



Graduate School of Development Studies

**One out of Sixty-four: The Paucity of Women's
Representation in Local Government Politics in
Ghana:**

The Case of Tamale Metropolitan Assembly

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Dedication

To my son, Reuben, for enduring my long and painful absence from home, with all innocence. The thought of you urged me on.

Acknowledgement

To God be the glory, great things He has done!

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List of Acronyms

CA	Consultative Assembly
CE	Committee of Experts
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CPP	Convention People's Party
DA	District Assembly
DCE	District Chief Executive
31stDWM	31 st December Women's Movement
FOMWAG	Federation of Muslim Women Association of Ghana
GDCA	Ghana Developing Communities Association
GNAT	Ghana National Association of Teachers
GLSS	Ghana Living Standards Survey
ILGS	Institute of Local Government Studies
LG	Local Government
LI	Legislative Instrument
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
MCE	Metropolitan Chief Executive
MP	Member of Parliament
NCWD	National Council on Women and Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NORSAAC	Northern Sector Action on Awareness Centre
NDC	National Democratic Congress
NPP	New Patriotic Party
PNC	Peoples National Convention
PNDC	Provisional National Defence Council
TAMA	Tamale Metropolitan Assembly
WIP	Women in Peace-building

Abstract

Despite global concerns about the need to involve women in decision-making processes at all levels, women's representation in local politics has remained very low in Ghana. It is interesting that since Ghana embarked on an uninterrupted decentralisation through the District Assembly system of local government in 1988, the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly hardly gets two elected women representation. This study is an attempt to highlight the challenges women experience in their bid to access representation in local government and the coping strategies they adopt. Various concepts were employed for understanding of the situation. Four propositions were made, some of which were confirmed and others rejected. Analysis of variables such culture, education, decentralisation and socio-economic status helped to bring out their causal effects on women's representation in local government. The research findings point to cultural beliefs and practices as the main limiting factor; and which also plays influencing role on the other variables, which together limits women's representation in the Tamale Metropolitan Area. Women's community involvement and personal individual interaction with electorates are the main strategies that positively influenced their election and appointment to the Assembly.

Relevance to Development Studies

There have been concerns and efforts at global, regional, national and local levels to increase women's representation at all levels of decision-making. Various studies have been done showing the extent of the problem in various countries. This study on women's representation in local government in the Tamale Metropolitan area contributes to other works in the area; highlighting the context of Ghana.

Keywords

Women's representation, Tamale Metropolitan Assembly, Local government

Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

The low representation of women in national and local level decision-making has been of concern in most countries of the world. The idea of women being identified with domestic life and politics viewed as the domain of men is impeding the socio-economic advancement of women and the overall development of nations. Global concerns about this phenomenon led to various efforts made towards increasing women's representation in public offices and decision-making. The 1995 Beijing Conference Platform for Action for instance called for 50-50 gender balance in decision-making as prerequisite to achieving equality, development and peace (Mukhopadhyay and Meer 2004). Yet, even in older established democracies such as the USA and Britain, by 2004, women made up only 14.3% of the USA Congress, 17.9% of UK Parliament, and 15.6% of parliamentarians worldwide (ibid: 72). Currently, women's representation in parliament stands at 19.2% worldwide and 19.3% for Sub-Saharan Africa, with Rwanda topping at 56.3% (IPU 2011).

A world acclaimed governance system aimed at involving citizens in national governance has been decentralisation of local government (LG). Decentralization is seen as an important facet of participatory democracy that gives citizens the opportunity to present their views and interests to elected representatives who are subsequently accountable to citizens (Bardhan and Mookherjee 2006: 4). As Mukhopadhyay points out,

...democratic decentralization as a form of government that expands participation of subordinated groups and is responsive to their interests is critical for women...not only because of the proximity of local government to the lives of ordinary women but because the lack of democracy in gender relations excludes them from participation in government and the consideration of their interests in the business of governmental decision-making (2005: 4).

The study seeks to find out to what extent women are able to get representation in Ghana's District Assemblies (DAs) as elected and appointed members, as well as the challenges they face and their coping strategies.

1.2 Background to the study

As part of efforts at involving ordinary citizens in government decision-making, Ghana, in 1988 embarked on a major decentralisation reform; with the creation of the DA system through the enactment of LG Law 1988 (World Bank 2003). This Law was given impetus by the Ghana's 1992 Constitution, and subsequently the LG Act 462 of 1993. The Constitution enjoins the state to make democracy a reality at all levels through decentralization, and to promote gender balance in

recruitment and appointment in public office (Ofei-Aboagye 2004). Ghana's decentralisation process designates assemblies as the highest political and administrative authority at the district level; with the power to deliver local level development that are responsive to and inclusive of all sections of the population (ILGS 2009: 9). The DAs are created by Legislative Instruments (LIs) as the second tier of government with corporate status, and are the basic unit of government with deliberative, legislative and executive functions. The DAs are called Metropolitan, Municipal or District Assembly depending on the population, and are collectively called local governments (Commonwealth Secretariat 2010). Metropolitan areas have population above 250,000; Municipal areas have between 250,000 and 75,000; and Districts have population below 75,000.

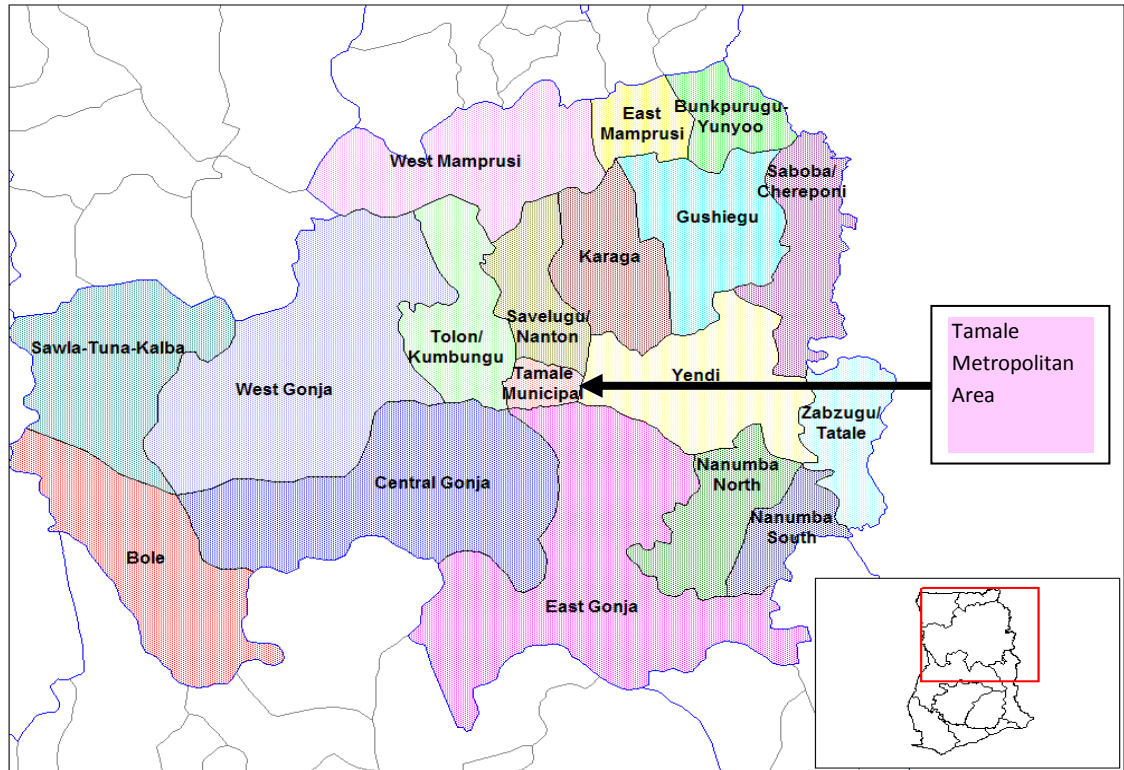
The DA is composed of 70% elected members, one from each LG electoral area; and 30% members appointed by the government (Ghana 1992). By a 1998 Administrative Instrument, the government allotted 30% of the seats of the appointed members to women, and in 2002 the quota was increased to 50% of appointed members. By the time, only 6 out of 110 districts had made the mark of 50% women in appointed positions (Ofei-Aboagye 2004: 754). And since 1988 the total national elected and appointed Assemblywomen has been less than 11% of the total membership. In principle, election and appointment to the DA is constitutionally non-partisan but in practice, "the process has been undermined by open, undisguised promotion of candidates by various political parties, notably, governing parties" (Government of Ghana 2007: 28).

Elected Assemblywomen are those who go through election process as part of the 70%, while appointed Assemblywomen are those who are nominated by the government as part of the 30% appointees.

Background to the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly (TAMA)

The Tamale Metropolitan area is located in the centre of the Northern Region and shares boundaries with Savelugu-Nangon district to the north, Tolon-Kumbungu district to the west, Central and East Gonja districts to the south and Yendi district to the east. The metropolis occupies about 750 square kilometres; about 13% of the total area of the Northern Region. The TAMA was established in 1988 by LI 1453, and has 3 Sub-metropolitan areas, 11 Zonal councils and 64 units. The Metropolis, according to the TAMA 2009 estimation, has a population of 375,469. With an urban population of about 67%, the Metropolis is the only area in the region which is predominantly urban; and has a population density of 319 persons per square kilometre, 11 times higher than the regional average density of 29. Apart from Metropolitan Tamale where there is ethnic diversity almost all the people in the surrounding villages are Dagombas (the indigenous ethnic group). Even in the Metropolis Dagombas constitute 80% of the population. Islam is the predominant religion with a share of 84% of the population; and almost 90% of Dagombas are Muslims (TAMA 2009).

Map 1
Map of Northern Region showing Tamale Metropolitan Area



Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Northern_Ghana_districts.png

1.3 Statement of the Problem

In spite of various efforts to increase women’s political empowerment and decision-making, the UNDP Beijing Plus Five assessment indicates great underrepresentation of women in political and bureaucratic posts in countries worldwide still exist (Bello 2003). The low representation of women in Ghana’s LG as Assembly members is described by Crawford as “an acute issue” (2004:29). Since the 1990s various strategies have been adopted by governmental and non-governmental agencies to increase women’s representation in Ghana’s DAs. These efforts yielded some success especially between 1994 and 2002. While women contestants for the DA elections increased by 79% from 547 in 1994 to 981 in 2002, the number of women elected increased from 124 to 341 respectively representing 75% increase (Ofei-Aboagye 2004: 754). However, at TAMA the number of elected women since 1988 hardly exceeds one (1). As positions in the DAs are by election and appointment, one would expect that the appointing body – the government – would ensure that at least the 50% appointed seats reserved for women were really occupied by women. And yet even the total of appointed

and elected Assemblywomen nationwide hardly make up 11%. This situation is worse in TAMA where the current total women membership is 9 (9.8%) out of 92. The question therefore is, why such poor women representation in TAMA?

This defeats the purpose of the DA system of empowering grassroots citizens to participate in the development of their communities and the nation. As asserted by Ofei-Aboagye, gender equity and gender sensitivity is a prerequisite for sustainable development (2004: 753). This is not just because women must be part of national development but because of the need to tap women's contributions for the development of their localities and the nation as a whole. Considering their contribution to Ghana's economy, women who form 95% of informal sector labour force and only 5% formal sector workers, contribute as much as 54% of Ghana's GDP (Ghana 2002). It is therefore only fair that the female half of the population be given the opportunity to be represented so their interests can be articulated. A lot of literature exists on the situation at the national level indicating slow progress in women's representation in local politics. However, very little information exists on what is happening at district specific levels. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by looking at the situation in one of the districts-TAMA.

