



## Women's Participation in the Local Politics of Ilocos Sur

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### Abstract

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes the equal rights of men and women. Women can now vote and stand for elections. Gender equality in political participation is essential in a democratic society, however, political participation remains to be dominated by men. This paper analysed women's participation in the local politics of Ilocos Sur, Philippines, their profile, motivation in entering politics, and contributions to local governance. Data were gathered from the profile of women elected for the term 2013-2016 and through an open-ended questionnaire answered by 39 respondents. The findings reveal that women are represented in 33 of 37 local government units (89%), however, of the 356 elected officials, only 69 are women (19% or 1:5 in favour of the men). There are lady mayors, vice mayors and members of legislative councils, a great number re-elected once or twice, and affiliated with the two dominant parties. They are of middle to senior years, Catholic, married with a bachelor's degree. They entered politics mainly to serve their constituents, continue where a relative has ended his/her term of office, and contributed to promoting women's welfare. Women's participation in governance should be increased and women's studies should be integrated in the curriculum.

**Keywords:** Gender Equality in Local Politics/ Profile of Women in Local Governance/ Women Politics/ Politics in Ilocos Sur/ Women Leadership/ Philippines

### Introduction

The United Nations recognizes the equal right of men and women to participate fully in all facets of the political process. The principle of the equal rights of women and men is contained in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all subsequent major international human rights instruments. Such universal recognition reinforces gender equality in political participation which is essential in a democratic society like the Philippines.

In the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, women's suffrage did not only become universal but more significantly, over 95% of all countries in the world have granted women the two most fundamental democratic rights: the right to vote and the right to stand for election. Unfortunately however, gender equality in terms of representation in political structures remains to be challenged (Ballington, 2005).

Some prominent women have marked their presence in the political arena as heads of state and parliament. Among them are Prime Minister Sirimavo Ratwatte Dias Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka (May 29, 1970-July 23, 1977), Prime Minister Indira

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Gandhi of India (January 1, 1966-Marh 24, 1977), Minister President Golda Meir of Israel (March 17, 1969-April 10, 1974), Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of the United Kingdom of Great Britain (May 3, 1979 – November 11, 1990) and President Corazon Aquino of the Philippines (February 25, 1986 – June 30, 1992). Some incumbent lady heads of state are Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany (November 11, 2005--), President Park Geun-hye of South Korea (February 25, 2013--), and President Dilma Vana Linhares Rowsseff of Brazil (January 1, 2011--). This year, Hillary Clinton is in the race to the White House as US President.

The right of suffrage has extended to the protection and promotion of women's welfare through the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which codifies women's rights to non-discrimination on the basis of sex, and equality as standing norms in international law. It also establishes that women and men are entitled, on the basis of equality, on the basis of quality, to the enjoyment and exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. Moreover, CEDAW covers critical issues, such as political participation and access to equal opportunity in public life and in the professions.

The Philippines being a state signatory to all these international instruments has endeavored to further advance women empowerment and gender equality. This has been manifested by continuous adoption of various laws, policies and programs. Likewise, the Philippines became one of the main players in the international women's arena and this is anchored on a very vibrant local women's movement. Numerous organizations and non-government organizations (NGO's) exist for the cause of gender equality and other related women issues.

Parenthetically, the gender situation in the Philippines is characterized by sharp contradictions. It graphically showcases samples of women's advancement in politics, academic and professional excellence, and even legislations. But this is contrasted by images of prostituted women, battered wives, economically disadvantaged women and exploited migrant workers (Anonuevo, 2000).

This puts the gender equality issues at the forefront of national discourse and precludes further downslide of women status in the modern Philippine society. Indeed, there are many hurdles for the changes to happen. These legal and policy gain resulted from the strong voice of women that started even during the anti-dictatorship struggle and culminated with the ascension of President Corazon Aquino as the first woman president of the country.

The fundamental law of the land, the Constitution, enshrines state recognition of the role of women in nation-building and ensures the fundamental equality before the law of women and men (Philippine Constitution, Article II Section, 14).

Anchored on the Constitutional mandate, numerous legislations were enacted that relate to the various aspects of women and gender concerns, which include among others, Gender and Development Law, Party-List in which women is a particular sector for representation in the legislature, Anti-Sexual Harassment Law and Anti-Rape Law.



More specifically, Philippine policies promoting women's leadership and political participation were likewise adopted, such as RA 7192 or the Women in Development and Nation Building, RA 7160 or the Local Government Code of the Philippines, R.A. 7688 An Act Giving Representation to Women in the Social Security Commission, the Labor Code, Philippine Plan for Gender Responsive Development (1995-2025), and Gender and Development (GAD).

The signing into law of Republic Act 9710 otherwise known as the Magna Carta of Women or the Bill of Rights of Filipino Women by Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, the second woman President of the Philippines, narrows the continuing quest for gender equality and women's empowerment since the filing of the bill in the bicameral Philippine Congress and since the suffrage movement in the eras of 1920 which secured women's right to vote in the Philippines since 1937.

