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ENHANCING CSOs' STRATEGIES- A COMPLEMENT TO DECENTRALISATION FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN AT GRASSROOTS LEVEL IN GHANA

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

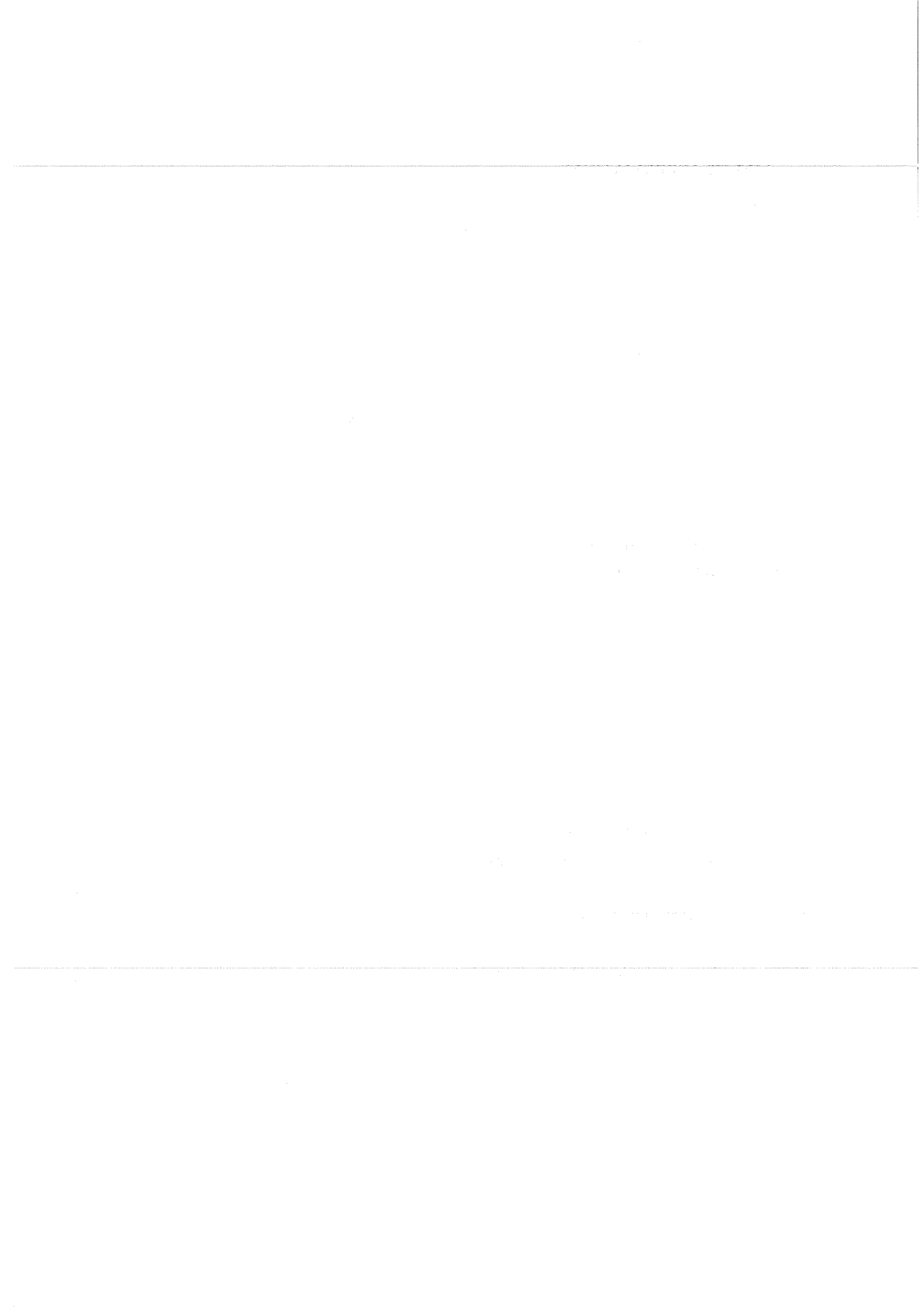|	
CDRs	Committees for the Defense of the Revolution
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CEP	Community Empowerment Programme
CMA	Christian Mothers' Association
CSOs	Civil Society Oganisations
DAs	District Assemblies
DCE	District Chief Executive
DECO	Diocesan Executive Committee
DWM	December Women's Movement
EC	Electoral Commission
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FIDA	Federation of African Women Lawyers
IDEG	Institute for Democratic Governance
JICA	Japan International Co-operation Agency
KAF	Konrad Adenauer Foundation
MOWAC	Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
MLGRD	Ministry of Local Government and Rural development
MPs	Members of Parliament
NACO	National Executive Committee
NCWD	National Council on Women and Development
NEC	National Executive Council
NFLS	Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NPP	National Patriotic Party
NRC	National Revolutionary Council
PNDC	Provisional national Defence Council
RCC	Regional Co-ordinating Council
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development ProgrammeEC

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Chapter 1 : Introduction

1.1 Overview

The Republic of Ghana derives its name from the medieval Ghana Empire located in West Africa with a coastline of 554km along the Atlantic Ocean and a total land area of about 238,533sqkm (92,000 sq miles). Within thirty-five years of Ghana's becoming a sovereign state, the country has experienced nine different types of government (three civilian and six military) including a Westminster-style parliamentary democracy, a socialist single party republic and several military regimes following coups in 1966,1972,1979 and 1981 before its fourth return to multiparty democratic government in January 1993 (Quainoo, 2002).

As part of its democratisation process, the Government has embarked on series of democratisation reforms at both political and constitutional levels. Notable are the adoption of a new constitution in 1992, on going elections held periodically for parliament and presidency in 1992,1996 and 2000 respectively and the decentralisation of authority structure through the enactment of law creating District Assemblies (DAs) in its 110 districts in 1988, (PNDC Law 207). In respect of the fundamental human rights, Ghana prohibits discrimination and ensures full participation of all in the decision-making especially at the grassroots level. In addition, Ghana is signatory to the various international conventions including Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and has ratified the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies (NFLS), all of which give recognition to the under-representation of women in politics world-wide. Thus, in principle, Ghana is committed to taking measures to ensure the full participation of women in politics at all levels.

Furthermore, there is also an indication that non-state actors like Civil Society Organisation (CSOs) have been playing a complementary role in the promotion of the country's democratisation process in various ways. For instance, Ninsin observes that "actors in civil society have advanced the course of popular participation in the

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decentralisation process in Ghana" (Ninsin 1998:42). More specifically they have played a major role in the promotion of women's participation in politics at all levels, because women have for far too long being at the periphery of local and national politics. Those who joined political parties have been perceived as useful supporters than leaders, thus being seen in an exploitative and utilitarian terms by their male counterparts (Quaye 1998). For instance, the 31st December Women's Movement (DWM) is an NGO that sought to promote the advancement of women at the grassroots level. This was done through mobilising women mostly of the lower classes and mainly in the rural communities for economic empowerment, (Ninisin, 1998). The Christian Mothers' Association, Ghana (CMA), a Catholic Church based organisation is another organisation in the area of women and development that mobilises members at the rural area for economic empowerment and participation in politics.

The activities of the various CSOs have generally created a high level of awareness particularly among women resulting in a nominal increase in women participation in a number of activities, especially social and economic. Ninsin also observed a corresponding growth of new CSOs between 1982 and 1992 that contributed immensely to the democratisation process of Ghana. He cited the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDRs) as a form of 'alternative civic association' and 'pro-democracy civil society organisations' that played major roles in the promotion of popular participation of Ghanaians in politics at the grassroots level at the inception of the decentralisation process in 1988 (Ninsin, 1998: 45).

Even though the situation did not necessarily result in high participation of women in politics as envisaged, the trend in the DA results indicate that complementary strategic actions by CSOs can enhance women's participation in politics at the grassroots level. This is because CSOs have the comparative advantage of covering a wider constituency and for that matter are closer to the people than government (Gaventa 1999). Galston also observed that 'civil associations pave the way for political association and that the more individuals get used to the idea of getting together for economic, social, or moral

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purposes, the more they enhance their capacity to pursue greater undertakings in common' (Galston 2000:68).

To promote and enhance women's participation in the decision-making process, academics have been concerned with researching into the factors that militate against women's participation in decision-making process and suggestions to remove these barriers. This study focuses on the initiatives of CSOs as a complementary role to Ghana's decentralisation process in the promotion and enhancement of women participation in politics at the grassroots level. The study examines the potential of mobilising through internal democratisation, building of social capital, economic empowerment, religious teachings and intensive civic and human rights education at the grassroots level by CSOs to promote women's involvement in politics.

1.2 Background to Decentralisation
The Government of Ghana adopted the decentralisation process as a state strategy to promote grassroots women's participation in politics. This process of extensive decentralisation of administration and political responsibility to the local (district) level is to promote empowerment, popular participation, responsiveness and accountability in the development process and decision-making at the grassroots level, (Aryee, 1996). The purpose of this exercise was also to ensure equitable participation in the process of distribution of the benefits of development for all, both women and men alike. Hence, the non-partisan approach at the district administration level, which was intended to foster integration and teamwork to promote development (Ninsin, 1998).

Figure 1 on the next page outlines the Structure and Implementation of Decentralisation .

Figure I: Structure of the New Local Government System
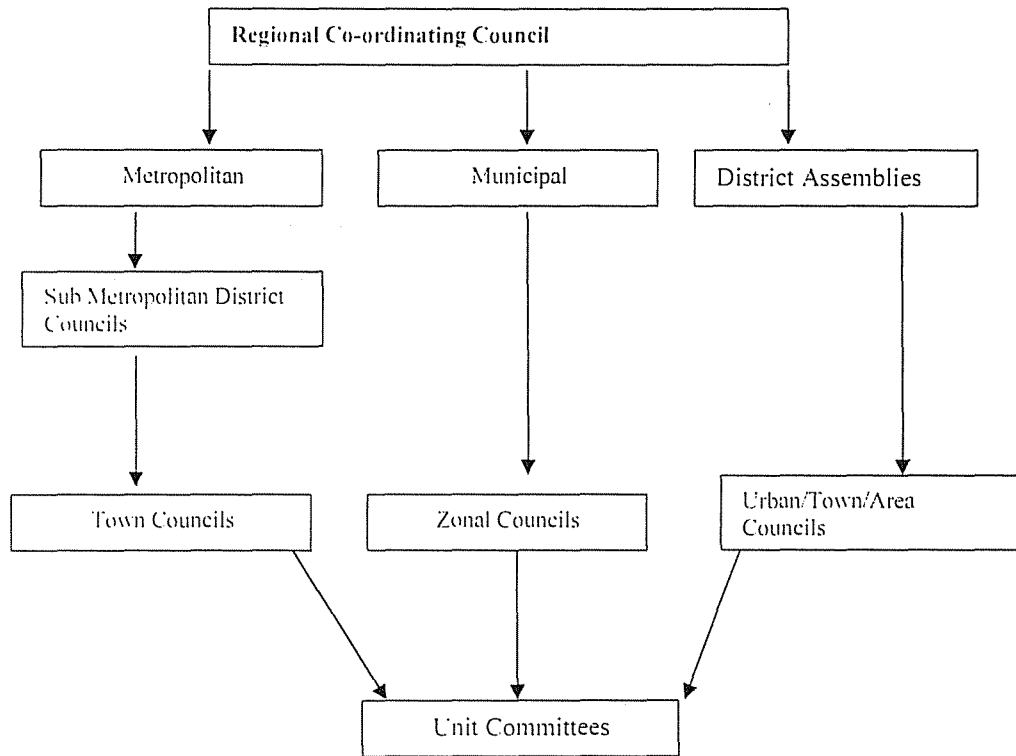
Source: *Ghana: Minisstry of Local Government and Rural Development, 1996*

Structurally. the decentralised system is a four-tier one that consists of Regional Co-ordinating Councils (RCCs). District Assemblies (DAs) or Municipal Assembly (MA). the pivot of the decentralisation programme, the Urban/Town/Area Councils and the Unit Committees (UCs).