The assertion by Crook and Manor (1998: 277) that the election of members into the DAs in Ghana disproportionately favours the wealthy and the better educated, is more applicable to northern Ghana where women are less wealthy and less educated than men. But what about those women who get elected? Crook and Manor did not talk about the strategies women adopt to get elected or appointed. This research goes further to analysing the strategies elected and appointed women used to have access to DA representation. This study therefore seeks to unearth the factors fuelling the paucity of women's representation in the Assembly and the strategies Assemblywomen adopted to get elected and appointed to the TAMA. This will provide information to potential Assemblywomen so they can devise similar strategies when seeking positions to the Assembly.

1.4 Research Objective and Questions

Research Objective

The objective of this research is to find out, in the context of male dominated space, how and to what extent Assemblywomen and women candidates are able to get representation in LG activities in TAMA.

Main Research Question

How do women get political positions (elected and appointed) at the local government level in the Tamale Metropolis despite socio-economic, cultural and other barriers?

Specific Research Questions

1. Which factors limit women's representation in politics at the local level?
2. What different strategies do elected and appointed Assemblywomen employ to have access to political representation at the local level?
3. What calibre of women get elected or appointed to the District Assembly?

1.5 Relevance and Justification

...[T]he ability of any group of people or their chosen representatives to participate in decisions affecting their lives not only puts them in a position to contribute ideas but also provides them with the tools and options for reshaping the course, direction, and outcome of specific programmes and activities which will determine their future. It is therefore critical to engage women in decision-making processes within the communities where they reside and obtain their livelihoods. (Opare 2005:90).

It is in recognition of the vital contribution of people to decisions affecting their lives that the establishment of LG in Ghana is seen as a way of encouraging maximum participation of all citizens in the affairs of government in an open democratic state that guarantees civil and political liberties essential for popular mobilization and civic engagements (Dorgbedo 2003:8). The local government system therefore should have been the easiest way of enhancing women's participation in decision-making, but in reality decentralization of power to LG has not led to increase in women's representation at the local level as envisaged (*ibid*). What then are the factors contributing to the abysmal representation of women, and what coping strategies do those who get to represent adopt?

Literature on representation of women in politics and LG in Ghana tends to focus more on obstacles to women's access to national political office and decision-making positions in the public sector (see Ankomah 1999, Kisseh 2000, Ofei-Aboagye 2000, Ohene-Konadu 1999), women in leadership in small rural communities (see Opare 2005); and the role of civil society in promoting women's participation in local governance (see Dorgbedo 2003). Some literature exists on how women managed to have access to representation in national and local politics in countries such as Tanzania and Rwanda (see Francis 2007, Powley (n.d.)). However little literature exists about how women managed to get political positions in Ghana especially at the DA. This study is therefore looking at the special case of northern Ghana, and more especially the TAMA where the number of women elected hardly exceeds one. Questions such as why and how some women in the Tamale Metropolis are able to get elected to the Assembly whilst others do not, are critical to unravel the factors that are either hindering women from making use of the opportunity of their participation created by the DA system, or promoting their representation.

This paper intends to tease out information about how the few women who were/have been able to make it to the DA, were able to overcome the various obstacles to get to the assumed men domain, and why others could not make it. The study will contribute to the work of Crook and Manor (1998); and Mahamadu (2010) which compared the Accra Metropolitan Assembly and TAMA. The study will therefore generate information that will be useful for women to take advantage of decision-making opportunities at the national, DA and community levels, to advance the concerns of women for improved community and national development.

1.6 Research Methodology

This research adopts qualitative approach so as to generate in-depth information for understanding how women negotiate representation in the DA through election and appointment. Negotiation refers to the strategies: resources, institutions and personalities; and how women employ these in their efforts to become politicians. The research is explanatory in nature because it goes beyond describing the characteristics, to analyse and explain why or how some things are happening (Thames Valley University Dissertation Guide).

Why TAMA was chosen as the study area

Tamale is one of the six (6) Metropolitan areas in Ghana and the only metropolis in northern Ghana. Additionally Tamale has a peculiar history. During the colonial era Tamale was the capital of the Northern Territory (now Northern, Upper East and Upper West regions (see Map 2) where all government administrative businesses pertaining to the area and major commercial activities were conducted. Tamale also had the first secondary school in the North with students attending from all over the Northern Territory. The city is host to various companies and international and local NGOs. As the third largest and the fastest growing city in Ghana and West Africa respectively, one would expect that everything would be very modern, but one still finds architectural blend of traditional mud houses roofed with grass and modern buildings. With its cosmopolitan nature and yet having one of the lowest numbers of Assemblywomen in northern Ghana, I thought Tamale will be very interesting to study. Findings may possibly be illustrative for the other districts particularly those in northern Ghana.

Sources of Data and Methods

In this study I employed both primary and secondary information focusing on two sources of evidence: interviews and relevant documents respectively. Semi-structured interview was the main research technique employed to elicit information from participants. Two sampling techniques: purposive and simple random, were employed in the selection of respondents for various reasons. Some of the respondents were purposively chosen so as to elicit specific information pertinent to the study. These include the only elected Assemblywoman, husbands of Assemblywomen, and NGOs, as well as the chiefs, magazias and male and female youth leaders of the community of the only elected Assemblywoman and

one rural community. The simple random sampling was used in selecting the remaining respondents including the current appointed woman, past Assemblywomen, executive members of the Assembly, elected Assemblymen who contested with women, appointed Assemblymen, and potential women politicians. In all, 24 respondents were interviewed: 2 from each of the 12 categories of respondents; and made up of 12 women and 12 men. All interview venues were determined by respondents and audio recorded with their consent. Table 1 contains the list of respondents.

Table 1
List of Interview Respondents

Category of respondents	Number
Current Assemblywomen	2 (1 elected and 1 appointed)
Past Assemblywomen	2 (1 elected and 1 appointed)
Executive members of the DA	2
Elected Assemblymen (who contested with women)	2
Appointed Assemblymen	2
Chiefs	2
Magazias	2
Male youth leaders	2
Female youth leaders	2
Potential women politicians	2
Husbands of Assemblywomen	2
NGOs	2
Total	24

Source: Fieldwork 2011

For secondary information the study engaged with wide sources of literature on women's participation in politics and local decision-making. Also consulted is variety of documents on Ghana's decentralisation.

Field Problems and Research Limitations

The fieldwork was not without some challenges. The first person I contacted at the TAMA offices could not provide me the current membership record of the Assembly because the Director was not available. This caused a lot of anxiety as it took me two days to access it. I could also not get membership records of the past Assembly members; the Director had to extract them from the list of members on

the minutes of past Assembly meetings and for some he had to recall from memory (advantage of his long service at the Assembly) and also contacted some past colleagues. No information is available at the Assembly on the background of elected and appointed members. Appointment with the Metropolitan Chief Executive (MCE) and Members of Parliament (MP) was not possible because they were involved in an ongoing NDC (ruling party) delegate congress for the election of their party presidential candidate for the 2012 elections.

My plan to sit in Assembly meetings so as to directly observe meeting proceedings; to assess the contributions of Assemblywomen and the gender-sensitivity of meeting procedures could not be possible because, all meetings were held a few weeks before I arrived. One regrettable limitation to the study is the non-inclusion of voters in my interview. Interviewing voters would have provided primary information on why they prefer voting for men to women.

1.7 Organisation of the paper

This paper has six chapters. Chapter one contains the general introduction to the paper including the background, research problem, relevance and justification, research objectives and questions, methodology and limitations. The following chapter contains literature review on concepts, and analytical framework. The third chapter deals with review of the LG structure and women's representation and chapter four highlights the declining women's political representation in the Tamale Metropolitan area. Chapter five discusses the inhibiting factors to women's political representation and women's coping strategies, whilst chapter six presents the summary of finding, conclusion, and some policy reflections.

Chapter 2 Conceptual and Analytical Framework

2.1 Introduction

The study seeks to find out how elected and appointed Assemblywomen manage to access representation in Ghana's DAs. It is therefore important to provide a conceptual and analytical framework that will guide understanding and analysis of Assemblywomen's experiences. The concepts used in this study include: decentralization, culture, education, and socio-economic factors.

2.2 Decentralisation and Women's Representation in Local Politics

Crook and Manor, define decentralization (within government) as the transfer of power away from central government to lower levels of authority in a territorial hierarchy (1998: 6). The Commonwealth Secretariat defines decentralization as "a process of state reform composed by a set of public policies that transfer responsibilities, resources, or authority from higher to lower levels of government" (2010: 9). According to Mukhopadhyay, democratic decentralisation is critical for women not only because of the proximity of local government to their lives but because they are often excluded from government decision-making (2005: 4). However, as governance is about the exercise of power, determining which citizens are included in the decision-making process and whose interests count, then there is no a-priori reasons why local level governance should be more just, equitable and inclusive. This is because decentralised government is mapped onto existing systems of political patronage and culture and therefore can prove to be equally discriminatory (ibid).

Contrary to views that LG is the level that women can easily break into and thus serve as springboard to national politics, the hierarchical and embedded nature of LG in local social structures make it difficult for women to break in as independent political actors (Mukhopadhyay 2005: 13). Where women are given the opportunity to participate in local government, the terms of their inclusion determine the sustainability of their representation. Countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Uganda and South Africa have affirmative action which has brought in significant number of women in LG (ibid), but the patronage political system and favours under which these quota systems operate tends to undermine the legitimacy, credibility and sustainability of women's representation in local politics (Goetz 2002, Mukhopadhyay 2005). Describing the case of India, Mukhopadhyay notes how selection of women candidates by parties for quota seats is determined by the 'usefulness' of the women; in terms of their relations to powerful men or so they can easily be influenced in political decision-making (2005: 14). Decentralisation processes therefore tend to reinforce and entrench existing traditional institutions and local elites; and which are deeply patriarchal,

allowing little or no space for women's authority and agency (ibid: 33). The author finds from her study in Bangladesh that women's marginalisation was reinforced by council practices and procedures. She notes how rules declared meetings quorate even when women representatives were absent; hence council meetings were scheduled without informing women, and when women queried the practice they were victimised (ibid: 33-34).

In analysing women's access to leadership positions and responsibilities of authority in community development committees in Ghana, Opare concludes that women are generally poorly represented in executive positions and even where women do achieve leadership positions, they are assigned nominal ones at lower levels of the hierarchy which are less visible or influential, such as women's organisers and ordinary executive members (2005). Tanga, in his study of women's participation in politics in South Africa, notes that before women are expected to fully participate in local governance, they must begin at the top. Political parties need to reserve a quota of their seats to women in party constitutions to correct the male dominance (2010: 6). The introduction of direct election to reserved seats for women in the Bangladeshi LG Law, for instance, is described by Khan and Ara as 'a breakthrough' for Bangladeshi women because they could not envisage any way women could have moved into these institutions. For these authors, at least the law has promoted women's access to government decision-making process in numbers albeit not much is ensured practically (2006: 87- 88).

The concept of decentralisation will be useful in analysing the opportunities and constraints decentralisation in Ghana offers for women's representation in LG. Representation in this study is understood to mean women contestants, elected and appointed to the Assembly. It is important to note that this paper does not employ the term 'gender' but 'women'. This is because decentralisation that transfers power and resources does not make provision for equal representation of women (Commonwealth Secretariat 2010), hence the study looks into the specific case of women. Moreover using 'gender' will entail a comparative analysis of men and women as well as other marginalised groups; which the study does not seek to do.

