower themselves and ‘be empowered’. This relates both to individual (such as increasing individual civic competencies), and collective empowerment (such as networking). Empowerment also involves creating conducive environment so that women can use these competencies to address the fundamental problems of society at par with their male counterparts.

According to Mawawa (1999), it follows therefore that building the analytical, political, advocacy, leadership, networking and other competencies of women is just as important as or even more important than increasing women’s numbers in high policy and decision-making bodies and institutions. It can even be argued that these qualitative factors provide the foundation for sustainable improvements in the position of women. Otherwise, legislative or constitutional mandates (or any other situations where the existing male dominated power structures are

required to ‘do favors’ to women- for instance by appointing them to the cabinet) may merely result in tokenism, manipulation and unsustainable representation.

Vanessa Griffin (1987) cited in Fardus Ara (2006), identified some components to illustrate what the term empowerment indicates:

- i. Having control or gaining further control.
- ii. Having a say and being listened to.
- iii. Being able to define and create from women’s perspective.
- iv. Being able to influence social choices and decision affecting the whole society.
- v. Being recognized and respected as equal citizens and human beings with a contribution to make.

So it can be said that empowerment means a process to establish control over resources and also means to acquire ability and opportunity to participate in decision-making process and its implementation.

Another remedy to the challenges women faced in their quest to participate in local decision-making structures was the quota system. Gender quotas emerged in response to the evident under-representation of women in the formal public life and political arena; and they involved the introduction of specified minimum levels of representation for each sex (Aggio, 2001). It was assumed that increased levels of participation would allow women to influence policy making and to challenge the inequalities that women currently confront in many areas, including among others politics, employment and education (Sun-Uk, 1995 cited in Aggio, 2001). This scheme was seen as a means to increase women’s participation in

public life. It was assumed that increased levels of participation would allow women to influence policy making and to challenge the inequalities that women currently confront in many areas, including politics, employment and education. Over the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, many countries have instituted gender quotas either voluntarily or through legislation. But this quota system is beset with discursive controversy.

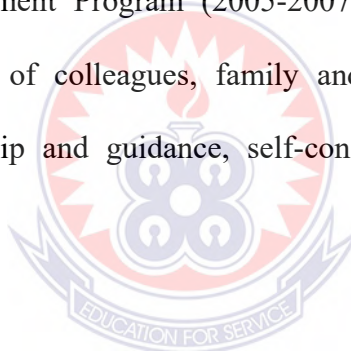
Gender quotas are instituted within the context of disparities, which are structural and systemic. Without addressing the structural constraints to women's political exclusion, their inclusion through gender quota cannot produce an effective representation. Yaji (2005) cited in Barry (2005:64) has reiterated the same idea by arguing that:

“While quotas are important in addressing the exclusion of women from the public life sphere, they can only form part of a multi-faceted strategy for empowering women, which must together with increased political participation also involve a redistribution of socio-economic resources within societies”.

Women who lack civil and economic rights are unable to exercise their political rights fully. The gender quota, therefore, need to be linked with the social and economic redistributive justice in the society (Barry, 2005).

In order to reform inherent structures created during the era when discrimination existed, temporary measures as the quota system are required (Sun-Uk, 1995). Therefore, in order to change the attitude towards women and for women to participate in high level decision making positions in various structures including political and economic ones; a new environment has to be formulated so as to allow adequate numbers of women to attain desirable representation.

Apart from the quota system Manuh (1998), postulated that women's leadership skills in their communities, groups and associations need to be harnessed and formalized to give them political and decision-making power. Women's commitment to their households, to local and national food security, local production and the environment should be reflected in equitable representation on all bodies that make decisions in these areas, as well as in broader economic programs that affect women's lives. Among the ways of creating opportunities for the inclusion, advancement and continuation of women's participation in local governance structures, the Combined Research Report on Women of Africa Leadership Development Program (2005-2007) proposed: role modelling and mentorship; support of colleagues, family and friends; political will, gender awareness, mentorship and guidance, self-confidence, financial resources and support.



The African Centre for Women (ACW) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) on the other hands state that, the essential participation of women in good governance could be achieved by:

- Making education and skills training the major factor for sustainable peace.
- Designing inclusive curricula and systems which do not emphasize ethnic differences.
- Stressing equal access to educational opportunities for boys and girls.
- Supporting women to seek political office, including the highest offices, through the adoption of appropriate affirmative action measures to accelerate their participation.

- Using the media for positive reporting of women's peace activities and concerns, and of women's successful bids for office at local and national levels.
- Recruiting women to visible positions where role models would have particular impact.
- Encouraging women to change their negative attitudes towards participation in public life.

Improvement in the electoral system has also been identified as very relevant to enhance the chance of women getting elected into positions in public life arena. According to Karam (2010), electoral systems are what translate votes into actual seats won by candidates. According to the *International IDEA Handbook on Electoral Systems Design* (1997), most of the Arab region tends to have varieties of plurality-majority systems. "The latter are characterized by outcomes where the candidate with the most votes fills in the positions, regardless of the actual percentage of these votes. In research carried out mostly in developed countries, these forms of electoral systems generally do not lead to high numbers of women in national legislatures" (Karam, 2010).

Another remedy is found in partnership. Women cannot make it on their own efforts. As men hold the majority of decision-making positions, they are central to achieving change. Women and men must work together to promote gender equality within the local governance structures. Another solution to the problem was the involvement of Non-Governmental Organizations and International Organizations. This became very relevant as most of them could act neutrally, and thus be a very effective vehicle for

educating women and communities members on gender equity and its relation to sound local governance.

In Ghana, the quest for participation in governance has seen the emergence of a number of women's movements. These operate as civil society and non-governmental organizations that represent the interests of women at all levels of public life. Notable among them are: The National Council on women and Development (NCWD), African Women Lawyers Association (AWLA), International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) and the Federation of African Women Entrepreneurs (FAWE). Since the inception of democratic dispensation in 1992, there has been extraordinary impetus for civil society activities and a re-invigoration of previously dormant groups that seek to represent issues that span across economic, social and political interests. These groups have taken advantage of the freedom of association guaranteed under the democratic consolidation process to embark on record levels of organization with coordinated efforts aimed at pushing their favored projects through the policy system (Ainuson & Tandoh-Offin, 2009). The interest groups and their coalitions, especially the gender-based groups, were instrumental in pushing for issues of women's equality and empowerment to be highlighted by leading political parties during their campaigning activities for the 2000, 2004, and 2008 election cycles. These efforts have culminated in significant accomplishments for women in Ghanaian society and boosted gender equality in public policy processes.

In summary, this chapter establishes that any study on governance cannot be done without a look at the gender issue. Sweetman (2000) remarked that though some advances have been made toward the recognition of women's equality with men,

there is a continuing lack of women leaders. In the face of the multiple challenges faced by women, proponents of gender equity have sought to bridge gender gaps through socio-economic interventions aimed at making women's presence felt in decision-making structures at the local level. Women are eager and desire to participate in public life structures. They are ready to accept leadership positions to improve their lives and that of others. They want to do this independently, without the control and guidance from their male counterparts. The affirmative action and other declarations support those women to go at all length to achieve their aims and aspirations. However, they face stringent challenges. It is refreshing to note that women who want to be part of decision-making structures have found ways of enhancing their participation.



## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the methods or sources of data, techniques and procedures used to conduct the research. These instruments enable the researcher to gather key information needed for the study.

It describes the research design, population, sample and sampling techniques for data collection, the instruments used, the analysis as well as the test for reliability and validity. The study was conducted in the Kwahu South District located on the Kwahu Mountains in the Eastern Region.

#### 3.2 Research Design

The study used a qualitative research approach and a case study which was geared to investigate how women's participation in local governance structures in the district has been like. The study aimed at establishing the fact that decentralization (local governance) has been effectively carried in the district. The local governance system calls for an equal participation of men and women in both processes and structures in decision-making for the development of the district. Have the women who formed the majority of the population in the district been fairly represented? The enquiry was built on four units: gender equality as applied to the local governance system, the trends of participation of women, constraints faced by women in their bid to be part of local decision-making structures, and the remedies enabling women to overcome those constraints limiting their participation.