It may have been a long and challenging quest for gender equality and women's empowerment, but it clearly demonstrates the effective dynamics of a responsive Philippine leadership and forceful but peaceful influence of individual and group stakeholders in Philippine Government decision-making.

While the legal framework is there however, the actual situation and reality reflect the deep gender divide, more especially in the aspect of politics. While there may be notable successes of several women in politics, these are overshadowed by the actual ground level statistics both in terms of numbers and actual positions occupied from the highest functionary to the lowest functionary of government. This is to say that women are still dominated by men in the realm of politics.

Worthy to take note also is the fact that strong voice in politics has surely contributed to several landmark pieces of legislation to promote women's welfare, protecting what used to be called the weaker sex from various forms of discrimination, harassment, abuse and violence. However, implementation of the laws, including those promoting the right to reproductive health, and protecting women and children from domestic violence remains weak (*The Philippine Star*, 2016).

Genuine gender equality and enhancing women's capability in a given society would allow broad women's participation in politics and women's access to decision-making.

This study aimed to determine the participation of women in the local politics of Ilocos Sur. Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

*What is the level of political representation of women in the province of Ilocos Sur?*

*What is the profile of the women who were elected into public office in 2013?*

*What is the women's motivation in participating in the local politics?*

*What are the significant contributions of women as local executives and legislators?*

*What are the problems encountered by the women in their performance of their functions as elective officials?*

Gender equality is equality between women and men in all aspects of life including political opportunity. In public office, gender equality has become an obligation of the government motivated by the reason that women's inclusion is crucial to achieve justice, promote women's interests and make use of women's resources for the good of the country.



This study is significant as it seeks to determine whether gender equality in terms of political representation of women is experienced in the Province of Ilocos Sur and in various municipalities and cities of Ilocos Sur.

Moreover, the significance of the study lies not only in its ability to determine the level of political participation of women in Ilocos Sur but also in its examination of the motivation of women in local politics as well as analysis of the problems they encountered in the performance of their functions as elected officials and most importantly their significant contributions to governance and development.

The government has been emphasizing that it is vital to actively promote women's political participation through affirmative and appropriate policies and programs. Hence, the data that will be gathered from this study are hoped to lead to new policies that will enhance gender mainstreaming and equal participation in municipal and city government structures.

This study was limited to women's political participation in local governments in Ilocos Sur in terms of the number of women elected to provincial and municipal elective positions [i.e. Provincial Governor, Vice Governor, Sangguniang Panlalawigan (Privincial Legislative Council) Member, City Mayor, City Vice Mayor, SangguniangPanglunsod (City Legislative Council) Member, Municipal Mayor, Municipal Vice Mayor and Sangguniang Bayan (Municipal Legislative Council) Member] based on the results of the elections conducted in 2013. It also determined the women's motivation in entering politics, the problems they encountered as elected officials and their significant contributions in governance with information gathered through an open-ended questionnaire.

### Conceptual Framework

The study was anchored on the paradigm presented below:

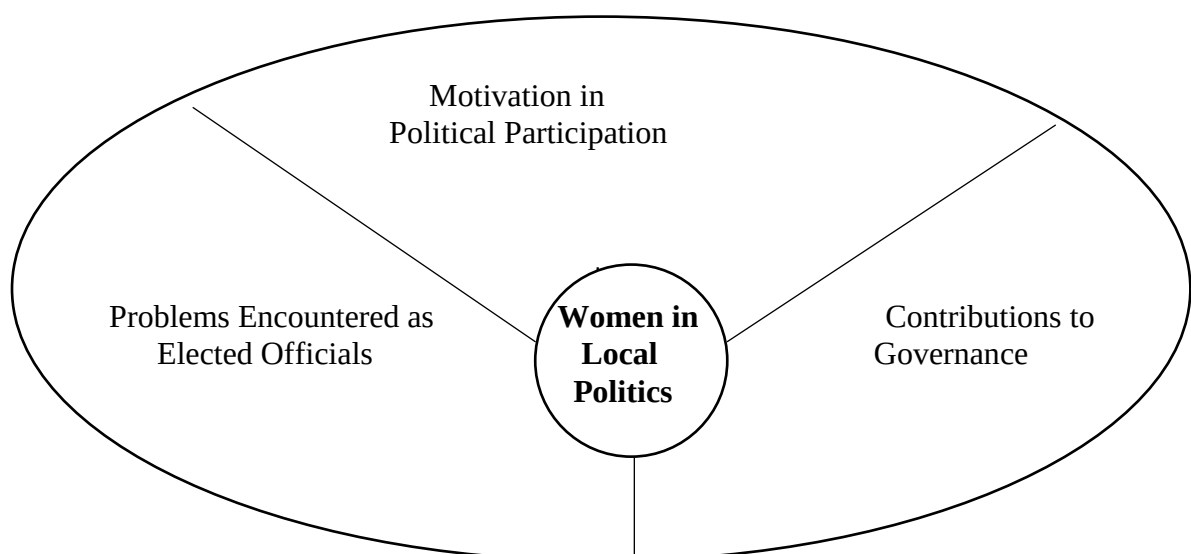


Figure 1. The Research Paradigm



The paradigm illustrates that women are motivated to enter politics. Although they encounter problems in performing their jobs as elected public officials, they do have significant contributions to local governance.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The following studies discuss the concept of women's political participation and representation in government structures.

