

**Women Empowerment in Local Government in Bangladesh:
A Study of Keshabpur Upazilla of Jessore District**

M. Phil Thesis

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Declaration

I do hereby declare that the content of my thesis entitled **Women Empowerment in Local Government in Bangladesh: A Study of Keshabpur Upazilla of Jessore District** has been prepared by me. I have done this unique work to collect relevant information and it was totally my own effort. I have used accurate references, though I did not get permission from all of the writers. I am submitting this dissertation to the Department of Political Science, University of Dhaka for required official procedure leading to Master of Philosophy in Political Science. I also mention that the thesis has not been submitted either in part or in full to any other universities or institutions for the award of M. Phil. degree.

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Certificate

I do hereby certify that the thesis entitled **Women empowerment in Local Government in Bangladesh: A Study of Keshabpur Upazilla of Jessore District** has been prepared by Nazimun Nahar, M. Phil Researcher, Session: 2016- 2017, Registration no: 193, Department of Political Science, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh under my direct close supervision and guidance. The entire thesis presents the researcher's own achievement and is not a conjoint work.

I have gone through the thesis and found it satisfactory to submit to the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh for M.Phil degree.

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Dedication

To

My Parents

Md. Nazimuddin
and
Tania Begum

Acknowledgement

First of all, I express my deepest sense of gratitude to almighty Allah who is merciful and who is beneficent for providing me necessary strength and vigor to complete the present piece of research work in an opportune time.

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Acronyms

ADAB	Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh
ADB	Asian Development Bank
APR	Asia Pacific Region
BDO	Basic Democratic Order
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
CBO	Community Based Organization
CHT	Chittagong Hill Tracts
CC	City Corporation
DC	Deputy Commissioner
ES	Environment Summit
ECA	Ecologically Critical Area
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
GO	Government Organization
LG	Local Government
LGD	Local Government Division
LGED	Local Government and Engineering Department

LGIs	Local Government Institutes
LGRD	Local Government and Rural Development
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non Government Organization
PP	Palli Parishad
PR	Proportional Representation
PA	Program of Action
RLG	Rural Local Government
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGS	Swanirvar Gram Sarkar
SS	Social Summit
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNO	Upazilla Nirbahi Officer
UEO	Upazilla Election Officer
UZP	Upazilla Parishad
UP	Union Parishad
ZP	Zila Parishad

Abstract

It is an unique case in terms of women's participation in local government, where the prime minister and the leader of the opposition are women. Unfortunately, women are not well represented in the local government system of Bangladesh while it is believed that women's representation is an essential step in democratization and engendering local governance. Women's active engagement in local level plays a role in determining whether women are able to emerge as potentials actors. But there are socio-economic, political and cultural obstacles as well as structural shortcomings which are designed in favor of men that create hindrance to give women proper space for active participation.

In Bangladesh, women comprise nearly half of the total population. Both men and women are playing different roles in the society shaped by ideological, socio-economic, political and cultural determinates. However, the reality is that the same status of women is considerably lower than that of men. Most of the women are usually confined into domestic life while politics is viewed as a male dominated public activity. With the advancement of time, the fact has now been recognized that without

ensuring women empowerment, that national development cannot be achieved. The national goals of social equality, development and stability cannot be realized without the active participation of women. Specially, women's role in decision making process as well as in local government level has proven to be one of the most important and significant issues in their empowerment. Therefore, justifiably enough, the government of Bangladesh, like the government of other countries, has taken initiatives to widen the scope of women's participation in the development process. The Local Government (Second Amendment) Act 1997 of Bangladesh, which preserved special quota for the women in local government bodies, paved the way for increased participation of women in political power structure. Yet, it seems from the recent records that the increased rate of participation is not up to the expectation. At the same time, women are encountering different types of socio-economic political and cultural barriers in making their voice heard in the decision-making process. Thus, the quota system for women participation in the local government to be not a complete solution to the problem of women empowerment. Against this backdrop, this study attempts to explore the real situation of women's empowerment of Keshabpur Upazilla of Jessore District to pinpoint the effectiveness of the

initiatives taken towards enhancing women's participation and decision making process in local government in Bangladesh.

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Chapter-1 : Introduction

Local government is always, in all circumstances, considered as the important vehicle and only the means to provide state benefits and services to the local inhabitants. Democracy is a system where government comprises of all sections of societies. But the problem of low participation of women is a special concern for strengthening democracy and without changing this trend true democracy can never be achieved. In a political landscape, apparently it seems that women are in a good position in Bangladesh in comparison to other South Asian Countries. But women's participation in local government in Bangladesh is not satisfactory for several reasons. Since the British colonial period till to day, Bangladesh local government institutions are considered as male-dominated institutions.

In the context of Bangladesh women comprise nearly half of the total population. Both men and women are playing different roles in the society shaped by ideological, socio-economic, political and cultural determinants. However, the reality is that the conditions of women is considerably lower than that of men. Most of the women are usually confined into domestic life while politics is viewed as a male dominated public activity. With the advancement of time, the fact has now been recognized that without

ensuring women empowerment, the national development cannot be achieved. The national goals of social equality, development and stability cannot be realized without the active participation of women. Especially, women's role in decision making process as well as in local government level has proven to be one of the most important and significant issues in their empowerment in the local level. Therefore, the government of Bangladesh, like the governments in other countries, has taken initiatives to widen the scope of women's participation in the development process. The Local Government Second Amendment Act 1997 of Bangladesh, which preserved special quota for women in local government bodies, paved the way for increased participation of women in political power structure. Yet, it seems from the recent records that the increased rate of participation is not up to the expectation. At the same time, women are encountering different types of socio-economic, political and cultural barriers in making their voice heard in the decision-making process. Thus, the quota system for women participation in the election appears to be not a complete solution to the problem of women empowerment. Against this backdrop, this study attempts to explore the reality of women's empowerment of Keshabpur Upazilla of Jessore District to explore the effectiveness of the initiatives taken towards

enhancing women's participation and decision making process in local government in Bangladesh.

As a general rule, colonizing powers upon gaining sovereign rights in foreign places have concentrated upon establishing national and top provincial administrations to carry out their political, economic, and social objectives. They have either neglected the local field, being satisfied to accept local leadership if found to be cooperative, or have half-heartedly tried to remake local institutions in their own image. As a result, these colonial governments, even when ultimately independent and manned by native officials and personnel, tend to be centralized in the national, colonial, and provincial capitals. Yet, the need for governing the nation as well as providing services to the localities results in the establishment of elaborate local government systems. These local government institutions are set up with stated objective of providing specific services along with the promotion of popular participation. Local self- government in the modern sense in the Indian subcontinent was the creation of the British. The system one sees in Bangladesh bears resemblance to the ones operative during that period.

The history of local government in Bangladesh shows that changes in levels of local bodies with the change of government have created confusion in the

minds of people while making it difficult for local bodies concerned to play any effective role in the absence of stability. Similar to the changes in levels, on the issue of representation also continuity has not been maintained.

1.1 Statement of the problem

In the present local government system, women are directly participating in different local government elections from city corporations to Union Parishad under the existing laws such as local government (city corporation Act. 2011) local government (Purashava Act. 2009) local government union parishad Act. 2009). According to these laws, special quota system has been established for women to encourage their participation in the elections and women response is gradually increasing, and they are also getting of their old fashioned mind sets. However, in reality, based on the statistics of some pervious years, it appears that the increased rate of participation is not up to the expectation and the elected women in local government system are not rightly able to work and participate in the decision-making process. They are encountering different types of social, political and religious barriers. Although, under the existing laws, the issue of equal treatment is suggested but practically it is absent. The legitimacy of democratic governance depends on the equality of gender representation in local government as well

as in the political decision making process. In support of gender equality, the Fourth UN Conference for Women, held in 1995 in Beijing, China, adopted an overall strategy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in development. It has been argued that women can play their role effectively within the national development process. Women's contribution to the development of the society and nation-building depends significantly on their participation in both family and national decision making processes. On the other hand, the sustainability of economic and social empowerment of women depends on the extent of their participation in local government decision making. In effect, political participation is considered an indicator that measures the extent of women's enjoyment of political rights. Moreover, ability to use their political rights is an important condition for the improvement of women's lives in the society. There are some underlying bases for women's representation and participation in the political process.

These include:

- the need for democracy and equality as well as civil rights, which makes the demand for proportional representation of women in politics unavoidable.

- Women's insignificant presence in local government raises questions about the legitimacy of the democratic process and of decision making authorities.
- Women are well informed and experienced about their basic problems and needs, but they will be deprived of an equal share of the output if they are not properly represented in the political process.
- Women's increased participation in politics and decision making bodies will facilitate the process of development and good governance.
- Finally, for efficient and maximum utilization of human resources, an increased number of women should be allowed to participate in politics (Chowdhury 1995).

Moreover ensuring women's equal participation in the political process can be considered as an essential requirement of modern democratic government. It has been realized that real development will not be possible if women are kept away from the policy-making process, particularly as they comprise half of the total population.

However, well participation and accountability are two important features of democratic local government. On its participation side democratic local government requires meaningful inclusion of women and minorities into local politics. However, the concern is to find ways for their political integration since the age-old institutional design acts as an impediment to women's participation. In such cases reform becomes inevitable to bring changes in the institutional design, in order to create positive discrimination in favor of women. Under the situation of male domination and patriarchy, it is unlikely that women candidates would win elections when contesting against male counterparts. This does not necessarily mean that women would never win elections contesting with males. However the number is too few to be considered exemplary. The above discussion leads us to raise a pertinent question: who should shoulder the responsibility for initiation of action to bring about gender equality?

A probable answer to this is that the state may act to protect and promote better female representation in three ways.

First, the legislature may amend existing constitutional articles or legal rules, or make new laws or regulations to incorporate women in public office.

Second, the executive branch may guarantee equal opportunity principles and even take affirmative action for hiring, training and promoting women.

Finally, the judiciary can also end gender imbalance in the public sphere by interpreting laws in new ways (e.g., justifying actions as necessary for attaining equality).

Moreover, several scholars have observed that an ‘electoral system’ is the most powerful determinant of female representation in democratic politics among alternative institutional settings.

In particular three types of electoral system contribute to achieving a higher female representation:

- proportional representation(PR) system;
- large, multimember districts and;
- Quota systems that ensure a minimum level of representation for women.

Ensuring gender integration is always difficult. Thus, the situation in Bangladesh is even more unfavorable to women, since opportunities in positions of authority are very limited. In the Civil Service, only 10% of higher managerial rank seats (Class I and II officers) are reserved for women while the ratio is 15% for class III and IV employees.

Meanwhile, women's participation in politics and in public sector decision making has been hampered by the public-private divide "theory". In simpler terms, this theory tends to limit women's role to the private domain only. At this juncture, it is quite important to mention that, from the early days of Western political theory, the society has been conceived to consist of two domains.

In several countries of the Asia-Pacific region, politics is mostly characterized by money and muscle power and Bangladesh is not an exception. Thus, entering into the political process proves to be more difficult for women. Here, women who are surrounded by male counterparts find themselves in a non cooperative atmosphere in public office. Moreover, societal and cultural impediments work against the women's equal access to power. Social institutions, such as the family, school, church,

mosque, government and media continue to promote stereotyped roles of men and women alike.

Now question arises what is the significance of the Act of 1997 as compared to earlier reform initiatives? A possible explanation is that the said Act introduced the system of direct election for women at the local government level for the first time. As a result, direct election has generated considerable enthusiasm among the women in Bangladesh.

Prior to the introduction of this Act in 1997, the number of women contesting in local government elections was too small to be viewed as significant. For instance, the total number of women contesting in elective positions of general members (which were open to all) was merely 863 out to 114,699 (constituting 0.7%) and 1135 out of 169,643 (comprising again some 0.7%) in the local government election of 1988 and 1992, respectively (Panday, 2013).

After the direct election allowed “reserved seats” for women members, the number of women who competed in the 1997 and 2003 elections saw a big surge. In the election of 1997, 44,134 women contested the reserved seats

with 14,029 winning the seats (of them, 592 were elected unopposed). As for the 2003 election, 39,419 women candidates joined the race for 12,669 reserved seats (Panday, 2013).

Noticeably, there is a clear sign of decline in the number of women who contested in quota seats in the elections held between 1997 and 2003. In fact, this can be readily seen if the statistical data of the last two UPs elections (1997 and 2003), regarding the number of women candidates, are compared. A possible explanation for this might be that the elected women candidates during the 1997 election gathered an unpleasant experience while fulfilling their duties, which eventually discouraged them from participation in the 2003 election. Furthermore, the followers and associates of these women might have been influenced by their elected members women contesting for reserved seats since the initial surge, available data confirm that the great wave of enthusiasm among the women of Bangladesh created by the Act of 1997 is an important change.

Without doubt, one may ask the definition of “Participation” Whether running the administration or simply exercising voting power in the context of the present study. Since 1969 “ladder of participation” specifies various

participation levels, ranging from extremely passive to most active participation would be meaningless and frustrating if power is not evenly distributed among the participants. In the present study's context, the political "participation" of women refers only to the participation of elected women members in the Upazilla Parishad's (hereinafter, UP) decision-making process.

The above mentioned discussions suggest that the Act of 1997 had opened up new windows of opportunity through which women can take part in local government in larger numbers. The data mentioned in the preceding paragraphs substantiate that a great wave of enthusiasm has been created among the women community with regard to their taking part in the local government elections.

1.2 Rationale of the Study

Women empowerment and their participation in local level government may be considered as one of the most important issues for the development of rural areas and local level government. This study may also bring positive change in their traditional position in the society. To ensure women's empowerment and integrating them into the mainstream, new policy should be made and implemented regarding their political participation. In the consideration of women empowerment it is more important because their participation in politics and political process help them focusing attention on women's needs and establishment of equal rights.

Moreover, women's participation in local government can make the society more responsive to the demands of all people of their society. It is already stated that for last one and a half decades the quota system has been introduced for local government election (union parishad) in order to ensure women empowerment and encourage their participation in decision making process as well as political system in Bangladesh. Many scholars and researchers reveal that despite many constraints and limitations the system has, to some extent, ensured women participation in the local government

decision making process. Yet, most of the researchers seem to have failed to focus on the empowerment status of elected women (union parishad) members in their family and social setting.

Therefore, this study finds it important to assess the changes in their empowerment status in the context of Keshabpur Upazilla to understand the role of quota system in their empowerment in the local government in Bangladesh. In this regard, this study attempts to find out the extent to which the imposition of quotas has helped to change the popular political culture and gradually become more conducive to women's political participation in local government.

1.3 Research question

In the light of above statement of the problem, and against the background of dismal condition of women empowerment in local government of Bangladesh, the following question has been raised:

What is the nature of women empowerment in local government of Keshabpur Upazilla, of Jessore district?

1.4 Objectives of the study

Main Objective

To evaluate the current empowerment situation of women in local government of Bangladesh by taking Keshabpur Upazilla as a case study.