The narration of findings was done using the methodological triangulation that is questionnaire, Interview and observation. This enabled the researcher to gather elaborate data on the respondent's attitudes, aspirations and motivations with regard to women's participation in local governance structures. Furthermore, the design helped the researcher to sample women found in these structures, and rationalize the opinions and attitudes of eligible women who want to participate but are hindered to do so within the district.

### **3.3 Population**

The study considered all women within the Kwahu South District. Given time and financial constraints, and the vastness of the land, a section of this population was sampled out covering the Atibie and Mpraeso townships. This sample population comprised of traders, government workers including teachers and health professionals and civil servants, farmers, students, former assembly members (women and District Coordinating Officer) within Atibie and Mpraeso townships.

### **3.4 Sampling Procedure**

The study considered a sample size of 30 respondents comprising the five groupings named in the sample population. Purposive sampling procedures were used including the maximal variation, snowball and confirming sampling strategies. The maximal variation was used to enable the researcher to identify the various groupings in the female population. Again, the snowball strategy was used to overcome the initial difficulty of locating the targeted groupings in the population and their economic activities. The confirming sampling enabled the researcher to ascertain the

components of the female population based on the economic sectors. By this method, the various respondents' groupings were made with the assurance that they covered the total female population in the Kwahu South District.

In summary, out of the 30 respondents eight (8) were interviewed in addition to filling the questionnaire, and three (3) of the interviewees (contesting in the elections) were observed during the electoral process. Given the large size of the population, this sample made a little easier to manage the respondents, and contacting them (especially aspirants) during observational period was adequate.

### **3.5 Study Area**

The Kwahu South District is one of the twenty – six (26) District Assemblies in the Eastern Region of Ghana. Its total population stands at 69,757 comprising 47.4 percent male and 52.6 percent female (Source: Ghana Statistical Service, 2010 Population and Housing Census). It is therefore imperative to target women for the local government structures. The population is youthful with 39.4 percent being under 15 years, followed by age groups 16 – 24 years representing 18.4 percent, 25-29 years representing 6.7 percent; 30-59 years representing 25.8 percent; and 60 + representing 9.7 percent. The social structure indicates that 79.40 percent of the population is Christians, while Muslims constitute 6.45 percent and 12.2 percent have no religious affiliation. The economy of the district is predominantly agrarian occupying 44.7 percent of the working population. Other sectors are services including health, education, security; and small scale industry notably pottery (Kwahu South District Assembly, Statistical Department

### **3.6 Sources of Data**

The researcher used both primary and secondary sources. The primary source included information gathered from respondents. Further, the researcher used secondary source including books, journals, and articles from well-known authorities on the area being researched. To enrich the study, the world - wide web (www) was used thoroughly for relevant information and knowledge.

### **3.7 Research Instruments**

In this study, the data collection tools used included interview, questionnaire and observation of respondents. These tools were used to enable the researcher gather firsthand information about what affect women in their quest to participate in local governance structures. In addition, the researcher was able to picture out certain practical challenges faced by women participating in these structures. The interview enabled the researcher to engage respondents in interactions and probed further into the women's plight. The tools made it possible also for the researcher to unravel unfounded information regarding the challenges faced by women seeking to participate in the local governance structures.

#### **3.7.1 Interview guide**

An interview guide was developed and administered to the 8 respondents purposely former assembly members and those vying for positions. The experience of former assembly women was vital in understanding the nature of challenges faced by women. The interview guide was unstructured in four sections containing five questions each. The various questions were open and close ended. The first section aimed at gathering demographic facts about respondents to ascertain the identity of women participating

in the local governance structures. The second section sought information about the personal involvement of women in the local governance structures. Whereas the third section looked at challenges faced by women in their quest to be involved in these structures. Lastly, the fourth section looked at ways to enhance women's participation in local governance.

### **3.7.2 Questionnaire**

A questionnaire was administered to the 30 respondents. It had ten open ended questions linked to the research questions. The instrument aimed at having the respondents offer information, express their opinion without limitation. It enabled the researcher to clearly understand the challenges faced by women as it relates to the Kwahu South District. This semi-structured questionnaire sought to identify issues related to women's participation in the local governance structures.

### **3.7.3 Observational schedule**

The observation process was done by following the three women who aspired to be assembly members. The researcher had the opportunity to interact closely with aspiring respondents at times in their residences. The observation was done by closely following the campaign trails of women who took part in the last district elections. For the purpose of this study, a systematic observation was done. This method enabled the researcher to identify events and behaviors of participants before and after the presentation of manifesto, note down strategies for campaigning, production of posters, formation of campaign teams. The observation of the three (3) aspirants was made easier because they scheduled their campaign at different times.

### **3.8 Evidence of Research Ethics**

The researcher arranged appointment with the respondents at their convenience. The privacy of respondents was strictly preserved, and they had full assurance of confidentiality with regard to the information provided. Interviewees felt at ease in their interactions with the interviewer given the assurance they had.

### **3.9 Validity and Reliability**

The researcher used the tools for the data collection. Every interview was duly prearranged through personal contact since the respondents did not have an office of their own. The triangulation method was applied and findings were correlated to certify the validity and reliability of the tools. Colleague graduate students and the supervisor helped in reviewing the tools. They made a fair assessment of the usefulness of the instrument for gathering of needed information.

### **3.10 Data Analysis**

The analysis of the data was based on the triangulation method. The study relied on the narrative method to clarify the responses from respondents out of the open ended questions. The transcription of the data was done manually. The examination of the data was carried using the simple percentage and tabulated appropriately. Comments were made from the tables for further clarifications.

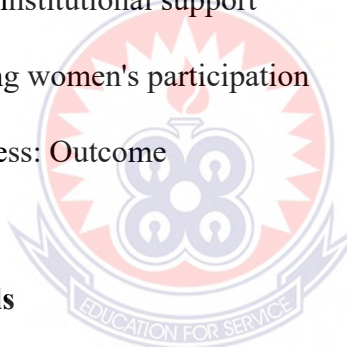
## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the findings gathered from the interview, questionnaire and observation. The data has been studied under six areas notably:

- Demographic Trends
- Participation of women in local governance
- Challenges faced by women
- Stakeholders and institutional support
- Ways of enhancing women's participation
- Observation process: Outcome



#### 4.2 Demographic Trends

Demographic analysis of the study looked at the age, occupation, level of education and marital status of the respondents. Although the demographic trends do not form part of the research objectives and questions, they were found important for the study. Therefore, data were collected through the interview, questionnaire and observation. These demographic data made the interpretation of data gathered through interview, questionnaire and observation schedule easier to understand.

In gathering the demographic information, 30 respondents filled the questionnaire to enable the researcher to have their age groupings and the percentages for each

group, their occupational, educational and marital background. The sample size was 30 out of which 3 respondents were observed during the election time.

#### 4.2.1 Age of respondents

The results showed that 8 of the respondents representing 26.67 percent were between 18–30 years; 10 representing 33.33 percent were aged 31 – 40 years; 7 representing 23.33 percent were between ages 41–50 years, whereas 5 representing 16.67 percent were aged between 50–60 years. This is shown in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1: Age distribution of Respondents**

Age Range Years	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-30	8	26.67
31-40	10	33.33
41-50	7	23.33
51-60	5	16.67
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field survey (2015)**

The above tabulation indicates that women's population is youthful in majority making up 83.33 percent (age 18-50 years). One might expect therefore that young women will be much active in the district developmental process by being involved in the local governance structures. Again, during the survey older women (above 50 years) felt reluctant filling the questionnaire since the majority had a low level of education.

The age of respondents (below 50 years) compared to that of former assembly women (on record all are above 50 years; KSDA- Statistics, 2015) showed that over the years the youthful population of women forming 83.33 percent of the females in the district have not had a representation in the assembly from that age

bracket. This is an alarming trend, when it is expected that the youth would be more interested in developmental issues as they are linked to their future well-being. Discussions with members from this group revealed that what hindered their active participation in decision-making structures was not the age, but their economic status.

#### 4.2.2 Occupational analysis of respondents

The outcome of the survey indicates that 8 representing 26.67 percent of the respondents were traders, 15 representing 50% were government workers (Teachers, health workers, civil servants), 4 representing 13.33 percent were farmers; whereas 3 representing 10 percent were in other professions (hairdressers, seamstresses). This is shown below in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2: Occupational Analysis of Respondents**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Traders	8	26.67
Government Workers	15	50
Farmers	4	13.33
Others	3	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey (2015)**

The results showed that the respondents occupation or profession is linked to their interests in the local governance issues. It indicated that those who are government employees have an eye on the local governance structures more than others. Probably, government employees, given their level of education, have more knowledge on the local government system than others. The higher percentage of



respondents being government workers, indicates that women who felt comfortable filling the questionnaire did so because of their educational background. Language was a major barrier for other respondents who coincidentally had a level of education below the secondary. Nonetheless, government workers were not among those who aspired to be members of the assembly in the 2015 elections as one might have expected.