Rai (2013) posits that political participation can be described as any voluntary act with the purpose of influencing elections or public policy. It can be in the form of casting a vote or running for office, and has always been taken as an essential indicator to measure empowerment in the political process. This concept can be linked with having control and gaining further control in decision making bodies as well as in family and society.

Fox and Lawless (2010) provided a thorough analysis of how gender affects women and men's efficacy to run for office. Based on their findings, it was revealed that despite comparable credentials, background, and experiences, accomplished women are substantially less likely than similarly situated men to perceive themselves as qualified to seek office.

Mendez, et al (2012) found out a gender gap in evaluations of competence and maturity by merely looking at the faces of political candidates revealing that people are more likely to prefer men candidates than women candidates.

Mc Donagh (2010) argued that the state's public policies constitute a political environment that has an impact on public attitudes about women's suitability as political leaders and women's election to political office. Therefore, what promotes women's political representation is a state that combines democratic politics affirming women's sameness with men and maternal list policies representing women's group difference from men.

A joint publication of the International Centre for Research on Women(ICRW) and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women ) entitled "Opportunities and Challenges of Women's Political Participation in India: A Synthesis of Research Finding from Select Districts in India" authored by Bhatla, Walia, Khanna, &Verma, R. (2012) noted that women in local governments face a number of barriers such as low literacy, poor preparatory training, a high household work burden and negative attitudes towards women in public office that constrain their ability to fulfil their governance roles or that make them unlikely to recontest.

On the other hand, True, Niner, Parashar& George (2012) examined the patterns of women's political participation in the four sub- regions (Eastern Asia, South-- Eastern Asia, South Asia and the Pacific Islands) of the Asia-Pacific region and analyzed the key enablers and obstacles to women's equal participation in formal politics (legislative institutions) and public life. The study revealed that high status for women has been claimed in South Eastern Asian societies, yet relative gender



disparity and low levels of women's political representation compared with the rest of the word is pronounced.

## **Methodology**

The study is a descriptive research that utilized the mixture of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Data were obtained through an open-ended questionnaire that was administered to 39 key informants (KI) and documentary analysis. The study was conducted from January 2015 to March 2016.

The level of women's participation in all 32 municipalities and two (2) cities of Ilocos Sur was determined from the election results of 2013 obtained from the Provincial Office of the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) of Ilocos Sur. From the report, the profile of the women officials were derived in terms of position to which they were elected, age, civil status, religious affiliation, party affiliation, rank in the legislative council, term of office served and education. Selected data of the existing policies in the Philippines which promote women's leadership and political participation were obtained from various references and resources.

The key informants were taken from among the women who were elected officials in the 2013 elections.

The data gathered through the questionnaire and documentary sources were subjected to content analysis. Data obtained from the election results were analyzed by taking their frequencies and percentages.

## **Results And Discussion**

### **A. Level of political representation of women in the Province of Ilocos Sur**

Women are represented in 89% or 33 out of 37 local government units (LGUs) in Ilocos Sur particularly in the Provincial Government, the City Government of Candon, the City Government of Vigan and 30 of the 34 municipal governments (88%) of the First and Second Districts of Ilocos Sur. Table 1 presents the distribution of women in elective positions in the province.