The RCCs. established in each of the ten regions of Ghana comprises of the Regional Minister as the head and his deputies. the presiding member of each DA and the District Chief Executive (DCE) of each district in the region. Others are two chiefs from the Regional House of Chiefs and the regional heads of the decentralised departments without voting rights. RCCs are to monitor, co-ordinate and evaluate the performance of

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the DAs in each region, including the use of all monies allocated to the DAs by central government and any other agency; and review and co-ordinate public services in general.

The DAs consists of the DCE, two third of members elected directly by universal adult suffrage, the MP (s) representing the constituencies within the district and one third of members appointed by the president in consultation with chiefs, interest groups and other opinion leaders in the district. The DA is headed by the DCE or Mayor nominated by the President and endorsed by the Assembly. The Sub-Metropolitan District Councils consists of not less than 25 and not more than 35 members made up of elected members while the Urban Councils consists of not less than 25 and not more than 30 members elected from among the DA, UC and ordinary residents in the area. The Zonal Council is made up of elected members of the MA, UC representatives and some residents while the Town Area Councils have elected members, representatives from the UC and ordinary residents in the area.

At the grassroots level are the UC, which form the cellular base of peoples' power, with the membership of 10 locally elected members. The appointed membership is intended to ensure representation of key interest groups and sections of the population and also to infuse technical expertise. The Assembly meet three to four times a year, and operates mainly through committees, (an executive committee responsible for general policy and development direction of the district).

Other provisions include the non-partisan nature of the DA system, the freedom to use the local language for business and the discretion of the assembly to create additional committees depending on the needs of the assembly. It is, therefore, envisaged that the provisions of the decentralisation system should have made women participation in politics at the grassroots level easier.

1.3 Research Problem

The low participation of women in political decision-making continues to persist. Citizens in most countries for instance, can observe it directly whenever government

officials appear in the press. Governments have taken many initiatives to promote women's participation in decision-making at all levels as it denotes good governance. These initiatives include the adoption and signing of the various international conventions and treaties to involve women in public life as their fundamental rights. In addition, governments have introduced decentralisation reforms in an effort to transfer power from central government to local government to facilitate women's participation in political process.

Ghana seeks to achieve good governance through the Local Government Law, 1987, PNDCL 207 of decentralisation. Under this law, district assemblies have been created to serve as a forum at the local level where a team of development agents, representatives of the people and other actors deliberate and agree on the development problems of the area and possible solutions.

This decentralisation effort was undertaken with the following key aspirations in mind:
- to provide more responsive, equitable and participatory development;
- to bring government and decision-making nearer to the people and quicken the processes, and
- to serve as a training ground in political activity.

These and other provisions in the design of the decentralisation process should have made the participation of women in public decision-making easier. Other provisions include those for a non-partisan local government system, the freedom to use the local language for the business of the Assembly and the discretion in creating additional sub-committees. It is also expected that the geographical location of the local government enables women to participate without necessarily moving away from their families because culturally it is difficult for husbands to follow their career wives who live away from their homes. Besides, for many of the women who have little or not much education to understand the complexities of the economic, political and social issues at the national level to have the exposure at the local level. This is because the issues handled at the local level are those that women are familiar with since they are concerns of the

immediate communities and are about provision of services used by the households such as electricity, schools, health posts, water and waste disposals. The decisions of the local governments therefore have direct impact on the women's lives. As such, the local government creates a forum where it is easier for them to exercise and articulate their rights and views.

In reality, the decentralisation of power to local governments has not necessarily led to an increment of women participation at this level of government, nor has it led to an increase in their effectiveness in influencing government at this level. The initial participation of women in local government was low and has remained so. In 1988, women made up about 7.5 percent of DA members and dropped to 3 percent in 1994. In 1998, this proportion rose to 5 percent and 7.4 percent in 2002. This was very interesting given that women constitute more than half of all registered voters (Afari-Gyan, 1998). It must be emphasised that there is no legal policy prohibiting women from participating in public life and political decision making process. Hence one will say that Ghana in principle has put all structures in place with an enabling environment for women's participation in politics.

The problem that this study identifies is that while the decentralisation reforms have been introduced with other policies on Affirmative Action that introduces 30 percent quota for women's participation in politics, there have not been any substantive mechanisms put in place to translate women's political participation into reality. This study intends to demonstrate that introducing legislation alone is not the answer but a lot more needs to be done in order to empower women to take up the challenges that come with participation and the decision-making processes.

1.4 Justification of the Study

Following the adoption of the various International Conventions and Treaties by national and international bodies, there has been the gradual acceptance of the important role of women in all spheres of life including political participation of women, which is a necessary component of good governance (UN, 2000). Besides, social justice has to do

with the fact that men and women have the right to live their lives and raise their children in dignity, free from hunger, fear of violence, oppression and injustice (UN 2002, Snyder 1995). If women constitute more than half of a population, then it is just fair that they are proportionally represented. The recognition of the right of the woman should transcend that of passive citizenship to active one in every society.

This contention has been echoed by Freidmann, (1992) that for a fair share of the national cake, it is good for all to participate in politics because participation in the day to day exercise of power is about common resource allocation, management and claim (usually controlled by government). It is therefore only through participation of women in decision-making that they can get a fair share of the available resources. Furthermore, if we agree that women's problem cannot be solved in the course of the current type of development, then it is necessary to look for political solutions as an alternative strategy, whereby women, who by themselves know their priorities can go for it, fight for it and effect change in their standard of living. Thus, participation of women in politics will auger well for the improved social, economic, legal and cultural conditions of women. This is because they would be able to influence government to change national agenda.

The establishment of the local governments has been based on the premise that their establishment will encourage maximum participation of all citizens in the affairs of government in an open democratic state that guarantees civil and political freedoms essential for popular mobilisation and civic engagement (UN, 2003). The decentralisation of authority in Ghana for instance, is a major provision that should have made women's participation in decision-making easier. However, it has been observed that in reality decentralisation of power to local governments has not necessarily led to an increase of women at the local level as envisaged.

Ofei-Aboagye (2000), and many other Ghanaian academicians have attributed the low participation of the Ghanaian women in politics to a number of factors ranging from the social structure of Ghana through low economic base to the low level of education and the complex structures of the electoral and the DA processes. Several CSOs have adopted

different methods to complement the governments' decentralisation process to remove barriers in promoting women's participation in decision-making at the grassroots level. These strategies include, among others, grassroots mobilisation for community economic empowerment, intensive civic and human rights education, lobbying for women representation, building up social capital and networking with other organisations for the support of women candidates

Research conducted on the causes of the low participation of women in Ghana mostly focus on obstacles that militate against women's participation neglecting the role of civil society. (see Ankomah 1999, Ohene- Konadu 1999,Aboagye-Ofei 2001, Kisseh 2000, Quaye & Drah. 2002.). However, CSOs are known to have been mobilising women at the grassroots level for political participation. This study analysis the trend of women participation in the DAs since its inception vis a vis the roles played by CSOs such as CMA in the 2002 DA elections as a case study. The study agrees with the earlier researchers on the various factors found as barriers to women participation in politics at the grassroots level as the social structure of Ghana, poor economic base, low level of education and so on. It therefore pays particular attention to the initiatives by CMA to remove these barriers so as to achieve political participation and involvement of members in the 2002 DA elections.

1.5 Study Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine how CSOs can complement state actions in facilitating and increasing women's participation in the decision-making processes especially at local level. The specific objectives are to:

- Assess how state action by the Government of Ghana through the decentralisation process has contributed to women's participation in the DA.

- Using the Christian Mothers' Association as a case study, examine how CSOs can complement state actions in increasing women's participation in politics.

1.6 Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

- Is government legislation and policy enough for the promotion and enhancement of women's political participation at the grassroots level?
- What is the role of CSOs in the promotion and enhancement of women's political participation at the grassroots level in Ghana?
- How has CMA complemented the state strategy to enhance women's participation in politics at the grassroots level?
- What types of women are able to win the elections at the grassroots level and how did they make it?

1.7 Research Proposition

It is my proposition that decentralisation of power to the local level, if complemented by strategic civil society action and mobilisation can enhance participation of women in the decision-making processes especially at DA level. This contention has been echoed by Ninsin as he relates the various roles played by the different CSOs that advanced or inhibited the course of Ghana's transition from military rule to democratic rule (Ninisin, 1998:43).

1.8 The Research Methodology

The study is concerned with the dynamics that exist between decentralisation and strategic actions of civil society to empower women at the grassroots level in Ghana. As such, the paper will first provide a detailed historical and contemporary background of the features of the decentralisation process in Ghana, and the opportunities for women to be involved in this process.

In order to understand the potential and limitations of women's economic empowerment under decentralisation, the paper will develop a conceptual framework of analysis which focus on the relationships and linkages that exist between economic and political empowerment on one hand and intensive civic education, religious teachings and building of social capital as adopted by CMA for the achievement of political participation of grassroots women.

Adopting a case study approach, the paper will review the strategic action adopted by a specific CSO, CMA, (the primary unit of analysis) to promote the political empowerment of women. The CMA has been selected because it owes much of its achievements to its activities in grassroots mobilisation through internal democratisation, religious teachings and building of social capital, economic empowerment and intensive civic and human rights education. Secondly, the researcher was the first Civic Education Programme Officer (CEO), who opened the unit and designed a strategic plan in consultation with experts to achieve political participation of members. She therefore has intensive knowledge and experience of CMA activities as both participant and observer, which would be useful in the research.

1.9 Data Sources

For the purpose of this research I essentially depended on the following sources for information and material: Secondary data, published and unpublished; Audio recorded interviews from CMA members. Practical personal observation as the first CEO of CMA. In addition, information was collected using thirty questionnaires, which were administered and analysed[1].

1.10 Limitations

The major limitations of this study are those encountered by any research that uses the case study approach. First there is the issue of generalising of findings of the study bearing in mind that CMA may be one of the many other CSOs that might be doing similar work in the promotion of women's political participation. However, with reference to the contributions of some past CSOs to mobilise women such as DWM, study assumes that the case of CMA can conveniently generalised to give a fair idea about the situation in other CSOs doing similar work to enhance women's development and political participation.