#### 4.2.3 Educational background of respondents

The researcher investigated on the respondents' educational level. The outcome indicated that 3 representing 10 percent had obtained the B.E.C.E, also 5 representing 16.67 percent had the M.S.L.C; again 9 representing 30 percent had the SSS / S.H.S level, and 13 representing 43.33 percent had completed tertiary level. This is presented in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3: Educational Status of Respondents**

<b>Educational Status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
J HS / Primary	3	10.00
M S L C	5	16.67
SSS / S H S	9	30.00
Tertiary	13	43.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2015**

The results above indicate that in the Kwahu South District the educational level of the majority of the female population making up 56.66 percent is below the secondary level. The survey also revealed that the respondents who had tertiary education were government workers in the age bracket 31-50 years. The farmers in

their majority did cross the primary level in their education, and were found in the age bracket 41 to 60 years.

#### 4. 2.4 Marital status of respondents

The researcher did further investigation on the respondents' marital status. The outcome showed that 12 representing 40 percent were single; while 15 representing 50 percent were married; again 2 representing 6.67 percent were divorced and 1 representing 3.33 percent is widowed. This is presented in Table 4.4.

**Table 4.4: Marital status of Respondents**

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Single	12	40.00
Married	15	50.00
Divorced	2	6.67
Widower	1	3.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Source: Field survey 2015**

The data above represented indicate that the marital status cuts across the five groupings of respondents notwithstanding their educational background or age bracket. The respondents' marital status is not also correlated to their profession, that is to say that the four statuses were found in each group of specific occupation. But equally so, most married respondents were found among the government workers.

### 4.3 Participation of Women in Local Governance

#### 4.3.1 What motivated women's participation

The study found out that there are many factors that contribute to women's participation in the local governance structures. These include among others: The political affiliation, Knowledge about local governance structure, personal motivation and external support (Spouse, relatives, friends, community members). The study showed that of the thirty respondents, 56.67 percent participate because of political affiliation though at this level it is nonpartisan; Whereas 73.33% are motivated given the knowledge they have about local governance structures. Additionally, 93.33 percent take part on self-motivation and personal ambition. Finally, 80 percent participate due to external support by relatives, friends and community members. This is compiled in Table 4.5.

**Table 4.5: Response on what Motivated Women's Participation in Local Governance Structures**

Response	Knowledge			
	Political Affiliation	about Governance Structures	Personal Motivation	External Support
Yes	56.67%	73.33%	93.33%	80%
No	43.33%	26.67%	6.67%	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field survey 2015**

The above table shows that there are factors accounting for women's participation on local governance structures. The Majority of respondents were of the opinion that knowledge (73.33 percent), personal motivation (93.33 percent), and external support (80 percent) formed the basis of their participation in local governance

structures. Whereas political affiliation is on the lower side (56.67 percent). Even though knowledge about governance is of prime importance, it is not the first ranked factor for participation. Again, self-motivation is the prime trait that accounts for women who have ever participated in local governance structures.

#### 4.3.2 Trends of participation

District elections over the years revealed there has been some progress in the efforts to enhance women's presence in decision-making structures. However, this progress has been slow and arduous. A look at figures brings out the factors that account for this pace. This is shown in the Table 4.6 below.

**Table 4.6: Trends in Local Government Elections (1994, 1998, 2002, 2006)-  
Elected Males and Females as a Percentage of Elected Persons in  
Ghana.**

Year	Contestants			Elected		
	Female	Male	Total	Female%	Male%	Total 100
2006	1772	13,084	14,856	478(10.1)	4,254(89.9)	4,732
2002	965	12,625	13,590	341(7.4)	4,241(92.6)	4,582
1998	547	14,696	15,243	196(4.1)	4,624(95.9)	4,820
1994	NA	NA	NA	122(2.9)	4,082(97.1)	4,204

**Source: Electoral Commission**

From the table above, we see that in 2006 the number of women contestants is 12.3 percent, an increase from 1998 which stood at 3.5 percent and 2002 which was 6.8 percent. Women's share of successful candidates went higher from 4 percent in 1998, to 7.4 percent in 2002 and 9.6 percent in 2006. But there was a decrease in the percentage of women who won in relation to women who stood from 35.8 percent in 1998 to 35.3 percent in 2002 and 26.7 percent in 2006. The implication

here is that simply increasing the number of women who contest does not necessarily mean an increment in those elected. The table 4.7 below presents the success rates of women in local government elections in Ghana from 1998 to 2006.

**Table 4:7 Success Rates in local Government elections in Ghana (1994-2006)**

Year	Contestants			Success Rate of Elected		
	Female	Male	Total	Female %	Male %	Total
2006	1772	13,084	14,856	26.98	32.5	4,732
2002	965	12,625	13,590	35.5	33.6	4,582
1998	547	14,696	15,243	35.80	31.5	4,820
1994	NA	NA	NA	122	4,082	4,204

**Source: Electoral Commission 1994-2006**

It results from this table that when the number of female contestants was lower their success rate was higher. The outcome thus indicates that the representation of women at local governance structures is not related to the number of aspirants than the caliber of women at the national level. As Ofei-Aboagye (2006) points out that the representation of women is related to the understanding of their roles as providers of local service and employees. Thus gender equity is also needed in areas of service delivery, economic support and opportunity.

On the other hand, the trend with appointees was slightly better because of the existence of an affirmative action policy. Of the ninety-seven districts surveyed only six had made 50 percent of women appointees target. Twenty-seven had 40 percent. Since the recent local government dispensation was established in 1992, few women had been appointed as District Chief Executive (DCE), District Coordinating officers or Budget officers. In 2001, there were seven (7) female

DCEs. There was an improvement in 2006 to twelve (12) including one for a metro assembly. Women presiding members' percentage has not crossed ten percent by 2006.

A look at what transpired at the Eastern Region's districts elections in 2015 brought out an alarming trend that gives every cause for concern. A total of 157 females from 26 districts in the region filed their nominations: East Akyem saw 13 aspirants, New Juaben had 12; Kwahu South had 11; Akuapem North, Birim Central, Asuogyaman, Kwaebibrim and Fanteakwa had 10 each; Upper Manya Krobo, Upper West Akyem; and Afram Plains South had 1 contestant each; the remaining 14 districts recorded 2 to 9 aspirants; and finally Lower Manya Krobo recorded 0. This is tabulated below in table 4.8

Table 4.8: Number of contestants in district elections in the Eastern Region 2015

NUMBER OF CONTESTANTS	DISTRICTS
13	East Akyem
12	New Juaben
11	Kwahu South
10	Akuapem North, Birim Central, Asuogyaman, Kwaebibrim, Fanteakwa
1	Upper Manya Krobo, Upper West Akyem, Afram Plains South
2-9	14 districts
0	Lower Manya Krobo

Source: Electoral Commission

In summary, female aspirants' assembly members represented 6 percent of the total as against 94 percent males. For the unit Committee, female aspirants stood at 9.9

percent against 90.1 percent for their male counterparts. In addition, 52 Unit Committees had 0 nominations. Thus in 2015, the region recorded 157 female aspirants as against 198 in 2010; a drop of 41. Of the eleven who stood in the Kwahu South District one (1) was given the nod. This trend is not encouraging even as we are contemplating an equal representation of both male and female. This compared to 2012, where out of the forty (40) members 28 were elected and 12 appointed. Four (4) women were elected representing 15.38 percent, and four (4) out of the twelve appointed representing 33.33 percent. In 2012 therefore, women representation in the assembly membership was 8 making up 20 percent. By 2015, there has been a downward trend in the presence of women.

Further investigations carried out by the researcher brought out a vivid picture of what is happening actually in the District Assembly after the 2015 elections. The constitution of the sub-committees of the Assembly is tabulated below.