**Table 1. Distribution of Women in Elective Positions  
in ILOCOS Sur (2013 Election)**

| <b>AREA<br/>Province</b> | <b>Governor</b> | <b>Vice<br/>Governor</b> | <b>SangguniangP<br/>anlalawigan<br/>Member</b> | <b>Total</b> | <b>Percentage %<br/>to Total<br/>Officials</b> |
|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Ilocos Sur               |                 |                          | 1                                              | 1            | 8                                              |
| Total Officials          |                 |                          |                                                | 12           |                                                |
|                          |                 |                          |                                                |              |                                                |
| <b>City</b>              | <b>Mayor</b>    | <b>Vice<br/>Mayor</b>    | <b>SangguniangP<br/>anglunsod<br/>Member</b>   |              |                                                |
| Vigan                    | 1               | 1                        | 2                                              | 4            | 17                                             |
| Candon                   |                 |                          | 2                                              | 2            | 8                                              |
| <b>Total Women</b>       | 1               | 1                        | 4                                              | 6            | 25                                             |
| <b>Total Officials</b>   |                 |                          |                                                | 24           |                                                |
|                          |                 |                          |                                                |              |                                                |
| <b>Municipalities</b>    | <b>Mayor</b>    | <b>Vice<br/>Mayor</b>    | <b>SangguniangB<br/>ayan Member</b>            | <b>Total</b> | <b>Percentage %<br/>to Total<br/>Officials</b> |
| <b>First District</b>    |                 |                          |                                                |              |                                                |
| Bantay                   |                 |                          |                                                | 0            | 0                                              |
| Cabugao                  |                 |                          | 4                                              | 4            | 4                                              |
| Caoayan                  | 1               |                          | 2                                              | 3            | 3                                              |
| Magsingal                |                 | 1                        |                                                | 1            | 1                                              |
| San Ildefonso            |                 |                          | 2                                              | 2            | 2                                              |
| San Juan                 |                 | 1                        | 3                                              | 4            | 4                                              |
| San Vicente              |                 | 1                        | 1                                              | 2            | 2                                              |
| Santa Catalina           |                 |                          | 2                                              | 2            | 2                                              |
| Santo Domingo            |                 |                          | 1                                              | 1            | 1                                              |
| Sinit                    |                 |                          | 1                                              | 1            | 1                                              |
| <b>Total Women</b>       | 1               | 3                        | 16                                             | 20           | 20                                             |
| <b>Total Officials</b>   |                 |                          |                                                | 100          |                                                |
|                          |                 |                          |                                                |              |                                                |
| <b>Second District</b>   |                 |                          |                                                |              |                                                |
| Alilem                   |                 |                          |                                                | 0            | 0                                              |
| Banayoyo                 |                 | 1                        | 1                                              | 2            | 1                                              |
| Burgos                   | 1               |                          | 3                                              | 4            | 2                                              |
| Cervantes                |                 |                          | 1                                              | 1            | .5                                             |
| Galimuyod                |                 |                          |                                                | 0            | 0                                              |
| Del Pilar                | 1               |                          |                                                | 1            | .5                                             |
| Lidlidda                 |                 |                          | 2                                              | 2            | 1                                              |
| Nagbukel                 |                 | 1                        | 4                                              | 5            | 2                                              |
| Narvacan                 |                 | 1                        | 3                                              | 4            | 2                                              |
| Quirino                  |                 |                          | 1                                              | 1            | .5                                             |



|                              |   |    |    |     |    |
|------------------------------|---|----|----|-----|----|
| Salcedo                      |   | 1  | 1  | 2   | 1  |
| San Emilio                   |   |    | 1  | 1   | .5 |
| San Esteban                  |   | 1  | 2  | 3   | 1  |
| Santa                        |   |    | 2  | 2   | 1  |
| Santa Cruz                   | 1 |    | 3  | 4   | 2  |
| Santa Lucia                  | 1 |    |    | 1   | .5 |
| Santa Maria                  |   |    |    | 0   | 0  |
| Santiago                     |   | 1  | 2  | 3   | 1  |
| Sigay                        |   |    | 1  | 1   | .5 |
| Sugpon                       |   |    | 1  | 1   | .5 |
| Suyo                         |   | 1  | 1  | 2   | 1  |
| Tagudin                      |   |    | 2  | 2   | 1  |
| <b>Total Women</b>           | 4 | 7  | 31 | 42  | 19 |
| <b>Total Officials</b>       |   |    |    | 220 |    |
|                              |   |    |    |     |    |
| <b>Grand Total Women</b>     | 6 | 11 | 52 | 69  | 19 |
| <b>Grand Total Officials</b> |   |    |    | 356 |    |
| <b>Ratio – 1:5</b>           |   |    |    |     |    |

**No. of LGUs :**

|                |             |
|----------------|-------------|
| Province       | - 1         |
| Cities         | - 2         |
| Municipalities | - 34        |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>- 37</b> |

**LGUs with women**

|                |             |
|----------------|-------------|
| Province       | - 1         |
| Cities         | - 2         |
| Municipalities | - 30        |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>- 33</b> |

**Percentage of LGUs with women officials – 89%****Percentage of Women Officials – 19%**

The LGUs with no woman elected official are the municipalities of Bantay in the First District, and Alilem, Galimuyod and Santa Maria in the Second District.

Of the 356 elective officials in the entire province, only 69 are women (19%) or the ratio is 1:5 in favor of the men. This finding does not present a good picture of gender equality in terms of political representation, but it only proves further the fact that political power is still controlled by the men, a patriarchal system that pervades in the entire Philippine society.

In the SangguniangPanlalawigan, only one of the 10 Provincial Board Members is a woman. In Vigan City, the mayor, the vice mayor and two of the 10 SangguniangPanglunsod members are women (33% share of political power). In Candon City, there is no share of women in the executive branch, only two SangguniangPanglunsod seats (17% share of the political power) are occupied by the women. In both cities combined, political power is in the hands of six women or 25% of the elected officials. This situation proves true the findings of Fox and Lawless (2010) that gender biases affect the chances of women in getting elected although their qualifications are comparable to those of the men.