2.3 Factors Influencing Women's Political Representation

Women's level of Education

For many women, the lack of leadership capacity is due to discrimination in access to education and training (UN 2007: 20). Khan and Ara assert that education is the strongest factor influencing women's control of their own fate. They note that Bangladeshi women are politically handicapped because of low educational achievement and other social norms that restrict their movement in public (2006: 87). Medoff suggests a positive relationship between women's educational attainment and their political attitudes and beliefs regarding women's political participation: the greater the educational level of women the more likely they will support women candidates (1986: 249).

This concept of education will be helpful in understanding the influence of educational attainment of women candidates and female voter population on women's political representation.

Cultural beliefs

Culture is a set of shared attitudes, values, goals and practices that characterises an institution, organisation, or group (Wikipedia 2011). "Cultural beliefs are the commonly held norms and moral standards of a culture, the standards of right and wrong that set expectations for behaviour. These beliefs are usually rooted in the culture's symbolic inheritance and include the roles that are appropriate for particular persons" (Arnett 2011: 4). Opare suggests that women's inability to take-up leadership positions in communities is attributable to the cultural belief that ascribes natural leadership both in the household and wider community to men, and women only there to support them (2005: 95). Other cultural challenges to women's political representation, according to Khan and Ara, are patriarchy and religion. Patriarchal attitudes become so embedded to the extent that, even where there is supposed to be equality these attitudes tend to prevail. Patriarchal societies enforce rules in such a way that affect the self-esteem and self-confidence of women, limit their access to resources and information and keep them in subordinated status to men (2006: 87). This is to the extent that, some women whose leadership qualities are recognised by groups, to which they belong and nominated for positions, are disinclined to accept (Opare 2005: 92). Similarly, religion drives morality, ethics, religious laws or a preferred lifestyle from their ideas about the cosmos and human nature (Wikimedia 2011). Khan and Ara assert that religious interpretations are often employed by Islamic communities to challenge women's rights including their rights to political representation (2006: 87).

The relationship between women and Islam is defined by both Islamic texts and the culture of the Muslim world. The Qur'an stipulates the equality of men and women, but also states that men are the protectors and maintainers of women. Therefore righteous women are devoutly obedient to men. Although the Qur'an does not say, the superiority of men is interpreted from the text 'maintainers of women' (Wikimedia 2011). However, the most populous Muslim countries such as Indonesia, Pakistan and Bangladesh have at some point elected women as their leaders (ibid). It is therefore the misinterpretation of religion that puts women in subordinated position to men. For instance in Saudi Arabia women are not allowed to drive, remain veiled and hardly given the opportunity for political participation (Chaudhry 2011). Also, the King of Saudi Arabia in September 2011 proposed that Saudi women will be allowed to vote and stand for public office for the first time in 2015 (Gribbin 2011).

Medoff suggests that where fundamentalist religious groups have indoctrinated the society with their belief as the official moral position, then they succeed in imposing their religious standards and values on voters. Consequently, such societies tend to be negative towards women's political participation and

hence vote against women candidates (1986: 248). The lesson here is that, bringing women to men's domain of politics implies "tampering with the 'natural' principle of separate spheres for the sexes, lead[ing] to the total breakdown of the moral order" (Kabeer 1991: 52).

The concept cultural beliefs will guide the analysis on how cultural factors affect women in their efforts to get representation in LG.

Socio-economic factors

Poverty in Ghana remains high. One-third of Ghanaians are classified as hard-core poor and found largely among those in Agriculture, over 70% of whom are women. Poverty is noted to be greater in the rural areas and disproportionately located in the three northern regions (Ofei-Aboagye 2000: 3). About 80% of the population in northern Ghana is poor and 70% are extremely poor (GLSS 2008). Women's lower economic and social status, among others, especially in northern Ghana makes them particularly vulnerable as it limits their access to general advancement (Ofei-Aboagye 2000). For instance, women's "multiple roles as wives, mothers, daughters, community workers and income-generators severely limits their time for community interaction and mobilisation" (ibid: 4).

Similarly, Matembe, writing about women's political participation in Uganda, notes that, women are constrained from entering local level politics by lack of finances for campaigning; recognizing that politics is an expensive venture (2010: 8). Therefore to win elections candidates need to use resources to influence elections in their favour. The three most important resources, according to Medoff are money, people and time; and that candidates with the most money in an election campaign are more likely to win. He argues that women candidates, almost never raise as much money as their male counterparts and so women need to develop other campaign strategies to reduce this disadvantage, such as making time for campaign and networking (1986: 249).

The concept of economic factors will be useful in analysing how the lack of resources affects women's representation in local politics.

2.4 Analytical Framework

Based on the conceptual and literature review, the study proposes that the degree of women's political representation at the LG level is influenced by (a) decentralisation policy, (b) cultural beliefs, (c) education, and (d) socio-economic factors. In this analysis women's political representation which is considered as dependent variable is represented by the number of women contestants, elected, and appointed to the Assembly.

2.5 Dependent Variable: Women's Representation

The dependent variable of the study is about women's participation in LG activities as contestants, elected and appointed members to the Assembly. Since 1988, six DA elections have taken place through which 70% of the Assembly membership is elected. Government appointment of 30% members is done after the elections. This study will therefore focus on how women have participated to get elected or appointed to the DA and how they are accessing leadership positions in the Assembly. Generally the Assemblies have witnessed low women representation: few women contest and fewer are elected and appointed than men. Despite the 2002 government directive that all Assemblies ensure 50% appointed positions be given to women, in no Assembly in Ghana are there women making up a third of the total membership (Ofei-Aboagye 2004: 754).

The factors or independent variables that explain who gets elected and appointed to the DA are discussed below.

2.6 Independent Variables: Factors Contributing to Women's Political Representation

Gender-sensitive Decentralisation Policy

Ghana's decentralisation through the assembly system of local government is primarily about enhancing the participation and involvement of all people in public decision-making (ILGS 2009: 127). As noted by Mukhopadhyay, decentralisation of LG is a political project and so to be able to achieve its purpose, requires "strategies to mobilise 'voice' of subordinate groups in society and the forging of institutionalised spaces for participation and accountability" (2005: 11). In other words, the policy is expected to have affirmative action, reduce patronage and be gender-sensitive, so as to increase women representation. Countries such as Uganda, Tanzania, South Africa, Bangladesh, Pakistan and India have about 30% women representation in LG; and which is evident of the potential of affirmative action to increase women's representation politics. The 50% of appointed membership for women in Ghana is only a government directive and so not enforceable.

Proposition: where decentralisation policy lacks gender-sensitivity and statutory affirmative action women contestants, elected and appointed in LG will be low.

High Educational Attainment of Women

Educational attainment is an important factor that could help aspirants get elected or appointed to positions in DAs. Crook and Manor in their study observe how unlike South Asia, West African countries tend to discuss the success of LGs in terms of whether 'high quality' people were elected and appointed (1998: 280). They observed that in Ghana, "elected representatives still tended to come disproportionately from the male, educated and professional strata of society"

(ibid: 275). This implies generally that Ghanaians prefer educated people as their DA representatives. Medoff points out that the general educational attainment for women influences their support for a woman candidate (1986). The study region has the lowest female education rate in the country (GLSS 2008); which implies that women in the study area may not be the preferred choice as Assembly representatives.

Proposition: where the educational attainment of women candidates and female population is low then less women will contest, get elected and appointed to the Assembly.

Women's Access to Socio-economic resources: money, time and people

Political participation is a project that requires commitment of resources. Meanwhile, poverty in Ghana has important gender dimension. According to the Ghana Gender Assessment Report, females experience greater poverty, heavier time burdens, lower rates of utilization of productive resources compared to their male counterparts (Ghana 2002: 8); and the situation is worst in northern Ghana (GLSS 2008). This also affects women's ability to engage in other community activities which could give them exposure and endear them to voters and appointing bodies. Hence women's lack of resources hinders their bid to be part of the LG system as contestants, elected and appointed members, because women are unable to conduct active campaign.

Proposition: where women have low access to money, time, and people less number of women will contest, get elected and appointed to the DAs.

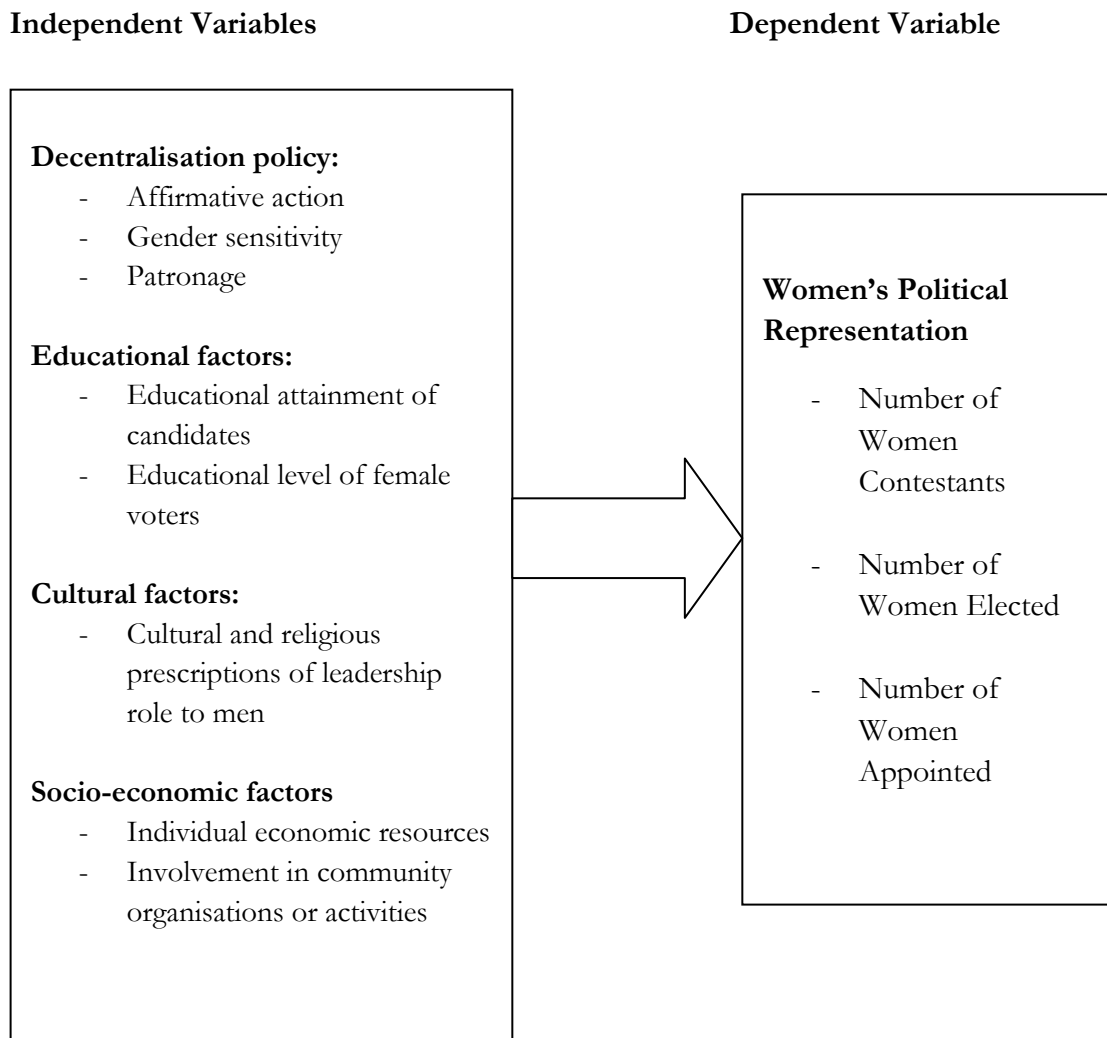
Cultural prescriptions and practices

Culture, to a large extent influences the level of interaction of a people with the political processes and structures prevalent in the community; and especially views the roles of men and women differently. For instance the culture of northern Ghana, coupled with the predominant Islamic religious practices, restricts decision-making and address of public gatherings to men while confining women to the domestic domain. While traditionally male politicians can devote their full time and energies to politics, women have to split their efforts between domestic and public activities (Mahamadu 2010: 26). Though Islam stipulates the equality of men and women, the roles of women in Islam are often (mis)interpreted to subordinate them to men. Some Muslim-majority nations such as Afghanistan allowed women's suffrage only in the last decade; and Saudi Arabia is still considering giving women the vote in 2015. Women's representation would be enhanced in a situation where the culture and religion are applied progressively to women (Mahamadu 2010: 27). Therefore, when culture and religion take control of LG then it will be difficult for women to have access to political representation especially at local level.