Table 4.9: Sub-committees of the Kwahu South District Assembly 2015

SUBCOMMITTEES	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Finance & Administration	6	1	7
Works	7	0	7
Justice & Security	7	0	7
Social Services	3	4	7
Development Planning	7	0	7
Health & Environment	6	1	7
Tourism/Agriculture	5	2	7
Public Relations & Complaints Committee	6	1	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>56</b>

Source: Kwahu South District Assembly, Statistical Department

The above table revealed that of the 56 members constituting the Assembly's sub-committees, 9 women are present making up 16.07 percent; with 3 sub-committees not having a single female member. The only sub-committee chaired by a woman is the Social Services which incidentally has the highest number of female making up 57.14 percent of the membership of that sub-committee. Key sub-committees such as Works, Justice & Security and Development do not have a single female member. The indications are that these sub-committees require some technical knowledge. Upon analysis of the educational background of the elected and appointed female assembly members, none of them fulfilled those requirements. This is a worrisome situation given that women concerns, and gender integration on developmental goals in the District cannot be well articulated without women. This trend has not been different from the previous years.

Another aspect revealing the trend of women's participation in the local governance structures is given by what transpires at the unit committees level. This is tabulated in table 4.10.

Table 4.10: Unit Committees membership – Kwahu South District, 2015

UNITS COMMITTEES		MALE	FEMALE
Group 1	14	70	0
Group 2	8	32	8
Group 3	4	12	8
total	26	114	16



Source: Kwahu South District Secretariat

The data above indicates that the District has 26 unit committees with 5 members in each one, making up a total of 130 members. 14 of the units forming the group 1 have no female representation; whereas 8 units forming the group 2 have one female each; and 4 units forming the group 3 have 2 female members each. Of the 130 members in the 26 units, 16 are females representing 12.30% as against 114 males representing 87.70%. This under-representation of women at this level of the local administration directly affects the purpose of the decentralization, and equal gender participation. Again the picture depicted above shows that women's presence in the district's decision-making structures have not seen an upward trend since its creation in 1998 till date.

#### **4.4 Challenges Faced by Women**

##### **4.4.1 Major constraints**

In their bid to participate in the local governance structures at the district level, women come face to face with several constraints. The respondents to the interview and questionnaire were encouraged to mention these challenges. Among others: the level of education, psychological barriers, cultural constraints, lack of support especially financial, and difficulties in combining family care and work. Respondents were asked further questions on these challenges to illicit clearer understanding. This is illustrated in table 4.11

**Table 4:11 Major Constraints Faced by Women**

<b>Constraints</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Education	73.33	In the District, literacy rate of women is 35.20 %.
Psychological Hindrances	85	It is the strongest hurdle to contend with.
Financial Strength	65	Majority of the women are in the informal sector.

**Source: Field Survey 2015**

The respondents whose level of education was not above the J. H. S or Middle School admitted (about 73.33 percent) that this constraint was a huge impediment to their quest to serve at the district governance structures. One of them remarked:

“Some of us cannot speak good English, so it’s vain to attempt being part of these structures”.

Another one during the interview tearfully reacted:

“Due to our level of education, we are not even regarded as people who can contribute in the development of the society”.

During the campaign trail of one participant, she was asked whether she could read and write any document or proposal in English to request for some development in her area. When she responded that she is solely fluent in the local dialect, all the young people left the durbar grounds. She pointed out as the researcher approached her that:

“You see why many women whose literacy level is low wouldn’t be part of this district elections”.

It is thus a fact that educational level accounts for women's withdrawal, but it is not the only challenge faced by women. The study revealed that public life demanded much strength than women are endowed with. Psychological barriers were found to be another set of hurdles women have to cross. These include among others:

- **Inferiority complex:** women themselves admitted that they were not endowed as men to pursue any course to be assembly members. In addition, they consider themselves as naturally weak compare to men.
- **Discrimination:** many a time, women aspirants could not attract any crowd as compare to the male counterparts during the campaigning season. The males and some other females believed women had nothing to offer them. About 70 percent of respondents of the questionnaire cited sex stereotyping of roles as a hindrance. In the eyes of many women, some roles are better assumed by men than women.
- **Cultural mindset:** In many communities, women are not regarded when it comes to leadership. A respondent remarked during the interview: "Women are not regarded in our town here; our place is in the Kitchen".
- **Fear of opposition or rejection:** 85 percent of respondents to the questionnaire admitted that opposition from experienced counterparts or males scared them. Also, the possibility of losing the election could mean the people have rejected them. Therefore, to avoid any embarrassment, women choose not to venture.

Other psychological hindrances are health issues. Usually, women are seen as a weaker sex, since much energy is needed for the work of an assembly member, a

weak person cannot qualify as such. Beyond the above challenges, there are further ones notably the financial one.

The study further revealed that in the Kwahu South District's elections in 2010, the total number of contestants were 175 with only 24 being females representing 13.71 percent for the 26 units' committees (Kwahu South District, statistics). In 2015, the scenario was not different. Delving into the issue, it was unraveled that lack of a strong financial backbone or support for women accounted for this situation. In an interview, a former assembly woman had much to lament for:

“The cost of financing campaigns is just unbearable for an average trader or any other business owner. No support is given to women even for those affiliated with political parties or women based organizations”

Again among the hindrances, women found it difficult combining the care of families, work and the demands of public life. House chores consumed a great deal of their time. The nature of their work (farming and trading for the majority), dwindled their energy and public life could affect their responsibilities as spouses and mothers. “The alternatives for ambitious women are just few”, remarked one interviewee.

In her assessment report to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) on Political Empowerment of Women, Mawawa (1999) noted the following challenges slowed down the progress of women's participation:

- Cultural and traditional barriers

- The persistent unequal division of labor and responsibilities within the household.
- Civil war/strife.
- Women's inadequate education and training.
- Lack of enforcement of quotas and affirmative actions
- Inadequate generation, dissemination and utilization of gender research
- HIV/AIDS epidemic
- Serious economic problems in African Nations.
- Lack of political will by leaders.

Of the hindrances thus far discussed, women in the Kwahu South District are not exempted. Even though from the traditional set up women have played key roles, yet it cannot be said that their participation in local governance structures since 1998 has been satisfactory. Women also had little attention from the media compared to their male counterparts. It all converges on the issue of financial strength. Majority of women did not have enough funds to pay for the publicity to be made on radio. The air space proved to be expensive for most women.

In conclusion, women face a multiplicity of constraints that affect even those who are ambitious. These challenges also differ from person to person, and from area to area.

#### **4.4.2 Dealing with Constraints**

Respondents were asked to share how they coped with the hindrances they faced.

The outcome indicates how women dealt with these challenges, notably:

- Closing ears to any derogatory comments.

- Engaging actively in discussions and debates without complexity.
- Using an interpreter during campaign tours.
- Raising funds through appeals to philanthropists or women's groups.
- Improving literacy level through adult education programs.
- Withdrawing when discrimination is exhibited.

An interviewee had this to say:

“It is not easy when people look down on you due to your gender or education level. So I read a lot to argue my case at meetings and campaign time”.

Another respondent narrated her strategy:

“I fearlessly engaged men in discussions to drain out of me the complexity that public life is their domain. I debated with some male contestants in public forum with level mindedness”.

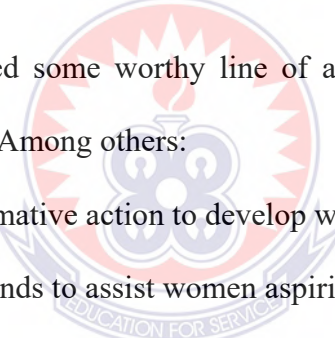
Participants in the election trail were observed using a door - to-door approach to appeal for financial support. One of them was nicknamed “one-cedi assembly woman”, for she requested not more than “one red note” to help her contest and gain the opportunity to articulate women's concerns in the assembly.

During the preparation for the campaign one of the participant actively engaged an adult educationist to help her improve her reading skills and answering questions techniques.

She startled many people each time she mounted the platform beaming with self-confidence as she answered questions about the assembly and district development so clearly. Besides what has been mentioned already, respondents interviewed

suggested empowerment of women through intensive civic education of women groups and society about the imperative of their participation in local development, and assuming key roles in decision making structures. Also, there was a call for women to help themselves by supporting their fellow women aspiring to be part of the local governance structures. In addition, there is a need to deal with the resistance to increasing gender awareness, women's efficiency in their existing roles, and integrating women into development efforts in the district. Despite the fact that women's efforts and capabilities have been acknowledged, their presence in decision making structures has met lots of opposing forces. This has led women's groups to advocate for a fairer representation through legislative instruments.