Only the Municipal Government of Nagbukel has an equal representation of women (50%) with the men, followed by five municipalities with 40% women representation. These LGUs are those of Cabugao and San Juan in the First District and Burgos, Narvacan and Santa Cruz in the Second District. These five LGUs with 40-50% representation of women comprise only 18% of the municipalities.

In terms of positions held by the women, only the LGU of Caoayan in the First District, out of 10 LGUs (10%) has a lady mayor while four LGUs (Burgos, Del Pilar, Santa Cruz and Santa Lucia) out of 22 LGUs (18%) are headed by lady mayors in the Second District.

There are more lady vice mayors: they are in three out of 10 LGUs (30%) in the First District (Magsingal, San Juan and San Vicente) and seven out of 22 LGUs (32%) in the Second District (Banayoyo, Nagbukel, Narvacan, Salcedo, San Esteban, Santiago and Suyu).

The male officials dominate the legislative councils in all the LGUs. It is only in Cabugao where there is an equal distribution of male and lady councilors. With the minimal voice due to very low representation, women's welfare or interests may not easily and necessarily be in the agenda of the LGUs.

Based on the foregoing data, the disparity in political representation in Ilocos Sur is similar to the "pronounced relative gender disparity and low levels of women's political representation in four-sub regions of the Asia-Pacific region" found out by True, Niner, Parashar & George (2012).

#### **B. Profile of the women in elective positions in ILOCOS Sur**

The profile of the women who were elected in 2013 is based on the data gathered from the Provincial Office of the Department of Interior and Local Government. Table 2 presents the distribution of women in elective positions in terms of age, civil status, religious affiliation, party affiliation, rank in the legislative council, number of terms of office served and education.

**Table 2. Profile of Women In Elective Positions in ILOCOS Sur**

| <b>VARIABLES</b>            | <b>N</b>  | <b>%</b>   |
|-----------------------------|-----------|------------|
| <b>AGE (as of 10-17-15)</b> |           |            |
| 71-80                       | 3         | 4          |
| 61-70                       | 15        | 22         |
| 51-60                       | 19        | 27.5       |
| 41-50                       | 19        | 27.5       |
| 31-40                       | 9         | 13         |
| 21-30                       | 4         | 6          |
| <b>Total</b>                | <b>69</b> | <b>100</b> |
| <b>CIVIL STATUS</b>         |           |            |
| Married                     | 42        | 61         |
| Single                      | 11        | 16         |
| Widow                       | 12        | 17         |
| Separated                   | 1         | 1          |
| Not indicated               | 3         | 4          |
| <b>Total</b>                | <b>69</b> | <b>100</b> |



|                                |           |            |
|--------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| <b>RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION</b>   |           |            |
| Roman Catholic                 | 57        | 83         |
| Others                         | 11        | 16         |
| Not Indicated                  | 1         | 1          |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>69</b> | <b>100</b> |
| <b>PARTY AFFILIATION</b>       |           |            |
| Liberal Party                  | 29        | 42         |
| Nationalista Party             | 11        | 16         |
| LP Bileg                       | 8         | 12         |
| NP Bileg                       | 8         | 12         |
| Nationalist Peoples' Coalition | 3         | 4          |
| NPC Bileg                      | 1         | 1.4        |
| Independent                    | 5         | 7          |
| Bileg                          | 1         | 1.4        |
| Aksyon Demokratiko             | 1         | 1.4        |
| Not Indicated                  | 2         | 3          |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>69</b> | <b>100</b> |
| <b>RANK in the Council</b>     |           |            |
| 1st                            | 6         | 11.5       |
| 2nd                            | 10        | 19         |
| 3rd                            | 9         | 17         |
| 4th                            | 5         | 10         |
| 5th                            | 6         | 11.5       |
| 6th                            | 6         | 11.5       |
| 7th                            | 6         | 11.5       |
| 8th                            | 4         | 8          |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>52</b> | <b>100</b> |
| <b>TERM OF OFFICE</b>          |           |            |
| 1 <sup>st</sup>                | 32        | 46.4       |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup>                | 21        | 30.4       |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup>                | 16        | 23.2       |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>69</b> | <b>100</b> |
| <b>EDUCATION</b>               |           |            |
| Elementary                     | 1         | 1.4        |
| High School                    | 2         | 3          |
| Vocational                     | 3         | 4.4        |
| College                        | 56        | 81.2       |
| Post Grad/DDM                  | 5         | 7          |
| Not Indicated                  | 2         | 3          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                   | <b>69</b> | <b>100</b> |



### **1. On Age**

A great percentage of the women officials are in their middle age of 41-50 (27.5%) and an equal number of 51-60 years of age (27.5%) accounting for a majority of the two combined age brackets (55%). A big number too are considered as senior citizens aged 61-70 (22%). Only a few officials (4 women or 6%) are young adults, 21-30 years old.