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[1] The questionnaire is attached as Appendix I

One could also criticise the reliability of the evidence and analyses, as the possibility of the preconceptions and biases of the researcher cannot be over ruled. This is particularly important because the researcher depended on secondary data as well as observations, knowledge and experiences of the researcher for the analysis to support the primary data. But this cannot be so much a critique of case study research as such but a general limitation of qualitative research approaches and techniques (Neuman,1991).

1.11 Organisation of the Paper

This paper is presented in six chapters. The first chapter gives the background to the study, problematises the need for alternative strategy to complement decentralisation in the promotion of women's political participation at the grassroots level in Ghana. Chapter two discusses the necessary conceptual issues for the understanding and analysis of the research problem. Chapter three reviews the initiatives taken by some CSOs to complement state strategy to promote women's political participation as observed in the trend of the DA results with their limitations.

Chapters four and five offer the types of alternative strategic actions initiated by CMA to promote women's political participation at the local level and the achievements of CMA in the 2002 DA elections. Chapter six gives a summary of the paper and suggestions.

Chapter 2 : The Conceptual Framework

2.1 Introduction

Chapter two reviews the conceptual definitions and analyses contributions by authors on pertinent concepts employed in this paper. On the basis of this, the paper examines decentralisation and democracy, their values and some problems that need to be addressed as a basis for popular political participation. Other respective concepts to be defined are internal democracy, barriers, The Catholic Social Teachings, social capital and human rights education as used in the paper. Links will then be established between these concepts and decentralisation as complementary strategies to promote women's participation at the grassroots level.

2.2 Understanding Decentralisation

The concept, decentralisation is multi-dimensional, complex that has no one uniformly accepted definition. At the centre however, are the elements of transfer of power, resources and authority from a higher to a lower unit. This definition depicts the concept of decentralisation as a political phenomenon involving both administration and government. The concept could also be viewed from two dimensions; functional decentralisation and territorial decentralisation. Functional decentralisation refers to devolution of authority and responsibility from government to private sector or NGOs CSOs. Funwhile territorial decentralisation refers to transfer of authority and responsibility to a territorially defined local authority (Sakyi, 2000). In all the two conceptions, decentralisation involves a 'central government transferring to local entities some of its political authority and crucially, some of its resources and administrative responsibilities' (UN, 2003:133)

The most important objective of any decentralisation process consists of bringing the state closer to the people, and cannot be obtained without a strong involvement of local actors. On an intermediate level, decentralisation fosters regional capacities and economic development and, thus, contributes to widening socio-economic gap between the richer and the poorer region Thedieck (1999). He further argues that decentralisation

is not a condition to be attained; but rather, it indicates a direction in which a society moves. Hence, the phenomenon is of interest to development policy, which has always had to deal with social and political change.

At the political level, decentralisation enables people to participate in real and effective way in the management of public affairs. Consequently, it is conducive to local democracy, which is the real and tangible form of democracy in contrast to the 'theoretical and quasi- mythical democracy of electoral campaigns, conferences and speeches (Nzouankeu 1994:215). Thus, local democracy is in harmony with the daily needs of the people and citizens are at last given the opportunity to alter the course of events by participation in the decisions relating to issues affecting them. Cheema and Rondinelli, (1983), noted that one of the most important ways of improving national and local governance is decentralisation. Thus, decentralisation involves changing of power relationships and distribution of tasks at various levels of governance.

Many values are associated with decentralisation. Worth noting is its responsiveness and accountability. Decentralisation does not only place government closer to the people, but it also fosters people greater responsiveness of policy makers to the will of the citizenry. This is not only because decision-makers at the decentralised level are more knowledgeable and more familiar to the needs of their area than the centralised national decision-makers, but also because the process of decentralisation permits decision-makers to be held accountable to the local citizenry through elections. For instance, it easier to change representatives at local level by voting them out of power in disapproval of their policies in respect to their local areas. This is because local issues are specific to specific geographical areas and have only one dimension, which might not be very important to other voters to evaluate government.

Furthermore, decentralisation provides expanded opportunities for political representation (UN, 2003). Providing people with a much stronger voice in policy decisions that affect their lives, decentralisation has increased representation among women in India where one third of seats are reserved for women at the "panchayat", or local level (a previously

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ethnic marginalised ethnic group such as Quechua and Aymara (UN, 2003). Above all, decentralisation improves implementation and monitoring of service delivery and expedites prompt responses to poor performance. Increased transparency and improved scrutiny can reduced both the level of corruption and the scale of embezzlement, because political power is no longer concentrated solely in the hands of national elite. Decentralisation of power, in this study refers to devolution of power from the central government to the local level that provided expanded opportunities for political participation for all including the grassroots women in Ghana.

2.3 Democracy

Democracy is one of the most popular but most contested concepts among scholars of the present day. It is a form of government in which people rule themselves continuously and directly without the need for professional public officials or politicians. The Oxford dictionary defines the word democracy as "a system of government in which all people of a country can vote to elect representatives or fair treatment of everybody, a system where there is a fair and equal treatment of everyone in an organisation, etc, and their right to take part in making decisions" (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2001:334). Perhaps more helpful starting point from which to consider democracy is to take a clue from Abraham Lincoln's laid down virtues of democracy to be "a government of the people, by the people and for the people' (Heywood, 2001: 68).

Although many scholars have defined democracy in different ways, they all agree on the concept of democracy that is based on the principle of 'government by the people'. This implies that people govern themselves, they participate in making crucial decisions that structure and affect their lives and determine the fate of their society. According to Osabu-Kle (2000), the differences in definition arise because of the variance between its real meaning and the actual practice of democracy that leads to the nominal and the operational definitions. The real definition of democracy derives its meaning from two Greek words, 'demos' and 'kratos'. 'Kratos meaning 'power or rule' while 'demos means common people'. Thus essentially, democracy means the 'rule of the common

people', implying a type of government that is based upon the majority rule. There are two elements of democracy: direct and indirect democracy (Heywood 2001 69).

Indirect (representative) democracy is one in which citizens elect representatives, to make political decisions, pass laws and implement programmes for the common good of all. It is indirect in the sense that people do not exercise power themselves but merely select through suffrage, those who will rule on their behalf.

Direct democracy (sometimes 'participatory democracy') is based on the direct unmediated and continuous participation of all citizens in the task of decision-making. Direct democracy, according to Heywood, 'obliterates the distinctions between government and the governed and between the state and the civil society, a system of popular self government' (Heywood 2001:70).

The merits of direct democracy is that it heightens the control that citizens can exercise over their own destinies and enables the public to express their own views without depending on self-serving politicians. Internal democracy in this paper is based on the concept of democracy as practised within the CMA. Its a blend of direct and indirect democracy, in the sense that issues are deliberated by all members in all the groups at their weekly meetings and decisions are taken on group level. These decisions are sent to the national level through representatives from parish level through diocesan level at monthly, and quarterly meetings respectively. This is based on the view that they have to decide their own destiny.

2.4 The Catholic Social Teachings

Catholic Social Teachings, also referred to as Catholic Social Doctrine, is defined as "a clearly discernible body of official teachings on the social order, in its economic and political dimensions. It is concerned, on the one hand, with the dignity of the human person as created in the image of God, and with human rights and duties, which protect and enhance this dignity. On the other hand, it is concerned with the common good, the radically social nature of human existence and the nature of society and of the state. It also concerned with the relationship between society and state (balancing the principle of

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subsidiarity and the principle of socialisation), and with voluntary associations, e.g., labour unions, which serve as a buffer and a bridge between state and society" (McBrien, 2000, 912-913). Catholic social teaching is the body of social principles and moral teachings that is articulated in the papal, and other official documents issued since the late nineteenth century and dealing with the economic, political, and social order. The social teachings of the church as used in the study refer to the church doctrines and the churches' stand on the participation of members in political and public life as used by CMA to achieve political participation of its members.

2.5 Social Capital

Social capital as defined by Rose et al, means the "trusting relationships between people or to relations between individuals and formal organisations, or between a multiplicity of non-governmental and governmental organisations" (Rose et al 1997:91). Fowler also describes it as the sum of trusted relationships or resources inherent in social relationships that facilitate collective action and relationships at all levels of politics and economy (Fowler, 1998:144). Social capital therefore, is seen to underlie all social relationships, networks within and across society. To explain further, Fowler contends that social capital is created by the reinforcement of success in people to solve shared problems, to overcome differences and to satisfy economic spiritual, recreational and other needs at levels which change over time. (Fowler, 1998: 145)

The economic instrumentalists view the term as to include social cohesion, good governance legal frameworks and institutions for the establishment of legitimate social order. The UNDP however, sees it from the normative point as those features of society, such as networks, institutions, values and codes (eg tolerance, reciprocity, inclusion fairness and trust) that facilitates co-operation for mutual benefit (Loomis 2000). Putnam also draws our attention on the concept from the general to the local level where he sees social capital in the perspective of the "social connectedness, ... our relations with one another " (Putnam 1993: 37 –115). While the World Bank also defines social capital as the institutions, networks and the norms that shape the quality and quantity of society's social interactions (www.worldbank.org/poverty/scapital/topic/econ1.htm).

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Practically. these trusting relationships have kept people together in society and for that, in CMA. Social capital as used in this paper refers to the mutual assistance in times of need. joy and sorrow that has been created in CMA and the networks that has been established with other sister organisations, both religious and secular, and in the communities. CMA depended on these trusting relationships and networks for the achievement of political participation of its members.

2.6 Barriers

The Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary (2001) defines barrier as an "object like a fence that prevents people from moving forward from place to place", or "a problem, rule or situation that prevent somebody from doing something or that makes something impossible". Barriers as referred to in this paper adopt the same meaning. The paper looks the social structure of Ghana. the economy, educational and the electoral and assembly processes as identified by CMA to be major obstacles and hindrances to women's participation in local politics and the strategies adopted to remove these obstacles.

Addressing the obstacles to women's participation in public life was a major aim of CMA for its members. This strategy became necessary because CMA agree with Oakley (1999) that the practice of participation does not occur in vacuum. since it is susceptible both in a negative and positive ways to a whole lot of influences. Thus. the three obstacles to participation of people in development process as identified by Oakley, which include structural, socio-cultural and legislative/administrative have been reviewed in reference to the strategies adopted by CMA and other CSOs.

2.7 Human Rights Education

Yuzara (2001), in his manual for starting human rights education defines human rights as basic standards without which people cannot live in dignity as human beings. Human rights are the foundation of freedom, justice and peace. Their respect allows the individual and community to fully develop. Taddelle (2002) also sees human rights as

inalienable and sacred legal claims that people are born with as human beings and are inviolable without the consequence of disrespecting humanity and human being. The basis of human rights such as the respect for human life and dignity are found in most philosophies and religions.

People need to learn as they grow and encounter different life situations, and in order to gain and maintain employment and provide for themselves and their family. Beyond these basic needs, people also aspire to learn about aspects of life that interest them, and so they can contribute to society and the stock of human knowledge and understanding. This lifetime process of obtaining knowledge, attitudes, skills, and socially valued qualities of character and behaviour can be referred to as education. Most education involves communication or a transfer of information from one person to another. This communication can involve a wide variety of channels and media. It may be verbal or written and may be delivered face-to-face or by other means.