Mawawa (1999) suggested some worthy line of action to spur and improve the representation of women. Among others:

- 
- Promotion of affirmative action to develop women for leadership
  - Setting up some funds to assist women aspiring to serve in the local decision making structures.
  - Reviewing and challenging electoral processes and discriminatory practices that hurt women's aspirations.
  - Supporting women in public offices through an active and vibrant women's movement to provide technical support, information and solidarity.
  - Ensuring economic empowerment of women.
  - Changing oppressive traditional and cultural practices.
  - Promoting alternative leadership by encouraging and acknowledging leadership initiatives by women at all levels of society.

However, creating an enabling environment with opportunities for inclusion rather than exclusion, is an integral part for future development efforts. This calls for concerted efforts from stakeholders, institutions and government.

It was further revealed that expectations from those who assisted some aspirants were too high. According to some contestants, the populace viewed public offices as money making machinery. Once assistance has been offered, it is expected on assumption of office that the elected or appointed ones will honor the demands of their benefactors or sponsors in compensation. In this vain, women are calling for organizations' support than individuals, groups or party assistance to avoid being pressurized.

#### **4.5 Stakeholders and Institutional Support**

The researcher examined stakeholders' perspectives and Institutional Support on women's participation in local governance structures. Respondents were queried on the community support, women's groups, men and Institutional support. It came out that only 23.33 percent received any support from their community be of verbal or material. Again, 6.6 percent of the women had knowledge of any women's group supporting aspirants to the District Assembly or Unit Committee. In addition, 80 percent of men showed willingness to support women. Also, it was reflected that barely 10 percent of women received any institutional support. This is tabulated in table 4.12 below.



**Table 4.12: Stakeholders and Institutional Support**

	<b>Community Support</b>	<b>Women's Support</b>	<b>Men's Support</b>	<b>Institutional Support</b>
Yes	23.33%	6.67%	80%	10%
No	76.67%	93.33%	20%	90%

**Source: Field Survey, 2015**

The above tabulation brings out the fact that stakeholders and institutional support of women willing to participate in local decision-making structures is insignificant. Even men's support representing 80 percent is much more verbal than material. And from all indications, respondents who admitted having had the support of men, received it from their spouses than other men from the community. The District does not boast of institutions or non-governmental bodies and civil society organizations that are geared in promoting gender equity policies, programs and practices. Thus far, the NCCE is the only established institution in the District. The Electoral Commission's presence is not felt at all especially in the public education on the electoral process. The District Assembly may have to set the pace by purposefully creating an environment for women to be willing to be part of the district developmental agenda. With these facts in mind, the study looked at various ways of enhancing women's participation in the local governance structures.

#### **4.6 Ways of Enhancing Women's Participation**

Outcomes from the interview, questionnaire and observational process indicate that there are significant challenges for women interested in participating in the local governance structures. None the less, there are equal possible ways of increasing their participation through the following: The quota system, adult and formal

education, economic empowerment, removal of psychological barriers, enhanced institutional and women's groups support. Respondents indicated an increase in the quota which now stands at 30 percent would give more women some chance. In table 4.3, it was realized that 26.67 percent of the women whose level of education is below the basic felt it is not worth thinking of any public life given their educational background. Yet many admitted during the observational process that improving the level of education of women would go a long way in making it possible for the ambitious ones to participate. Re-echoing the need to help more potential women through education a respondent said:

“Society must pay more attention to the girl child education, and even grant girls free education at all levels”.

In table 4.6, 65 percent of the women admitted that their economic strength was not enough to push them into public life. In the face of general scarcity of resources, there are pressing calls for government, financial institutions, women's organizations and non-governmental bodies to overtly empower women financially. Aspects where respondents felt potential women could be assisted among others included: payment of filing fees, publicity and education. In this vain, 56.67 percent of respondents to the questionnaire and interview admitted having no knowledge about such organizations as FAWE, ABANANTU, SEND. One interviewee had this suggestion:

“Women should be exempted from paying the filing fees”.

Some others were also of the view that women should be given a good percentage of allocation in the job market, and also be supported for training in employable skills acquisition.

Another way of increasing women's participation in local decision making structures is the removal of psychological barriers. The study indicated that 85 percent of respondents considered these constraints as the most threatening (table 4.6). Low self - esteem accounted for a greater percentage why women considered themselves as not fit for these structures. Stereotyping of roles had affected women in that they viewed decision making structures as a male domain. Again, other cultural barriers that viewed leadership as the sole right of men and women's role in development as not significant resonated in the minds of women and frustrated their efforts. A popular perception is that women's place is in the home. A respondent expressed her view in these terms:

“Nothing can be done about the situation under the current cultural setting. There should be a lot of education about the role of women in local development to boost their interest in public life”.

The socio-cultural practices that have perpetuated dominance should be dealt with. Some respondents also argued that women are their own enemies. They should help themselves by not discriminating against fellow women. The District should develop a comprehensive vision of gender equality issues into policies, programs and projects.

Further reactions from interviewed respondents brings out the need to empower women through seminars and financial assistance. This in the mind of many females will give them the right exposures that will build up their confidence. In addition, women will become bold and confident to take up leadership positions at the local level, and fit into any other decision-making office.

Another suggestion for empowerment called for an accelerated and compulsory education of women. A respondent was of this view:

“Nothing can be done about the situation under the current cultural setting. There should be continuous education about public life to encourage women and boost their interests. I strongly think that African tradition has caused a lot of harm to the girl child and for which the African woman pays for today. Until we modernize our culture and religious beliefs and adequately empower the female, the African woman’s plight in decision-making processes and structures will remain a mirage.”

This reaction from this respondent indicates the extent to which women have become helpless in the face of blatant discrimination due to socio-cultural practices that have perpetuated male dominance. It can even be said that these factors provide the foundation for sustainable improvements in the position of women. Otherwise, legislative or constitutional mandates may result in tokenism manipulation and unsustainable representation.

In summary, the study revealed that women should be proactive in their quest to participate to local decision making structures. It rests on women to renew their mind set, and in the spirit of what transpired in Beijing rise up to the challenges with might. Outcome from the study also indicate how vital Non-governmental and International organizations’ role is; as they are summoned to promote the participation of women who are eligible to take active part into local public life and governance structures. Areas of interest where respondents thought these organizations could assist are among others: financial help by paying for filling fees for example; education and training on public life, publicity through media coverage of female aspirants. In relation to the Kwahu South District, many respondents acknowledged that non-governmental and international organizations are yet to be established in the area. It is imperative therefore that an attractive

environment should be created to woo these organizations in the district for the sake of women.

#### **4.7 Observational Process**

The researcher was engaged in an observation process that lasted for four months. The observation period however was marred by an interruption due to the rescheduling of the district elections in 2015. Nonetheless, the researcher notes on the behavior and activities of individuals were kept appropriately. The observation schedule took into account five aspects: The filling of forms, the formation of campaign teams, publicity, meetings on campaign strategies and the presentation of manifesto. The outcomes indicated that each aspirant engaged in consultative meetings to seek for support from the electorate. One had sponsorship, whereas two have to raise funds individually or through appeals. The source of funding of activities determined the number of meetings, the amount of publicity and influenced the outcome of the electoral campaign. The formation of campaign teams was done according to the aspirant's personal connection with community members. Publicity was done according to each aspirant's source of funding. Where much funds were available, publicity was carried out appropriately. Radio publicity was not used because securing air time proved to be quite expensive. Some aspirants used the local FM to advertise their plans and manifesto. This enabled them to reach out to the electorate who were not present during campaign tours. The table below is the observational schedule covering the three aspirants who were observed.