The data imply that the older folks are more interested to enter the political field. Probably, the younger generations are more interested in other fields in which to establish a career. Probably, the political game requires maturity and experience, thus, the presence of older generations in the executive and legislative branches.

### **2. On Civil Status**

Majority of the women in elective positions are married (61%), a few have remained single (16%) while the widows (17%) have also found themselves engaged in public service through the power of the ballot. Having a family is not a deterrent to a political career, so, too is being single and widowed. Probably, being single is also advantageous for it allows more time for one to focus on her political career and on attending to the needs of her clientele and public service.

### **3. On Religious Affiliation**

A great majority of the lady officials (83%) are Roman Catholic. The other religious sects with which the woman politicians are affiliated are United Methodist Church, Anglican Church, Church of Christ, Pentecost, United Church of Christ in the Philippines in Gregorio del Pilar, Lidlidda, Quirino, Salcedo, Sigay and Suyoy which are upland municipalities in the Second District.

### **4. On Party Affiliation**

A great percentage of the women in elective positions belong to the Liberal Party (LP) which is the Administration Party (42%). Members of the Nationalista Party account for 16% of the women officials. There is an observed alignment of the local party Bileg with the two dominant parties (LP-Bileg, 12% and an equal number of NP-Bileg, 12%). It is also observed that some women ran as independent candidates in the last election and won (7.2%).

### **5. On Rank in the Council**

Many women officials ranked second (19%) and third (17%) with the men getting the top rank in the local legislative councils. This implies that women can compete with the men for political supremacy, however, the society still sees to it that the woman stays as the power behind the man literally.

### **6. On Number of Terms in Office**

A great percentage of women officials are newcomers in the political game (46.4%; however, a big percentage have served on second term (30.4%) and on third term (23.2%). These data imply that majority of the women officials have gained experience in the field of politics and operations of government. Likewise, these imply that women would like to serve longer as public officials.



## 7. On Education

A great majority of the lady officials are college graduates (81.2%). Their educational qualification stands out as their asset to remain in office as a local chief executive or as a legislator for such works surely demand mental ability and technical skills in administration and management.

The foregoing data imply that women in public office have the maturity in terms of age and experience, high education and religious and party affiliations that could support one's bid for a public office. These also indicate that women in the Philippines are in better position compared to women in India where Bhatla, Walia, Khanna & Verma (2012) noted that "women in local governments face a number of barriers such as low literacy, poor preparatory training, a high household work burden and negative attitudes towards women in public office that constrain their ability to fulfil their governance roles or that make them unlikely to recontest." In Ilocos Sur, successful women in politics find themselves seeking a second or a third term and even bidding for a higher office at the end of their term.

### C. Motivation of the women in participating in the local politics

In today's generation more and more women are motivated and accommodated in politics. In Ilocos Sur, 19% of the total number of the elected officials are women.

From their responses, not one of the key informants admitted that being in politics was her ultimate dream. The respondents however were motivated to join politics because of some other reasons as follows:

1. To render help and service to the constituents
2. To continue the service of a relative whose term has expired or who died
3. To gain friends in the public service
4. To change the present economic condition of the municipality

Most of the respondents answered that their main motivation in entering politics is to render help and service towards the constituents in the place. Accordingly, as women, they have a strong desire to help the needy since they know that a family's needs are numerous and these women politicians manage their home after their office hours. The answer might be considered as a motherhood statement for all politicians in the country but it remains to be the best motivation in entering politics. Worthy to take note is the findings in the paper of Bari (2005), on Women's Political Participation: Issues and Challenges, where it was found out that women in politics bring a special caring focus and female values to politics since they served as mothers who understand better the help and the services needed by the constituents. Through their active involvement in community work and women's movements, local women politicians are fully aware of issues faced by women in their communities and are uniquely positioned to address them.

In the country, political dynasty is practised in both national and local politics. The respondents admitted that they were only motivated to join politics because they



were encouraged by a family member whose term has expired. Only one however said that her being into politics was because of an inspiration to continue the service of a dead relative. Anywhere in the Philippines, a great number of families controlled the politics of a certain place whereby positions held by one member of the family is passed on to another member. A review of the profile of the respondents reveals that many of the elected women are related to officials who are either their spouses or parents/siblings who currently hold executive or legislative positions. A great number of the respondents in this study considered the family's influence as a motivation in joining the politics.

Some of the respondents said that they were motivated to join politics in their earnest desire to gain friends in the public service. Accordingly, their positions have made them gain friends in politics and in the government service. To them, they do not only serve the people, but they also gain friends. This social need to belong to a circle of friends, most importantly from the political arena gives them prestige and status as they rub elbows with those in power and with political influence.