Sub-objectives

- To examine the existing laws as to their ability and efficacy to ensure women empowerment up to the mark
- To identify the social, economic and religious factors creating barriers to the women empowerment in Bangladesh local govt. system.
- To examine the role of women participants in local government institutions and their contribution in women's development;
- To explore position and participation of women in decision making and implementation process of local government of Keshabpur Upazilla
- To identify the issues relating to gender discrimination in local government politics;
- To identify the socio- economic, political and cultural factors creating barriers to the women empowerment in local government.

1.5 Literature Review

To endorse the justification of the study, the researcher has tried to find out knowledge gap in this regard through review of related literatures that includes books, journal, public documents, reports, unpublished dissertations and so on. These literatures cover different aspects of women empowerment in local government in general and the issues relevant to Bangladesh in particular. However, a summary of reviewed literature is as follows:

Kamal Ahmed Siddiqui (1995) in his study described the major changes made to local government institutions in the past in respect of its name, functions, responsibilities, and structure. He also pointed out due to lack of budget provision and personnel Union Parishad facing several problems and women should play more active role in local government for decentralizing political empowerment.

Rahman (1998) emphasized on the institutional support but he added on the capacity building issues of the local government bodies to make the governance effective in Bangladesh. He stated that awareness buildings, integration of national plan with environmental consideration, development

of human resources, enforcement and so on are the most important capacity building issues of local governance in Bangladesh.

Ahmed (2000) has pointed out that with growth of urbanization the structure of local governments in Bangladesh has been changed, and since very beginning, these institutions have been suffering from various problems. However, they cannot provide to the people with good quality of civic amenities. That is why good governance of local government should be established in order to deliver all these services properly.

Sadik Hasan (2007) in his book discusses different types of local government institutions at rural and urban level in Bangladesh. The present structure of local government in Bangladesh has passed a long period of evaluation. He expresses the view that the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, all the governments of Bangladesh both military and civil took initiatives to introduce local government institutions at village level. Except the Swanirvar Gram Sarkar and the Palli Parishad all other initiatives to introduce local government institutions at village level including the most recent one were ward-based. Only these two initiatives were natural village based institutions. In addition, changes have brought about in these

institutions after the independence of Bangladesh. The central government has heavy control over these institutions.

Fox and Menon (2008) presented Bangladesh as a highly centralized state in which local self-government is less developed and the local political structure changes in accordance with the change in the central government. Besides, less accountability, problems in income and expenditure, limited access to revenue sources and weak monitoring system of quality service delivery have made the local self-governments in Bangladesh ineffective.

Talukdar (2009) in his study suggests that absence of a local governance policy is the main issue of governance problem in Bangladesh. Lack of inter-agency cooperation and coordination are also visible in local governance. The author emphasized on an aggregated local governance policy with vision and roadmap for the development of local governance.

Panday (2013) emphasized on institutional reforms, gender-related policy dynamics, the role of different actors in the policy process and the impact of a particular policy on the state of women's political participation in Bangladesh. He also suggested the necessity of reform for enhancing

women's participation in politics. Asian Development Bank (2014) has utilized different strategies through different projects to locally elected women for capacity building and networking. ADB findings reveal that "female reservation quota" certainly led to increasing the numbers of women in the local governance structure. Ahmed (2016) the foremost local government expert in Bangladesh dealt with the issues and problems of local government and proposed a package of reform for local government system of Bangladesh.

From the above literature, it has been found that various authors highlighted reforms agenda and local governance policy from different dimensions but there is dearth of study regarding women's engagement in both rural and urban local governance. With this backdrop, this study aims to explore the factors that hinder the participation of women in local governance with some recommendations.

Moin (2011) in her book considers empowerment of women and their participation in local government politics. She stated, in most part of the world, women are being discriminated in social, economic, cultural and political aspects. She suggested that emphasis has been given to empower

women for the betterment of their lives, as they constitute almost half of the population of the world. She also said in her book, sustainable development is possible only when women are associated with the mainstream development process.

Farah Deeba Chowdhury (2013) emphasized that Women's participation in politics is limited in Bangladesh. She identifies the problems that women themselves face when participating as active politicians. She also suggests that women of Bangladesh must fight against patriarchy so that women are considered as human beings. Paradoxically these are the main reasons which keep women in general down. At the same time women must also fight for political institutionalization, which will prevent violence and corrupt practices. Although the notions of women's roles as excluding public life remain prevalent, a relatively low or uneven level of institutionalism and enduring strength of kinship permit a wife or daughter to succeed to a vacated public office as a symbol of or stand in for the former male occupant in the absence of a suitable male heir.

The literature review amply indicates that rural areas either at national level have some unique problems that have been focused in their own research findings. From the literature review, a research gap is evident in this field. Though a substantial and increasing body of literatures addressing women empowerment in local government exists in world knowledge domain but hardly could we find any academic work on Bangladesh's context. In spite of all limitations, of course the existing literature provide a valuable source to guide the study.

1.6 Research Methodology

The study has been conducted following mixed method approach. Both qualitative and quantitative data have been used in this study with aim of exploring the women empowerment in local government in Keshabpur Upazilla of Jessore District.

This study primarily aims at understanding the issue of women empowerment in local government in the context of Keshabpur Upazilla. It intends to review relevant books and journals to construct the theoretical framework of this study. Besides, it seeks to conduct field investigation, data

analysis, interviews and participant observation to have first-hand information for understanding to women empowerment and the role of women in the local government.

A formal questionnaire has been used to collect primary data from different categories of respondents of Keshabpur Upazilla in Jessore district situated in of south-western part of Bangladesh. I have employed both descriptive and exploratory method to conduct this research because this study aims to uncover the realities of local government functions for ensuring women empowerment and their participation in local government. In this study data have been collected from primary sources such as interviewing public representatives (male and female), government servants and member of civil society.

1.6.1 Selection of the Study Area

The study has been conducted in the Keshabpur Upazilla. It has been selected purposively among the eight Upazilla Parishad in Jessore District for the following reasons.

First, the position of Keshabpur Upazilla is in the remote area of Jessore District. It is far away from the main town of Jessore.

Secondly, all the Upazilla Parishad of Bangladesh is now functioning under the same Local Government Act, 2009. Other rules and circulars are also same and promulgated by the Local Government Division of Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD). Principal sources of fund for development activities of all Upazilla Parishads are the allocation from the government and the same donor agencies that stipulate same guidelines for development compliance.

Thirdly, the location of Keshabpur Upazilla is far away, but it is also a important and significant Upazilla among all.

1.6.2 Sampling of Respondents

The sample size of the respondents is 60. The respondents are categorized into four types. Each category contains 15 respondents, such as:

- **Section A- Public Representatives (Male) :** This category includes elected chairman/members (male) of Keshabpur Upazilla, who are directly elected and who have experiences in the field.
- **Section B- Public Representatives (Female) :** This category includes elected vice- chairman/members (female) of Keshabpur Upazilla, who are directly elected and have experiences in the particular field .
- **Section C- Government Representatives:** This type includes government officials of Keshabpur Upazilla, who are directly involved in policy making and implementation.
- **Section D- Civil Society Members:** The fourth and last category includes the person who are concerned with policies of the central government and local public representatives and government officials.

1.6.3 Limitations of the Study

The study has some limitations, which are as follows:

- The area of study is limited as it covers only one Upazilla, among 8 Upazillas in Jessore District.
- Fund and others support for this study was insufficient.
- There were insufficient research number of studies in Jessore District.
- Some respondents did not cooperate by giving required data during the field visit.

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is structured into five chapters. The **first chapter** contains the research problems, rationale of the study, research questions, objectives of study, literature review and methodology of the study. The **second chapter** explores the concept and development of the local government. This chapter also explores structure, composition, status and legal framework of local government. The **third chapter** focuses on concept of women empowerment and position of women in local government and in the Constitution of Bangladesh. The **fourth chapter** includes data analysis and findings of the study regarding women empowerment in local government of Keshabpur Upazilla. Conclusion and recommendations are presented in the **fifth chapter**.

Chapter-2: Local Government in Bangladesh

2.1 Introduction

A government is essential component of modern state. It acts as the spokesman of the country constitutionally in most cases. In Bangladesh, there is a government elected by the people. The government accomplish a variety of activities on behalf of the people.

It is admitted that every government is service oriented for the betterment of the people. Local government is always, in all circumstances, considered as the important vehicle and only the means to provide state benefits and services to the local inhabitants.

Many political scientist and political philosophers have emphasized the role of local government as a training ground for democracy. It enables the local citizens to participate in collective endeavors and thus to learn how to materialize individual ambitions in relation to others in the society.

There are two types of local government institutions-rural local government institutions and urban local government institutions. These institutions are

widely recognized as the best ground in which people can learn the art of governance through their own experiences and involved with the system of local government.

Local government is one of the micro-level organizations that emphasizes on micro-level development. Necessity of the local government is justified for a wide range of reasons . Central government is not able to face the problems as to when necessary of all facts and works up to local level. To minimize and control functions and activities up to local level, local government is the appropriate organization. It can solve the local problems in the context of time, finance and physical involvement with minimum cost. In any democratic society, root level democratic practice may be followed through the local government. Direct people's participation in the administrative structure of the government is encouraged in the local government system. Through the participation, peoples can be aware about their responsibilities and be efficient on the judgment.

In several countries of the Asia-Pacific region, politics is mostly characterized by money and muscle power and Bangladesh is not an exception. Thus, entering into the political process proves to be more

difficult for women. Here, women who are surrounded by male counterparts find themselves in a non cooperative atmosphere: even when they are in public office.

Moreover, societal and cultural impediments work against the women's equal access to power. Social institutions, such as the family, school, church, mosque, government and media continue to promote stereotyped roles of men and women alike.

2.2 The Concept of Local Government

Local government means the administration belonging to or connected with the people who live in a particular place or area. Local government is the system of government of a town or an area by elected representatives of the people. It is grass root administration either in remote place or in urban or town area. It keeps connection with the central government. Locally, it is the high command to govern particular area. Since the issue of local government is an ancient institution with modern concept, it has been defined from different perspectives at various times by the scholars. Simply speaking, local government can be defined as the lowest tier of governance which is responsible for managing local affairs by the locally elected people. Stones states that local government is the vital part of the state which deals with the matters of people of a particular locality' (Stones, 1963). Rao, defines local government as the part of the government that deals with local affairs administered by authorities subordinate to the state government but elected independently of the state authority by the qualified residence' (Shrestha, 2000). In political terms, it is concerned with the governance of specific local area, constituting a political sub-division of a nation, state or other major political units. In the performance of its functions, it acts as the agent

of the state. In other words, the local government is an integral part of the political mechanism for governance in a country. Then, as body corporate with juristic person, it represents a legal concept.

Stewart categorically emphasizes the political identity of the local government and defines it as a political institution which is responsible for providing state services to the locality (Stewart, 2009). These definitions clearly reveal some common features of local government such as political and administrative local unit, service provider, autonomous body with decision making authority and so on. United Nations incorporate these features in a single definition: the concept of local self government refers to a political sub-division of a nation or state which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs, including the power to impose taxes for prescribe purposes (Siddiqui, 2005).

Local government is defined essentially in terms of some attributes: first, it has statutory status; second, its power to raise finance by taxation on the area under its jurisdiction; third, participation of the local community in decision making on specified subjects and administration; fourth, the freedom to act being independent from central control; and lastly, its general

function, in contrast to the single-purpose character of many autonomous bodies.

Local Government is a global phenomenon universally practiced as sub-national governance and service delivery mechanism, albeit with differences in organizational type and model, dimension and degree of authority, networking affectivity and capacity of the institutions. Bangladesh is an old nation with a new state. It started its journey as a sovereign and independent state from 1971. 'The constitution for the new and independent 'Republic' was adopted in 1972 in which 'local government' found a very distinct place as democratically organized governance system, service delivery mechanism, quasi-judicial body for local petty arbitration and development entity' (Ahmed, 2016, P. 178).

Local government may be loosely defined as a public organization authorized to decide and administer a limited range of public policies within a relatively small territory, which is a sub-divisional of a regional or national government. 'It is an ancient institution with a new concept. It embodies the individuality of man's group activities, reflecting the spirit of liberty. It is an integral part of body politic of a country, recognized or created under law for

the management of local affairs of a human settlement with geographic boundaries. The government's activity is necessarily impersonal. 'Against its rather abstract view, there is a perpetual rebellion. Localities which are not simply areas and sites but groups of men, living together as neighbors, feel that they differ from the abstract average of humanity legislated for by the government and claim discretion to apply its uniform rules in a way, more closely fitting their real needs and their own ideas of themselves. Moreover, local government is an administrative concept, not known to other levels of government, with its councilors involved in making, unmaking and remarking administrative decisions in council and its committees with a direct bearing on civic services to the local people and now on nation-building activities. "Constituting, what is called the cutting edge of public administration; the local authorities encounter series of challenge to their competence, human technological and fiscal and the pattern of their relationship with other public agencies. Then, the geography and demography of a local area, along with economic factors, offer important dimensions in the conceptual articulation of local government'" (Hasan, 2007, PP. 21-22).

Local Government is multi-dimensional institutions. It is basically an organized social entity with a feeling of oneness. In political terms; it is concerned with the governance of a specific local area, constituting a political sub division of a nation, state or other major political unit. 'In the performance of its functions, it acts as the agent of the state. In the other words, the local government is an integrant of the political mechanism for governance in a country. Then as body corporate with juristic person, it represents a legal concept' (Muttalib and Khan, 1983, P. 2). 'In some countries, the deconcentrated local extensions of the central government and in some others, traditional local power structures utilized for supporting field administration have been misconstrued as being equivalent to local government. Sometimes local government has been mistakenly considered an insignificant segment of the government' (Siddiqui, 1995, P. 38).

Oxford Advanced Learner's dictionary (1995) defines local government as the system of administration of a district, country and so on by elected representatives of the people who live there.

Considering the definitions discussed above, it appears that the key characteristics of local government are as follows;

- It is a political system constituted by law.
- Under this system, Institutions are organized for specified local areas.
- These institutions are elected bodies composed of the members elected by the people of the area or locality.
- They have the power of administration and taxation over specified areas and have the right to manage their own affairs.
- They are ultimately responsible and subordinate to the national government. This implies that though these institutions are given the right to manage the local affairs, they are not authorized to become the states within a state.

2.3 Development of Local Government in Indian Subcontinent

It is usually assumed that local government was the basic form of government in the Indian sub-continent till 6th century B.C. At that time, the village people were generally left to themselves. Only when they paid their taxes did the village population come in contact with central government agents. The authority of the central government seldom extended to the remote villages of the sub-continent. Thus, it is said that village self-government in the Vedas, the oldest Hindu religious writings, dating from approximately 1200 B.C., forms of village self-government are mentioned. (Hasan, 2007).

The evolution of local government in the Indian subcontinent did not follow any specific laws or rules. It experienced dramatic changes in its nature based on the defining characteristics of the ruling regimes.