**Table 4.13: Observational Schedule of Aspirants**

EVENTS	1ST ASPIRANT	2ND ASPIRANT	3RD ASPIRANT
Filling			
1. Consultation of stakeholders	*Meetings with traditional rulers, groups in community to seek approval and backing.	* Use funeral events, durbar and groups' meetings to seek for supports.	* Use churches, groups meeting and durbar to seek support
2. Submission of Application	*Personal Funding.	*Fee paid by a sponsor	*Fee paid through fund raising
1. Formation of Campaign team and Number of meetings	*3 times to form a team in one month	*5 times to form a team in one month	*4 times to form a team in one month
2. Composition of team	*Students, Colleagues, traders, unemployed youth: 12 in all	* Traders, party members, keep fit club members: 18	*Friends, youth Association members, Traders, Farmers:15
Publicity			
1. Production of Posters	*Personal Funding  *Hired unemployed youth using a taxi for the exercise	*Sponsored  *Use a van provided by sponsor	*Funds raised  *Use hired van for the exercise
2. Distribution of Posters			
Meetings on Campaign strategies:			
1. Scheduled	*Once monthly	*3 times monthly	*2 times monthly

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2.Unscheduled	*Unaccounted	• Not recorded	*Not recorded
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Presentation of Manifesto

1. Settings	*Durbar Grounds	*Durbar Grounds	*Durbar Grounds
2.Behavior	*Relaxed with clear voice, smile, natured gesture, *Personal praise on achievements	*Confident, Commandeering voice, clinched fist. Branding personal Business as proof.	*Tensed with a loud tone exhibiting academic level as proof.

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**Source: Field Survey, 2015**

The researcher noticed that the participation of women in local governance structures is directly related to their financial strength. When the funding of activities related to the electoral campaign was appropriate such as direct sponsorship, meetings and publicity were adequate. During the presentation of manifesto, aspirants came face - to - face with verbal abuses, allegations, suspicion from opponents' supporters. In some areas, the researcher observed that posters were tempered with, even intimidating words were written on torn posters. On the day of open forum at the durbar grounds at Mpraeso, aspirants were seen avoiding handshake with their opponents for fear of magical powers (juju). Again, it was realized that the self-supported aspirant was from the elite group owning a personal business entity which gave her a sound financial stand. As such, she beamed with confidence during her campaign tour assuring the electorate of her competence based on her personal realizations in business. On the other hand, the sponsored aspirant given her link with a political party had a lot of confidence; and equally so she was also a successful business woman. The third aspirant was a commoner so to say who relied on her link

with the mass population as a teacher. She appealed to the populace using her academic background to show how she could better articulate the concerns of the people in local decision-making structures.

In general, female contestants during the district elections were less critical of one another. Mainly, they faced stiff opposition from their male counterparts than female. The researcher further realized that the electorate had a blur understanding of the electoral procedures. Most often, the people response during campaigning time was based on personal popularity of the aspirants. The popular ones attracted masses whereas the less known had to be contended with smaller gathering. The situation was also aggravated by the negative feelings about electioneering promises that mostly aspirant did not honor when voted for. The outcome of the elections was based on the popularity of the aspirants than on the fair understanding of the proposed agenda by contestants and appreciation of the capabilities and competence.

In summary, the observational process showed women faced a lot of challenges in their aspiration to serve in local governance structures. Lack of knowledge about electoral processes, poor appreciation of developmental issues which were restricted to provision of street light, light poles and public toilet marred the beauty of democratic system of governance. During one of such time when an aspirant was launching her manifesto, a woman was heard scorning that:

“I will better go and weed my farm than wasting my time listening to lies and vain promises by these politicians”.

In the mind of a higher proportion of the electorate, district elections are seen as partisan in nature. So aspiring assembly members are identified with one political



party or the other. In reality, the contestants may belong to some party but the local governance structures are administered on a non-partisan basis. This the majority of the electorate is yet to understand. It was also observed that some supporters openly wore party colors during campaign time. In some instances, supporters of aspirants clashed to the extent that the law enforcement agents had to intervene to restore public order in some areas. Notwithstanding these scattered incidents, the elections were peaceful throughout the district.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Overview

The primary focus of this study was to have a clear picture of participation in local governance structures in the Kwahu South District. Issues on governance cannot be discussed outside the framework of gender equality, for the main purpose of effective and inclusive governance is the equal participation of both men and women. In the past, the issues affecting public life used to be decided jointly by those with the right to vote. Democracy, which could be considered as participatory has come to the limelight because both the number of participants, and the complexity and diversity of the decisions have increased. However, as the interests of the representatives did not overlap societal interests from time to time, as willingness of the citizens to participate in decisions influencing their lives have increased with technological development, a new trend of governance known as decentralization has emerged in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section provides an overview of the chapter. The second section elaborates on how the research questions were covered. The third section brings out the discussions on the findings. And the fourth section looks at the recommendations.

As already noted, the purpose of the study was to investigate the reasons for the low participation of women in the decision – making structures in the Kwahu South District. Four objectives were set out: ‘to identify challenges faced by women’; ‘to

analyze the trends of women's participation'; 'to examine stakeholders and institutional support of women'; and 'to provide recommendations to improve women's presence in these structures'.

To achieve these objectives, a case study was designed around the following research questions:

- What identifiable challenges mitigate against women's effective participation in local governance structures?
- What are the observable trends on women's participation?
- What have been the stakeholders and institutional contribution to address these challenges?
- What are suggested recommendations to improve on the current situation?

The conceptual framework that undergirded the study was gender equality. It identified challenges faced by women in their bid to be part of decision-making structures in Ghana especially in the Kwahu South District and the factors responsible for these hindrances. It discussed the concept of gender equality in relation to effective local governance, and identified the core call of gender equality proponents as a need for concerted efforts to eradicate all forms of discriminations based on gender. The knowledge acquired from the conceptual framework of gender equality guided the development of themes in relation to the data collected. It also influenced the process of data collection using a triangular method with questionnaire, interview schedule and observational process as tools. The findings drawn made it possible to answer key research questions re-stated above. Conclusions were made, some initiatives and recommendations were formulated.

## 5.2 Discussion of Research Findings

The study uncovered several factors that were responsible for the low presence of women in the local governance structures in the Kwahu South District. Basically, the study found out that women encountered multifaceted constraints: economic, socio-cultural, psychological and religious problems.

The first research question delved into challenges encountered by women in their attempt to be fully part of these structures notably unit committees and District Assembly.

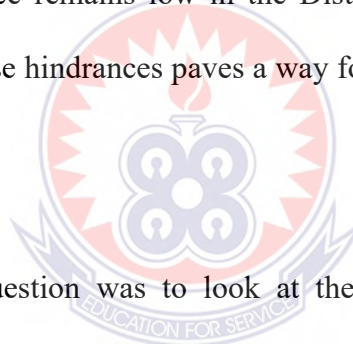
The study discovered that women encountered multi –faceted issues and concerns. On the issue of their number, with eight (8) as assembly members making 10 percent of the total, the study revealed that the larger part of the population aged 18 – 50 years representing 83.33 percent of the female in the district, showed less interest in being part of these structures. Between 2002 and 2012, the four former assembly women were above 50 years of age. This situation is worrisome in that the youth are to show interest on issues of local development since it affects their future directly. It came out from the findings that a combination of factors accounted for that, notably lack of knowledge about governance, occupation, level of education and socio – cultural hindrances. From the findings, it was evident that the majority of female population had no knowledge about governance and how it affects their day-to-day living. More so to them, being part of these structures was the preserve of the elite and those interested in politics. In relation to their occupation, farmers, traders, petty industrialists and government employees pointed out at time constraint coupled with an erroneous concept about public life. The nature of their professions consumed a

larger portion of their time, leaving them exhausted. Comparatively, most women felt that the economic gains of being an assembly member were not attractive enough. The public misconception of prevailing corruption and foul gains associated with public life were further deterrents to women. Again, further challenges were linked to the level of education. In the Kwahu South District female literacy rate is below 40 percent (GES, statistics 2010). The study uncovered that most educated women showed low interest. They were of the opinion that remuneration in serving in the local governance structures was not enough an incentive compare to their current profession. For those whose level is below SHS, fear of being ridiculed turned them off. In addition, the lack of public arena skills by this group's members was an apparent trauma which filled them with fear. Furthermore, challenges cited were socio – cultural, economic, multiple roles of women. Society viewed women in public life as having low moral standards, and considered decision-making structures as a male domain. From the traditional mindset, leadership has been the preserve of men.

Moreover, women in the Kwahu South District do not in their majority have strong financial backbone to venture into public life. Observations pointed out that seeking support of the electorate, filing fees payment; formation of campaign team, meetings, durbar, campaigning, and publicity demanded adequate funding. In the District, few women have that much in their accounts. Again, the cultural conception that makes women the sole caretaker of the home coupled with the demands of their professions made it hectic for female aspirants to stand their grounds. Those who tried were labelled as irresponsible and destroyers of inherited cultural norms.