Proposition: where cultural beliefs and practices accord less leadership rights to women then the number of women who contest for, get elected and appointed to, and their access to leadership positions in the Assembly will be low.

Figure 1 below is a diagram of the dependent and independent variables.

Figure 1
Diagram of Dependent and Independent Variables



Source: Author's presentation of Analytical Framework

Chapter 3 Local Government Structure and Women's Representation since 1988

3.1 Introduction

Although various decentralisation policies have been implemented in Ghana, the most comprehensive LG reforms started in 1988 and has since become the dominant feature of successive governments.

3.2 Decentralisation

The Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) government introduced the most ambitious and comprehensive decentralised LG systems in Ghana through PNDC Law 207 and conducted the first LG elections in 1988. The PNDC, now National Democratic Congress (NDC), which won the 1992 Presidential elections, conducted the first LG election under constitutional rule in 1994. The PNDC/NDC era saw a lot of empowerment activities for women through the 31st December Women's Movement (31stDWM), a nationwide women's organisation. The New Patriotic Party (NPP) which took over power in 2000, created more districts and gave legal backing to the Institute of Local Government Studies (ILGS) as the main capacity building institution for LG (Mahamadu 2010). The NPP has been one of the governments with the most gender-sensitivity: establishment of Women and Children's Ministry; appointment of minister for Girl-child Education; and women to head key public institutions; micro-credit for women; passage of the Domestic Violence Act and Human Trafficking Act; and provision of free maternity healthcare to women (NPP Manifesto 2008).

The NDC, then in opposition, criticised the NPP government's amendment of various laws and Legislative Instruments and also the appointment of the 30% DA membership. However, having been in power since January 2009 and having conducted DA elections in 2010, it is realised that the NDC government is equally guilty of what it criticised the NPP government; as using the reserved 30% appointed membership of the DAs as an avenue for rewarding political party cronies such that political party executives tend to dominate the appointments to the Assemblies, regardless of their competence (NDC Manifesto 2008). The NDC, in their manifesto, promised to appoint 40% women to all government-appointed positions; but three years after coming into office this promise has not been fulfilled.

3.3 Membership of the District Assembly

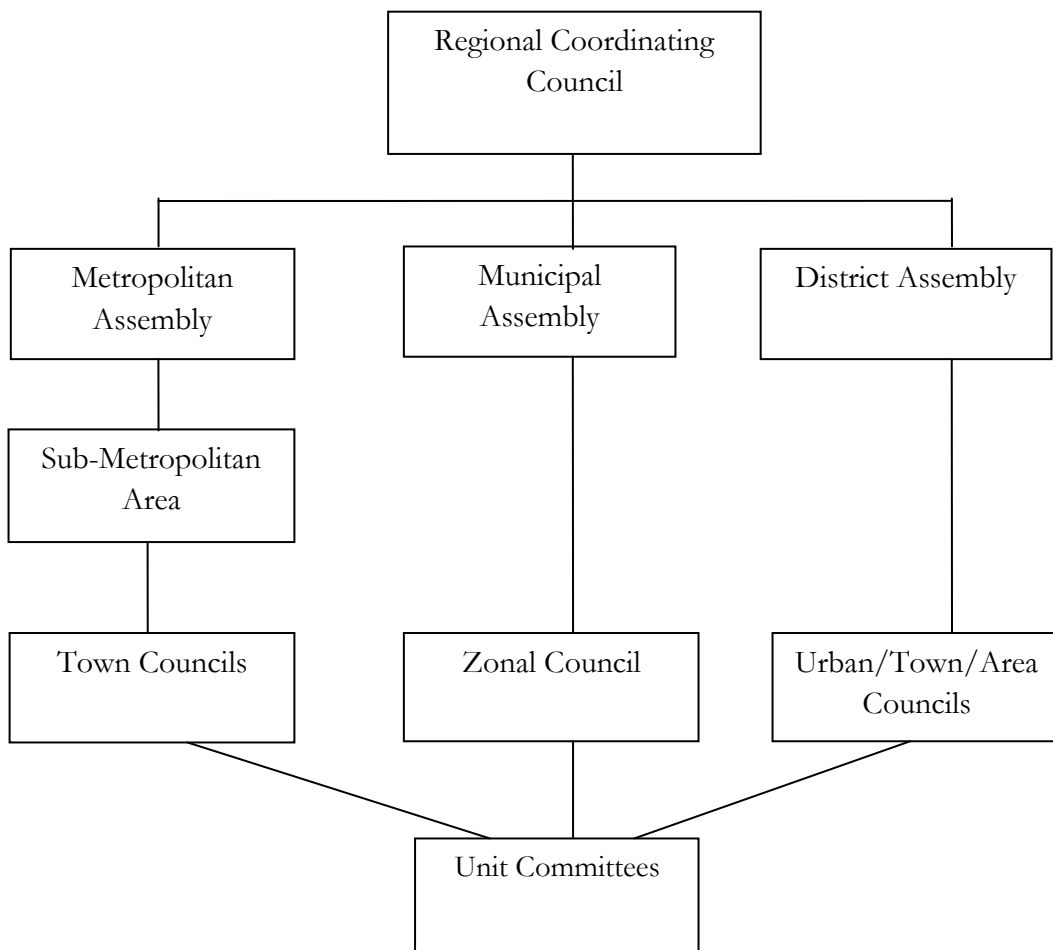
Membership of DA include the Metropolitan/Municipal/District Chief Executive appointed by the President with approval of at least two-thirds of Assembly members; the MPs within the Assembly area; 70% elected members and 30% appointed by the President in consultation with traditional authorities and other

interest groups. Every Assembly has a Presiding Member elected from among the Assembly members by two-thirds of the total membership (Ghana 1992).

3.4 The Local Government Structure

The government monitors and coordinates the work of the Metropolitan/Municipal/District Assemblies through the Regional Coordinating Council of each of the ten government administrative regions. Under the Metropolitan Assemblies are the Sub-Metropolitan areas and Town Councils. Below the Municipal and District Assemblies lie the Zonal and Urban/Town/Area Councils respectively. The Unit Committees are the bottommost and the last of the LG structure. These sub-structures are established to ensure that government is brought closer to the people. The Ghana's LG structure is illustrated below in Figure 2.

Figure 2
Ghana's Local Government Structure



Source: ILGS (2009)

3.5 Women and Politics in Ghana

The PNDC regime (1981-1992) witnessed a revival of women's political participation. The 31stDWM (referred to by many as the women's wing of the PNDC/NDC) is noted to have promoted the political representation of women. Allah-Mensah indicates that majority of the women who contested the 1988 DA election and the 1992 parliamentary elections were politically connected to the 31stDWM and were members of the PNDC/NDC (2005: 17). It can therefore be said that the movement at least created opportunities for women's representation in politics at the local and national levels.

During the constitution making between 1991 and 1992, a Committee of Experts (CE) and a Consultative Assembly (CA) were formed to respectively draft and discuss the constitution for the Fourth Republic. Lamenting on the gender composition of the committee, Allah-Mensah notes, "Out of nine members only two, which is a paltry of 22%, were women", and suggests that women's interests could not have received the needed attention no matter how vocal the women were and how gender liberal the men were (ibid: 19). In the CA were 10 women (representing 31stDWM/ NCWD) out of 260 members from various representative groups. Though the 10 women's representation was more than any one identifiable group, Allah-Mensah bemoans their level of participation. She notes that though a few women made significant contributions to discussions especially on women issues, majority did not perform to expectation, with the intended implication on content and outcome of the constitution regarding women's concerns (ibid: 23). We can suggest therefore that this underperformance could be due to the high politicisation in the nomination of the CA membership, sidelining more qualified women who did not belong to the ruling party.

From 1992 when Ghana returned to constitutional rule, women have been part of the political processes at both national and local levels, still as a minority. The Fourth Republic has had five presidential and parliamentary elections held in 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004 and 2008. At the presidential level no woman contested in all these elections. It was in 2008 when a woman, Eva Amegashie, declared her intention to contest as an independent presidential candidate but was quickly co-opted into the Peoples' National Convention (PNC) and made its vice-presidential candidate. Again in July 2011, history was made when the former First Lady, Nana Konadu Agyemang-Rawlings contested but lost to the current President of Ghana, John Evans Atta-Mills as the NDC party presidential candidate for the 2012 elections. From the parliamentary perspective, the statistics indicate insignificant but steady increase in the number of women contestants and those elected except in 2008 that it experienced a decrease in contestants from the previous 104 to 103; and elected from 25 to 19. The figures are shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Number of Women Parliamentary Contestants and Elected in Ghana since 1992

Year	1992	1996	2000	2004	2008
Contestants	23	57	95	104	103
Elected	16	18	19	25	19
% of total	69.5%	26%	20%	24%	18.4%

Source: Adapted from Daily Graphic 6/12/08

At the local level women have been taking part in LG activities through the DAs as elected and appointed members. The elected positions are keenly contested for, though without the political party furore characteristic of national level elections, because the system is (controversially) non-partisan (ibid: 50). Women's performance at the DA level since 1988, like the national level, has experienced steady but slow progress in number of contestants and actual winners. Sadly however, the 2010 DA elections saw the number of women contestants reduced by 23% from 1,776 in 2006 to 1,376. Likewise, the number of elected women reduced from 478 in 2006 to a whopping 412 in the 2010 elections, a reduction of 14%. Table 3 has the figures.

Table 3
Number of Women DA Contestants and Elected in Ghana from 1994-2010

Year	1994	1998	2002	2006	2010
Women contestants	348	580	981	1,776	1,376
Women elected	94 (27%)	199 (34%)	368 (38%)	478 (27%)	412 (30%)
% of total elected seats	2.9%	5%	7%	10%	10%

Source: Ofei-Aboagye 2004: 754, Joy News/Ghana 10/2/11

3.6 Conclusion

It can be concluded from this review that the LG structures do not provide sufficient opportunity for women's representation. If it did, more women representation would be achieved. Though the PNDC/NDC era, through the 31stDWM promoted women's empowerment, more efforts and resources were put on the economic empowerment than the political empowerment of women. This is evidenced by the low percentages of women's representation, though most of them were members of the movement. Also, the NPP government referred to as the most gender-sensitive, tended to concentrate more attention at national level government positions for women but did very little to increase women's representation at the DA level. Women have also played various roles in Ghana's constitution making albeit a paltry representation. All these happenings are at the national level and tell nothing about what is going on at the district levels. In all the processes however, high politicisation has been the order for various governments leading to low qualified women representation.