Human rights education is teaching people what their rights are, how they can make others respect their rights, teaching duties of others and indirectly teaching their own duties and how they respect others rights. In a nutshell, it is about educating people to develop respect for oneself, asserting ones own rights, respect for others, knowing one's duties and responsibility for one's actions and taking the consequences of failing duties. Thus, as observed by Yuzara, "human rights education is education about, but also for human rights" (Yuzara , 2001: 188). Teaching people about law and the violations such as torture, rape and other forms of suppressions and inhuman cultural practices are all human rights education. This paper's notion of human rights education is not different from the definitions above. Helping women to understand they are important, irrespective of their tribe, sex and educational level and so needed to be respected and protected has been the position of CMA, thus making human rights education an essential part of its programme of activities. CMA therefore makes members to understand that political participation is not only a right but also a responsibility and hence the need to take advantage of the decentralisation of power to enter the political scene.

Conclusion:

In effect. government's decentralisation process was in the right direction since it brought decision-making closer to the people. In addition, though CSOs were mobilising women for economic empowerment and created awareness of women for political participation, their activities in the rural areas did not have a strong support base since most of them were either politically inclined or too urban oriented. CMA therefore using the decentralisation process as a basis adopted democratic principles through its decentralised structures and resorted to proactive strategies through intensive church teachings, human rights education as well as dependent on long term networks built over the years to achieve political participation of its members. Activities of some CSOs and CMA to achieve political participation are the main concerns of this study.

Chapter 3 : The Role of State Machinery and Non-State Actors in Women's Participation in Politics.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the role of National Council of Women and Development/ Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (NCWD/MOWAC) as state machinery in the promotion of advancement of women. It also reviews the efforts of some CSOs to complement the decentralisation process in the promotion of women advancement including political participation at the grassroots level. The chapter also identifies the limitations of these CSOs. The last section discusses the trend of results of the DA elections analysed in view of the role played by specific organisation such as the CDRs, DWM and CMA in the achievement of women's political participation at the grassroots level.

3.2 The Role of NCWD/MOWAC in Promoting Women's Political Participation.

Since the declaration of the International Women's Year in 1975, a number of measures aimed at strengthening efforts to address issues of women and gender equality have taken place the world over. Most visible among these have been the various institutions established by countries to oversee the promotion of women's rights. The UN refers to these structures as the "national machinery for the advancement of women' (UN 1999). Different types of structures have been established in different countries such as special bureaux or departments within existing government structures, consultative bodies, full ministries, departments under ministries, commissions, advisory committees, councils, governmental and NGOs or mixture of governmental and NGOs.

In Ghana, the national machinery took the form of a council, The National Council on Women and Development (NCWD) was set up by a decree issued by military government of the day the National Revolutionary Council (NRC Decree322) in 1975. Until the year 2001, when it was replaced by MOWAC by the current ruling National Patriotic Party (NPP) government NCWD did serve as the sole official national machinery for pursuing the general advancement of women and enhancing their participation in development.

The NCWD succeeded to a large extent in raising the consciousness of women as regards their capabilities and their role in national development. It has also changed the societal perception on women as 'mere producers of babies' Tackie, (1996:46).

In addition, NCWD played the role on women's contribution and participation in development and in the changing of legislation, which affected women negatively. For instance, in collaboration with other women's NGOs such as Federation of African Women Lawyers (FIDA)- Ghana, The Law Reform Commission and others, the PNDC Laws on Intestate Succession, Registration of Customary Marriages and Head of Family Accountability were enacted. Others are the laws banning female circumcision and inhuman widowhood rites. Furthermore, NCWD was also very instrumental in advocating for the Affirmative Action, which resulted in the reservation of 30 percent seat for female membership in the DAs, though in practice it does not work.

However, NCWD was strategically located at the highest level of government, the office of the President with secretaries in all the ten regions but had just a few offices in the districts. The location of the NCWD limited its activities to urban areas and outward oriented than focusing on improving women's situation locally. Thus, limiting its capacity as an empowering mechanism observed in a study by Quaye (1998). It was also noted that the then PNDC/ NDC governments have their parochial interests and used the NCWD to achieve their political goals (ibid). Above all, it was also established that there was conflict of roles between the NCWD and DMW, the later an NGO that was headed by the wife of the former president and better resourced, completely took over the activities of the NCWD (ibid).

The newly established MOWAC in 2001 took over the activities of the NCWD with the functions of advising Government generally on all matters relating to women, to integrate women in national development and promote the welfare of children (Asmah, 2001). It is supposed to function through the NCWD secretariats in the ten regions of Ghana.

However, the activities of MOWAC are also limited in scope and more of political. For instance. a study by Ohene-Konadu (2002) for the Ministry on the participants in a training of candidates for the 2002 DA shows that about 80 percent of the participants belong to the women's wing of the National Patriotic Party (NPP) ruling government. Besides. most participants came to the training grounds in the party colours, even though the Local Government Act states clearly the non-partisan nature of the DA (Akpalu 2002). Dzirasah (2002) also described as "unacceptable a statement" allegedly made by the Minister of Justice that called on DCEs and NPP functionaries to ensure that majority of elected members into the DAs and UCs were NPP members as 'unconstitutional'. Article 248 Sub-Section Two of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana states that 'no political parties shall endorse, sponsor, offer a platform to or in any way campaign for or against a candidate seeking election into the DA or any lower and local government unit'

Several CSOs have been established all over the country to supplement the efforts of the government machinery that engaged in advocating for the uplifting the image and status of women and the promotion of women participation in politics at the grassroots level.

3.3 The Role of CSOs in the Promoting Women's Participation in Politics at the grassroots level

NGOs emerged as institutions or organisations interested in providing services to communities beginning in the middle of 1980s and through the 1990s. From providing various communities with sanitary facilities, boreholes, schools and small-scale businesses. CSOs[2] as they are now referred to have broadened their scope to advocacy, political empowerment and forming coalitions to oppose unfavourable policies in many countries Ghana inclusive.

They are made up of church groups, educational institutions, student groups, women groups. legal practitioners and other powerful pressure groups which evolve spontaneously as and when necessary and disappear after achieving their objectives. Thus. CSOs can be put in two broad categories in Ghana. Those that are member-based

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[2] Civil society organisations will be used interchangeably with NGOs in this paper.

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and serve only their members such as labour unions, national or community based organisations on one hand. Prominent among the member based organisation are the 31st December Women's Movement (DWM) and the CMA. (These CSOs have been singled out due to specific efforts to mobilise people at the grassroots level for economic and political participation)s.

On the other hand, are those that are non-member based and provide services to specific categories of people or entire communities, spearheaded legislative and policy issues and serve as advocates for specific groups of people. Worth mentioning among these categories are the International Federation of African Lawyers (FIDA), Ark Foundation to mention just a few. Below is a review of these organisations.

3.3.1. International Federation of African Women Lawyers (FIDA)
FIDA commenced in 1985 as one of the first NGOs, which sought to provide legal service to women in Ghana. It is a small, non-partisan and voluntary organisation. Its strength lies in the voluntary spirit of a group of lawyers. FIDA is committed to improving the situation of women and children and to strengthening their position in the overall developmental process of Ghana. In furtherance of these objectives. FIDA has been very active in initiating and sponsoring the review of laws and traditional practices which negate the development and aspirations of women and children in the civil educational and business fields. FIDA has a Legal Aid Clinic, which offers free legal advice arbitration and counselling and represent in court indigent women who cannot afford the services of a lawyer.

It is worth mentioning that FIDA has been instrumental in the enactment of legislation on Affirmative Action, which provides for 30 percent women's representation in the DA. Since this legislation was passed in 1997 there has been pressure on political parties to involve more women in the electoral processes. However, their efforts at promoting political participation at the grassroots level have been minimal since their activities are more of urban-oriented (Quaye & Drah, 1998). They are therefore not close to the grassroots women and only come out with a few advertisements on television, which has

limited outreach during electioneering period to encourage women to either contest the election or for women to vote for women candidates.

3.3.2. Ark Foundation

The Ark Foundation, Ghana is a human rights organisation focusing on protection of women and children in Ghana. It has been a visible and active player, contributing and participating in various activities which have an affect on women and child rights, such as the passage of legislation harmonising child rights and law. It also plays an active role in advocating for women's participation in the political processes. The Ark Foundation plays a very active role during election times and provides campaign materials and advertising space on radio and television stations for female candidates.

There are several others organisations involved in the advancement of women such as the Sisters' Keepers and Network for Women's Rights; the Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment: the Gender Centre and Abantu (IDEG 2000). As indicated already, all the above mentioned organisations are non-member urban-based, with small office (s) usually the national or regional capitals. Their efforts at promoting political participation women at the grassroots level have therefore been minimal. Those organisations that attempted running training for women candidates during the DA electioneering period did so in the city where to a large extent miss the target group.

3.3.3. 31st December Women Movement (DWM)

Since DMW's establishment in 1982, the movement has regarded civic education and functional literacy programmes as a vital programme for its 2.5 million members (Konadu, 2000). Until the year 2001, when its activities ceased to be publicised (because it was alleged to be part of the former ruling party), the movement remained the largest women's membership organisation in the Ghana.

The movement has initiated a number of projects nation-wide to enhance the capacity of women to generate income for themselves and to empower them generally. These

activities include tie-and-dye cloth manufacturing, gari processing, bakery, construction of silos. palm oil extraction mills, revolving credit scheme for members and construction of 821 day care centre (Quaye & Drah 1998) These projects are supposed to empower the women economically and also to enable them finance their campaign activities during the period of elections.

Through. civic education, public rallies and forums, the movement has succeeded in raising the consciousness of the grassroots women the pivot of its members, encouraging them to participate in the political life of the country. Several women acknowledged that they had benefited a lot from activities of the Movement financially and in the area of rights and freedoms (Quaye & Drah,1998).

However, the DMW was always alleged to be the women's wing of the then National Democratic Congress (NDC) ruling party whose activities were heavily sponsored by the party. Indeed its members have been seen in party colours at seminars and forums and were very visible at all functions of the NDC party. Thus, it was therefore not possible for the Movement to go all out during any election period to help women at the grassroots level to take part in any form of elections. The best they could do was to lobby for government appointments which were very minimal The above has hindered the activities of the movement in many ways. Studies have shown that the activities of the movement since its inception has not had any positive affect on the trend of the grassroots women's participation in politics especially in the DAs as shown below in the 1988. 1994 and 1998 District Assembly election results. (see Ninsin 1998. Kisseh 2001). Thus. participation of women in DA has remained low. This is further elaborated in section 3.3.

3.3.4. CMA

Another organisation that has played a significant role in educating and encouraging women to participate in politics in Ghana is the Christian Mothers' Association – Ghana (CMA). CMA-Ghana is a catholic based women's organisation with the aim of developing its members in the ten regions of Ghana holistically. In furtherance of this objective, the organisation embarks on intensive civic education for human rights and political empowerment, skills training for economic empowerment and religious education at the grassroots where the core of its members are located. Activities of CMA are reviewed in the next chapters.