2.3.1 Ancient Period

There are ancient cities in various districts in Bangladesh which were grown up for different purposes. Some were developed as administrative and capital cities and some other as commercial and educational centers. Among oldest ones, Mahastangharh or Pundrabardhan was the best organized city' (Karim, 1955). This city was built on the bank of the Karotoa shaping a half circle. This city existed in 300 B.C. and was chief administrative and international business centre. (Jakaria, 1995) Other ancient cities of Bangladesh are Paharpur, Mainamati, Savar, Vikrampur, Kotibarsha, Sonargaon, Tilgram, and Ghoraghtat. (Rumi, 2005) It is slightly known about the administration of the cities and towns of ancient Bengal. The stone inscriptions of Mahasthangarh indicate that parts of Bangladesh were included in the Gupta Empire. (Siddiqui, 2005) During Gupta rule, the empire was divided into units such as Bhukti, Vishay, Mondal, Beethi, and Gram (Siddiqui, 2005). The Bhuktis and vishays were said to correspond to the Divisions and Districts of modern Bangladesh (Siddiqui, 2005). The Governor of a Bhukti (called Uparik or Uparik Moharaja) was appointed directly by the Emperor, and the Governor of a Bhukti appointed the District officer called kumaramatyā or Vishayapati but in some cases the

appointment seems to have been made by the Emperor (Siddiqui, 2005). An administrative council was set up at each level of government. Historians believe that members of the council were selected either by the Emperor or by his representatives in the provinces, divisions, etc. The functions of the administrative units were collection of land revenue, maintaining law and order, regulation of trade and commerce, supervision of lower administrative units, etc (Siddiqui, 2005). The eastern and southern regions of modern Bangladesh came to be ruled by a number of independent kings during the 6th century AD. In the middle of 8th century AD, a strong central government was established in Bengal with the emergence of pala rule. The palas ruled Bengal for nearly four centuries. The Sena kings followed Pala rule. During these two regimes, no significant changes took place in the character of local administration. The local government that existed was to local self government but a local extension of the central authority (Siddiqui, 2005).

2.3.2 Medieval Period

Medieval period coincides with the advent of Muslim rule in the South-Asian Sub-continent. According to Abul Fazal, there were about 300 towns at the end of the 16th century, about 200 of them were quite large. (Moula, 2003). Al- Beruni and Ibne-Batuta mentioned about 50 important urban centers during this period with Chittagong being the most eastern one. According to Ibne-Batuta, a few capital cities were also established by the rulers of this period. Sonargaon was one of them. Dhaka and Chittagong emerged as important trade centers in this region. (Moula, 2003).

The Mughals are the pioneer of developing urban governance in the Indian sub-continent and Bangladesh as well (Khan, 1997). They developed the office of kotwal as the cornerstone of municipal organization during this period (Siddiqui, 2005). The Kotwal, a person of high status, was appointed under a Sanad of the Emperor. He was the chief Executive Officer of the Town and wielded with wide ranging powers including magisterial, police and fiscal powers. His first responsibility was to maintain law and order and afterwards providing civic amenities. Each town was divided into a number of Wards or Mahalla. The Kotwal appointed a headman or Mir Mahalla for

every ward. Mir Mahallah used to maintain a register for houses and roads, cemeteries, slaughter-houses and sweeper colonies (Siddiqui, 2005). He controlled the market dues and transit duties. Kotwal was assisted by two officers namely Kazi and Mahatasib, Kazi was a judicial officer while Mahatasib was assigned to prevent illegal practices. The Mughal system of urban governance lacked mechanisms of people's participation. It was an extended form of the central authority to local areas (Siddiqui, 2005, p. 35).

2.3.3 British Period

Western European nations have contribution in developing types of towns in the sub-continent. The Portuguese first established port towns-Goa in 1510 and Bombay in 1532. The Dutch built Machilipatnam in 1605 and Nagapattinam in 1658 and the French established Pandichery in 1673 and Chandernagore in 1690 (Moula, 2003). Organized urban governance system in Bangladesh was introduced by the Mughals but this system acquired a representative character during British period. First Municipal Corporation was set up in Madras in 1687. This body was designed on the pattern of English Borough and consisted of three elements, namely the Mayor, Alderman and Burgesses. The Charter Act 1793 was the first law regarding Municipal administration enacted by the British Parliament which was

applicable only to the three Presidency towns, namely Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. The Act provided for the appointment of Justices of the Peace by the Government in order to assess city houses and land, the appointment of Town Chaukidars and for scavenging and repair of roads (Siddiqui, 2005,P.35). Dhaka was the first town in Bengal where, in 1813, taxation for the provision of chaukidars was imposed. This taxation was subsequently extended to other towns of Bengal. Government introduced Tk 2.00 on any one assesses on monthly basis under the regulation 15 of 1837 (Siddiqui, 2005). Bengal Regulation on the Local Government was introduced in the year 1942. This was the introduction of urban local government though regulatory involvement. (Ahmed, 2000). Act xv of 1842 was enacted to create municipalities in Bengal. This Act gave the householders of the concerned town indirect opportunity to involve them in creating municipality of their own provided that if the two third of them agreed to do so. This Act was considered a dead one as no municipality was created under this. (Ahmed, 2000). According to The Municipal Act,, 1850 initiatives for creation of municipalities were retaken by the government and under this Act two municipalities were established in Bengal. The town police act of 1856 empowered the District Magistrate to appoint a Panchayet in the town. This Panchayet did assessment to tax and spent this

fund for the payment of Chaukidars conservancy town improvement and street lighting. Under this Act. 64 Municipalities were formed in Bengal where this Panchayet system of administration was introduced (Collier, 1905). The District Municipal Improvement Act, 1864 provided each municipality a Municipal Body consisted of the seven nominated members from the resident of the municipality including the Divisional Commissioner, the Magistrate and the Executive Engineer. Later on by an amendment in 1867 the Superintendent of police was also included in this 'Municipal body'. Tax was the principal source of income of the municipality which could go up to 7.5 percent of the value of holdings. (Siddiqui, 2005). This act empowered the municipal body to levy and collect tax on animals carts and carriages. Maintenance of town police roads, Conservancy , control of offensive trades and vaccination were its functions (Siddiqui, 2005). The District Town Act 1869 kept provision of forming 'Town Committee'. This committee was constituted with five persons, of which not more than one-third could be government officials. The committee appointed its Chairman and Vice-Chairmen annually and functions remained same as were before (Siddiqui, 2005). Local Government Act of 1873 provided provision of election of the tow-thirds of the member of municipal bodies established under the Act of 1864. During

this time Vice-chairman of the municipal body was elected and got regular salary from municipality (Siddiqui, 2005). Government brought some reforms under Act IV of 1876 and Act VII of 1878. This Act categorized local bodies into four classes under four laws. Those governed by the Act of 1864 became 1st class municipality; those governed by the Act of 1868 became second class: those towns which were still under Act XX of 1856 became unions and those under the Act of 1850 became stations (Roy and Bose, 1932). Act VII of 1878 provided additional power to the first class municipalities. This law gave right to the first class municipalities to take over the cleaning of privies and to levy a rate for the purpose (Khan, 1967). In 1880 responsibilities were given to municipalities to carry out compulsory vaccination program (Khan, 1967). The Municipal taxation Act 1881 (Act No XI of 1881) was prescribed to government revenue. Tax collection sectors were also prescribed in the Act as a Schedule. Holding tax and collection of tolls were emphasized. (Ahmed, 2000)

Lord Ripon, the enthusiastic Vice-Roy, advocated for self-reliant local government. He brought some reforms and adopted a new resolution in 1882. The prime aim of this reform was to involve local people in the affairs of administration both in urban and local level. In order to establish local

self government in India, the Bengal Municipal Act 1884 was passed during the viceroyalty of Lord Ripon. The main features of this act were the provisions for the election of two thirds of the commissioners, chairman and vice chairmen by rate payers. Municipalities were given freedom in selection their representatives and conducting their own business but the district Magistrate had power to control the administration (Rajbangshi, 1992). However, Ripon's endeavor in reforming local government failed in almost every direction (Tinker, 1967).

The Act IV of 1894 laid down the foundation of Sanitary Boards; it also provided the provisions for preparation and implementation of water supply and sanitary projects (Siddiqui, 2005). The Act II of 1896 extended the power of municipalities of enable them to spend funds on some new welfare services such as libraries, maternity centre's and care of animals (Siddiqui, 2005). The Royal Commission upon decentralization was set up in 1907 to enquire into the financial and administrative relations of the government of India and the provincial governments. The committee considered the development of local self government as an aspect of administrative devolution. The Commission put some recommendations but those recommendations were not implemented because of First World War (1914-

1918). The government of Lord Harding passed a resolution in 1915. The resolution prescribed that government of India would not impose any views upon the provincial government about local government matters and provincial government would help to develop local government institutions (Rajbangshi, 1992).

However, local self- government did not achieve any significant progress within this time as the control over resources sources of taxation remained in the hand of the government of India. The Montague-helms ford Report of 1918 tried to resolve this dichotomy (Rajbangshi, 1992). The Government of India Act, 1919 Transferred authority to the popularly elected ministers of the provincial government to look after matters of urban and local government. Elected ministers of the respective provinces formed elected councils for towns. Elected chairman of the councils were given executive authority with a view to making the local bodies self reliant. (Rajbangshi, 1992).

Development of local government suffered a setback during 1920s and 1930s due to the independent movement. Nationalist leaders used the local bodies as platform for their political movement. Bengal legislative Council

passed the Bengal Municipal Act. 1932 which was considered one of the best legislations in South Asia (Rajbangshi, 1992). Four fifths of the Commissioners of Dhaka and Chittagong municipalities and three fourths of the commissioners of other municipalities were elected by the people of the respective municipalities. Women were given voting rights as well as right to compete in the election. Other nominated members of the municipalities were from different section of the communities like minority people business man etc. Chairman and Vice chairman were elected by the Commissioners of the municipalities. Authority was given to the elected Chairman to control the municipality from the District Magistrate and Divisional Commissioner (Rajbangshi, 1992).

In the wake of necessity, modern type of Municipalities was engineered by the colonial British rulers. In the passage of development, controlled electoral process has been introduced but the supremacy was always in the hands of the officers over the municipalities. Municipalities were never fully democratically elected institution in the British regime. Suggestions and views of Collectors of the districts and Divisional Commissioner of the Divisions were always taken seriously by the colonial rulers. Officers under the colonial regime have fear in mind that everyone with equal opportunity

in the local governance may create problems in the society as there were divisions in the society on the basis of caste, religion and wealth. Extreme divisions among the Hindus due to the caste system helped the officer to continue discriminatory policy. Moreover, there was fear of exclusion of the Muslims if all members were to be elected. Colonial government never wanted to make these local bodies fully independent and self-reliant. Consequently, representatives who came as Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the municipalities were privileged, educated and wealthy elites of the society. In spite of all these setbacks, there were also positive sides during British regime. Local Leaders imitated their leadership for these type of local institutions and afterwards they became great leaders in India politics. As for example, Sir Surendranath Banarjea was the first Bengal Minister of Local Self-Government, Nawab Khaja Nazimuddin first made his reputation as Chairman of Dacca Municipality (1922-1929) and Sir Sikander Hyat Khan had been the president of Hassan Abdal Municipality (Tinker, 1967).

2.3.4 Pakistan Period

At the time of creation of Pakistan in 1947, East Pakistan inherited 45 municipalities from East Bengal and four municipalities. Municipalities from east Bengal were administered under the Bengal Municipal Act, 1932 and those municipalities from Sylhet were administered according to the Assam Municipal Act of 1923 (Tinker, 1967). The United Front Ministry brought some significant changes in several laws regarding local government in the province (Tinker, 1967). The amendments were as follows:

- Nomination as well as reservation system of elective seats for the minority community in all local bodies were abolished.
- System of forming all local government bodies with elected members was introduced.
- The members of the local government bodies were elected on the basis of adult franchise and people having 21 years of age or above had voting rights.
- Introduction of symbols in voting by secret ballot.
- Appointment of one or more stipendiary Magistrates as Municipal Magistrates for the trial of specific offences under the Municipal law.

However, these amendments remained only in the paper as before any election could take place, Martial Law was declared in the country in October, 1958 (Tinker, 1967). The military government promulgated the Basic Democracies Order, 1959. To keep all municipalities' in line with the Basic Democracies Order, the government promulgated the Municipal Administration Ordinance, 1960 repealing all laws relating to urban and rural local bodies in Pakistan (Siddiqui, 2005).

In the new enactment, 28 out of the 56 Municipalities with a population of 15000 or below were declared towns and a town committee was set up in each town in accordance with the Basic Democracies Order 1959. The remaining 28 Municipalities were administered according to the provision of the Municipal Administration Ordinance , 1960. A Municipal Committee, both elected and appointed officials was formed for each of the Municipalities. In 1962, a new Municipality was created and with this one, the number rose to 29 Out of 29 Municipalities only 5 had full time Chairman and the rest were headed by either Sub-divisional Officers of Additional Deputy commissioners (Siddiqui, 2005).

Basic Democracies Order provided guided democracy in the local government. Exclusion of common citizens from the process of governance in the local institutions was a deterrent to make these institutions self-reliant (Biswas, 2007).

2.4 Constitution and Local Government in Bangladesh

It is a unique characteristic of the Constitution of Bangladesh that specific provisions for local government have been incorporated. In the earlier constitutional dispensations the administration outside the capital was left with the civil servants and the people had practically no participation in the administration. The scheme of local government bodies had little part to play in the administration of the country. In their anxiety to have a truly democratic setup involving the people including those at the grass root level, the framers incorporated articles 9 and 11 as two important fundamental principles of the state policy. To give effect to these fundamental principles of the state policy there are articles 59 (Hasan, 2007). In terms of political and democratic phenomena, local government is given legal recognition either by an act of Parliament or by incorporation of relevant in the Constitution. Bangladesh's Constitution of 1972 clearly spelt out the legal

basis and responsibilities of local government. Article 59, Chapter-3 of the Constitution states that, 'local government in every administrative units of the Republic shall be entrusted to bodies composed of persons elected in accordance with law'. Article 60 of the Constitution states 'for the purpose of giving full effect to the provision of Article 59, Parliament shall, by law, confer powers on the local government bodies referred to in that article including power to impose taxes for local purposes, to prepare their budgets and to maintain funds'. It is evident that the legal basis of the local government is clearly spelt out in the Constitution. The Constitution, through its Article 59 of Chapter-3 has ensured the devolution of power to local government bodies' (Panday, 2013).

Article 9 of the Constitution under the heading of 'Promotion of Local Government Institution' expressed the stance of the state about the local government institutions: The state shall encourage local government institutions composed of representatives of the areas concerned and in such institutions special representation shall be given, as far as possible to peasants workers and women. Article 11 titled 'Democracy and Human Rights' talked about the features of the Republic by mentioning elected representation: The Republic shall be a democracy in which fundamental

human rights and freedoms and respect for the dignity and worth of the human person shall be guaranteed..... and in which effective participation by the people through their elected representatives in administration at all levels shall be ensured (Hasan, 2007). But all these aspirations of framers were denied by the Constitution (Fourth Amendment) Act 1975 passed on January 25 1975. The entire chapter-3 of part IV of the Constitution dealing with ‘Local Government’ was deleted and omitted the words ‘and in which effective participation by the people through their elected representatives in administration at all levels shall be ensured’ from Article 11. Later, the Constitution (Twelfth Amendment) Act 1991 reinstated all these by restoring the parliamentary form of government substantially as provided in the original form of the Constitution in 1972 (Hasan, 2007).