Among all the respondents, there were two representing upland municipalities who answered that they wanted to change the economic conditions of their municipalities. To them, their being into politics was due to their exposure to the very hard life in their area and they believe that somehow by joining politics, they could do something to change the present economic condition of their municipalities. This desire is supported by the paper "Women in Local Governments" by iKNOW politics (July 15, 2013) which found out that the local government's political and socio-economic status improves when women become more involved in decision making and policy development at all levels of governance

#### **D. Significant contributions of women as local executives and legislators**

Around the world, women are entering the field of politics and government in growing number signifying political participation, role in civil society, and government decision-making. It is a simple fact that women leaders are becoming more involved in politics and that they have significant contributions as local executives and legislators. In Ilocos Sur, the following were the significant findings on the contributions of women local chief executives. The Mayors, found the following as their significant contributions:

1. Managing of all the affairs in the city/municipality
2. Supervision towards the employees whether they are doing their job well
3. Checking on whether projects are implemented well
4. Signing of pertinent laws that will help the municipality of city

The Local Chief Executives considered the management of the affairs of the city/municipality as their main tasks assuring the constituents they served that everything is well taken care of. The lady Mayors also gave emphasis on supervising the works done by their employees which is an integral part of decentralization. Accordingly, they check whether the employees are performing their tasks and are not putting the city/municipality in jeopardy. Anent hereto, is the checking whether or not projects are fully implemented and that these are executed legitimately. Lastly, as the



Local Chief Executive, the signing of pertinent laws/ordinances that will help the municipality, also forms an integral part of their significant contributions to governance.

For the legislators particularly the Vice Mayors, the Sangguniang Panlungsod Member and the Sangguniang Bayan Members, the following were found out to be their main contributions to governance.

1. Propose a bill/ordinance that protects women and children
2. Join in the deliberation of laws that will help the constituents and the place
3. Attend programs/gatherings that will represent the city/municipality
4. Help those who come to the office for personal problems

They found proposing a bill or ordinance that protects women and children as a significant contribution. Being in an elective position gave them the chance to prioritize pertinent laws that would uplift the role of women in politics as well as those that will protect both the women and the children. This finding is supported in the paper of Melanne Verveer entitled “Women as Agents of Change: Advancing the Role of Women in Politics and Civil Society” (June 9, 2010), which states that there is a strong evidence that women elected to office tend to emphasize issues that reflect the priorities of families, women, and ethnic and racial minorities.

Being elected into a public office assures their presence in the deliberation or hearing of laws that will surely help their constituents. They see to it that the ordinance/law caters to the needs of the people. The legislators also considered attending programs/gatherings representing their city or municipality as a contribution in the field of governance. They see to it that people see them as not only functioning within the four corners of the office but that they are also visible and functioning outside the office.

#### **E. Problems encountered by the women in their performance of their functions as elective officials**

Women face numerous obstacles in achieving representation in governance. “Around the world, women are entering the field of politics and government in growing numbers, yet their gains have been uneven and their leadership often goes unrecognized” (Women as Agents of Change: Advancing the Role of Women in Politics and Civil Society, Melanne Verveer, June 9, 2010). The problems encountered by these women leaders are categorized into their three main function, official function, social function and family relations. Their responses as to the problems they encountered are discussed below.

##### **1. Official function**

Official function problems are those encountered by the women leaders in their functions as local chief executives or legislators. They are enumerated as follows:



- a. Feel discriminated because most of the committees are headed by men and women politicians only serve as members
- b. Conflict of schedules of the different meetings and events
- c. Problem in party affiliation since the mayor picked those from the same party
- d. Have to attend to the needs of the place even if already at home

Majority of the elected women considered feeling discriminated against the menofficials since majority of the committees in the municipality are headed by men and the women leaders only serve as members. Although some women were given the opportunity to chair a committee, still a great number felt discriminated. The same findings were revealed in the study “Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Women in Management” by Linda Wirth (May 2001,) where the hierarchical industry structures have men occupying nearly all decision making positions.

Another problem faced by the women leaders is the conflict of schedules, meetings and events in their official capacity. It is either they missed one of the meetings or events or that they missed both activities. Party-affiliation problem also occurred where those who are included before in the political line up are more given committees to handle, including a say in every projects. Women leaders who do not belong to the party were discriminated. Some even jokingly said that they were not given the same treatment as men because of a bias against the womenas the weaker sex since “mas mahina daw ang loob nila” (they have a softer heart).

In the paper of Angelica Galiano (2013) “Women for Women,”it is accepted by some male leaders that although women can have good business minds and are efficient heads of households, in the public eye, they appear amateurish and weak and men are better for political office.

Lastly, they view as a problem in their official function that of attending to the needs of their community even if they are already at home. Admittedly, they realized that their being into public office extends to their homes since they can be called anytime of the day if the need arises. As public figures, their official life coincides with their private life; they acknowledge the fact that public service does not choose the time and place for it to be rendered.