3.4 The Trend of Women's Participation in the District Assembly.

Various provisions in the design of the decentralisation process complemented by efforts of both government machinery and civil society organisations should have made the participation of women in politics at the grassroots level easier. While the visibility of women in the DA has increased, the numbers are still very insignificant. Figure 2 below depicts the trend of women participation in the DA.

No. of Females Elected to DAs by Regions 1988 - 2002

□ Series1
▣ Series2
□ Series3
□ Series4

Series 1= 1988
Series 2 = 1994
Series 3 = 1998
Series 4 = 2002
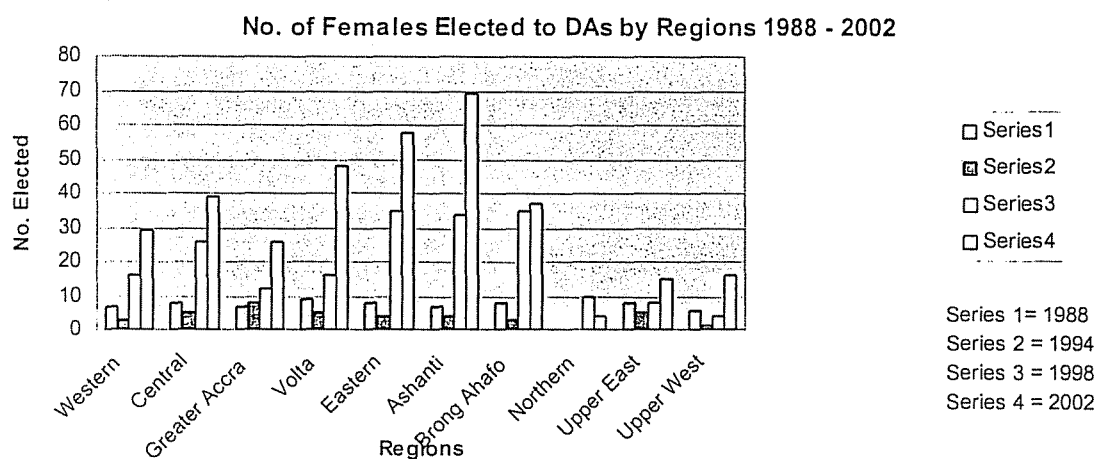
It is difficult to determine the trend of women participation in the DA from 1987 when the DA system was established due to unavailability of data. An attempt is however made using figures based on the results of the elections. The figure above indicates the levels of female participation in DAs. Series one to four represent the numbers of those elected in 1988, 1994, 1998 and 2002 respectively.

From figure 2 it can be observed that women's participation was highest in 1988 at 7.5 percent but later dropped to 3percent in 1994, rose to 5 percent in1998 and again to 7.4 percent in 2002. However, this did not beat the high rate that was seen in 1988. It is important to note that of the elected female candidates in 2002, not less than a third are members of CSO, CMA.

The observed highest rate was in 1988. It is however, interesting to note that in 1988 itself, women representation in the DA was 7.5 percent (EC & MLGRD, 1999). This was quite impressive considering the fact that the DA system was introduced in 1987. The reason for this 'impressive' record was that this was the time of the military regime of the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) when the zeal in members of Committee for the Defence of the Revolution (CDRs) was very high. They consisted mainly of the

lower classes of unionised and non-unionised workers, unemployed and self-employed persons in the formal and informal sectors as a whole, they were able to deal directly with the people to perpetuate the virtues of the then revolution. However, most of the members were rather government appointees as the PNDC government with its populist ideology used the CDRs to entrench its position (Ninisin,1993: 44).

The DWM. though, was able to consolidate support from other women organisations such as the Market Women Associations, of which 26 associations were reported to have been affiliated already (Manuh: 1993), the DWM was unable to reach its target group (women). This was due to DMW's political orientation, hence the drop in number of female elected to the DAs from 7.5 percent to 3 percent in 1994. This sharp drop supports the earlier assertion that the DMW was more of a political movement (women's wing of NDC) than any ordinary CSO. Besides, since 1992 ushered Ghana into constitutional democratic regime, it was no longer easy for the government to appoint people as during the military regime of 1988. Above all, most political parties did not nominate women candidates for the elections and also because the NPP opposition party rejected and boycotted the 1992 National Presidential and Parliamentary elections with the reason of the stolen verdict (Kisseh: 2000). This in turn had serious effects on the 1994 DA elections.

From the data it can be seen that 1998 saw the resumption of active participation of women again in politics thus, the percentage of women rose from 3 percent of 1994 to 5 percent. In 1998, out of an overall total of 567 women contestants, 196 were elected to the DAs. Though very low, there was an upward increment, which could be explained, in the following terms:

All political parties participated actively in the 1996 national elections and were anxious to get representations at the DAs so as to fight for their interest in the 2000 elections at the grassroots level hence the encouragement of active participation of all including women in the 1998 DA elections. Thus party influence was at its peak during this period.

Another explanation can also be due the enthusiasm created by the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 that intensified awareness among women on the need to participate in the political process. Furthermore, other CSOs, churches and the media played very active roles in sensitising women to actively participate and stand as candidates in the elections. At the same time, women were also encouraged to vote for female candidates. This was done through print and electronic media advertisements, the pulpits in churches and so on.

However, the number remained low also because women candidates were left to battle it out all alone. No particular CSO took any radical action to train the candidates for the contest hence though 567 women contested for the elections only 196 were elected forming only 5 percent of the total members elected. In the year 2002, DA elections saw a further increase in women participation in politics at the grassroots level compared to 1998. The number of women contestants almost doubled from 547 to 965 and the number of women elected rose from 196 to 341. Thus, active involvement of women if comparison is made between the number of female contestants in 1998 and 2002.

The year 2000 national parliamentary and presidential elections, which brought about a change in Ghana's young democratic governance influence politics at all levels including the grassroots DAs. The change of government from former ruling NDC party to the current ruling National Patriotic Party (NPP) encouraged a lot of people to freely participate in elections at the local level. The current ruling party, in order to make sure party representatives were replaced embarked on intensive education, lobbying and funding spree through the MOWAC. All training programmes conducted by MOWAC for the women contestants were preceded by massive party rallies where party colours were displayed (Akpalu, 2002). It was also observed that all the invited participants for the three days training organised by MOWAC were selected by the DCEs whilstss all the participants also confirmed they were NPP functionaries, mostly women organisers (Ohene-Konadu, 2001).

Another explanation for the increment in the elected members can be attributed to the tireless efforts of the CMA, a catholic based women's organisation, which went all out after several years of strategizing to ensure that its members and other women were elected into the DAs. Several strategies were adopted by the CMA to facilitate this and from the analysis of the female candidates elected in 2002 elections one third of the elected members into the DAs were either members of CMA or other women that were recruited and trained by CMA. The case of CMA is reviewed in chapter four as earlier indicated.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is clear that both government and civil society are committed to the promotion of the participation of grassroots women in public life, thereby raising the consciousness of Ghanaian women on their civic rights and responsibilities. However, as already stated, the activities of these CSOs are limited to policy issues whereby, they all come together as a pressure group to advocate for the change of legislation, passing of bills to ban inhuman cultural practices like the Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Trokosi system, (a practice which held virgins in servitude in atonement for the crimes of relatives) and to protect the rights of women such as the protection of women against serial killings.

Regarding the participation of women in politics, their activities are limited to media advertisements during the peak of the elections, which miss the target, the grassroots women, majority who have no access to any form of the media. The few who try to organise any form of training do so in the urban centres in very expensive hotels where the grassroots women are usually left out.

The government's decentralisation process creates an enabling environment for political participation at the grassroots level. If CSOs can go much further than just limiting themselves to policy issues and get closer to the grassroots with proactive strategies which are necessary to ensure increased women's participation in politics such as in the case of CMA as shown in the next chapter, much will be achieved.

Chapter 4 : The Case of Christian Mothers Association (CMA)

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review the barriers to women's participation in politics as observed by the CMA and the attempts made by the association to remove these barriers to promote women participation. It will also look at other strategies adopted to enhance and promote women participation in politics at grassroots level.

The first part of the discussion will briefly recap the background of CMA as a civil society organisation. highlighting the philosophy around which CMA activities evolve. Part two will relate to the first phase of CMA's strategy as a long term agenda set down for the promotion of women empowerment holistically and the third part will review the means used to achieve their aim.

4.2 Background of CMA

Christian Mothers Association. Ghana (CMA) is a Catholic Church based Women organisation which was started by a group of nuns way back in the 1940s for the spiritual advancement of especially the widows in the church. As a Church based organisation, emphasis was placed on the religious activities only until the early 1960s when the concept of the association developed to include the holistic advancement of women. Thus. from that time. there was a re-organisation within the organisation to cater for the social. economic and political needs in addition to the spiritual needs of it members. With the support of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAF), a German NGO, a national office was established to co-ordinate activities of the organisation. By the early 1970s, CMA had drafted and adopted its constitution, with constitutionally elected executives at all levels of the group and registered under the Companies Code, 1963 (Act1970) as a recognized voluntary organisation under the Department of Social Welfare, Ghana.

Currently. the organisation has about 33,000 active members spread over the ten regions of Ghana with different types of occupation mostly established through the initiatives of

CMA. CMA is very active in the promotion of the advancement of its members and all other women who ascribe to its aims and objectives spiritually, economically and politically. Spiritually, members are taken through the social teachings and virtues of the Catholic Church to enable them grow into good catholic women, wives and mothers as laid down by the tradition of the church. Economically, through the various skill training, members have acquired different types of skills that are viable and sustainable enough to enable them live a meaningful life. Through intensive civic and human rights education, members participate in decision-making processes within the association the church and the nation as a whole. The next section will focus on how CMA used all the above to enhance political participation of members.

4.3 Agenda Setting: Strategy Phase I
4.3.1 Internal Democracy through Decentralisation
The first strategy of CMA has been its role in promoting democratic principles. CMA's principle of governance is based on the doctrine of government by the people whereby decisions are taken by all, irrespective of tribe, qualification and geographical location. This form of popular decision-making is done through the decentralised structures of the organisation from the grassroots up to the national level, thus, making the system purely a bottom up.

Regarding the structure and organisation of the association, are groups at the following level:

- Local/out station- made up of group members within a locality in a particular church; this implies a bigger town or city with many Catholic Churches may have several local groups.
- Parish Level- Parishes of the Catholic Church can be likened to the districts comprising of many villages/ churches under one station manned by one or two priests depending on the population.
- Diocesan Level- an area for which a bishop is responsible.
- National Level.   (CMA Constitution, Article 4: 0).

Each of these groups has a committee with a composition and functions as laid down by the constitution of the Association (CMA Art. 4.1). Executives consisting of a president, two vices, secretary and assistant secretary, financial secretary, treasurer and two co-opted members and the immediate past president also as ex-officio[3] are elected for the various levels by suffrage from within members as laid down by constitution. The executives formulate by-laws and run the affairs of the local groups and take necessary decisions such as identification of the needs of members at group levels for the national office through the parishes and dioceses.