The Local Government Act of 1997 introduced the system of direct election for women at the local government level for the first time. As a result, direct election has generated considerable enthusiasm among the women in Bangladesh. Prior to the introduction of this Act in 1997, the number of women contesting in local government elections was too small to be viewed as significant. For instance, the total number of women contesting in elective positions of general members (which were open to all) was merely 863 out

to 114,699 (constituting 0.7%) and 1135 out of 169,643 (comprising again some 0.7%) in the local government election of 1988 and 1992, respectively (Panday 2013).

After the direct election allowed “reserved seats” for women members, the number of women who competed in the 1997 and 2003 elections saw a big surge. In the election of 1997, 44,134 women contested the reserved seats with 14,029 winning the seats (of them, 592 were elected unopposed). As for the 2003 election, 39,419 women candidates joined the race for 12,669 reserved seats (Panday 2013).

Noticeably, there is a clear sign of decline in the number of women who contested in quota seats in the elections of 2003 from 1997. In fact, this can be readily seen if the statistical data of the last two UPs elections (1997 and 2003), regarding the number of women candidates, are compared. A possible explanation for this might be that the elected women candidates during the 1997 election gathered an unpleasant experience while fulfilling their duties, which eventually discouraged them from participation in the 2003 election. Furthermore, the followers and associates of these women might have been influenced by their elected members women contesting for reserved seats

since the initial surge, available data confirm that the great wave of enthusiasm among the women of Bangladesh created by the Act of 1997 is still an important and permanent change.

2.5 Development of Status and Legal Framework

After the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, it was of great importance to strengthen the local self-government bodies with an eye to ensuring rural development, but almost nothing was done in this regard except for changing the titles of local government. Soon after independence, all local government bodies except the Divisional Councils were dissolved by Present Order No. 7 in 1972 and an administrator was appointed in each of the Municipalities. Government promulgated the Bangladesh Local Government (Union Parishad and Paurashavas) Order 1973. Through this Order, the name of the local government bodies was changed. Union Council was changed to Union Panchayat, which was later reverted to Union Parishad and Thana Council became Thana Development Committee while the District Council was named Zila Board or District Board (the name of Town). Committee was named Shohor Committee and Municipality was named Nogar Panchayet (Talukdar, 2009). The government enacted local

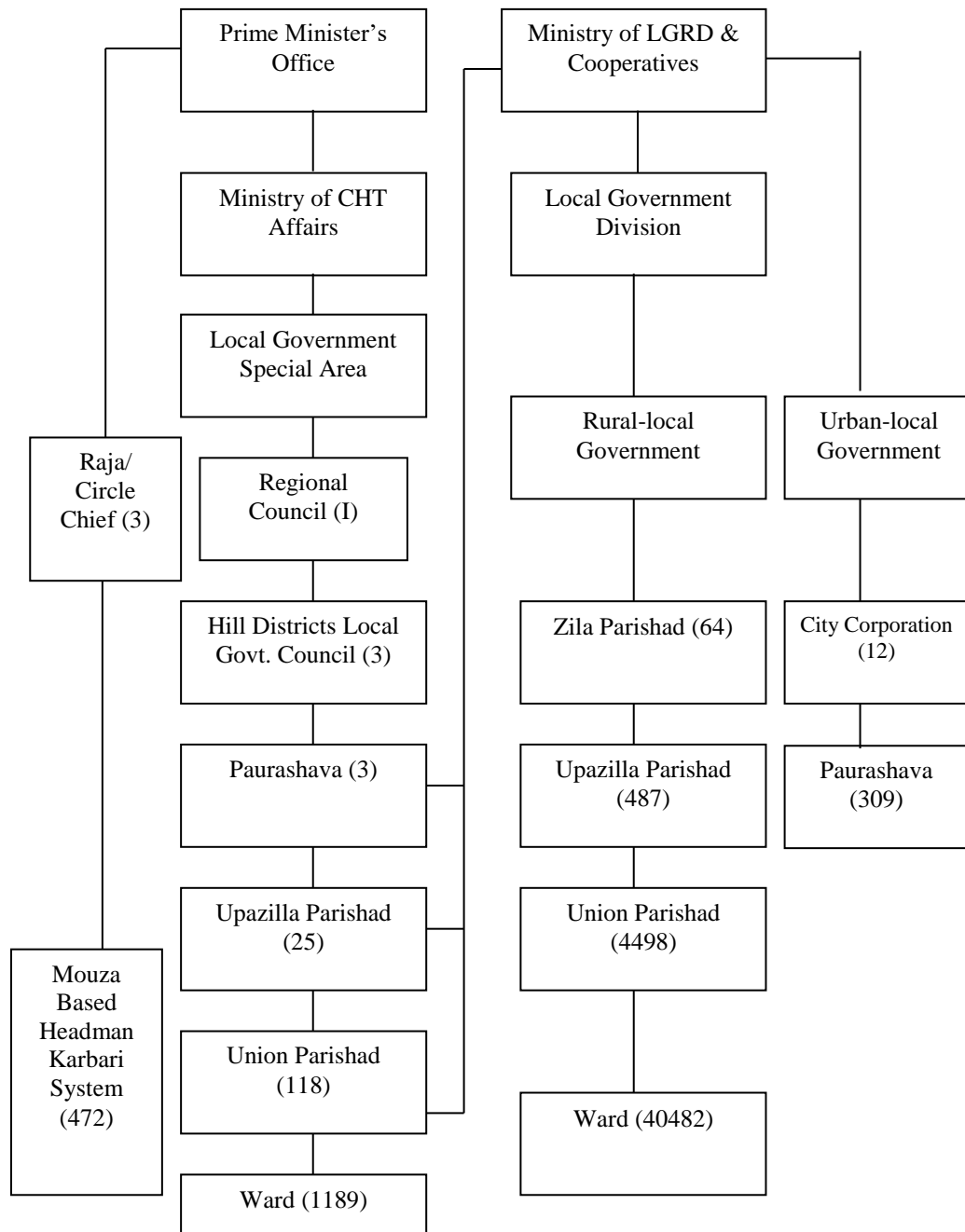
government (city corporation) acts, 2009 which is a combination and coordination of existing Acts and Ordinances related to city corporation in Bangladesh.

Presently, all the city corporation act under this local government (city corporation) Acts, 2009. The most recent development in the governance of Dhaka City has taken place with passing of the local government (City Corporation) Amendment Bill 2011 by the National Parliament and ratified by the President on 1 December, 2011 (The Daily Star, 2011).

The Amendment has caused the division of Dhaka City Corporation into two city corporations namely North Dhaka City Corporation and South Dhaka City Corporation.

2.5.1 Administrative Structure of Central Government

Before we proceed through mentioning structure of local government in Bangladesh, it would be helpful to make a brief discussion about the administrative structure of the central government.



Source: Panday, 2013.

The constitution of Bangladesh provides for a unitary and parliamentary system of government. The President is the head of the state and the Prime Minister is the head of the Government. The Prime Minister is the chief executive of the country and is selected by the President, from among the members of the parliament, who commands the support of the majority of the parliament members. The Prime Minister is assisted by a council of ministers responsible to him/her in the discharge of his/her duties. For ensuring smooth functioning of administration, the whole country is divided into 12 administrative Divisions (Dhaka North City and Dhaka South City, Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi, Barisal, Sylhet, Rangpur, Cumilla, Narayanganj, Gazipur and Mymensing) and 64 Districts. Divisional Commissioner heads a division while a district remains under a Deputy Commissioner (DC). After the national level, division is considered as the highest tier of administration. Role of Divisional Commissioner is to supervise the activities of department or agencies in the Division since division office of each department has direct linkage with its national office. In addition to its supervisory role, Divisional Commissioner also coordinates the activities of the district administration in the Division (Panday, 2013).

From the very beginning, the Districts (64) have been considered as the focal point in the administrative system in Bangladesh. The DC are considered as sole authority of district administration. Below the Districts, there are Upazillas (482) (previously known as Thanas) which is headed by an officer called Upazilla Nirbahi Officer (UNO). Besides, there are department of the ministries at the Divisions, Districts, Upazillas and in limited case at Unions (Panday, 2013).

2.5.2 Tiers of Local government

There are at present two types of local government institutions in Bangladesh: one for the rural areas and the other for the urban areas. For the Chittagong Hill Tracts, there is another special type of local government. The details have been discussed in below.

2.5.3 Rural-Local Government

In rural areas, three levels of local government legally exist, but unlike urban areas these are hierarchical in nature rather than alternative in structures. (Panday, 2013) Zila Parishad (ZP) District Council (61) is placed at the top of the rural local government hierarchy. Below the ZP, there are 482 Upazilla Parishads (UZP) sub district Councils. Union Parishad (UP)/Union council is the third tier of rural-local government. There are currently 4498 Union Parishads, but the number is changing frequently. Below the UP, there was another local government tier, named Gram Sarker/Village Government. Head of a Gram Sarker was the UP member of the Ward. This system was in paper only but not operated. It was cancelled by the Caretaker government in 2008.

2.5.4 Urban-Local Government

Like the rural-local government, urban areas have a separate set of local government. There are two distinct categories of urban local government bodies in Bangladesh: City Corporations and Paurashavas (Municipalities). There are twelve City Corporations, namely, Dhaka North, Dhaka South,

Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Sylhet, Barishal, Narayanganj, Rangpur, Comilla, Gazipur and Mymensingh. All of these have been functioning under the Local Government (City-Corporation) Act, 2009. Elected Mayors and Councilors rule the City Corporations, The Second category of urban local government is Paurashava, run by elected Mayor and Commissioners, There are currently 398 Paurashavas which are classified into-A B and C depending on the amount of revenue they generate.

In addition, there are also some urban centers that are under Military Cantonment Boards. The City Corporations and Paurashavas are true urban local governments. The large number of urban centers is administered under the Union Parishad system (rural local government). Some urban centers have a fairly large population, but have not yet been declared a municipality and therefore, under UP management (Panday and Jamil, 2010).

2.5.5 Special Type of Local Government

Local government institutions for the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) are different from that of the other parts of Bangladesh. The present systems of local government for the three hill districts, namely, Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachari, are a bit complex. After Peace Accord of 1997, government established Ministry of CHT affairs and CHT Regional Councils. Government also reorganized Hill District Local Government Councils into Hill District Councils. Similarly, CHT Development Board, Established in 1976, have been remodeled and placed under the CHT Regional Councils.

2.6 Composition of Local Government

As regards to the composition of different local government institutions, it is evident that the ZP exist in law and on paper without elected representatives. Thus, despite having revenue rising power, ZP remained as merely government functionary. Newly constituted UZP consists of an elected chairman and two vice chairman (one male and one female), all elected chairman of Ups and Mayors of the Paurashava are the members of the UZP while UNO serving as the 'Principal Executive Officer'. In addition, there is a provision of election of one third women members from the elected women members of Ups and Paurashavas. The Ups, Paurashavas and City Corporations are elected bodies composed of Chairperson/Mayor, one representation from each ward and women members/councilors/commissioners (one-thirds) from reserved seats. The Ups chairman, Paurashavas and City corporations Mayors are directly elected by popular vote of the entire constituency while the ward members/councilors/commissioners are elected by their respective constituencies. In addition. there are reserved seats for women in Paurashavas and City Corporations (Pranab and Jamil, 2010).

The Chairmen/Mayor and members/councilors/commissioners of the local government bodies are paid such honorarium as may be prescribed by the government. The term of every Local Government Institution (LGI) is a period of five years commencing on the day of its first meeting after its constitution. LGI holds its first meeting on such date, not later than thirty days from the day on which the names of its Chairmen/ Mayor and members/councilors/commissioners are notified in the official Gazette, as may be appointed by prescribed authority. Before enters upon the office, every Chairmen/Mayor and every member/councilor/commissioner of a Local Government Institution, makes an oath in the prescribed form in the prescribed manner and within the prescribed period.

Chapter-3: Women Empowerment in Bangladesh

This chapter discusses the issues regarding position of women in family and society, political parties, parliament and local government of Bangladesh. It also discusses how the constitution of Bangladesh ensures the participation of women in the local government.

Generally, politics is considered as the male dominated sphere, and that is why a very tiny proportion of women are found in the political arena. As political participation requires knowledge about politics, conscious participation in local government and interest in this field is important. But it is very difficult for the women of our country to acquire knowledge and experience through participation in local government. Traditional norms and values create obstacles to women's involvement in outdoor activities, specially in politics.

As a result, the opportunity to acquire the knowledge about the political process is not always possible for the women. However, in spite of the obstacles women of our country have gradually shown interest in taking part in politics. Especially, with the introduction of the provision of women's

participation in local government. However, it is important to know the political background of the women participants on the basis of which they are motivated to engage themselves in politics.

3.1 Conceptual Framework of Empowerment

‘Empowerment’ as a concept has become popular since the mid 1980s around the globe. Thus women’s empowerment as concept is more significant in local government as well as has become an important factor which has also been related to the issue of international development. Although the term ‘empowerment’ is usually used for improving women’s condition, in real sense it may be applied to any disadvantaged group of a society for bringing them to the same level of advanced section. In most parts of the world, women are being discriminated in socio- economic, cultural and political aspects and are found to struggle for their equal rights compared to their male counterparts (Moin, 2011).

Women’s empowerment has become an important factors as well as international development. Although this term is usually used for improving women’s condition, in real sense it may be applied to any disadvantaged

group of a society for bringing them to the same level of advanced section. In most parts of the world, women are being discriminated in social, economic, cultural and political aspects and are found to struggle for their equal rights compared to their male counterparts (Moin, 2011). The term ‘empowerment’ is widely used in relation to women throughout the world. Empowerment generally means control over resources. It simply connects to self-reliance and self respect. Empowerment “is a process of change by which individuals or groups with little or no power gain the ability and resources to make choices that affect their lives” (Nath, 2003, p.32). Different scholars give the definition of empowerment from different perspectives.

The term ‘entitlement’ used by Amartya Sen (1981) carries almost the same meaning to empowerment. It implies genuine rights to an equitable share of society. Theodore Thomas (1985) defines the term ‘empowerment’ as owning the capacity to act, rather than be acted on.

Vanessa Griffin (1987) identifies some components to illustrate what the term 'empowerment' indicates:

- having control or gaining further control;
- having a say and being listened to;
- being able to define and create from women's perspective;
- being able to influence social choices and decision affecting the whole society;
- Being recognized and respected as equal citizens and human being with a contribution to make.

Haldar and Akhter (1999) notes that empowerment is a process of achieving more controlling power to face the question on existing power and to control over the source of power. They also argue that it is at the same time a process and the result of the process.