Chapter 4 Declining Women's Political Representation in TAMA

4.1 Introduction

The chapter highlights the background that acts to maintain women's low profile in northern Ghana; and the politics surrounding women's political representation in the Tamale Metropolis, especially among the two main political parties. Also discussed is the trend of women's political representation in TAMA and efforts of NGOs to enhance women's representation in politics.

4.2 Contextual background of Tamale Metropolitan Area

The Northern Region whose capital is Tamale, together with the Upper East and Upper West regions constitutes northern Ghana, hitherto referred to, during the colonial era as the Northern Territory; and covers 40% of the total land area of Ghana. It is recorded that these regions are the most disadvantaged and the poorest in Ghana due to their overall neglect by various governments. Both pre and post-Independence, these regions have been viewed as labour reserve for the development of the rest of the country; with little investment in infrastructural development done in the area (Baden et al. 1994: 5). Additionally, the arid-savannah ecology of the region and limited irrigation facilities does not allow all-year farming which the people mainly depend on for their livelihood. Farmers in northern Ghana, (most of whom are women because the men have out-migrated to work in the cash economy of the south), are therefore highly vulnerable to external shocks given the limited diversity of their income sources. This coupled with the lack of physical and social infrastructure implies that women's income earning opportunities are constrained; and their access to education, and thus modern employment, is limited (ibid: 5).

The social organisation of the people is informed by patrilineal descent ideologies which differentiate them from the south. Property rights and succession to traditional positions are based largely on paternal ties. Sons succeed fathers and inherit property while daughters do not. (Awedoba 2006). This tends to put a lot of economic burden on women as they neither inherit from their fathers nor their husbands. The region has the highest Muslim population of 58% while that of the country is 16%, and Tamale 84% The Northern Region has the lowest school attendance rate of 50% female and 59% male, while the national school attendance rate is 86% (GLSS 2008).

Therefore the overall neglect of the northern regions, the patrilineal family structures reinforced by Islamic practices, low education, and the arid-savannah ecology have all acted to maintain women's low status in the three northern regions (Baden et. al 1994: 5).

4.3 The Politics of Women's Political Representation in Tamale Metropolis

In all five parliament elections held in Ghana since 1992, all the three constituencies in Tamale have always been won by men; and from the two main political parties, NDC and NPP. Apart from the smaller political parties such as the PNC and CPP who present women candidates, the NDC and NPP never put forward women. It is important to note that this situation may be attributable to the history of protracted chieftaincy problem in the area where the two chieftaincy factions are very antagonistic towards one another. In Ghana, Tamale is considered a 'sensitive' area in terms of politics and chieftaincy. The two factions: the Abudus and the Andanis are openly associated with the NPP and the NDC respectively, to the extent that the chieftaincy problem is believed to be highly politicized. Each of these two main parties, who would go at all length to win the Tamale parliamentary seats, would rather sponsor men to contest the elections because men are more likely to win than women. Additionally, all contestants have been Muslims with the exception of two Christian women who contested in 2008 on the tickets of the PNC and CPP.

At the Assembly level, the TAMA has consistently experienced very low women's representation since 1988. The first assembly had only 1 elected woman out of 54 and no appointed woman among the 22 government appointed members. Similarly, the two assembly periods of 1994-1998 and 1998-2002 each had 1 elected and 5 appointed women. It is important to note that no elections were held in 2002 in Tamale due to the 2002 chieftaincy conflict during which the paramount chief who belonged to the Andani faction was murdered. Consequently elected members continued from 1998 until elections were held in 2005. However DA elections across the country were due in 2006 but this could not come off in the Tamale Metropolis because members went to court invoking article 246 of the constitution which stipulates that LG elections shall be held every four years. Their argument was upheld and so elected members remained in office until 2010 elections (Mahamadu 2010: 82). In 2005 history was made when 2 of the 15 women contestants were elected into the TAMA while the number of appointed women was increased from 5 in 1998 to 6. However, the new government in 2009 replaced all appointees (whom they believed were cronies of the previous government) with a different set of people. This time however the number of women appointees was reduced from 6 in 2005 to 4 while the number of appointed men was increased from 16 in 2005 to 22. This trend is interesting considering that the NDC government soon forgot its manifesto promise of giving 40% appointed positions to women.

The 2010 elections results were shocking to many including the women contestants and the agencies that supported them. Of the 17 women who contested the elections only 1 was elected to the 64 elected-member assembly. With this abysmal situation it was expected that the government would increase the tally of women by giving at least 40% of appointed positions to women; but

only 8 women (28%) were appointed among the 28 government appointees. Table 4 shows the trend.

Table 4
Elected and Appointed Assembly members in TAMA since 1988

Assembly period	Total Representation	No. of male elected	No. of female elected	No. of male appointed	No. of female appointed
1988-1994	76	53 (98.2%)	1 (1.8%)	22 (100%)	0 (0%)
1994-1998	77	53 (98.2%)	1 (1.8%)	18 (78.3%)	5 (21.7%)
1998-2002	77	53 (98.2%)	1 (1.8%)	18 (78.3%)	5 (21.7%)
2006-2008	76	52 (96.3%)	2 (3.7%)	16 (72.7%)	6 (27.3%)
2008-2010	80	52 (96.3%)	2 (3.7%)	22 (84.6%)	4 (15.4%)
2011	92	63 (98.5)	1 (1.5%)	20 (71.4)	8 (28.6%)

Source: Adapted from TAMA Membership records 2011

The trend in Tamale is not so different from the national trend especially with regards the last two elections. Out the 1,776 women contestants in 2006 only 27% (478) was elected. In 2010, both the number of women contestants and winners dropped to 1,376 and 412 respectively. This represents a drop of about 14% from the 2006 women winners. Similarly, of the 15 women who contested the 2006 elections in Tamale 2 got elected representing 13% and in 2010 only 1 of the 17 women contestants won, representing 6%. The figures are presented in Table 5.

Table 5
Number of women DA Contestants and Winners at National level vis-à-vis TAMA from 2006-2010

Year	2006		2010	
	National	TAMA	National	TAMA
Women contestants	1,776	15	1,376	17
Women elected	478	2	412	1
% of total	27%	13%	30%	6%

Source: Adapted from Ofei-Aboagye 2004:754, Joy News/Ghana 10/2/11, Ghana Electoral Commission (2006 and 2010)

In terms of percentages however, the case of Tamale can be said to be more appalling in view of the 50% reduction in elected women from 2 to 1 in 2006 and 2010 respectively. Inasmuch as there may be skepticism about the precarious situation of women's representation in the TAMA, we need to be hopeful in view of the fact that at least women are still prepared and interested to contest and win elections or get appointed to the DA. We also need to be hopeful because, according to the NGOs advocating for improved women's participation in the DA, the 2010 elections results have revealed a marked improvement in vote margins for most women contestants compared to the 2006 elections. For instance, the only elected woman in 2010 won with about 63% of valid votes cast whilst her counterparts in 2006 had 48% and 42% respectively. Of the 16 women losers in 2010, 9 of them had the second highest votes in their respective electoral areas. Thus all is not lost for the future of women in politics in Tamale.

4.4 Efforts in Futility

NGOs, women's advocacy organisations and other Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have shown a lot of concern about the low representation of women in politics in Ghana at both the national and local levels, and are making efforts to curbing the situation. Among these at the national level are Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), Abantu for Development, Ark Foundation, and Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF) who have formed a coalition and also have branches in the North. In Tamale, two local NGOs - GDCA and NORSAAC - are the main NGOs that train and sponsor women's political participation; with support from two international NGOs (IBIS and ActionAid). In preparation for the 2010 DA elections, GDCA and NORSAAC collaborated to profile and support women who had the intention of contesting. Of the 22 women trained in Tamale 17 (77%) eventually contested but only 1 won. Apart from the training, contestants were provided campaign posters and airtime to sell themselves to their electorates. Of the 16 women who lost the elections, the NGOs presented the profile of 10 of them to the government for consideration for appointed positions in TAMA, but none was appointed.

It is important to note that all the 17 women contestants in the Tamale Metropolis have better educational qualifications than most of their male counterparts. All of them have at least secondary school education with one being a lecturer with a Masters Degree. With this we can confidently suggest that educational background is not so much an issue that reduces women's chances of participating in the TAMA. Apart from their good educational background, they were all in good occupations such as teaching, development work and trading. We can also suggest that experience of the women in the work of the assembly does not count so much as to attract votes. This is because even one of the only two elected women in the 2006 assembly who contested again in the 2010 elections lost, despite her being acclaimed one of the best women performers in the last assembly.

4.5 Conclusion

The neglect of northern Ghana with little infrastructural development by successive government, coupled with the patrilineal social organisation of the people and Islamic practices contribute to maintain women's low status in the region. It is clear from the political processes in the Metropolis that women cannot win parliamentary elections in Tamale in the foreseeable future. At the Assembly level, it is very embarrassing that despite several years of women's empowerment efforts by NGOs and other agencies, women's representation at TAMA hardly exceeds one. The question is whether this appalling situation will ever change. The 2010 elections results however, revealed a marked improvement in vote margins for most women contestants compared to the 2006 elections. This notwithstanding, the situation shows certain things need to be put right, because it is clear that the educational background of the women is not an issue that reduces

their chances of getting representation because most of them have higher education than some of their male counterparts.

Chapter 5 Inhibiting Factors to Women’s Political Representation in TAMA and Women’s Coping Strategies

5.1 Introduction

The chapter highlights the membership composition and related structural politics in TAMA that tends to affect the representation of female members. Factors limiting women’s chances of getting elected and appointed to TAMA, which include cultural beliefs and prescriptions, socio-economic factors such as individual resources and involvement in community activities, educational attainment of candidates and voters, and prevailing decentralisation practices and attitudes are discussed. Also discussed in the chapter are the strategies elected and appointed candidates adopt to gain access to LG representation.

5.2 Membership Composition and Structural Politics of TAMA

TAMA has 3 parliamentary constituencies, 11 town councils, 64 electoral areas and 64 units. TAMA has a total membership of 96 made up of MCE, 3 MPs, 64 elected and 28 appointed members. Of the 64 elected members only 1 representing 1.5% is a female and the remaining 63 (98.5%) are males. For the government appointees, only 8 representing 28% are women and 20 (72%) are men. The total number of elected and appointed women is 9 out of 92, representing 10% of total membership, whilst men make up 90%. Table 6 has the statistics.

Table 6
Current Elected and Appointed members of TAMA by Gender

Gender	Elected members	Appointed members	Total
Male	63 (98.5%)	20 (72%)	83 (90%)
Female	1 (1.5)	8 (28%)	9 (10%)
Total	64 (100%)	28 (100%)	92 (100%)

Source: Adapted from TAMA 2011 Membership record

The Assembly works through the Executive Committee and Subcommittees. LG Act 462 provides for 5 statutory Subcommittees for each assembly: Development Planning, Social Services, Works, Justice and Security, and Finance and Administration; and others which each Assembly deems necessary to address their unique concerns. Therefore TAMA has added Revenue Mobilisation, and Environment and Sanitation, making up 7 Subcommittees. Women are in all 7 subcommittees but only 1 (Environment and Sanitation) is chaired by a woman, representing 14% and the remaining 6 (86%) have men as chairpersons. The officer of GDCA notes that, all viable subcommittees such as Finance, Works, and Development planning are taken up by men; and women are pushed to welfare related committees such as social services and sanitation. A statement by one of the executive members interviewed confirms:

Women by nature are good at sanitation and preserving the environment, so that subcommittee is just best for her.