The parish level executives comprise of the same as local elected from among a committee of the local group executives with a representatives from each group constituting the parish, a parish organiser and immediate past president as ex-officio members. (CMA: 4 3.1). Major decisions are made by the parish committee and the entire membership of the parish group, they implement decisions of the diocesan committee generate and control finances of the parish and elect representatives from the group on the diocesan committee. In conjunction with the executives, they also formulate by-laws and serve as checks on the parish executives who are responsible for the organisation and training of the local groups and submitting of quarterly reports to the diocesan committee. (CMA: 43.2).

Two members representing each parish within a Diocese preferably the president and secretary, two co-opted members, the diocesan organiser, (a paid employee of the association) and all parish organisers form the Diocesan Committee (DECO). The Diocesan Executives Council (DEC) is elected from among the committee to see to the general organisation, implementation and running the affairs of all the groups within Diocese as a whole. The National Committee (NACO) is made up of two representatives from each Diocese (elected president and secretary), four co-opted members, the

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[3] Ex-Officio member s are included due to their experience as in the case of the immediate past president(to guide) or due to the person's job as in the case of the organiser who is most often employed to run errands, help to implement decisions and co-ordinate activities of the group. The ex-officio members have no voting rights.

executive secretary and all paid senior staff[4] appointed by the Association as ex-officio members.

Major decisions are discussed and made by NACO, National Executives (NEC) which are elected from within the NACO to run the affairs of the association through the employees (CMA 4:4.2-4:4.5). Elections are held every three years at all levels to elect new executives. In effect, members of CMA are familiar not only with constitutional issues. but in practice, they are also familiar with the decentralisation process, democratisation of governance and the electoral process as a whole over the years. It was therefore easier for members to understand Ghana's decentralisation process at the grassroots level where the core of members is located. For instance, just as it is provided for in the decentralisation process, authority and power in CMA is transferred to the local level where the local executive identify and decide on the type of income generating projects and training needs for the area, group and the individual members. The executives at local level have their own by-laws. sources of generating income to supplement whatever they get from the national level. They have their own local assembly with sub-committees put in place, fix their own time of meeting to deliberate on issues of concern, and find ways to resolve problems and report to the national assembly. Thus. CMA utilised the association as training ground for internal political empowerment to prepare members for the DA of year 2002.

Another important area of concern was the interpretations of the Social Teachings of the Catholic Church. which, for a long time remained a barrier for members (especially women) participation in politics. The teachings were reinterpreted in accordance with the changing social, economic and political environment and made public unlike in the past when it was the preserve of the clergy. The reinterpretation made it possible for the Catholic Community to realise that the social teachings do in fact, encourage members to participate in the political processes. CMA took the opportunity that these teachings

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[4] The paid senior staff are the heads of the various units like the civic education, income generating and finance who are expected to give technical advise and answer questions pertaining to their areas when need be. They however , have no voting power.

provided and used it as a tool of encouragement to members to promote and enhance women's participation in public life as a whole.

4.3.2 Social Teachings of the Church: *A tool for Promotion of Political Participation.*

The Social Teaching of the Catholic Church used to be the 'most kept secret' of the church some years back hence was only limited to the clergy, (Ryan, 1985: 17). Until 1965. when the Constitution of the church was revised and put in the domain of the lay people. the interpretation of the teachings was a preserve of the clergy. A lot of teachings including the churches stand on members' participation in politics were rather hidden to the laity. As such, members of the church including members of CMA had the popular notion that politics was a 'dirty game' in which Christians should not engage. (Afari-Gyan. 1993).

However. Vatican II[5] reviewed the constitution of the church taking into account the changing circumstances of the modern world and placed it at the domain of the laity. From then it was noted that the constitution of the church rather places it as a responsibility on members of the church to participate fully in 'public life in a climate of genuine freedom' and 'enjoins people to pay tribute to those nations whose systems permit its citizens the largest possible number (women included) to take part in public life' (Vatican II.1965:818).

The leadership of CMA quickly took advantage of the Social Teachings as laid down in the constitution of the church to intensify sensitisation of its members to participate in decision-making processes of the church and the CMA itself. Thus, before members could enter the DAs, they were already actively involved in the decision-making process of the church. For instance, about 50 CMA members are catechists (a position, which used to be exclusively reserved for men in the church),scattered all over the eighteen dioceses in Ghana and several of them are serving on various councils and committees of decision-making in the church. Thus, the social teachings of the church offered the

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[5] Vatican II is the second Vatican Council that deeply studied the mystery of the church and came resolutely to address not only its members but all humanity, hence coming out with an interpretation of the constitution on the church to suit the modern world. (Vatican II, Gaudium et Spes, 7 December, 1965)

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leadership of CMA the opportunity to challenge the church and by re-orienting members that as Christian women, it was not only a right but also a responsibility to participate in politics. This was openly done in the pulpits without reservations. This action was met with mixed feelings from the leadership of the church. While some openly showed their disgust towards CMA's radical stand, others supported the women, while some others remained indifferent.

4.3.3 Economic Empowerment

Several studies have identified economic empowerment as a major political resource (UN, 1992). While the electoral system to a large extent determines whether a candidate needs money to finance a political campaign or not, in Ghana, the DA elections in practice requires that individuals have to finance their own entry into the DAs. In places such as Ghana, where, traditionally women are financially dependent on their husbands and the family with finances strictly managed by men in general, it becomes very difficult then for a woman to finance her campaign. Except for family and personal expenses, women have no access to any extra funds, as such, she cannot financially plan and run for public office (Dolphyne 1991).

At DA level, a contestant needs money to buy drinks to introduce him/ herself to the traditional rulers in the electoral area, to finance the campaign train and even to move around the electoral area. The whole political process has been commercialised, such that one needs to lobby to become a candidate (Ankomah, 1999). Besides, it could also be argued that greater amount of participation, democratisation and capacity building means little, unless poor people have greater economic ownership and control (Oakley, 2000). It is in the light of this that CMA attaches a great importance to economic empowerment of its members. Hence, supporting members to gain access to tangible economic resources and small enterprise development and improving the opportunity for generating greater income are essentially central components of CMA poverty alleviation and political empowerment strategies (Dickson, 1995).

CMA's concern has been the promotion of small business enterprises, provision of a revolving loan scheme/micro finances and the general creation of entrepreneurial skills with the assistance of donors. For instance, until 1998, there has been 30 years sponsorship by Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAF) in training courses on practical and theoretical skills, and offering loans to women in small scale businesses to promote viable income generating projects, which have improved living standards in the lives of members (Wilde 2001). To date, CMA through KAF sponsorship has helped establish various enterprises in 500 of its 1,200 local groups. 'As a drive to enhance the economic and social development of women in a more sustainable manner in the three Northern Regions of Ghana, KAF has supported women's economic empowerment through the Sheabutter Extraction Enterprise Community Empowerment Programme (CEP) under the sponsorship of Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA) with over six thousand beneficiaries'. (Annual Report. CMA 2000).

In order to ensure that the projects and enterprises are sustainable, CMA/KAF has established a Revolving Loan Scheme that does not only encourage the women to save but also to access loans at a very reasonable interest rate to support their activities. More than 10,000 beneficiaries have established themselves through revolving loan scheme and micro- credit financing. These credits always go with training that enable women understand the scheme (Annual Report, CMA 2002). Currently the scheme is renamed CMA Savings and Credit Scheme.

Thus, with the majority of women who hitherto were economically dependent solely on their husbands, and could not participate freely in politics as a result of the financial constraints, the above mentioned programmes and facilities provided by the CMA have now made it possible for women to be economically independent and therefore contribute towards the upkeep of the house, pay children's school fees and participate freely in politics (Annual Report, CMA 2002). Therefore, it can be argued that a sound economic base for members enables them to participate in politics at the grassroots level.

Box I below is a recorded interview of two success stories from women who benefited financially from the programmes offered by CMA

Box 1 Two success stories of CMA Members.

An elected assembly woman in the Yeji DA representing the area acquired the skills of mushroom farming through CMA capacity building enterprise, benefited from the CMA/KAF revolving Loan Scheme by the acquisition of loan from the CMA credit scheme and set up her own mushroom farm where she makes a good living. She said "with my mushroom farm, I am able to live a descent life, pay my children's school fees and above all, have the ability and strength to sponsor my campaign train, before the elections and sponsor observers who ensured that I was not cheated on the election day so at the end of the day, I won the elections again. Thanks to CMA" (Annual Report CMA 2002). She has for many years been a voluntary organiser at the local level of CMA.

Another member from Chinderi DA doubled up her tiger-nut farming with fish mongering just to make a living. This she said used to be very difficult to combine the two with care of her five children, financially, let alone going into politics. As a member of the CMA she happened to benefit from the CMA training sessions on simple book-keeping and how to access credit from CMA/KAF revolving loan scheme. I never knew how to record my sales and calculate to see if I had made profit or loss. Neither did I know how to separate my fish accounts from my tiger-nut accounts' she reported, 'and I kept on servicing my loan that I took from the money lender. But after attending the CMA course, I took a loan from CMA KAF loan scheme. I paid my loan off and invested the rest into my fish mongering. Now I have my own fishing net so I do not have to buy the fish, I have quitted farming and concentrated on the fishing alone. I am able to sell out a minimum of ten baskets of fish to my customers a week, and do you know what that means to me?' She asked. Answering herself she said, she is now counted among the rich in her village, she contributes to the development of the area and so she did not find it difficult at all to win the DA elections because the people nominated her.

Source: Recorded Interview August 12, 2002

The above examples go to show how the activities of the CMA which involved skills training combined with a revolving loan scheme/micro finance enabled women to become economically independent and hence provide them with the ability to participate in politics without them having to depend on other people to finance their activities or determine how they were to spend their money.

4.3.4 Human Rights Education

Social justice has a lot to do with building up human capacity and it is related to economic empowerment and political participation as well as in overcoming poverty (Snyder 1995). UNIFEM identified economic, social and political factors as the three main aspects of poverty after consultation with grassroots women who articulated their needs in 1995 (UNIFEM, 1995). UNIFEM has, therefore, advised that in order to succeed in reaching the long-range goal of development, people's well being that aims socio-

economic empowerment must inevitably interrelate with elements of social justice and political participation. It is in view of these observations that CMA's programmes have incorporated social justice as a primary concern.

Their principal objective is to ensure equitable access to the basic amenities necessary for dignified existence; often called social or basic needs such as education, health and employment, which foster human development, and those of community service nature such as provision of water, fuel and sanitation. CMA also appreciates the fact that denial or neglect of social justice in the pursuit of economic growth can have dire consequences for people. For instance, it was cited in one CMA Report that cuts in governments provision of health by the introduction of the 'cash and carry system', and education in the 1990s had devastating effect on social justice, since experience shows that girls and women bear the greatest burden by stepping in to fill the gap of education and health for their families and communities.[6] (Annual Report, CMA 1999).