Furthermore, findings brought out psychological issues that women faced: marginalization, subordination, gender stereotyping of roles, low self-esteem, fear of rejection and aspects of culture that portray women as second class beings. In table 4:11, 85 percent of the respondents confirmed that psychological constraints are a huge barrier. These coupled with the multiple roles women play sank the interests of many women. Some religions literally sideline women and forbid them to aspire for public offices. Subordination of women is portrayed as an evidence of womanhood, calling women not to override men in any way.

In summary, women are confronted with a multiplicity of challenges in the Kwahu South District. Though there are a handful of women who have braved those hindrances, their presence remains low in the District decision-making structures. The identification of these hindrances paves a way for future strategies on how to turn things around.



The second research question was to look at the observable trends on women's participation. Decentralization aimed at having an equal participation of both men and women in the local administration for accelerated development. As it is evident in many developing countries, this desired outcome has not been reached (Allah-Mensah, 2005). In the Kwahu South District, not until 2002 women have been virtually absent in most local decision-making structures. According to the District Electoral Commission representative, of is around 2002 that female presence at the District Assembly reached 10 percent. In the same year, of the 26 units or electoral areas barely one woman registered to contest for the district elections. Factors that account for this trend are among others: patriarchal system that imposed men as leaders' de facto; autocracy that viewed leadership as male domain, erroneous

perception about governance, powerful sex stereotyping of roles and religious prohibition. Since its establishment in 1988, the Kwahu South District has not seen more than 10 percent female presence in the Assembly' membership. From 1988 to 1990 no woman was elected as well as 2006 and 2010. In 2015, there was a decline in number to one (1) elected assembly woman (Kwahu South District, statistics 2015). The same picture applies to the unit committees. For example, in 2010, out of 175 contestants for unit committee membership, the number of female standing was 24. Those present in the unit / zonal committees, area councils were appointed.

This trend is quite alarming and calls for prompt actions and critical evaluation of the effects of the low female presence on the development goals in the District. In summary, female participation in the District's decision-making structures has not known a constant trend. In the Kwahu South, there is a strong need to reverse the current trend. Since women form more than half of the population, their contribution to the developmental issues must not be taken highly.

The third question was to find out about the institutional and stakeholders' contribution to curb the challenges and trends observed. The study revealed that in various communities in the District, women's groups, local and international institutions, non-governmental bodies working at getting women overcome challenges faced and be involved in improving their presence, are non-existent. The only groupings are female wings of political parties. 90 percent of the respondents confessed having no knowledge of such existing organizations (table 4:12). The only institution seen in the District is the National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE). Lack of funding and logistics have limited the efforts of the NCCE,

according to the district director. Further, there is a general apathy in the communities' engagement in supporting women. The observational schedule (table 4:13) indicates that women have to resort to various ways to secure the support of the community. This is due to the cultural trauma that regards women as not fit for leadership. Again, many civil societies lack enough logistics and funding to expand their operations at the districts' level, Kwahu South not being exempted. Existing women's groups are not independent since majority are political parties' wings. Findings indicate that misunderstanding on how crucial women's participation in the local governance and development is, has made stakeholders' contribution in the Kwahu South District to remain low. Over the last two decades, traditional rulers have become increasingly vocal in demanding a stronger voice in the local government. But this was not geared towards enhancing women's presence in these structures but rather increase chiefs influence on local government.

The fourth question was concerned with providing recommendation and interventions to improve on the current situation. To enhance women's presence in the decision – making structures in the District, the following interventions and initiatives were suggested:

- Organizations and institutions should engage themselves in intensive education of women to improve their self – efficacy. When women believe in their capabilities to participate fairly in structures and processes for local development, gender ceases to be an issue.
- The understanding of governance by women should be enhanced through formal and informal education. If women are sensitized from childhood about how imperative their participation is, then their engagement will increase.



- There should be collaborative efforts between government agencies, civil society and private sectors in eliminating all forms of discrimination based on gender. Gender stratification in governance is still a reality, and working to reorient the mindset that sees leadership as male domain calls for concerted and sustained actions.
- There should be reinforcement of local and international instruments such as the CEDAW (UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women), DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era), AFL (African leadership forum). These instruments and networks provide adequate framework on the elimination of gender – based discriminations, corrective affirmative actions and protection of women’s human rights. In the Kwahu South District women are still struggling for recognition as equal partners for development with men.
- Intensive civic education should be continuous and sustained. Institutions such as the NCCE should intensively educate the populace that participation in local governance structures is open to all without discrimination as guaranteed by the 1992 constitution.
- Economic empowerment of women: Women should be encouraged to form cooperative societies that will work at improving women’s financial backbone. There should be an intentional easy access to funding by women’s groups from financial institutions. Further way out, is for agencies, institutions (public and private) to reserve a percentage of jobs for women. They should also support women’s training in job creation ventures and skills acquisition.
- The translation of legislation, convention and policies into actions. The problem of low participation of women in governance should be tackled at the

grassroots on interpersonal levels to ensure effectiveness. Sustained efforts in reorienting women socio– culturally should be the order of the day not waiting for elections. Sensitization programs should be community–based.

- The District Assembly should ensure the implementation of the provision in the local Government Act 1993, Act 462 which summons all Assemblies to provide adult education facilities in all communities. This will enable change women’s attitudes and deepen their understanding about issues on local development and governance.
- An increase in the enrolment of females at the various levels of the educational system coupled with efforts at limiting school dropout girls, teenage pregnancy and harmful traditional practices.

While the removal of obvious barriers is important, it is not sufficient. Failure to achieve full and equal participation of women can be unintentional, and the result of outmoded practices and procedures which inadvertently promote men. In an attempt to achieve equality of participation, a wide range of measures must be implemented:

\* Recruiting, financially assisting and training women candidates.

\* Amending electoral procedures.

\* Developing campaigns directed at equal participation.

\* Setting numerical goals and quotas above the prescribed 30 percent and targeting women for appointment to public positions.

Additionally, there are preconditions for increasing participation which are the basis of decentralization and good governance:

- (i) Creation of processes open to participation
- (ii) Bringing together the civil society organizations which will ensure effective participation.

- (iii) Making sure that participants have access to information and that necessary training for meaningful participation is provided.
- (iv) Establishment of organizations and processes for increasing participation.
- (v) Formulation of policies that will not provide unbalanced benefits to any segment of the society.

Local governance needs to be perceived not only as a legislative process, but also as a project of cultural transformation at the same time. It should be kept in mind that for such a cultural transformation, resources need to be allocated to civic education and intensive communication; and by so doing women's participation can be enhanced.

Ofei-Aboagye (2000) also proposed two main strategies to make local government more responsive to women and gender concerns. These include:

- i. Building the capacity of women to aspire, attain and perform in local government structures.
- ii. Encourage stakeholders, institutions such as the district assembly, training institutions, and agencies providing services and implementing development initiatives to provide appropriate support to women's concern by targeting positive action, creating an enabling environment that will enable women to participate.

In summary, recommendations, initiatives and interventions should be multifaceted, continuous and sustained in the District until the desired equal participation of women is achieved.

### 5.3 Significance of the Study

This study is significant in many ways. It can:

- Enable the District policy makers on development to specifically tailor some policies that will affect women's empowerment effectively.
- Contribute to the literature on the topic since there exist no such available study conducted on the District.
- Clarify the actual challenges faced by women which account for their low presence in the District local governance structures.
- Provide new direction for further debate about women's contribution in the development of the District.

### 5.4 Conclusions

In order to overcome centuries of male domination in the public sphere, women also require the encouragement and support of all sectors of society to achieve full and effective participation. Relevant to this study is what has been termed as indirect discrimination which has to be dealt with. The CEDAW defines it as follows:

“Indirect discrimination against women may occur when laws, policies and programs are based on seemingly gender neutral criteria which in their actual effect have a detrimental impact on women. Gender-neutral laws, policies and programs unintentionally may perpetuate the consequence of past discrimination. They may inadvertently have modelled on male lifestyles and thus fail to take into account aspects of women's life experiences which may differ from those of men. These differences may exist because of stereotypical expectations, attitudes and behavior directed towards women which are based on the biological differences between women and men. They may also exist because of the generally existing subordination

of women by men” (General Recommendations 25, Para 7, 2004). This recommendation is a clarion call on government to ensure that there is no discrimination against women.