This agrees with the assertion of Holzner and deWit (2003: 3) in their study on women councilors in India, that men occupy positions of financial importance whilst women are in welfare such as health, education and child welfare. In other words, women are put in subcommittees that reflect their reproductive roles. In the executive committee, which constitutes not more than one-third of the total membership of the Assembly including chairpersons of the various subcommittees (ILGS 2006: 22), are 4 women representing 13% of the 30 members and 26 (87%) are men. Apart from subcommittee chairpersons who are automatic members of the executive committee, the rest have to do intense lobbying to get nominated and voted for by the general house. It is therefore not surprising that the number of women in the executive committee is so negligible considering that only 1 woman chairs a subcommittee and therefore an automatic member, whilst the remaining went through intense lobbying. The female membership is so insignificant to make much difference when it comes to voting for their own.

Discussions with the Deputy Director of TAMA revealed that a female member in the 1998 assembly chaired the Revenue Mobilisation subcommittee and was one of the most successful chairpersons of TAMA as her tenure saw increase in local revenue mobilized by the Assembly. This assertion was in fact confirmed by the woman concerned, Hajia Ajara Telly, during interview with her. She noted that, though an appointed member, she performed to the admiration and commendation by all; proving male members wrong that women cannot be effective leaders. The Director opined that more women in chair positions at TAMA could boost the performance of the Assembly as evidenced by the hard work of, also, the current female chairperson of the Environment and Sanitation subcommittee. The Executive Committee, also known as the Metropolitan Authority, coordinates the plans of the subcommittees and submit these as comprehensive plans of action to the DA (ILGS 2006: 22). Therefore being an executive committee member gives them the opportunity to push forward their individual electoral area's plans as well as those of their various subcommittees.

This confirms Mahamadu's claim that, individuals who chair committees are influential and powerful because they have an important role in agenda setting (2010: 81).

The politics between elected and appointed members surfaced in the interview with one of the elected Assemblypersons. She narrated how elected members agreed among themselves to vote against any appointed member who contested for the position of chairperson to any subcommittee. This is because the elected feel they deserve to be in such positions because they toiled to get elected whilst the appointees got their position on a silver platter. They believe being chairpersons gives them the opportunity to be privy of sources and availability of funding so they can push funding to projects in their electoral areas. This implies some kind of antagonism between elected and appointed members, because as pointed out by the officer of NORSAAC, appointed women are looked down upon. Comparing elected and women in 'special seats' in Tanzania, Francis observes similar scenario and raises the question as to whether the special seat provision is in fact divisive and disempowering (2007: 10). Similarly, Mukhopadyay notes that women on reserved seats have no contact with constituencies, little communication with each other, belong to different social groups, and so have limited shared agenda among themselves and with elected members (2005: 36). This could bring about divisive attitudes in TAMA as not only the elected woman but also the elected men feel that they do not have much in common with their appointed colleagues. This is clear in the words of the elected woman:

I never knew most of them until at the assembly. My concern is to push for issues that address women's interests generally but more specifically the concerns of my electorates because they elected me. Appointees have no problem because they have no electorate to hold them accountable.

This notwithstanding and looking at the current trend in TAMA, adherence to the quota provisions will at least augment the number of women in the assembly.

5.3 Factors Inhibiting Women's Representation in Local Politics

Factors attributed to the trend of low women representation at TAMA cut across cultural, socio-economic, educational and prevailing decentralisation practices.

Culture: a Bane to Women's Public Decision-making?

In Ghana as in all over Africa, women's roles are confined to the domestic whilst men are in-charge of the public domain. In the study area, which has a Muslim population of 84%, it is hard to differentiate between Islamic and cultural practices because they are seen as one and the same because they influence each other. Cultural and Islamic beliefs and practices prescribe leadership roles both in the household and public for men; and women are confined to the home and expected to perform household responsibilities. These attitudes stem from the

intra-household and community gender power dynamics; and which are also extended to the general public political arena.

Intra household and community gender power dynamics is about the power relationships between men and woman that tend to put women in subordinate positions at the house and community levels. On women's roles, it was gathered from all respondents that economic decisions are generally taken by men in households without consulting women except in situations where the woman contributes economically to the household, and even with that, the man has the final say because he is regarded the head. The current appointed Assemblywoman argues:

Women are only in charge of housekeeping, and take decisions with regards to meals and reception of visitors.

The implication of the lopsided household power relations in favour of men is that the decision of most women to take public leadership or political positions depends on the approval of their husbands. No wonder majority of the Assemblywoman are either single or divorced. For instance, of the 9 women at TAMA 2 are married, 2 divorced and 5 are single. It is important to note that the women are single not because they are under age or do not want to get married, but because men are apprehensive of marrying highly educated women for fear that such women would not submit to their dictates.

The experience at the community level is not different from what applies at the household. Just like the household, culture ascribes community leadership to men. All respondents indicate that, of the community leadership positions ranging from chief and elders, chairman, youth leaders, to *magazia*, women occupy only the positions of *magazia* and female youth leader. The community leadership positions are rift with various gender and power dynamics. Whilst the chief and elders are in-charge of the general welfare of the community in both physical and spiritual matters, the chairman takes charge of developmental matters and the male youth leader is responsible for affairs of young men. The *magazia* and the female youth leader are only in-charge of affairs concerning women and female youth respectively. However, women cannot take decisions on their own without approval of the chief and chairman, but the latter does without consulting the women. To this effect the appointed Assemblywoman noted,

Magazia is consulted only when they need women to implement some decisions such as communal labour.

The above confirms Opare's point that, both household and community levels men are believed to be the natural leaders and women are only there to support them (2005: 95). It is also in line with Mahamadu's position that, communities in northern Ghana restrict decision-making and address of public gatherings to men and women confined to the domestic domain (2010: 26). On respondents' view about the cultural effects on women's participation in politics,

the general understanding gathered is the misapplication of culture at both community and Assembly levels. One of the female youth leaders argues,

Culture is dynamic, those days when women were seen as inferior and confined to the home is over, yet men for their own selfish interest still use culture to discriminate against women”.

The youth leaders of Sagnarigu contend that, the fact that their Assemblywoman beat two male contenders to win the seat is indication that tradition and culture has little impact on women’s political representation. All 4 youth leaders interviewed believe tradition and culture should not be barrier to women’s participation in politics. However the officer of GDCA intimates that men hide behind culture to portray politics as a ‘no-go’ area for women:

Culture is a big issue because some women failed to contest for fear of losing their marriage. Even at the Assembly, outspoken women are intimidated during meetings because they are seen out of the normal.

Corroborating this statement Hajia Zaratu, former elected Assemblywoman says she was nicknamed ‘gender’ because she was outspoken and never accepted intimidation. When asked about the factors contributing to the low female representation at the TAMA, the past appointed woman (a Muslim) says,

In this region non-Muslim women are usually neither voted for nor appointed. If to satisfy gender requirements as in appointed positions, then they prefer Muslim women but these are mostly illiterates, and so they tend to put men there.

The officer from GDCA also notes that,

Muslims prescribe the lifestyle of women such as, prohibition from seeing dead bodies, or being among men or outside home at odd hours. Both men and women use this as excuse that politics is tasking and so is meant for descent women.

This assertion supports the position of Medoff (1986: 248) that fundamentalist religious groups question the proper role of women in society, saying scripture mandates men to be leaders and women homemakers. As such the Muslim-majority society of Tamale might have been indoctrinated with this belief as the official moral position of Muslims. This consequently leads to low women’s political representation. This however tends to affect women vying for elected positions more than those for appointed positions. For appointed positions, the requirement of gender balance makes it mandatory to have some women representation among the 30% government appointees; and obviously Muslim women are the preferred choice.

Another issue, according to programme officer of NORSAAC, is the fear of losing control of women, which makes most traditional authorities to disincline to endorse the political candidature of women. She says,

When you talk to the chiefs they agree to give their support to women but turn round and do otherwise, just as husbands.

The chief of Sagnarigu however think otherwise. For him, the fact that some communities have women chiefs shows that women are expected to be leaders too. He however acknowledges that there are some traditional roles that even female chiefs are not allowed to perform hence men take up those roles.

Despite the general feeling that culture does not prevent women's political participation, it can be deduced from respondents' explanations that culture in fact acts as very important limiting factor to women achieving their political ambition. The fact that even females chiefs are denied the performance of certain traditional roles; and the *magazia* is left out in community decision-making, are indications that the culture disadvantages women. As asserted by Mukhopadhyay, "the deep abhorrence of ... culture to women's role in the public sphere infects the meeting room and council chambers of local government institutions" (2005: 33). In other words, the very cultural restrictions at the domestic domain are the same ones transferred into the public political sphere.

One therefore appreciates the difficulties women face in their bid to present themselves for political positions especially when competing with men. I will therefore not hesitate to state categorically that the foregoing confirms the *proposition* that cultural and religious beliefs and practices in Tamale limit the number of women contestants, elected and appointed to TAMA.

Women's Domestic Roles: A Barrier to Socio-economic Resources

This factor highlights the issue of cost involved in political campaign which requires the candidate to have access to economic resources; and also the need for candidates to have prior involvement in community or political organisations for exposure to the electorates and appointing bodies.

It is generally acknowledged that politics is an expensive venture that requires commitment of resources; and which women tend to lack (Matembe 2010: 8). Medoff notes the three most important resources to the individual for successful political campaign as money, people and time (1986: 246). 'People' refers to networking and involvement in community groups and activities. Study respondents acknowledged the expensiveness of politics which tends to limits the chances of most women without sponsorship. The elected woman abhors the way men dish out money and gifts to the electorates to the disadvantage of their female contenders who cannot do same because of household financial burdens. This is confirmed by one of the executive members that

Men have more resources because of less household responsibilities and so can afford to socialize with friends and win their votes.

The position of all respondents is that men have more resources and so can engage in more intensive campaigns than women. This agrees with Mandel's assertion that candidates with the most money in an election campaign are more

likely to win; and that money is the biggest problem of women (1981 cited in Medoff 1986: 249). Medoff moreover notes that women's lack of money makes them devise other ways of campaigning through the use of people and time (ibid). This is confirmed by the elected woman's revelation that she relied so much on the youth and women's groups in her community who did a lot of campaigning for her. A male appointee attributes the lack of women's access to resources to the general poverty situation in northern Ghana where due to patriarchy women have no access to family and community resources such as land and livestock and even the few who have cannot dispose them off without the consent of husbands or male relatives.

A male appointee points out that politics in Tamale has taken another dimension involving the use of 'electoral boys', who move round from one community to another, usually on motorbikes, campaigning for politicians who recruited them. This is beyond the affordability of many women. This affirms apprehensions held by potential women politicians of the lack of funding for effective campaigning because as one puts it, "*money really counts*". On why women are not elected by the electorates, the NGO representatives mention among others the lack of resources and the low party sponsorship for women. The officer for NORSAAC notes,

Women are financially weak because political parties prefer sponsoring more men to women. NGOs provide training, posters and airtime but no cash which the electorates want.

This assertion of parties' preference for male candidates confirms Mahamadu's suggestion that political parties' preference for males negatively affects women's political participation (2010:26).

The level of candidates' involvement in community activities or political organisations also affects their chances of winning and getting appointed. Community involvement affords individuals the opportunity of networking, contacting and building alliances to make them known, acquire sponsorship and endear them to the hearts of electorates and appointing authorities. Medoff's view of people as one of the important campaign resources applies to both elected and appointed members. The appointed may not require money to get appointed but definitely need people and time. As confirmed by the appointed members, their appointment is due to their work either at the community, political party or professional levels and the time they had for networking and contacting at various levels.