However, from all these definitions some key words such as ability, access, acting, control, capacity, decision-making, entitlement, influence, participation, power, have emerged which may appear very helpful for the understanding of 'empowerment'. Keeping all the existing definitions in mind, in this study, the term 'empowerment' means a process to establish

control over the resources such as material, intellectual, political and ideological resources. It also means to acquire the ability and opportunity to participate in decision-making process and its implementation.

3.2 Women Empowerment in The Globe

Empowerment of women is now a global issue. Thus women's empowerment has become an important factors as well as international development. Although this term is usually used for improving women's condition, in real sense it may be applied to any disadvantaged group of a society for bringing them to the same level of advanced section.

In most parts of the world, women are being discriminated in social, economic, cultural and political aspects and are found to struggle for their equal rights compared to their male counterparts. Therefore, emphasis has been given to empower women for the betterment of their lives, as they constitute almost half to the population of the world. It is said that sustainable development is possible only when women are associated with the mainstream development process. Women's empowerment can help advance the mankind to a great extent. In this connection, Rao's observation

is important. He states, “No country can achieve its potential without sufficient involvement of women in development process and encouraging the empowerment of women” (Rao, 1996, p. 37).

Women’s empowerment has become an important factor of national as well as international development. Women’s empowerment is regarded as a precondition for their development. Because, empowerment is such a process that it makes the womenfolk conscious of their position and relative status in the society. It helps them to raise their voice to eliminate disparity regarding their existing social, political and economic position. It also enables them to achieve self confidence to perform active role in establishing their equal rights as compared to their male counterparts. Therefore, importance of empowerment is undeniable as well as very much desirable for women. However, women’s empowerment has several dimensions, such as, social, economic and political, which can be perceived in individual and collective level. These dimensions are interrelated and interdependent; implying the actions promoting one dimension reinforces the values of other dimensions (Haldar and Akhtar, 1999).

For the empowerment of women, the most important issue is their participation in all levels mentioned above. It is well known that women constitute at least half of the total population of most of the countries, so their representation should be ensured proportionately in all spheres of life. Masdith (1997) has opined that as the citizen of a country, women's civic rights should be reflected in their participation in different levels of political life. Excluding women from the place of power based, democracy cannot be proactive in complete sense. The main point of women's empowerment of the women should participate in decision making process. Their participation in decision-making process and the implementation of decisions are considered as integral to the process of empowerment. To illustrate the importance of women's participation in decision-making process for their empowerment, Karl has commented, Keeping women aloof from the process of decision-making, it is very difficult to practice democracy, to ensure human rights and people's participation in governance and development. Women's participation in all levels occur some changes by bringing new priorities and perspectives to political process and the organization of society, it can make society more responsive to the needs of all people.

In this context, women's political participation is a crucial point through which they can participate in decision-making process. If women do not participate in political decision-making power, generally it results in their under-representation in different spheres of life. According to Prasad and Sahay (2000) lack of women's participation in political decision-making deprives women of important rights and responsibilities as citizen, and excludes their perspectives and interest from policy making and decision-making.

Therefore, political empowerment is necessary for the survival of women with dignity and helps to promote basic human rights (Sultana, 2010). At present, worldwide campaign about women's empowerment is very active in which women's empowerment in political dimension receives high prominence along with other dimensions. It may be mentioned that in response to the world interest on the subject of the status of women, the General Assembly of the United Nations Proclaimed the year 1975 as International Women's Year (Huq, Salauddin and Begum, 1997). Also, the year 1976 to 1985 was declared as the women decade, after the first world conference in Mexico in 1975 which opened the United Nations Decade for Women (Pietila and Vickers, 1990). Subsequently, several conferences were

held in Copenhagen 1980, Nairobi, 1985, Beijing, 1995 and Beijing + 5 conferences in New York 2000, Beijing +10 conference in Addis Ababa October, 2004.

In addition to that many other conferences were held to project women's situation throughout the world for creating awareness among the women to acquire equal status and empowerment in different aspects of life. Fourth World Conference on women in Beijing 1995 declared a Platform for Action (PFA) that described itself as "an agenda" for women's empowerment (Goswami,1998) and the main goal of the PFA is to ensure women's participation in economic activities, politics and all the social and cultural affairs without facing obstacles (GOB, 1996).

The emergence of the international women's movement as a powerful political force has also been highly evident at UN conferences in the 1990s, especially the Environment Summit (1992). The Human Rights Conference (1993), the International Conference on Population and Development (1994) and the Social Summit (1995).

All these conferences focused on women's empowerment issue and suggested a number of recommendations to improve their condition and position in society. Different strategies such as, the Plan for Action (Mexico, 1975) the Program of Action (Copenhagen, 1980) and the Forward Looking Strategies (Nairobi, 1985) were taken up for the advancement of women and the main theme of these strategies is centered on women's political participation (Chowdhury, 1994).

Therefore, it can be said that the issue of women's empowerment, particularly political empowerment, is one of the current and important issues thoroughly discussed in the world, which is trying to unite the women in the mainstream of decision-making process.

Traditionally, the political process, authority and leadership have been highly dominated by the males. In this connection, former Prime Minister of Canada Kim Campbell has stated in a book "in virtually all societies, leadership is gendered masculine. This is not because women do not lead, but because the positions that define leadership have been dominated by men" (Panday, 2011,P.38).

3.3 Position and Status of Women in Bangladesh

It is recognized that all around the world women have a relatively lower status economically, socially and politically. An women's status is reflected in the authority and power she holds within the family by and or prestige she commands from the other members of the family and the community.

In general, women all over Bangladesh are more backward than the men because of outmoded social system, back dated attitude towards women, superstitious outlook, poverty, lack of education, lack of congenial environment and so on.

Now questions may arise as to why it is necessary to make special arrangements for women when the Prime Minister and the leader of the opposition in the parliament are elected women. Actually this is an exception. Specially in our society women need care, attention and protection to be at par with men in all walks of life. It is necessary to provide special facilities to the women for enabling them to participate in all spheres of national life.

In order to fulfill the object of the principles of state policy and in compliance with directives in article-10 the Constitution has steps shall be taken to ensure participation of women in all sphere of national life (Ferdousi, 2004).

To the outside of the world it maybe quite a surprise that a developing country like Bangladesh has an examples. There are two women in the highest positions of power in the state. It seems that women are extremely prominent in national politics. The fact is that two women are exceptions and that their position does in no way indicate active participation of women in politics rather it only symbolizes the trend of family inheritance in the politics of Bangladesh.

3.4 Women in the Family and Society

In a patriarchal society, women are trained from childhood to obey orders of men and not to argue back or disobey orders of men's decision. All through her life cycle, a woman is identified as a daughter, a wife or a mother or hardly her own self. Women's subordination in society is socially constructed not biologically predetermined. Most of the local governments are inherently patriarchal institutions. In a practice, however, women and men are not treated as equal according to the Constitution. There is gross disparity between the men and women in every sphere of life. Tradition depicted women as physically weak and intellectually poor requiring constant protection of the men who were in turn depicted physically strong and intelligent. Men and women have unequal access to and control over resources in development efforts and programs (Hasan,2007).

The practical social system and institutions of purdah, marriage and religious bindings place them in an unequal and disadvantaged position. Thus negative attitude towards women leads to cyclical dependence and subjugation.

Women in Bangladesh in general do not earn incomes. They are educationally backward; and socio-cultural factors militate against their participation in active politics (Hasan,2007). However, in recent years, women have been making some progress towards overcoming the obstacles. Female education in the country has been improving; and women are also in larger numbers, joining income earning pursuits in various sectors in our country.

3.5 Women in Political Parties in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, women constitute about half of the total population of 145 million people and about 80 percent of the population lives in the rural areas. If we rearrange the statement it means women constitute about half of the total voters.

One of the greatest constraints to participation of women in politics in Bangladesh is the misinterpretation of religious principles and ‘fatwa’ by the so called religious leaders, most of whom are ignorant about Principles of Islam. The traditional attitude of the male dominated society and the patriarchal social norms hinders women’s access to leadership on the ground that Islam does not recognize leadership by women (Hasan,2007).

The traditional invisibility and domesticity of women is reflected in politics and administration of the Government. In pre-liberation Bangladesh, women had no role in the political decision making of the political parties and the situation has not changed much. The representation to women in party caucus in Bangladesh is insignificant and largely ornamental. The political parties do not normally nominate female candidates (Hasan,2007). A few women have been elected parliament members but they are generally from families with political background and/or from higher income groups. Women, thus, remain backward in politics for lack of finance, low literacy, social barriers, and lack of interest on the part of political parties to nominate women candidates.

Table 1 Women Member in the Committees of Major Political Parties

Political Parties	Committees	Total Members	Female Members	Percentage
Bangladesh Awami League (AL)	Presidium & Secretariat	36	5	13.89
	Executive Committee	64	5	7.81
Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)	National Permanent Committee	14	1	7.14
	National Executive Committee	164	11	6.70
Jatiya Party	National Permanent Committee	31	2	6.45
	National Executive Committee	201	6	2.98

Source: Hasan, 2007

For the reason of male domination women's participation in the sphere of politics is found negligible. They have to confront many obstacles to enter into this male-dominated sphere. Hence, it is important to identify the barriers of women's participation in politics in the context of our country. The barriers are discussed below.

First, economic dependency or lack of financial resources restricts women's political participation. Women of our society are generally dependent on the male members. Although women are increasingly opting for income-earning jobs, the practice of spending huge amount of money in elections hinders their capability to participate in such election. Muscle power is also used sometimes in electioneering. Women, in general, lack this. All this acts as deterrent factors for women's participation in local government and politics.

Secondly, lack of political socialization is one of the reasons for women's low-level participation in local government. The individual's political orientation is a product of socialization essentially within the family. Lovenduski and Hills (1981) argue that different life styles (which is the outcome of socialization process) of men and women markedly affect their political behavior and for this reason, women's visibility in politics generally

remains lower than the men's. Sex based learning process associates females with the immediate environment inside home, and males with wider environment. In this way process of socialization develops a negative attitude for females towards participation in politics. Similar situation is found in Bangladesh.

Thirdly, traditional role allocated for women and lack of time to spend outside home creates a barrier for women to get involved in politics. Household chores, child rearing and other household responsibilities are due for women, which require long time to accomplish these tasks. Moreover, women with job outside home have to perform both household and working place's responsibilities. The male members think that if women enter into the public role participation instead of domestic role participation, they (male members) may lose their dominant position in the family and society.

Fourth, patriarchal social system, religious ideology and values, narrow social and cultural outlook restrict women's mobility in our society. In patriarchal social system, men dominated in all areas of life, in private (family) and in public (work and politics). The nature and extent of patriarchy differs throughout the world, but the dominance of men is

generally a shared matter. Generally women are considered inferior in the patriarchal system. This sense of inferiority resulted in other inequalities; inferiorities, discrimination and degradation (Bhaskar 1993). Apart from this due to purdah obligation women's mobility is difficult and they are not allowed to communicate with the outside world. For the participation in political wide level of social interaction is necessary. It is a very easy job for the male activists but not for women. Thus dominance of men in politics has turned it into a male's profession Chowdhury (b) (1994) Sometimes, it is reported in the newspapers that some elected women members of Union Parishad were sexually harassed by their rivals. As a result, women tend to lose their interest in politics.

Moreover, it is observed that in reality wide disparity exists between women's formal political equality and their meaningful exercise of political power (Panday,2013). Existing situation generally prevent them to implement political power properly. However, although women face many obstacles in participation in politics. they have to cope with the existing situation and some of them involve themselves in political activities for their empowerment.

3.6 Women in Parliament

In 1947, after the birth of Pakistan, Begum Jahanara Shahnewaz and Begum Saista Ekramullah were the two women representatives in the National Assembly of Pakistan. They played the pioneering role in the movement for establishing the legal rights of women. Later, in 1954, eleven women were elected members of the National Assembly from the jukta Front. They are : Nurjahan Murshed, Daulatun Nessa, Badrunnessa Ahmed, Amena Begum, Selina banu , Rajia banu, Tafrunnessa, Meherun Nessa and three other from minority community. Neli Sen Gupta was elected as member of the Provincial Assembly at that time. This trend in politics generated much enthusiasm among the women-folk for active participation (Begum, 1989).

In the first parliament election of 1973 in independent Bangladesh only two political parties (National Awami Party (Muzaffar and Jatiya Samijtantrik Dal) gave nomination to two Women members to contest from three constituencies. The 1979 parliament election report indicates that only nine parties put up thirteen women candidates to contest in general seats. Besides, four more women candidates contested for general seats ad independent. But none could come out (Hasan,2007).

In the 1979 election there were two qualitative changes. Firstly, two seats in the by election were won by women and secondly, 15 reserved seats were increased to 30. Women candidates credibility was enhanced during the 1986 election. For the first time major political parties nominated 20 women candidates to contest in the general seats. Thus women's participation in the electoral politics increased from 0.9% to 1.3% in 1979 (Hasan,2007). But it should be mentioned that most of the candidates came from rich, educated and well-connected families and they had relationship with party stalwarts.

In the election of 1991, women constituted 1.5 percent of the total candidates. More than 40 women candidates fought from different constituencies but only 8 were elected and after by election the number of women seats stood at 7 in the Parliament. Women were elected in 11 seats. In 2001 election, 37 women contested in 48 constituencies and of them 6 were elected as member of the Parliament (Hasan,2007).

There are however 45 reserved seats in the parliament for women according to the 14th amendment to the Constitution. These seats are to be divided among the political parties according to the ratio of seats won in the general election.

The above facts would have us believe that as politicians, women are not yet accepted by the political parties unless they have the blessings of party high-ups (Hasan, 2007).

The general impression among women's organizations and promoters of women's movement is that the contribution of women politicians and women MPs in focusing and redressing women's development issues and gender biases in socio-economic-political spheres, is, if at all, very insignificant. Hardly any woman has raised gender issues or voiced women's concern in the Parliament during deliberations on budget, discussions on bills or in question answer sessions. They have seldom agitated for legislation to ameliorate the legal status of women. Their response to the demand voiced by the women organizations is not obvious to the public (Hasan, 2007).

In the words of Barrister Rabia Bhuiyan, former MP and Minister, the subjects of debate in our Bangladesh parliament concerns more typical and ordinary matters such as constructions of roads, bridges culvers, wheat and relief distribution, welfare of schools, rather than concentrating on debates on policy, gender, legal, constitutional, and human rights issues. When there

is any debate on passing of laws or amendments of law, the participation of women Parliamentarians is noticeably less.

Since women in reserved seats were assured of election once nominated by the majority party, their selection was not based on either popularity with the constituencies or any service rendered to them. They were not therefore accountable to their constituents.

The materials, facilities, and services available to the Parliamentarians, particularly the women are very few. None of the women MPs, except women Ministers, have individual rooms. They sit in a common room together. They do not have private assistants, material, computer, or Internet facilities (except privately so that they can go equipped in the Parliament before a debate (Bhuiyan, 2001).

3.7 Women and the Constitution of Bangladesh

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh in its fundamental principle of state policy guarantees fundamental freedom and human rights of all citizens without any distinction. Corresponding to that, the Constitution ensures equal participation of women in all spheres of national life and equal right of women with men in all spheres of state and public life.