## 2. Social function

In social function, the following were viewed as problems encountered by women officials. Though they do not entirely see them as problems, there were times that they could not express the real emotions that they felt inside because of the notion that as political figures, they should always appear warm and accommodating to the public.

- a. Should always deal with people nicely and always smiling even if having some personal problems
- b. Should never appear to be moody or angry at public places
- c. Should never chose the people they deal with



d. Should cancel personal appointments because of an obligation or an event in the community.

It is a must that they should always deal with people nicely and always be smiling even if they have their own personal problems. This to them is something difficult because it is not easy to smile and appear nice when troubled. To them they are like the local artists who should always appear beautiful and friendly to the public. Another problem that is related to the foregoing is that they should never appear moody or get angry at public places

Women leaders and all politicians should never chose the people they deal with since this could negatively affect their popularity. Most of the constituents look up to them as someone they could turn to and not someone who drives them away. Lastly, the women officials saw as a problem cancelling their personal appointments because of an obligation in their service commnity or because of an event that they need to attend. Cancelling a doctor's appointment was given as an example.

### 3. Family relations

To the respondents, the women officials also encounter problems pertaining to their own family relations. Being in an elective position is actually the major sacrifice that they have to bear. They were sworn into office to serve the constituents regardless of time, place and day thus resulting into the reduced family time. The following personal relations problems were found out in the study.

- a. Time with the family is sacrificed since even if it's already late, they need to be at the office
- b. Cannot attend to important family gatherings like reunions since it conflicts with work
- c. Missed some programs of the kids because of an obligation to attend to the needs of the place
- d. No longer have enough time to bond with kids

The women leaders admitted that public office entails being always ready to serve even outside the official time for a government employee. Though they completely understand that when they embraced politics, their time with the family would be sacrificed, still they see it as a problem. Instead of them supposedly sleeping or resting soundly, if the need arises, they have to be at the office.

Another problem is that they are unable to attend important family gatherings or reunions because of conflict in schedule with their work. This is completely understandable by them since they knew that when family gatherings coincide with their work, they have to prioritize their work. Missing some programs of the kids because of an obligation is somewhat heartbreaking to them. Though they said that they are able to attend some recognition programs of their kids, most often, they are not able to because of some conflicts in the work. Mothers who are also women leaders as much as possible would like to be always able to attend to their kids and be their number one fan. However, sometimes they cannot do their responsibilities as a



mother when there is an important thing that needs to be done in connection with their being women leaders.

Lastly, they see as a problem their little bonding time for their kids unlike when they were still ordinary citizens. It is either they attend meetings, programs or events beyond their official time or are being away from home because of seminars, trainings or conferences, making them leave home and miss their family.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The women are represented in the local government units in Ilocos Sur, however their representation is limited with only one woman official to every five male officials in elective positions. Local politics is still dominated by the men. There is still no genuine gender equality in terms of representation in local politics in Ilocos Sur.

The women in elective positions in Ilocos Sur are of middle age, married, Roman Catholic and a bachelor's degree holder. They are affiliated with the dominant Administration party, the Liberal Party, and are serving their first term in office. Many of the women are on their second and third term in their respective offices.

The elected women officials were motivated to join politics because they wanted to render help and service to their constituents, to continue the service of a relative whose term has expired or who died, to gain friends in the public service and lastly, to change the present economic condition of the municipality where they live.

They have also significant contributions in the field of governance: for the Local Chief Executives or the Mayors, management of all the affairs in the city/municipality, supervision towards the employees whether they are doing their job well checking on whether projects are implemented well and the signing of pertinent laws that will help the municipality or city; for the women legislators, proposal of a bill/ordinance that protects women and children, attendance in the deliberation of laws that will help the constituents and the place, representing the city/municipality in programs/gatherings and rendering help to those who come to their office for assistance in their personal problems.

The elected women officials encountered problems along their official function, social function and family relations. On their official function, they feel discriminated over the men in heading committees. On social function, women leaders should always deal with people nicely and must always be smiling even if having some personal problems. On family relations, their time with the family is sacrificed since public service is prioritized over their family concerns.



## Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are forwarded:

The importance of increasing women's representation in decision-making and policy-making in local government units should be disseminated in schools through the integration of gender and development in the curriculum.

More qualified women should be encouraged and supported by communities and civic organizations to run for public office to ensure that women's welfare and rights are promoted and safeguarded in local governance. Further, all LGUs should implement women's representation in the local legislative bodies as mandated by RA 7160 or the Local Government Code of 1991.

The women leaders should be engaged with activities that would lead to empowering women and creating their ability to critically engage with the state and the society for social change and gender equality. This is to give them more motivation to enter politics.

Discrimination among women leaders due to their gender and party affiliation should be eliminated and give way to gender equality in politics.

Research, documentation and dissemination of successful experiences in the world is needed to promote women's participation in politics and development.

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