In Ghana generally and in northern Ghana in particular, it is difficult for one to get a political position as elected or appointed member without having strong affiliation with a political party, community organisation or links with influential individuals in society. The 2 current Assembly women interviewed both acknowledged their strong affiliation to the ruling NDC party. They acknowledged that their active involvement in the NDC as women organisers in their respective

zones played significant role in their election and appointment. As intimated by a government appointee,

One rarely will get government appointment to the assembly without leaning towards the ruling party. I was appointed not only because of my vast experience in education but my sympathy with the ruling party also counts.

All Assembly members, NGOs representatives, potential women politicians and husbands of assemblywomen interviewed attest to the fact that political party affiliation counts in one's election or appointment to TAMA. However both past assemblywomen interviewed indicate otherwise. They note that as development workers they do not belong to any political party as that will affect their credibility before their clients and partners. They all however agree that involvement in community organisations and activities is important for one's election and appointment.

From the above it can be concluded that access to economic resources and involvement in political parties, community groups and religious groups gives a candidate more chances of winning and getting appointed to the DA. However, this is more favourable to men than women because women tend to lack all three resources (money, time and people) proposed by Medoff (1986). This is attributable to women's greater experience of poverty, heavier time burden, lower rate of utilization of productive resources, poorer literacy rates, among others, especially in northern Ghana (GLSS 2008 & Ghana 2002). It holds true for the *proposition* that where women have lower access to economic resources (money, time, and people) lower number of women contest, get elected and appointed to the Assembly.

High in Qualifications Low in Numbers

Educational attainment of political aspirants as well as voters is an important factor that could influence the election and appointment of people to political positions. On the contrary however Ghana's LG Act 462: 6 (5) stipulates that lack of education should not be barrier to any person's candidature to the DA. However, in TAMA all 64 elected members have educational attainment ranging from Middle School Leaving Certificate and Basic Education to University degree. The problem however is that only 1 woman is among the 64 elected members. This tends to confirm Crook and Manor's (1998) observation that people in West Africa, especially northern Ghana prefer educated males as their LG representatives. The paltry representation of elected women in TAMA stems from the generally lower educational attainment of women in the Northern Region. Meanwhile the Electoral Commission records indicate that women form more than 50% of the total registered voter. If this is the case what then prevents women from casting their votes for women? This suggests that, even with their greater percentage in the voter's register, women's low educational attainment in the region negatively affects their attitudes and beliefs towards the political potential of women. This agrees with Medoff's suggestion that the lower the educational level of women voters the less likely they will support women

candidates (1986:249). Moreover as noted by the NGO officers and also evidenced from the election register, the 2010 DA elections had women with higher educational qualification than men, ranging from Diploma to Masters Degrees; and yet only 1 of the 17 women contestants was elected.

Furthermore, in terms of education there may be more politically eligible men than women as evidenced in the lower number of women DA contestants. For instance for the 2006 elections 15 women as against 105 men contested for 54 seats; and in 2010, 17 women as against 174 men contested for the 64 seats. Moreover the voter preference for educated male representatives (Crook and Manor 1998) coupled with the influence of culture make voters to support male candidates.

On the part of appointed positions, if the purpose of the 30% appointed DA positions is actually to harness various expertise to bear on the effectiveness of the assemblies on various technical areas (Ofei-Aboagye 2004: 753), then one expects more educated people to be appointed to TAMA, to serve the purpose. However, data from TAMA indicates that one of the appointed women has no formal educational qualification. The policy itself tends to contradict the purpose of the appointed positions. Act 462: 6 (5) states that no person shall be disqualified from being elected or appointed to a DA by reason of his/her status, position, profession, among others. Therefore no one is blamable if people with the required expertise are not appointed, because the policy is not clear. In practice, the appointment of less qualified women to the DA falls out of Mahamadu's argument that education influences authorities' decisions to nominate women for a political office (2010: 23).

From the foregoing, the first part of my *proposition* that where the educational attainment of women's candidates is low then one expects lesser women to get elected and appointed to the DA is disproved. This is because the female candidates for 2010 TAMA elections in particular as well as the list of potential candidates compiled by NGOs for appointed positions had very high educational and professional qualifications; yet only one was elected and none of those presented was appointed. The second part of the *proposition* that where educational attainment of the female population is low then lesser women will be elected is however confirmed.

Decentralisation: Prevailing Practices and Attitudes

The prevailing decentralisation practices and attitudes in the DA could have implications on the participation of both elected and appointed women at TAMA. These include gender-sensitivity, and affirmative action and patronage.

Gender-sensitivity: It was gathered that every Assembly member is expected to belong to at least one of the seven subcommittees. Other positions that are contested for are subcommittee chairpersons, Presiding Member and members of the executive committee. The appointed woman noted that in principle, all positions are open to both men and women but quickly added that

most men do not cast their vote for women vying for chair positions, just as most women do not contest for fear of being ridiculed or intimidated by men. Of the 7 subcommittees only 1 is chaired by a woman. This agrees with Opare's contention that women are generally poorly represented in executive positions and are put in ordinary positions where they can only vote but do not play any role of influence (2005: 93); and Mukhopadhyay's position that women's marginalization is reinforced by council practices (2005: 33). The above portrays the lack of gender-sensitivity in prevailing practices at TAMA.

Affirmative Action and patronage: In Ghana, the only affirmative action for women's political representation is the 50% government appointed membership allotted to women at the DAs. Even this figure is rarely met in most assemblies and has never been achieved in TAMA. The 8 appointed women in TAMA represent only 28% of the total appointed membership of 28. All Assembly members and NGO representatives interviewed except one, argue for a statutory quota, especially in the executive committee, for women because they see it as a crucial decision point where women can push forward their interests. The one who disagrees with this view is an elected man who contested with a woman. His view is that women should not be given undue advantage over men and should be given the position based on competence. For him the problem is not so much about the numbers but the quality of women appointed who can make meaningful contribution to the work of TAMA. He noted that appointed women are

generally unqualified, make no contributions at meetings and are just there to make up the number and to vote on party interests.

This falls in line with Mukhopadhyay's description of the case of India where parties select women for quota positions based on their 'usefulness' to the party; and her assertion that though affirmative action have increase the number of women in LG, the patronage political system undermines the legitimacy, credibility and sustainability of women's LG participation (2005: 13-14).

On why government does not get women to occupy the 50% appointed positions at TAMA, both executive members interviewed blame this on political pressure and parties' preference for men. One notes that

The ruling party expects to have more appointees who should be their own chosen men so they can vote for the party's interests.

Respondents admit that Assembly positions, especially the government appointed largely comes from the party of the ruling government. One appointed member notes,

Who will like to give appointment to someone only for the person to turn round and criticise them? Government appoints people who will cooperate and support their agenda and not draw it back.

These, point to Mukhopadhyay's (2005: 29) assertion that parties sponsor women to reserved seats so women are represented in name just to push forward the agenda of political parties. It also agrees with Matembe's position that women appointed through party influence are not often effective in debates due to lack of requisite skills (2010: 7). This assertion was confirmed by the NGO representatives who indicate that none of the women they trained and petitioned TAMA to be considered for appointed was taken; but only party affiliates were. The NGOs blame this phenomenon on the lack of political will. One officer says,

Qualified women are there but successive governments have been unwilling to appoint women. It is men who appoint and so naturally they ensure that men are appointed.

This therefore defeats the reasons the various assemblies give for the low women's representation in appointed positions, as either the lack of qualified women or their unwillingness to offer themselves for such positions (Ofei-Aboagye 2004: 754).

The lack of gender-sensitivity, non-statutory affirmative action and the high political patronage system confirm the proposition that where decentralisation policy lacks gender-sensitivity and statutory affirmative action women contestants, elected and appointed to the Assembly will be low.

5.4 Women's Coping Strategies to Political Representation

To cope with the many inhibiting factors to their political representation, women adopted various strategies to realize their ambitions of being part of the political process.

Strategies employed by elected women

Community Involvement: Commitment to community activities and membership of community organisations such as political parties, women's organisations, religious organisations, as well as professional organisations has been cited by all elected Assemblywomen as the main strategy that endeared them to the heart of the people and contributed largely to their election. The past elected Assemblywoman who has been the president of WIP, board member of several schools, executive member of GNAT and head of school points out,

I proved my capability by taking active part in community development activities and executing my responsibilities to the best of my ability in all the positions I have been in. This made me very popular and earned me a lot of support from voters and opinion leaders.

The elected woman is a Librarian, Women's organiser of NDC party, and leader of her community women's association. She believes her commitment to community development gave her the edge over her two male contenders. She noted,

I organised loans for farmers and women's agro-processing group and helped dropout children return to school. This made my people have confidence in me and massively supported me with their votes.

She also alludes that her position in the party was helpful in bringing her victory because it made her popular, even though unlike some of her male colleagues, she got no financial support from the party. Asked why, she says parties prefer sponsoring men because they believe they have better chances of winning than women.

Interaction with electorates: In addition to involvement in community development work the elected Assemblywomen interviewed say maintaining constant interaction with electorates individually and collectively was a very helpful strategy. The current elected woman says:

I attended all social gatherings such as funerals, weddings, naming ceremonies, visited the sick and made donations. In fact I was so much appreciated that the youth and women really campaigned and voted massively for me.

She also notes that she did a lot of lobbying behind the scene; talking to party leaders, opinion leaders, and other influential people especially the men. The former elected woman also says she engaged in one-on-one interaction with community people, especially opinion and youth leaders to learn their concerns. This supports with Francis' assertion that women can succeed in politics if they have good reputation, knowledge of and ability to deal with men's priorities, and build alliances with key men (2007: 13).

Strategies adopted by appointed women

Community involvement: Community involvement has also been cited by appointed women as an important strategy that influenced their appointment. The former appointed Assemblywoman is the regional president of FOMWAG, a development worker and founder of an NGO that provides entrepreneurial skill training for women. She notes that though she was nominated on the ticket of FOMWAG, her long experience of development work played a role in her appointment. The current appointed woman is the secretary of FOMWAG, a broadcaster, head of a school, founder on NGO supporting farmers, and a former women's organiser of the ruling party. She was also nominated on the ticket of FOMWAG but says her various roles played in the community attracted her to the nominating authorities. She however added that her role in the party had some influence as well. She explains,

FOMWAG is represented in TAMA but being an executive member of FOMWAG alone may not be enough to attract my nomination, because the authorities usually investigate nominees' political background before confirming their appointment.

Community involvement is therefore a strategy that all elected and appointed members interviewed attested to have largely influenced their election

and appointment to TAMA. As noted by Moller (2010: 11) “civil involvement plays a crucial role in making the environment sensitive to potential community politicians. [It] gets women in touch with local bodies, makes them well-known and increases respect for them in the community environment or the political parties”. Several writers confirm this assertion (see Allah-Mensah 2005: 50, Francis 2007: 10, Mukhopadyay 2005: 36, Mahamadu 2010: 10). The appointed women however note that they do not campaign for appointment and so do not need to have direct interaction with the electorates as their elected colleagues do.

5.5 Conclusion

Findings point to the low representation of women not only in general Assembly membership but also within Assembly committees. The male members continue to portray themselves as deserving leadership even within the Assembly. The fact that only 1 woman chairs a committee and only 4 women are in the executive committee of 30 members is indication that it will take a very long time for women’s impact to be felt at TAMA, and their interests to be achieved. This implies that the efforts of the few women in the Assembly are being stifled even when they get representation at the Assembly. This therefore calls for measures to ensure that Assemblywomen are put in key positions that give them the opportunity to influence policy and so enhance the wellbeing of women, because as Mahamadu (2010) notes, people in chair positions have a lot of influence on agenda setting.