In Article 9, the Constitution has guaranteed special representation of women in local government bodies. At the same time, the Constitution has the provision of reserved seats to ensure women representation in these institutions.

The Constitution also ensures equality of opportunity to all citizens, and declares that all citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law irrespective of religion, race caste, sex or place of birth. Article 28(4) advances the rationale of affirmative action for the equal protection and advancement of women. The constitution also affirms the equality of opportunity in public employment (Hasan, 2007).

Thus, in Articles 36 to 39, women enjoy the fundamental rights of freedom of speech and expression, association and assembly, which form the basis of political activity in a civil society.

The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and Bangladesh. The convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (herein after CEDAW) was adopted by the general assembly on December 18, 1979 which came into force on September 3 1981. CEDAW is the international instrument providing the ethical and legal basis for protection and promotion of human rights of women as guaranteed under the Universal. Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) adopted by the United Nations on December 10, 1948. The human rights norms and standards embodied in CEDAW provide the international framework for non-discrimination and gender equality (Moin, 2011).

CEDAW has 30 operative articles of which 16 substantive articles (Article 1-16) identify specific areas of discrimination and provide an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. Articles 17-22 deal with

formulation and procedural matter and articles 23-30 deal with administrative matters.

The government of Bangladesh has ratified major international human rights instruments including the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) which obligate the government to remove all forms of discriminations against women and ensure participation of women, on equal terms with men in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their country. Therefore, the government has taken legal and procedural steps to involve women in local level activities including local government bodies.

However, the government has reservations about some provisions of CEDAW, relating to family benefits and guardianship of children as contained in Article 13(A) and Article 16(1) (b) of the Convention. Article 13 (a) gives the women the right to family benefits and Article 16(1) (b) ensures equal right of men and women with regard to guardianship, worship, trusteeship and adoption children (Moin,2011).

Considering the definitions discussed above, it appears that the key characteristics of local government/ local self-government are as follows:

- It is a political system constituted by law;
- Under this system, institutions are organized for specified local areas;
- These institutions are elected bodies composed of the members elected by the people of the area or locality;
- They have the power of administration and taxation over specified areas and have the right to manage their own affairs;
- They are ultimately responsible and subordinate to the national government. This implies that though these institutions are given the right to manage the local affairs, they are not authorized to become the states within a state.

3.8 Women in Local Government

At present, Bangladesh has a four-tier local government structure at village, union, Upazilla and Zila levels and all the four bodies are to be constituted through direct vote of the people. The legal framework introduced recently requires that at each of the four local governments, a specified number of women (for example, three in each village, union and Upazilla bodies) are to be elected directly by the people from reserved seats.

According to this process, all local bodies (Union Parishad, Upazilla Parishad, Zila Parishad, Municipality Corporation and City Corporation) must have certain number of women members who will contest against other women only in those seats. In the last UP election 1997, 20 women chairmen (out of 102 women candidates) of Union Parishads were elected, where contestants included both men and women, in addition to the 12,828 women members elected from reserved seats. Moreover, some 44,527 women candidates competed for the reserved UP seats all over the country and over 75 percent of the women voters cast their vote (Hasan, 2007).

In addition, there are 13 UP committees that undertake various development activities and women are to head one third of them and are further mandated to head the committee on women's and children's welfare, culture and sports. Members and commissioners from reserved seats are to motivate people against the cruelty to women and children and engage in awareness building regarding gender-based issues and women's development. One third of the members of these standing committees have to be from the reserved seats.

Similarly, Municipal Corporations and City Corporations of Bangladesh are also following the same system and for them there is a reserved seat for every three wards for women. The 1997 legislation, at least theoretically, guarantees the one-third representation of women at the electoral level, as well as the functional level, through their involvement in development committees and programs, There is also provision for three women members for every Upazilla Parishad of Bangladesh taking the number of women public representatives to 1,510 in the Upazilla level (Hasan,2007).

Thus the government is trying to involve a vital portion of the population in the development process who are generally assigned the roles of wives and mothers in most to the developing societies.

In the present local government system, women are directly participating in different local government elections from city corporations to Union Parishad under the existing laws such as local government (city corporation) Act.2011, local government (Purashava Act. 2009) local government union parishad Act. 2009). According to these laws, special quota system has been established for women to encourage their participation in the elections and women response is gradually increasing, and they are also getting of their old fashioned mind sets. However, in reality, based on the statistics of some pervious years, it appears that the increased rate of participation is not up to the expectation and the elected women in local government system are not rightly able to work and participate in the decision-making process. They are encountering different types of social, political and religious barriers. Although, under the existing laws, the issue of equal treatment is suggested but practically it is absent (Solaiman, 2018).

Local government is a system of providing services and facilities of central government to the local people. From its representative character it is expected that participation of people's representatives should remain equal in proportion to male-female population. Being a part of human resource, women's equal participation is necessary from the political point of view. But it is noticed that from the creation of local government, the males mostly dominate it. Women of our country were not even allowed to cast vote in election till 1956 when election was held on the basis of universal adult franchise for the first time (Qadir, 199; Alam, 1982) Prior to that women could cast their votes in Calcutta Municipal election in 1923.

After the emergence of Bangladesh several local government elections were held to strengthen the local government institutions. It should have come to know from the discussion of local government system that government took the initiative to reserve seat for women for enhancing their participation in decision making process. First step was taken by the government to ensure women's participation in local governance in 1973 for Paurashavas and 1976 for Union Parishads. Accordingly, government introduced the provision of two reserved seats for women in each Paurashava and Union Parishad. Later on the number of reserved seats was increased from two to

three through the Local Government ordinance of 1983 (Khan, 1996) At present, one-third direct representation of women is ensured in all the functional LGIs, Such as Union Parishads municipalities and city corporations. The three other institutions such as, Gram Sarkar, Zila Parishad and Hill District Councils are pending operationalization. When those will put into operation, they will follow the same discourse. Apart from this the provision of one reserved seat of female vice-chairman is introduced for each Upazilla Parishad to ensure women's representation in this local government institution (Moin, 2011).

Under the provision of reserved seats opportunity is created for 14950 women to participate in presently active LGIs in Bangladesh. Table- 3.2 show that 13458 seats are reserved in 486 Union Parishads and 483 seat in Upazilla Parishads. In urban LGIs, 927 seats are reserved for 309 Paurashavas and 84 for 6 City Corporations (CC). Apart from this there are 64 Zial Parishad in our Country (BBS, 2002) Where 192 seats are reserved for women, but they are not in operation at present, as election has not been held yet (Moin,2011). However, women's reserved seats i different functional LGIs are presented in Table-2.

Table 2 Distribution of Women's Reserved Seats in Present LGIs in Bangladesh.

Local Government Unite	Number of Unite	No. of reserved seats (in each unit)	Total umber of reserved seats
Union Parishad	4486	03	13458
Upazilla Parishd	483	01	483
Paurashava	309	03	927
City Corporation	06	30+14+10+10+9+9	82
Total	-	-	14950

Source: Moin, 2011

From the history of women's participation in LGP in Bangladesh we found that the trend of women's participation in local government general seats is limited. Women empowerment in Bangladesh like other developing countries in the world is a matter of concern in all tires of governance and state affaires due to their regular increase of participation. It has also become essential to cope with the changing phenomenon of social and political structure in the global. In response to global campaign, the women empowerment process in Bangladesh has recognized constitutional and statutory recognition covering central and local government tires. As a result of this, empowerment is regularly growing in their minds and they are actively participating and responding to relevant local government programs.

Chapter-4 : Data Analysis and Findings

4.1 Data Analysis

In this chapter, the main purpose of this study is to explore the women empowerment in local government Institution in Keshabpur Upazilla of Jessore District. To do so, the study has examined the real situations and development as well as trend of participation of women's in Local Government Institutions. Integration of women in Local Government and as well as development implies equal access of women to the opportunities of development and in the decision-making process. Women who constitute about fifty percent of any country play a significant role in the national economy and society.

Generally, women's involvement in the developing process as envisaged by planners is only in the area of family planning and population control with the implicit bias that women's accommodate in these areas which can be linked to a greater use of contraceptives, and not to the areas of education and skill development through which women could become more productive members of society.

Thus, a questionnaire was distributed among the participants of Keshabpur Upazilla Parishad women members for getting information and ideas about steps that has been taken by the different government, socio-economic and political obstacles, experiences, training, quota system, discrimination of gender, problems, response of family members and neighbors, about her task and its impact, and most importantly about the level of mental satisfaction about their jobs as a women member in Local Government Institution.

They were asked questions to identify the main problems of a women member. Most importantly, the women members were asked to identify the reasons if they are not satisfied as a member. They were also asked to identify the reasons if they are not happy with their male members.

In the following chapter, the report is presented through random sampling under sub-headings dividing the questions, asked the four categories respondents'. The study was conducted taking 60 respondents' belonging to Keshabpur Upazilla of Jessore District. To identify and understand the result, the analysis is mainly presented by category wise.

4.1.1 Section A- Public Representatives (Male)

The age of the samples respondents are classified into five age groups, which are 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, and 60 years and above. Figure-2 shows that most of the respondents in this section fall into age group 30-39 (40% of the respondents), followed by 40-49 age group (27% of the respondents). In the case of educational qualification, most of them (67%) have educational qualification below SSC and the rest have either SSC or HSC degree (Figure-3). Therefore, it can be noted that most of the male public representatives in the local government have very low level of education.

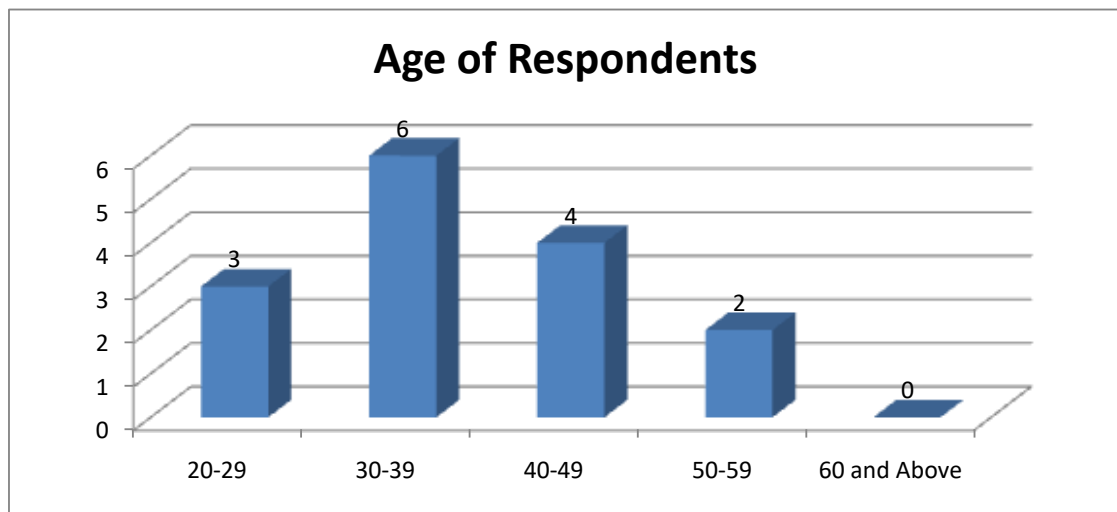


Figure 1 Age of the Respondents

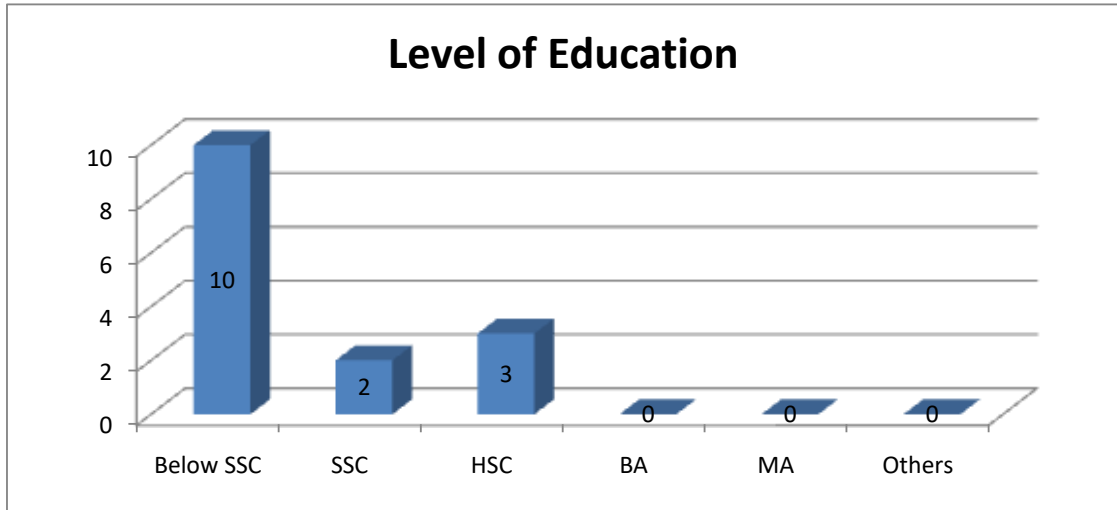


Figure 2 Level of Education

Different government made different laws to facilitate women empowerment in Bangladesh. One of the significant law in this regard is the Special Quota System. Figure-4 shows that most of the male public representatives (80%) believe that these laws made by the governments are very much facilitative to women empowerment and the rest of them (20%) think that the laws are facilitative.