In addition to legislation, stakeholders and institutions should combine their efforts in dealing with cultural practices that tend to frustrate women by revising if not eradicating those that constitute huge blockade.

The participatory approach required by good governance can become effective and efficient in the societal sense only through the adoption of a national education system that is accessible to all, and focuses on the rights and responsibilities of citizens and actively encourages the citizens to participate in decisions-making structures that influence their lives.

As it is highly difficult for every citizen to participate in every decision-making process directly, it is important that well-functioning civil society organizations are developed in the Kwahu South district, and that its management capacities are developed so that they could be agents of participation. However, even if there exist civil society organizations ensuring participation, there are two more requirements for the decisions to be taken in a participatory manner:

- (i) Public officials that use public authority in the districts such as DCE should encourage participation by demonstrating a management approach open to participation.
- (ii) The process on how the elected and appointed members of assemblies who are authorized to take final decisions with regards to the utilization of public resources will collaborate with the representatives of civil society organizations should be clearly formulated in Kwahu South.

Further strategy recommended by the United Nations' Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI, 2001) is the gender mainstreaming. Initially, promoting gender equality focused on separate targeted activities for women. Mainstreaming highlights the necessity to ensure that gender equality is a primary goal in all areas of social and economic development. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2002, p.98) mainstreaming focuses:

“in addressing the inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels, Governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programs so that before decisions are taken, an analysis is made on the effects on women and men respectively”.

ILO (2002) indicates that in July 1997, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOG) defined gender mainstreaming as:

“A strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality”. (p.65)

A critical aspect of the mainstreaming strategy is to ensure gender equality from initial stages of development processes so that there is potential to influence goals, strategies and resource allocations and as a result ensure real changes in policies, programs and other interventions for gender equality in the Kwahu South District. Gender mainstreaming aims at bridging gaps and to ensure gender equity and sustainable development that enhances the participation of both men and women in both structures and processes of local governance.

In conclusion, the participation of women in the Kwahu South district's governance structures can be enhanced through the following in mind:

- i. The initial definitions of issues or problems across all areas of political, social, economic activities should be done in such a manner that gender differences and disparities can be diagnosed and assumptions that issues are neutral from a gender equality perspective should never be made.
- ii. Clear political will and allocation of adequate resources for mainstreaming, including if necessary additional financial and human resources are important for translation of the concept into reality.
- iii. Gender mainstreaming require that efforts are made to broaden women's equitable participation at all levels of decision-making structures in the locality.
- iv. Mainstreaming does not replace the need for targeted, women-specific policies and programs, and positive legislation nor does it do away with the need for gender units.

Gender mainstreaming that focus on women entails:

- Prioritization of women's empowerment because of the much greater discrimination against women.
- Not only increasing household incomes but also increasing women's economic, social and political empowerment.
- Challenging the root causes of gender inequality not just basic needs.
- Linking a grassroots participatory process with macro-level advocacy and lobbying.

## 5.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made for further actions:

- The District Assembly should assist the NCCE with funding and logistics in their efforts to educate women on the crucial role they play in the local development.
- More agencies and institutions aiming at supporting women would-be leaders should be established in the District.
- The Assembly should enact policies that will attract companies and institutions in the District, and encourage such bodies to employ women whenever possible.
- Religious organizations should get involve at facilitating educational programs of women's groupings to help women have a deeper knowledge on public life.
- Cultural Festival's time should be used to educate communities why they should support women would be leaders.

Ofei-Aboagye equally suggested some directions that are worth considering. These include:

- Advocacy for the implementation of government affirmative action commitments; and to support this, continuous efforts in identifying and supporting women to take advantage of affirmative action.
- Promoting cooperation among women assembly members across districts
- Advocacy for the creation of institutional support mechanisms that will promote women's interests and concerns at the district level.



- Examination of socio-cultural practices that affect women's ability to enter public office.
- Extensive collaboration with women in the media to break down barriers to women aspiring to be part of public office.
- Extensive public education and sensitization of communities on gender issues and they affect local development.

### **5.6 Suggestions for Further Research**

The following areas are worth considering for further study:

- Effects of women's under – representation on development.
- Women's empowerment: A tool for enhanced participation.
- Transforming cultural mindset: Overcoming low representation of women.
- Best practices in getting women's issues on the national/local agenda.
- Partnerships of District assemblies with NGOs in promoting gender concerns at the local level.
- Women's experience with the district assembly participation as a strategy for capacity-building.
- The history of women's engagement with local government and activism of today versus pre-colonial activism.
- Gender issues in promoting small scale enterprise by district assembly.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1

#### QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this questionnaire is to investigate on women's participation in the local governance structures in the Kwahu South District. The information provided will be kept confidential and your anonymity protected.

1. Age group: 18-30 years [ ] 31-40 years [ ] 41-50 years [ ] above 50 years [ ]

2. Profession: Trader [ ] Farmer [ ] Teacher [ ] Health worker [ ] Other [ ]

3. Level of education: Primary [ ] JHS [ ] MSLC [ ] Secondary [ ] Tertiary [ ]

4. A. Do you think women should get involved in the district assembly and unit committee?

Yes [ ]

No [ ]

B. Give reasons for your answers

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5. A. the level of education can prevent women from participating in these structures.

Agree [ ]

Disagree [ ]

B. If you agree, why?

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-----

3. A. Are there any other challenges apart from education?

Yes [ ]

No [ ]

B. If yes, please name some challenges

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-----  
-----

4. A. Are you of the opinion that women have been prevented from being part of these structures purposely? Yes [ ] No [ ]

B. If yes, why is it so?

-----  
-----

5. A. Women standing for the assembly should get more votes during district elections.

Agree [ ]

Disagree [ ]

B. Give some reasons for your answer.

-----  
-----

6. A. Over the years, women have been few in the districts assemblies. Yes [ ] No [ ]

B. How many assembly women do you know?

1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] more [ ]

7. A. Women do not have enough knowledge about their role in local development.

Agree [ ]

Disagree [ ]



## APPENDIX 2

### INTERVIEW GUIDE

The purpose of this interview is to examine women's participation in the local governance structures in the Kwahu South District. Confidentiality and anonymity are assured.

#### A. Personal data

1. Age group: 18-30years  31-40years  41-50years   
above 50years

2. Occupation:  
.....

3. Level of Education:

Primary  JHS  Middle school  SHS  Tertiary

4. Marital status:

Single  Married  Divorced  Widow

5. Number of Children:

One  Two  Three  More than three

#### B. Personal involvement:

1. Do you have knowledge about district assembly, unit or zonal committee?

Yes  No

2. Have you served in any of the above cited?

YES  NO

3. Do you support women to be part of these structures?

YES  NO

4. Can you give some reasons why women are not many in these structures?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

5. Have you given your support to any woman during elections?

YES  NO

**C. Women's involvement**

1. Do you know any woman in your community who is or has been an assembly woman?

YES  NO

2. In your community when committees are formed are women included?

YES  NO

3. Can you say that women have been excluded purposefully from the assembly, unit or zonal committees?

YES  NO

4. Are women themselves interested in being part of these structures?

YES  NO

5. Are there some barriers preventing women from being part of these structures? Point out some

.....  
.....

.....  
.....

**D. Enhancing Women's Participation:**

1. What actions should be taken to get more women participation in the local government structures?

.....  
.....  
.....

2. Do you know of any group, institution or organization that supports women to be part of these structures?

YES  NO

3. Do you support the 30 percent quota for women in the district assembly?

YES  NO

4. Do you know of any policy that can help enhance women's participation?

YES  NO

5. In terms of community development, have women been taken part fully?

What can be done?

YES  NO

### APPENDIX 3

#### OBSERVATIONAL SCHEDULE

Events	1st Aspirant	2nd Aspirant	3rd Aspirant
1. Filling: Consultation of stakeholders. 2. Submission of Application			
1. Formation of Campaign team and Number of meetings. 2. Composition team members.			
1. Publicity: Production of Posters 2. Distribution of Posters			
Meetings on Campaign strategies: 1. Scheduled 2. Unscheduled			
Presentation of Manifesto: 3. Setting 2. Behavior			