Though issues discussed and raised at these workshops vary depending on the area, the underlying objectives remain the same, thus, the women are made to understand that it is not a privilege to participate in politics but a right and also participation will enable achievement of social justice since they will have the chance of influencing decisions as to what type of projects to bring to their various communities. The few members who took advantage of CMA activities got into the DA during the 1998 electioneering and have since been able to influence decisions in the assemblies.(Refer to Box II on the next page)

A member doubles up her teaching profession with food banking with a loan from CMA earlier revolving loan scheme. She was one of the 34 members who took advantage of CMA training and braved it into the DA since 1998. Due to her exposure to civic and human rights education, she has managed to facilitate the building of sanitary facilities, safe drinking water, a nursery school and electricity in her electoral area. The electricity in particular has boosted village industries. 'Today women do not worry about where to keep their children before they go about their economic activities, nor do they have to walk long distance in search of water' she retorted with pride in her campaign speech .She has been re-elected into the DA in 2002

Source: Recorded Interview, August 12, 2002

From the above statement, it can be argued that the civic education provided by the CMA has enlightened women and they are able to influence the decision-making in favour of the issues that directly affect the family and women in particular and their communities.

4.3.5 Social Capital

Social capital as built within the CMA as an association and also with other associations was one major tool that helped in the promotion of members into the DA in year 2002. This social capital has been built over the years based on trust and reciprocity. This net work was built through multiple channels: for example, information flow was one important channel used whereby members running for DAs were introduced in the churches of all denominations and other sister organisations. This is due the fact that over the years CMA has encouraged members to build up broader identities and solidarity networks which helped to translate the "I" mentality into a "we" mentality. For instance there was co-operation between CMA and all other associations be it religious like the Moslem Women Association or a secular one such as Market Women Association and other professional associations like the hair dressers, teachers and nurses. Besides, due to the " we feeling" among members, campaign teams were formed without any problem to help candidates throughout the electioneering period.

" United Nations (1991): The World's Women 1970 –1990 , New York ; notes that girls often help their mothers either after school or when their brothers are allowed to do homework or by staying out of school.

Due to the strong base of social capital it became much easier to lobby for women's nomination in spite of the unfavourable political climate. The 'whole political process', as observed by Ankomah, 'is commercialised to such an extent that even within the party before a woman is accepted as a candidate, she has to lobby' (Ankomah 1999). Thus, if members of her own party demand money from her before she is voted for, as Aknomah observes, then one can imagine how it will be for the DA members at the grassroots level. There was therefore the need for lobbying family members including even husbands and other opinion leaders like the DCEs since the non-partisanism of the DA is rhetoric. CMA's campaign team went all out to lobby opinion leaders, husbands, chiefs and DCEs to support women in the community. Thus, one would say from the above experience that it takes more than just the state legislative to promote successful women participation in politics in any given country.

Chapter 5 : Electioneering Strategies: Phase II

5.1 Introduction

This section discusses the immediate strategies that were employed during the electioneering period to achieve political participation during the 2002 DA elections. To ensure successful achievement of its goal, an eleven member Civic Education Committee (CEC) consisting of professionals such as lawyers; gender specialists; and human rights activists was formed to advice the Civic Education Unit.

The Committee has in its strategic plan of activities to increase the existing number of CMA members in the following key positions:

- District Assembly – from the existing 36 to 80 by the year 2004
- Unit Committee ---at least one member in each unit and area.
- District Chief Executive (DCE) – at least 5 members by 2004
- Parliament   1 to 3 female members of Parliament by 2004
- Church leaders (President, Catechists and so on) at least an average of one in each Diocese   (CMA Strategic Action Plan,2000).

5.2 Immediate Areas of Concern

After a thorough needs assessment it was recommended by CEC that every member of the organisation needed civic education. Members identified with special potentials for leadership positions were to be targeted not only in CMA but also within the church and the nation as a whole for civic education to enhance their chances of success in political participation, (Report Civic Education Committee, CMA 1999). Outlined below are the issues that were identified as some of the immediate problems that needed to be tackled in order to achieve the objectives of the Strategic Plan. These included the status of women in the community and within the social structure, the electoral process and personal empowerment.

5.2.1 Social Structure

In most societies, the social structures prevent married women from participation in politics. In some African countries it is not acceptable for a married woman to run for a public or political office in the area where she lives with her husband, as this would imply that she rules over the village or community of her husband (Dolphyne 1991). In most traditional Ghanaian communities women do not take part in decision-making. They were not expected to speak in public and had to ask permission to do so from elders (Manuh, 1984). Women by themselves had no judicial power and could only assist men to arriving at decision, since they are only to be seen and not heard, (Nukunya 1998). Even where in some Ghanaians social structures, female authority is considered mainly that of advisory as in the case of the queen-mother among the Ashanti, this has hardly translated into involvement in active local or national politics. This is because ability of the woman to wield political power is hidden in the ideology of subordination to men as fathers, husbands and uncles. Thus, marriage relations within the traditional social structure confer authority on the man as the sole decision-maker. It therefore becomes difficult for the woman no matter her educational level in the traditional setting to get involved in politics as she is faced with threats of divorce for trying to rule over the husband as in the case of the woman discussed in the Box III below.

Box III Constraints posed by the social structure

A NEC member of CMA living in one of the three Northern Regions of Ghana and a teacher by profession was active in the training of CMA and the churches' women towards political participation. She also offered herself as candidate for her electoral area during the year 2002 DA elections. However, due to pressure from her husband and his relatives she had to withdraw her nomination. The reason, her husband's younger brother was also in the race.
"I was summoned to a family gathering at dawn and was asked not only to step down but also campaign for my husband's brother or quit the marriage". She related sadly. *"Since I don't want to lose my marriage, I thought it wise to withdraw my candidacy,"* she concluded.

Source: Recorded Interviews February 8, 2002

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CMA in meeting these challenges had to send members to lobby husbands on behalf of their wives for the husbands to allow their wives to stand. Other opinion leaders such as chiefs and even DCEs, are lobbied to throw their weight behind the women in their districts. This is done through Community discussions, and house to house visits.

5.2.1 Marital Status

The marital status and number of children that a woman has a significant implication on her ability and acceptability to participate actively in political processes. A UN study reveals that the age at which women begin having children, number of children they have and their ability to control the time of pregnancy through contraception, all have important effects on their social status; health; economic well-being; and political involvement (UN, 1992). Most women in Ghana become wives and mothers at a very early age. The age for early marriage of the average woman in the traditional Ghanaian society was low. For instance, the mean age of marriage among the Asante women was recorded as between 15 and 20 (Manuh, 1999) Today, even though "modernization" is gaining roots, traditional practices are still predominant in the rural areas and still encourages early marriage and exchange of wives [7] which lowers the status of women. Moreover, in most Ghanaian marriages husbands are much older than their wives, thus placing the man at an advantage of age. Thus, as the head and master, the man commands respect and obedience of every one, and has the sole authority to take decisions hence it becomes difficult for a married woman to contest for any public or political office while the husband is there.

CMA has to embark on intensive civic and human rights education on gender issues for both men and women and offer marriage counselling to ensure husbands allow their wives pursue political careers. Above all as a result of their multiple roles as wives and mothers, their participation in politics becomes very limited even though they want to do so. In order to reduce the burdens of mothers and wives, CMA teaches on reproductive

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[7] Exchange of wife is a situation in which a brother exchanges his sister for her wife from another family. It is practised in part of the Northern Region of Ghana. Women who find themselves in such a situation have very low esteem since they are considered as property in payment for their brother's wife, thus have no say whatsoever in any decision that is taken even on their own issues. Source: Recorded Interview 2002.

rights of the women targeting men also and provides support through the establishment of some day care centres to cater for children of members while they go about their daily chores and political activities. Members within the same area also voluntarily help political candidates take care of their children while they go about their political activities. According to the candidates these activities helped to ease their burden of looking after children and at the same time provided them with an opportunity to pursue other activities during their free time and hence able to do other things like politics.

5.2.2 Level of Education

Education, it is said is one of the greatest sources for change in women's lives because it influences their chances of obtaining good employment, increasing their age at marriage, and their control over childbearing and their chances of exercising legal as well as political rights and acquiring political power, (Snyder 1992). The higher the educational background, the higher a woman's involvement in political activities. Hence, the low educational background of women reduces their chances of competing with men on the political platform, as they tend to have a low self-esteem. For example, while non-literate members contest for the UC level elections, all members for the DAs have not less than the basic school qualification, (CMA Recruitment Data Sheet, 2002).

Furthermore, the DA structure looks very complex and needs to be studied critically before understanding its functions and proceedings at the assembly. Since women in most cases tend to be illiterate, they find it too complex and prefer to stay away. In addition, even though the legal and political framework of the Legislative Act allows that local language be the medium of expression in the DAs in conducting business, literacy still plays a vital role because it improves the assembly members' understanding of assembly procedures and development issues. Hence, to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of women, literacy is an essential requirement not just for understanding the proceedings of the assembly but to be well informed and build up confidence and self esteem.

The CMA agrees that it takes more than income for women to improve upon the quality of life of their families and communities. Training for group participation and solidarity

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can have transforming effect when it is combined with access to productivity-enhancing resources (Snyder 1995). Everywhere, women point to a specific period in their lives when they become empowered: they all agree that it was often the time when they are able to speak in public. Snyder cites Bhatt describing 'women who were afraid to speak their own names as having nothing inside like their own identity' (Snyder 1995: 262).

CMA also feels that there are different ways in which knowledge functions as power hence makes it a duty, to impart knowledge in various ways for members to be able to critically understand the reality of the processes in decision-making. Members are therefore, taken through DA structure, the functions of various committees and members of the DA in local governance while participants are given a platform to practice on specific issues in the form of manifestos to enable them build up their confidence.

In that way, members are able to build their own personal capacities by improving their knowledge and information base to be effective advocates for women issues in the assembly.

5.2.3 Electoral Process

It must be noted that the current electoral process is very cumbersome, male-oriented and expensive. For instance, it is stated in the electoral act that the nomination of a candidate shall be made by a proposer and seconded by another but needs not less than eight people to sign one's nomination form as witnesses (Electoral Commission, 1997 C.1.15). However, it becomes difficult for women to find the eight witnesses in an area where the public perception about women's involvement in politics is low. Besides, it is clearly stated that the DA elections are non-partisan and only the Electoral Commission has the prerogative to create platform for campaign for the elections. While this may be so, it becomes necessary for candidates to start campaigning on individual level by making themselves visible, taking part in communal activities such as communal labour and other community discussion gatherings. This takes a lot of time and considering the multiple roles of women as wives and mothers they are unable to put in as much effort as the men.

Above all, after entering into the DA, members of the electoral area expect so much from the assembly member. A DA member is not only expected to fulfil campaign promises but also take part in, donate money at all public functions and respond to the social needs such as donations at funerals and payment school fees for those in dire need. While men may face these same problems, women are view as failures if they are unable to offer any assistance. All these act as obstacles to women's involvement in politics.

For example a DA woman, from the Zanlerigu Damolgo Electoral area was forced to step down for a man because she could not provide a car to send a sick woman to the hospital when contacted. The community used this as an excuse to show that female DAs are incompetent. Less attention was given to other initiatives that she had started on her own. It could be seen that even though with her own initiative, she was able to get sponsorship from an external donor to provide good drinking water and sanitation for the electoral area not many people appreciated the initiative. Such manipulations by men and community members make the DA position unattractive to women.