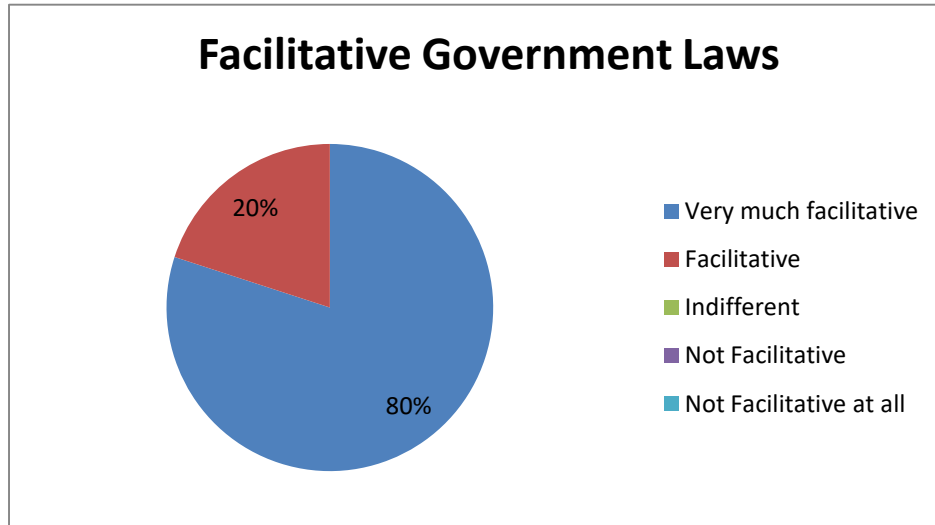


Figure 3 Facilitative Government Laws

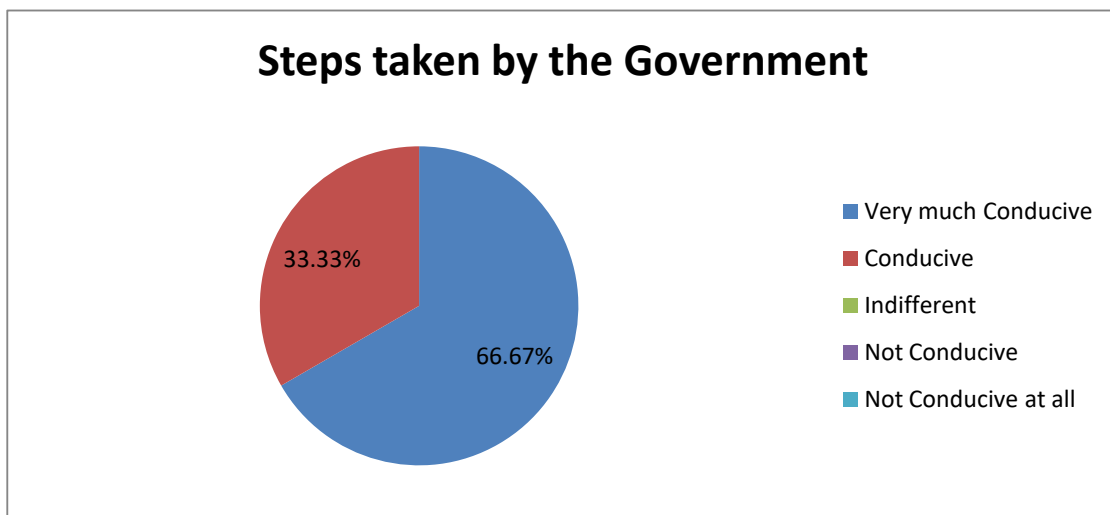


Figure 4 Steps taken by the government

Figure-5 shows that 66.67% of the male public representatives also opined that the steps taken by the government are very much conducive and the rest opined these are conducive only to women empowerment.

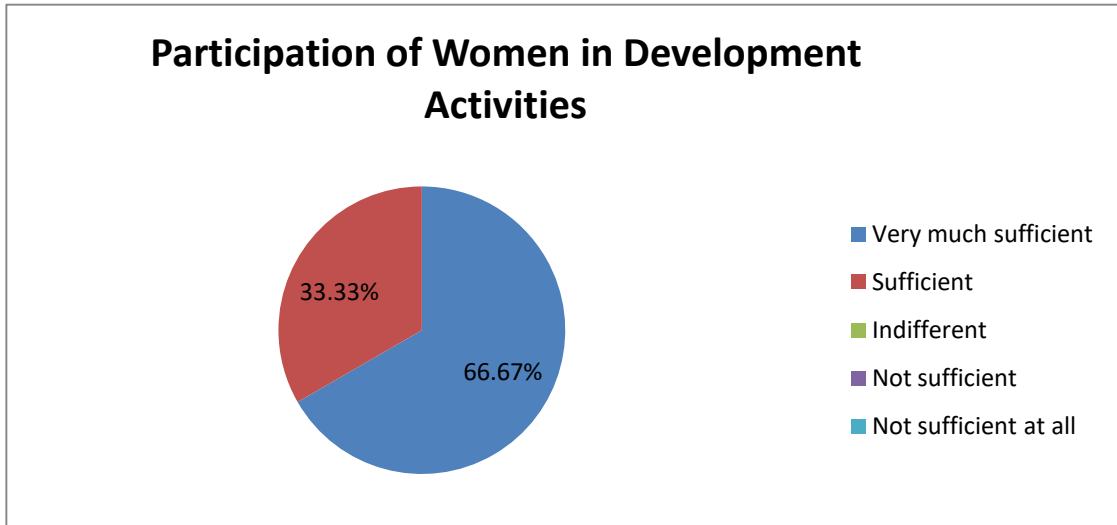


Figure 5 Participation of Women in Development Activities

Figure-6 shows that 66.67% of the male public representatives opined that women participation in development activities is very much sufficient, whereas the remaining 33.33% stated it as sufficient.

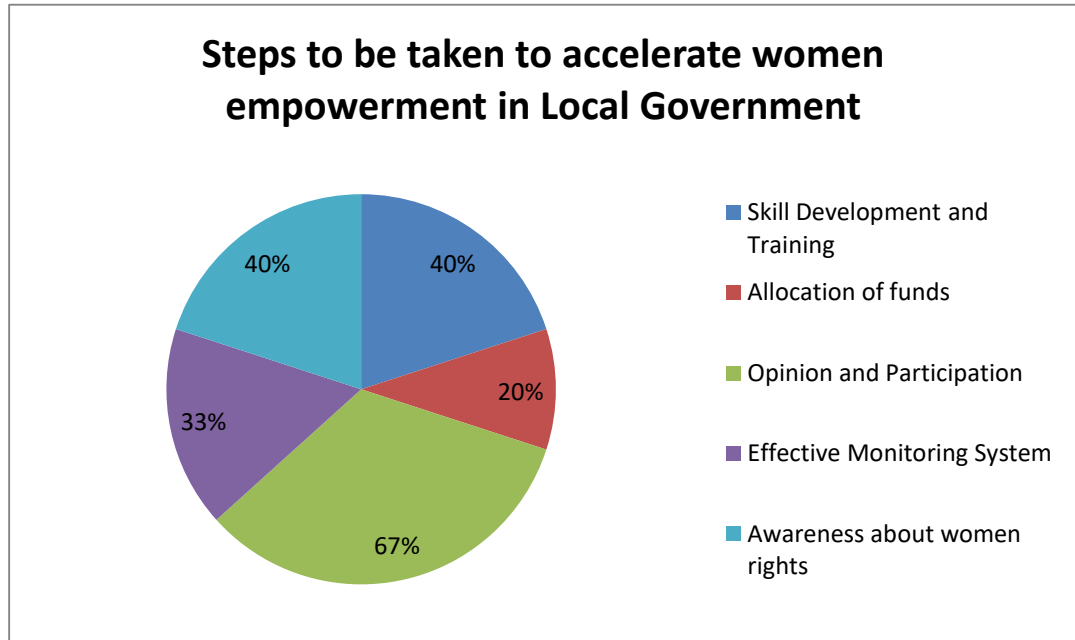


Figure 6 Steps to be taken to accelerate women empowerment in local government

The male public representatives advised several measures to accelerate women empowerment. Figure-7 shows that 67% of them commented that women are not encouraged to participate in the meetings and other activities. So, women should come forward to participate. 40% of the respondents emphasized women skill development and training. 40% suggested awareness building about women rights. Other suggestions included effective monitoring system and proper allocation of funds.

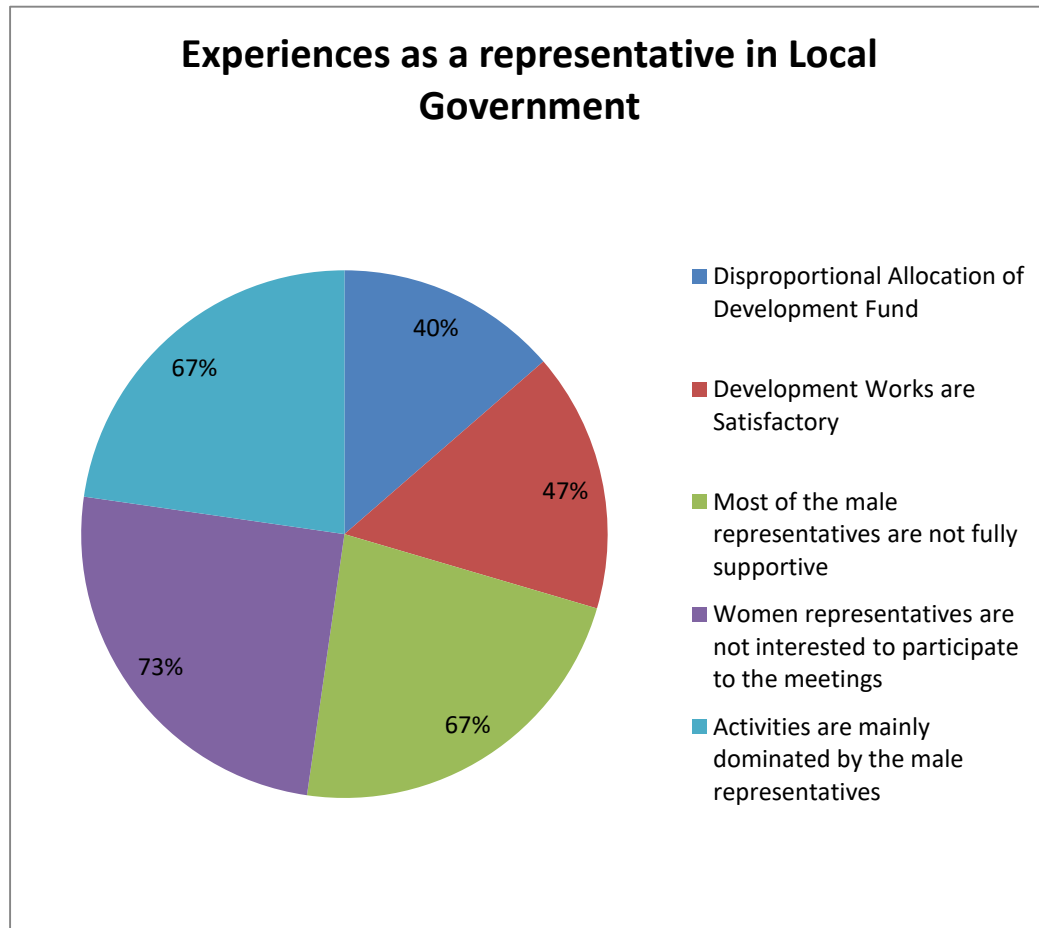


Figure 7 Experiences as a representative in local government

As a representative in the local government, the male respondents have different experiences. Figure-8 shows that 73% of them stated that the women representatives are not interested to participate in the meetings, 67% think that the activities of local government are mainly dominated by the male members. 67% of them also think that the male members are not fully cooperative to the women representatives. 40% of them also complained

about disproportional allocation of funds. However, 47% of them are satisfied with the development activities by the local government.

4.1.2 Section B- Public Representatives (Female) :

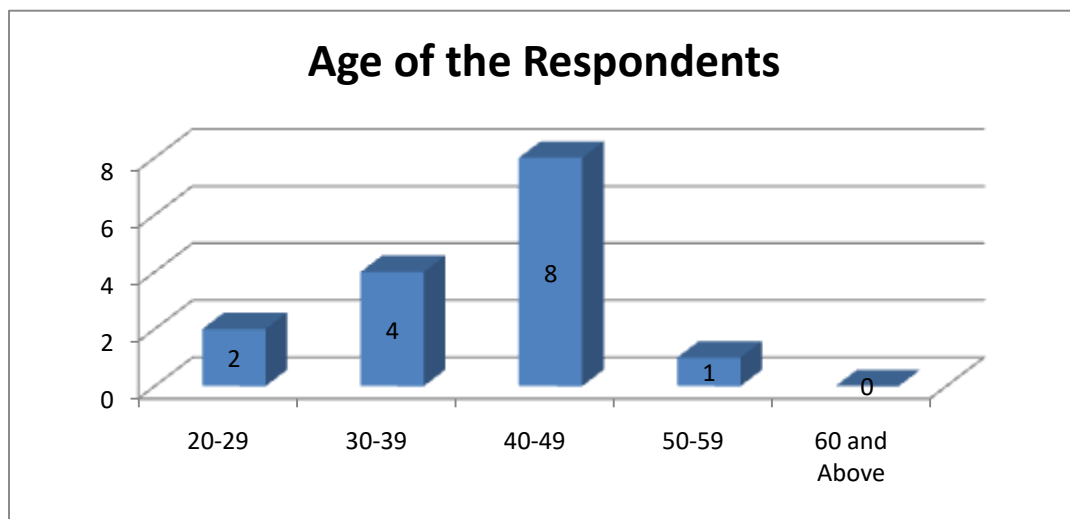


Figure 8 Age of the respondents

The age of the samples respondents are classified into five age groups, which are 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, and 60 years and above. Figure-9 shows that most of the respondents in this section fall into age group 40-49 (53% of the respondents), followed by 30-39 age group (27% of the respondents). In the case of educational qualification, most of them (53%) have educational qualification below SSC and the rest have SSC degree (Figure-10). Therefore, it can be noted that most of the female public representatives in the local government have very low level of education.

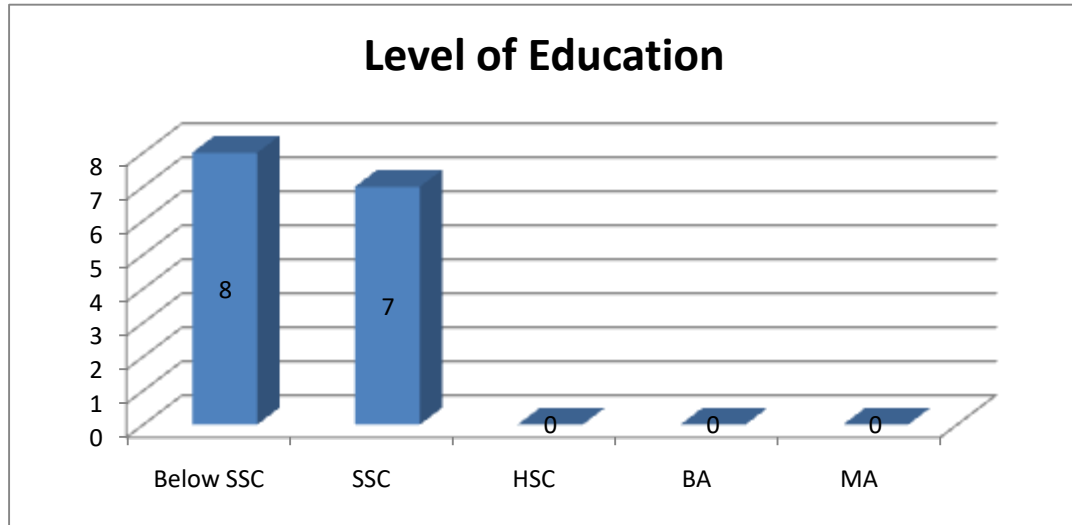


Figure 9 Level of Education

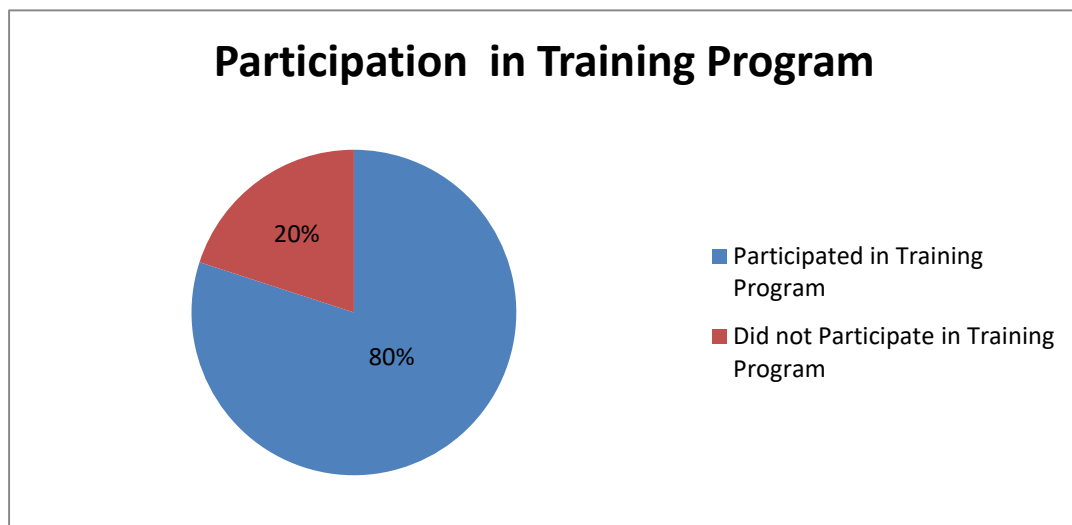


Figure 10 Participation in training program

Figure-11 shows that 80% of the female public representatives participated in training programs and the rest did not. Training is considered as one of the major pre-requisites for capacity building of the members of local

government institutions. As women representatives are considered the important part of local government institutions, they have to perform manifold responsibilities. So, it can be expected that training programs make women members efficient and conscious about their duties, responsibilities and also women's rights.