The cultural beliefs and practices that prescribe the public domain for men and domestic for men are the main factors inhibiting women’s political representation; and also influencing the other limiting factors like women’s low level of education, low access to resources, and lack of gender-sensitive decentralisation practices. This is indication of the need for progressive cultural practices that equally recognize the potential of women in public decision-making. This is because, as Mukhopadhyay (2005) points out, it is the same cultural abhorrence of women in decision-making in the private sphere that is brought into the public leadership domain, and limiting their representation in politics.

The coping strategies of women to get Assembly representation point to the fact that elected women need to have more contact and interaction with community people including political parties, especially the ruling party for endorsement and votes. For the appointed, not much is required but community involvement especially strong affiliation with the ruling party.

Chapter 6 Summary, Conclusions, and Policy Reflections

6.1 Introduction

In this study, we sought to find out how and to what extent elected and appointed Assemblywomen are able to access representation in TAMA. To do this, answers were sought to the following: factors limiting women's political representation at the local level; coping strategies elected and appointed women adopt to have access to Assembly representation; and the characteristics of women who get elected and appointed at the Assembly. The research made four propositions which are either confirmed or rejected. Following is the summary of findings.

6.2 Summary of Research Findings

Having completed the research we now summarise the findings based on the propositions.

Cultural and Islamic practices in Northern Region and Women's Political Representation

The proposition that where cultural beliefs and practices accord less leadership rights to women then the number of women who contest for, get elected and appointed to, and their access to leadership positions in the Assembly will be low, has been confirmed in the study. The study found out that cultural and Islamic practices prevalent in the study area prescribe leadership roles in the household and community to men and women in-charge of household welfare. This is to the extent that all community leadership positions are held by men except the magazia who is the leader of women and yet not part of the general community decision-making. Even the few communities that have female chiefs do not accord them rights to perform certain traditional rites and these are done by men in their stead. These very practices are transferred into the public domain where political representation is seen by both men and women as the preserve of men. Consequently, very few women contest, get elected and appointed to TAMA. For instance, the 2006 and 2010 Assembly elections respectively had only 15 and 17 women contestants as against 105 and 174 men. Similarly, women were only 2 out of 54 elected and 4 out of 26 appointed positions at TAMA in 2006 and 1 out of 64 elected and 8 out of 28 appointed positions in 2010. In terms of Assemblywomen's representation in executive positions at TAMA, only 1 out of the 7 subcommittees is chaired by a woman and only 4 women are in the 30-

member executive committee, the most influential committee in the Assembly. This scenario implies the need for a progressive cultural transformation that accords and respects the leadership rights of women.

Economic Resources and Community Involvement

The proposition was that where women have low access to money, time, and people (networking) few women will contest, get elected and appointed to the DAs. The study found out that politics is an expensive project and candidates need to commit resources to it in order to win. But most women in the study area are always constrained by inadequate resources. Due to their domestic burdens and lack of access to family economic property, the women do not have money to conduct extensive political campaign, and no time to network with people for support and get involved in community organisations where their leadership potentials could be exposed. As a result only few women contest for Assembly elections; and fewer are elected. The proposition therefore holds true for women in elected positions at TAMA. For appointed women however, the proposition is partly confirmed and partly rejected. This is because women for appointed positions do not undertake political campaigns and so do not need to have money in order to get appointed since they are not going to influence any voter. This part rejects the aspect of the proposition which says; where women have less money fewer women will be appointed. On the other hand, the proposition is partly confirmed in that appointed candidates need time for involvement in community and political organisations so as to be attracted to appointing bodies. And since women do not have the time for community involvement lesser women are appointed.

Educational Attainment of Women Candidates and Female Voters

It was proposed that where the educational attainment of women candidates and female population is low then less women will contest, get elected and appointed to the Assembly. This proposition is partly confirmed and partly rejected by study findings. The findings confirm the proposition that low educational attainment of female population leads to less women contesting for Assembly elections. This is because the study area has the lowest female education rate in the country and so only a few women are able to assert their right to and do vie for political positions. Also confirmed is the part of the proposition that says where the educational level of female voter population is low less women will be elected. This is because the low level and lack of education of majority of the women deny them the ability to appreciate the leadership capabilities of women and their right to representation; and so vote men as their political representatives instead. This is evident in the current 'one out of sixty-four' female membership of elected representation in TAMA. However, the proposition that lower educational attainment of women candidates results in fewer elected and appointed women is disproved. This is because all female 17 contestants as well as women petitioned by NGOs for government consideration for appointed positions in 2010 have appreciable educational and professional attainment; and yet only 1 was elected and none of

the petitioned women was appointed. Instead, even a woman with no educational attainment is among the 8 women appointed at TAMA.

Gender-sensitive Decentralisation Policy and Practices

The study proposed that where decentralisation policy lacks gender-sensitivity and statutory affirmative action women contestants, elected and appointed in LG will be low. This has been confirmed from the research findings. The decentralisation policy is found to lack gender-sensitivity. Elected positions are open to both male and female across the nation without considering the different cultural settings that differently affect women's representation in public decision-making. For instance, women in the study area, unlike their counterparts in the south, are denied decision-making responsibilities and therefore only few of them have the courage to come out to contest for Assembly elections and fewer are elected and appointed. The 50% appointed positions allotted to women is not adhered to due to the non-statutory nature of the affirmative action, making it non-enforceable. Consequently, women are also under-represented in appointed positions at TAMA. Even within the Assembly no affirmative actions are in place to ensure women hold leadership positions, as such only 1 woman chairs a committee and only 4 are in the executive committee.

6.3 Strategies Women Employ to Access LG Representation

Two major strategies were adopted by women to get elected or appointed to TAMA. Elected women's involvement in community work, organisations, associations and other social groups played very significant roles in their victory, because it exposed them to leadership, networking and also endeared them to the electorates. In addition, they had personal individual interactions with electorates and lobbied opinion leaders. This, they believe gave a personal touch to their campaign as people came out to support them. Similarly, appointed women believe their level of community involvement and affiliation with the ruling party did influence their appointment. Their position does not require voting and so they have no direct interaction with voters.

The implication of these strategies is the exclusion of ordinary women such as the poor and marginalized from government decision-making processes contrary to the aim of the LG policy of expanding the participation of ordinary people in the affairs of government. The need for potential Assembly representatives to have prior involvement in community organisations so as to gain recognition and acceptance for both elected and appointed positions in the Assembly involves commitment of resources and time, which ordinary women lack. They even lack the courage to be part of community organisations for fear of rejection. Assembly representation is therefore mostly taken up by community elites who are always in-charge of affairs.

6.4 Characteristics of Elected and Appointed Women

Generally, elected women to TAMA have good educational and professional qualifications. It was found that voters in the Tamale Metropolis tend to support women who have good educational and professional standing, and are playing leadership roles in the community. For appointed women however, it appears educational and professional standing is important but not necessary. At TAMA for instance, there seems to be some square pegs in round holes because the calibre of some of the women appointed does not match the purpose of their positions as stipulated in the decentralisation policy; to bring in technocrats whose experiences will be brought to bear on the work of the assembly. The lack of educational and professional experience of some appointees shows how the policy is easily manipulated to suit the interests of individuals or groups, such as political elites and parties.

6.5 Conclusion

The study has provided insight into the experiences of Assemblywomen in their bid to access LG representation at the DAs, highlighting the inhibiting factors as culture, low female education, socio-economic limitation and lack of gender-sensitivity of the decentralisation policy; and women's coping strategies as involvement in community organisations and personal interaction with community members. The findings point to the need for cultural transformation, for understanding of the people that women can be effective leaders when given the chance; and also the need for a more gender-sensitive decentralisation policy.

The situation of women's political representation in Ghana has been very appalling at both national and LG levels. After twenty (20) years of women's empowerment efforts by government, NGOs and CSOs, Ghana's parliament can boast of only 19 (8%) women out of 230 seats. The case of most DAs including TAMA is worse as they have lower percentages of women's representation than in parliament. As Opare argues that women's low level of participation in local decision-making opportunities appears to mirror those of their counterparts at the national level (2005: 91). But the question is, will this abysmal situation ever improve? After two decades of empowerment, this is women's representation we have at TAMA: one out of sixty-four. This is embarrassing and indication that some things are not being done right in Ghana's political processes. This is because, as in the case of Bangladesh for instance, the policies and programmes of the government and the various actors and partners do not sufficiently address the needs of women's empowerment (Khan and Ara 2006: 76). For instance, women's political empowerment programmes are mostly focused on building the skills of individual women, while neglecting the need to give attention to voters and the gender power dynamics prevalent in the household and community levels that tend to suppress women's political efforts. The latter is what is really fuelling the low level of women's political representation and requires concerted efforts of all stakeholders to address. Again, the fact that some women have been able to access representation in politics at the national and local levels shows their coping

strategies have been effective and therefore need emulation by potential women politicians.

The decentralisation policy itself has some contradictions that require reformulation. For instance, the policy says educational attainment should not be barrier to being a member of the Assembly; and at the same time requires appointed members to be professionals whose expertise will be harnessed for improved functioning of the Assembly. These are not reconcilable.

The findings of this study, though from the north of Ghana with different socio-cultural settings, mirror the picture of women's political representation in Ghana as a whole. This is because, though women's representation in the DAs in the southern Ghana is better than what pertains in the North, the percentages are still far below expectation. The findings can therefore be representative of the rest of the country, more especially northern Ghana.

6.6 Policy Recommendation on Improving Women's Representation in LG

Twenty years of empowerment by government, NGOs, donors and CSOs, and large amount of money spent, yet no improvement in women's representation. What then is the problem? This means that targeting is a big problem; we have not addressed the key issues affecting women's representation. Cultural barriers appear the most influencing factor to women's low political representation, as it in turn influences the other limiting factors such as low education, lack of resources and prevailing decentralisation practices.

Introduction of Affirmative Action

Ghana's decentralisation is a blanket policy that is expected to be implemented throughout the country despite the differences in culture. Decentralisation as a concept should be tailored to the socio-cultural context of the people. It must denote flexibility towards specific context, especially rural and urban. For instance, Tamale is a Metropolis, denoting that it is urban but in effect it has some characteristics of a district, as indicated in the background that tends to discourage women's political representation.

Decentralisation is supposed to provide opportunity to hitherto marginalised groups, including women to participate in decisions that affect their lives. Given the culture and other factors that deny women the opportunity to be part of leadership in society, the decentralisation policy should provide affirmative action for women in clear, specific and unambiguous terms; to propel women to LG representation. For instance the current half of the 30% appointed positions allotted to women should not just be a government directive but be made part of the policy, and then it becomes enforceable, as done in countries such as Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, South Africa, India, and Bangladesh. Additionally, as in India, rotated seats system should be applied. In this system a percentage of elected LG seats are reserved for women-only competition and rotated in every election.

These reserved seats then become general seats in the next election in which women and men can compete, whilst new ones are reserved for women.

As suggested by the study respondents, there is also the need for quota for women at the level of executive committee. This will help increase the number of women in the executive committee so they can push forward women's concerns, which are often overlooked by men.

Skill Building Training and Sensitisation

For women to prepare for public offices they need to acquire leadership and related skills; and these are generally provided by NGOs and other women advocacy groups. While these efforts may be laudable, their success is not automatic. There is the need to go beyond capacity building to engaging in extensive sensitization of electorates, traditional authorities and other stakeholders such as political parties. This requires concerted efforts of all stakeholders for progressive cultural transformation so as to minimize the gender power dynamics at the various levels that stifle women's efforts for political representation. This will enable electorates understand the need to and vote for qualified women.

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Appendix

Map of Ghana showing northern Ghana

Map 2
Map of Ghana showing northern Ghana