CMA rather took advantage of the weaknesses within the system to train member candidates. For instance, seasoned consultants were employed to train trainers who in turn trained member candidates. At these training grounds, campaign teams were formed voluntarily to help and support the candidates. Others were trained as election observers to observe elections on behalf of member candidates on the Election Day to ensure that elections were not rigged. In fact, 1,500 of the 10,000 electoral observers that were trained by the Forum of Religious Bodies were CMA members (Catholic Standards, May 17. 2002). These trained observers had accreditation and observed the elections at various parts of the country for CMA candidates. Above all Mother's Voice, CMA newsletter is published and circulated at a subsidized cost to educate members on the DA system and structure complemented by various local radio programmes in the rural areas during the peak of the election.

Conclusion

To conclude, intensive civic education was carried out at all levels through seminars, workshops, and field trips for self-empowerment during the peak of the elections. CMA held major Training of Trainers sessions in the southern, middle and the northern belts (representing the three Catholic Provinces) of Ghana respectively where participants were trained to train, recruit and help aspiring members the 2002 DA elections. Participants were made up of three diocesan executives, all regional organisers from the 18 dioceses, all sitting DA women and co-ordinators of other organisations in the church.

Diocesan campaign teams were formed after each of the training. This campaign team in turn recruited, trained and supported the candidates during the entire electioneering period. Some of the topics treated among others were:

> The DA Structure
>
> Gender issues in local governance
>
> Electoral campaign strategies
>
> Net working, lobbying and advocacy

All these activities were the proactive strategies adopted to equip the women and consolidate social networks among the members and others to enable further support.

Since members have been extensively exposed to the challenges of the DA system and the electioneering process, it is not a wonder that out of the 969 women contestants nation wide, 119 (12%) were members of the CMA and out of the 356 who were elected nation-wide, 112 (31%) were members of the CMA (Civic Education Annual Training Report, CMA 2002).

Chapter 6 : Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

Chapter six presents the conclusions and recommendations based on the analysis and findings of the study. The task of this paper was to establish the assertion that decentralisation as government strategy, complemented with strategic civil society interventions could promote women participation at the grassroots level. It examined potential strategies that can be adopted by CSOs to complement government's decentralisation to promote and enhance women's participation in politics at the grassroots level in the study using the case of CMA.

6.1 Summary of Findings

Section 6.1 presents the summary of findings in relation with the activities of the CMA to support my assertion that decentralisation as a state strategy, complemented with other strategies can effectively enhance women participation in politics especially at the grassroots level where the core of the women live. As a means of verifying this assertion, 30 questionnaires were administered to CMA members who participated in the electoral process and won the DA elections. At the same time, various concepts adopted from various scholars were utilised as part of my analytical tools.

My findings are that decentralisation alone does not translate into increased women's participation in politics at the grassroots level. An analysis of the questionnaire results show that all the respondents (100 percent) agreed that decentralisation of governance brought decision making to the 'door steps' of the people. This provided an opportunity for them to get involved in politics, because, decision making was brought closer to them and issues discussed at this level are related to problems that they are familiar with as women within their various communities. This assertion seems to support the claim that devolving decision-making to the local levels results in higher interest and participation in local government, thus, providing the opportunity for citizens at local level to define, discuss and decide on their fate (Cheema, & Rondinelli, 1983).

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It is interesting to note, however, that 95 percent of the respondents refuted the assertion that the decentralisation alone made it possible for them to enter the political scene and win the elections. Among these, 65 percent attributed their success to experience they had already acquired over the years as leaders either within the church or in CMA. They also attributed their success to the intensive civic and human rights education provided by CMA. Thirty percent of the respondents, who did not hold any leadership position, also attributed their success to intensive civic and human rights education and training from CMA and other local NGOs. They claimed the training gave them skills and confidence to be able to stand on public platform to campaign.

The other 5 percent attributed their success to the lobbying skills and campaign strategies taught them by CMA. which helped them to lobby their husbands and family members for support. From the above observation, it is clear that civic and human rights education is an important tool that enables people particularly women to participate in politics. This is because women become well informed and confident that they are not treading in the domain of men and that it is their right to be part of the decision-making process. The above findings also points to the fact that decentralisation alone does not automatically translate to increased women's participation in the political processes.

Responses from the respondents also indicated that the misinterpretation of religious and other ideologies could inhibit or advance people's participation in politics. Response from 70 percent of the respondents indicated that they only got involved in politics after they were made to understand the Catholic Churches' stand that it was the responsibility of members to take active part in politics, which they hitherto felt was not a domain of Christians. CMA took opportunity that the teachings of the Church proclaimed as a challenge to encourage women at the grassroots to participate in politics.

An important observation was that all the respondents attributed their success to support from family, husbands, fellow 'mothers' and women from sister organisations. These people did not only support but were also believed to have given them the mandate through their votes. Thus, social capital in practice, whereby people running for office

depend on bonding networks that connect folks, where neighbours informally keep an eye on one's neighbours' homes as seen common with CMA members, notwithstanding the trust and willingness to co-operate with other organisations to facilitate the realisation of shared goals.

An interesting observation was that 80 percent of the respondents are married while 10 percent are widows and the rest 10 percent are either separated from their husbands or single but all falling within the ages of 40 and 65. Thus, one can say that marriage might no longer be as strong an obstacle to women's participation as it used to be, or that beacause husbands have also been part of CMA's sensitisation programme, they willingly allowed their wives to participate in politics. A few of them about 6 percent, however, had problems from their families and husbands and so had to step down from the race but were later still appointed by government (refer to box III) an assertion made earlier in the study.

However, the age group reflects childbearing and the associated multiple roles of women are still hindrances to women's participation in politics. This is because 85 percent of respondents are 'above' the childbearing age and those who have children at all, their children are grown-ups and are independent of their parents.

Another observation worth mentioning is the educational level of the respondents. Majority, (75 percent) of the respondents are Certificate Teachers while the rest 25 percent have at least Middle School Leaving or Vocational School Certificate. They all asserted that it was easy for them to understand the DA system and the electoral process after receiving the training. This reflects the fact that even those who are literate need to be taken through the complexities of the DA structure and the electoral process for them to be able to understand them. In Ghana, there is no provision in the legal documents of the Local Government for training on the structure and its complexities and so training organised by any other organisation will auger well for aspiring candidates. Thus, CMA training has placed its members in an advantageous position as noted by respondents.

Finally. it was observed that 100 percent of the respondents are in some form of business either as full time business, small-scale entrepreneurial business or doubling up with their civil service work and have bnenefited from the credit scheme of CMA/KAF. The respondents claimed that economic standing helped them during the period of campaign. They were able to fund the campaign team and observers, and moved about freely without any financial constraints. The above assertion also supports my earlier claim that decentralisation of governance alone can not serve as a basis for effective democratisation. It only provides an opportunity which has to be supplemented by other strategies such as economic empowerment; civic education; lobbying and so on if this is not done. it will just be rhetoric so long as women participation in politics at the grassroots is concerned.

Finally. it was observed that there were several other CSOs other than CMA located in small communities that were helping women to build up their capacities for economic and political empowerment. a situation though in the right direction tha led to duplication of activities in some areas.

6.2 Recommendations
6.1.1 Civic and Human Rights Education
From the study, it has been observed that decentralisation has brought decision-making closer to the people and for that much an opportunity for most women but more needs to be put in place to complement the decentralisation process. Civic and human rights education is one area, which can be helpful to the promotion of women participation politics especially at the grassroots level. Since democracy detests ignorance and rests on a well-informed populace. there is the need for intensive civic and human rights education targeting all irrespective of sex not only to know their rights but also to defend and respect the rights of all citizens. If government intensifies civic and human rights education, it will go a long way to enhance women's participation in politics.

In addition, it has also been observed that there were other localised organisations that were educating women at various times which shows that there are several other

organisations capable of civic education dissemination. A strategy could be devised they could join with and support national organisation so as to be able to cover a wider constituencies in their education programmes and avoid duplications. The best way to avoid duplication is to intensify collaboration between state and civil society organisations and between civil society organisation themselves.

6.1.2 Social Capital

Social capital should be strengthened among communities and within and between organisation. The study and other studies identified social capital as a strong coping strategy among the poor and rural communities. Social capital. networks of reciprocity can be an insurance mechanism which enables people to survive day to day when individually they cannot, feed their children during the lean season, pay children's school fees access formal credit for their small enterprise, police the neighbourhood or maintain a local well. Social capital is therefore critical to short tem survival and in the long term, it is likely to make their collective voices heard through those supported to get into the decision making process (Putnam. 1995).

As the main source of economic and social welfare for its members, the family for instance. is the first building block in the generation of the social capital as observed in the study. Social safety nets are provided by meeting material and financial needs during difficult times and assisting the care of children while members went out for their daily activities including political. Besides, trust and willingness to co-operate allows people to for groups and associations to facilitate the realisation of shared goals. Thus, organisation should be encouraged to network with each other to achieve a common goal such as participation of women in decision-making process like in the case of CMA.

6.1.3 Civil Society Organisations

Women at the grassroots level need a stronger support base than presently exists. The study revealed that activities of women organisation, which guide, protect and promote political participation are urban oriented. Their efforts at improving the lot of women have therefore been very insignificant. These CSOs should therefore stretch their nets

wider to the rural area where the bulk of the women live for the promotion of strong participation of women in politics. When these structures are put in place, it is possible that women participation in politics at the grassroots level can be achieved with ease for the development of Ghana.

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Questionnaire

This is a questionnaire that intends to gather information on women's participation in politics. The findings are treated as confidential and will be solely utilised for the purposes of the Research. It is important to note that this questionnaire will be administered to those who actually participated in the elections and were encouraged to do so in one way or another by the Christian Mothers Association.

Name_____

Marital Status_____

What is your Occupation (Specify)?

Civil Servant_____

Business Woman_____

House maker_____

Other (Specify)_____

What is your education background?

(a)   Primary School Lever   (b)   Secondary School Lever

(c)   College Graduate   (d)   University Graduate

Other (specify)_____

What position do you hold in the DA?

(a)   District Chief Executive (b)   Presiding Member

(c)   Committee Member   (d)   Chairperson

Are you an elected member? (a) Yes   (b) No

If you are a Committee Member, which Committee do you belong to?

For how long have you served in the District Assembly

(a)   One Term   (b)   Two terms   (c)   Three Terms   (d) More than Three terms

Do you know about the Decentralisation Policy and how it promotes women's participation in local governance? If your answer is yes how?

_____
_____
_____

Would you say that the Decentralisation policy alone made it possible for you to enter into the DA?

_____
_____
_____

If yes how or if your answer is no explain briefly

_____
_____
_____

What other possible means do you think made it possible for you?

_____
_____
_____

Did NGOs play any role in your aspiration to the DA position? If yes what role did they play?

_____
_____
_____

Are you a member of the Christian Mothers' Association?

(a) Yes   (b) No

If you are a member, what position do you hold?

_____

Do you think that the CMA played a role in your being elected? (a) Yes   (b) No

If the answer is yes, what role did CMA play?

Training_____
Campaign strategies_____
Financial Assistance_____
Confidence building_____
Moral support_____
Public speaking_____
Lobbying skills_____

What other role other than the ones mentioned above did the CMA play?

(a) Economic activities (b) Social networking   (c) Social Teachings

Briefly explain your answer

_____
_____
_____
_____