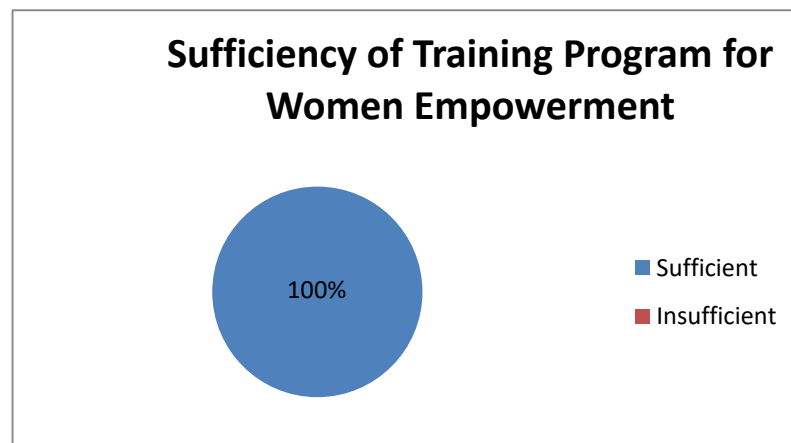


Figure 11 Sufficiency of training program for women empowerment

Figure-12 shows that 100% of the female public representatives of Upazilla Parishad opined that women participation in training program is very much sufficient.

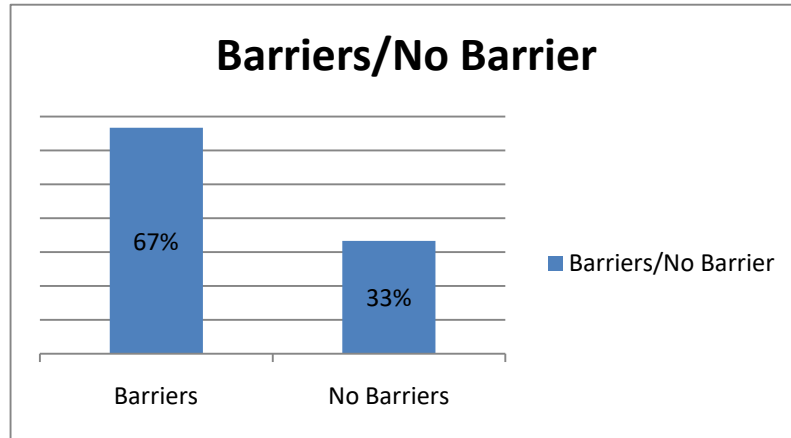


Figure 12 Barriers/No barrier

Figure-13 shows that 67% of the female representatives in the local government face different types of barriers in performing their activities.

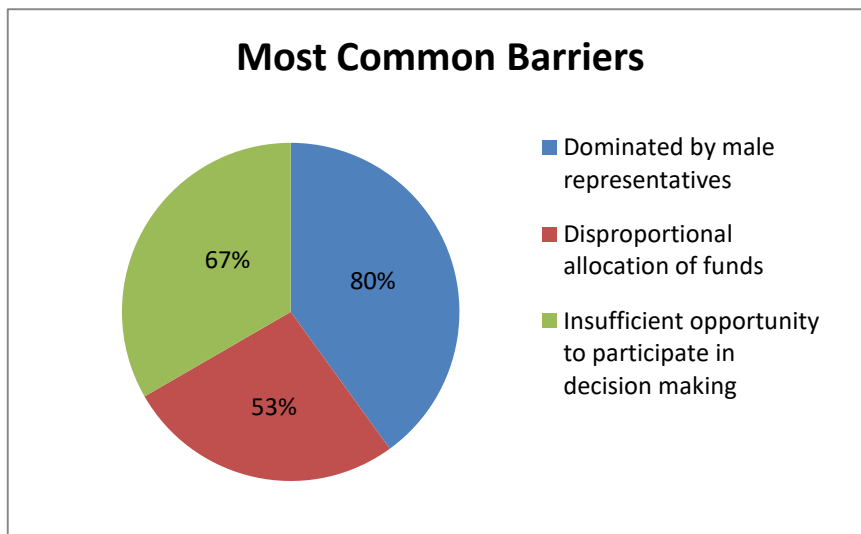


Figure 13 Most common barriers

Figure-14 shows a list of most common barriers. Here, we see that 80% of the women representatives stated that male representatives' dominance is the most common barrier for women. 67% commented that women representatives do not have sufficient opportunity to participate in decision making process. Other 53% complained about disproportional allocation of funds.

Table 3 Importance of women in decision making process

Level of Importance given	% of Respondents
High level of Importance is given	0.00%
Importance is given to some extent	6.67%
Indifferent	0.00%
No importance is given	40.00%
No importance is given at all	53.33%
Total No. of Respondents	100.00%

Table-3 shows that more than 53% of the women representatives think that women are not given importance at all in decision making process, whereas 40% think they are not given importance. Only around 7% stated that they are given importance in decision making process. Therefore, this can be said that most of the women representatives are not satisfied with the level of their participation in decision making process.

Table 4 Cooperation by the male representatives in decision making process

Cooperation by Male Representatives	% of Respondents
Very much supportive	5.00%
supportive	8.00%
Indifferent	0.00%
Not supportive	20.00%
Not supportive at all	67.00%
Total No. of Respondents	100.00%

Table-4 shows that more than 67% of the women representatives think that male representatives are not cooperative at all in the case of decision making. Another 20% think the male representative are not cooperative. Only 13% in total believe that the male representatives are cooperative.

Table 5 Invitation to join meetings arranged by the local government

Invitation to Meetings	% of Respondents
Get regular invitations	80.00%
Get irregular invitations	20.00%
No Comments	0.00%

Table-5 shows that 80% of the women representatives stated that they get invitation regularly to join meetings.

Table 6 Invitation to participate to development activities

Invitation to Participate to Development Activities	% of Respondents
Yes	86.67%
No	13.33%

Table-6 shows that more than 86% of the women representatives stated that they get invitation regularly to participate development activities. As the constitution of our country guaranteed the rights of men and women in all spheres of public life, women representatives of local government have the rights to participate in developing activities as compared to male members .

Case-1: Domination by Male Representatives

A female representative of Keshabpur Upazilla Parishad told these following words regrettably and she did not disclose her identity fearing further isolation.

“Male representatives get the mosquito-control pesticides. Male representatives also determine which places to sweep by the sweepers. We can cook rice, we can participate in the procession, and then why can't we do it? It is very frustrating for us, we are elected, not selected.”

Case- 2: Gender Discrimination

Morzina Khatun (40), a female representative of Keshabpur Upazilla Parishad stated:

“After my oath, I went to the chairman and asked him to assign me some work. The chairman became annoyed and said that the government has brought out the women from their houses to create unnecessary trouble in the Upazilla Parishad. What will you do in the Upazilla Parishad? Go upstairs and sit with my wife and spend your time. I do not find any work for you. No specific work is mentioned in the manual for women.”

The above example reflects a situation in which women members are not viewed separately from their identity as “women”. A series of functions are assigned to local government representatives, there is no specific responsibility for female representatives defined in any tier of local government. Female representatives are reinforced by the discriminatory and dominant attitude of male chairman and male representatives. Lack of support from male counterparts or colleagues hugely discourage women in local government.

4.1.3 Section C- Government Representatives:

The age of the samples respondents are classified into five age groups, which are 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, and 60 years and above. Figure-15 shows that most of the government representative fall into age group 50-59 (47% of the respondents), followed by 40-49 age group (33%) and 30-39 age group (20%) . In the case of educational qualification, Figure-16 shows that most of the respondents (67%) have MA degree followed by BA degree (20%). Therefore, it can be noted that most of the government representatives in the local government fall into high age bracket and have higher level of education.

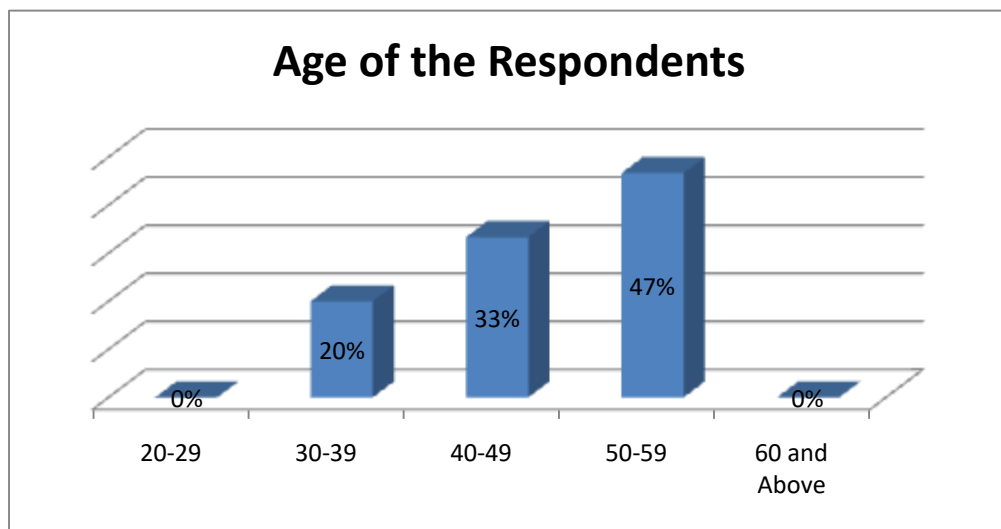


Figure 14 Age of the respondents

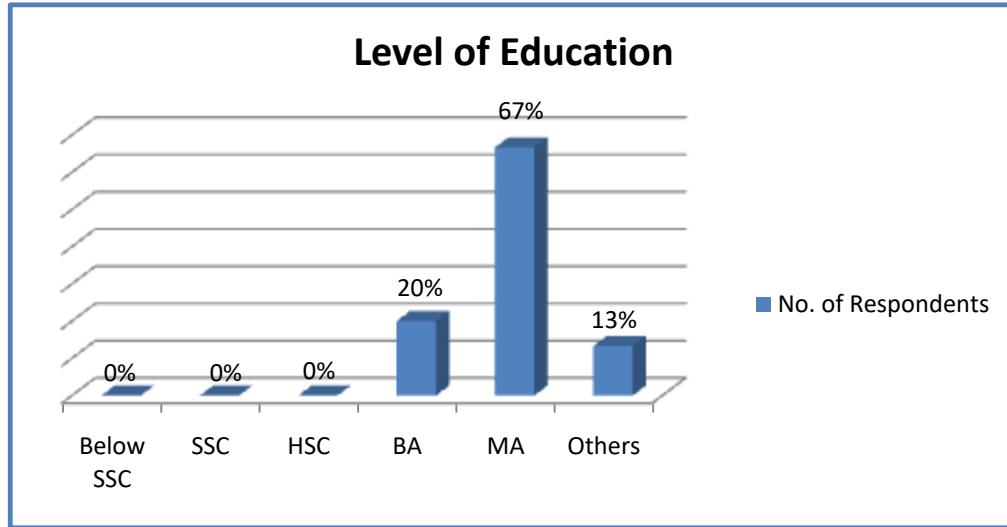


Figure 15 Level of education

Table-7 shows that 80% of the government representatives opined that the initiatives taken by the government are very much conducive and the rest opined these are only conducive to women empowerment.

Table 7 Conduciveness of Government initiatives for women empowerment

Level of Conduciveness	% of Respondents
Very much Conducive	80%
Conducive	20%
Indifferent	0%
Not Conducive	0%
Not Conducive at all	0%
Total No. of Respondents	100%

Figure-17 shows that 87% of the government representatives attended training programs offered by the government and the remaining 13% did not.

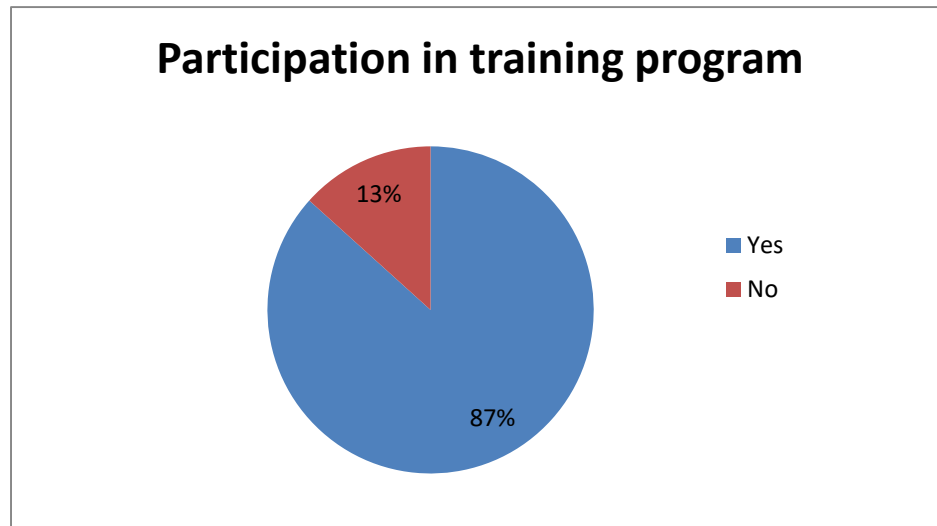


Figure 16 Participation in training program

Figure-18 shows that 80% of the government representatives opined that the training programs offered by the government are sufficient for women empowerment.

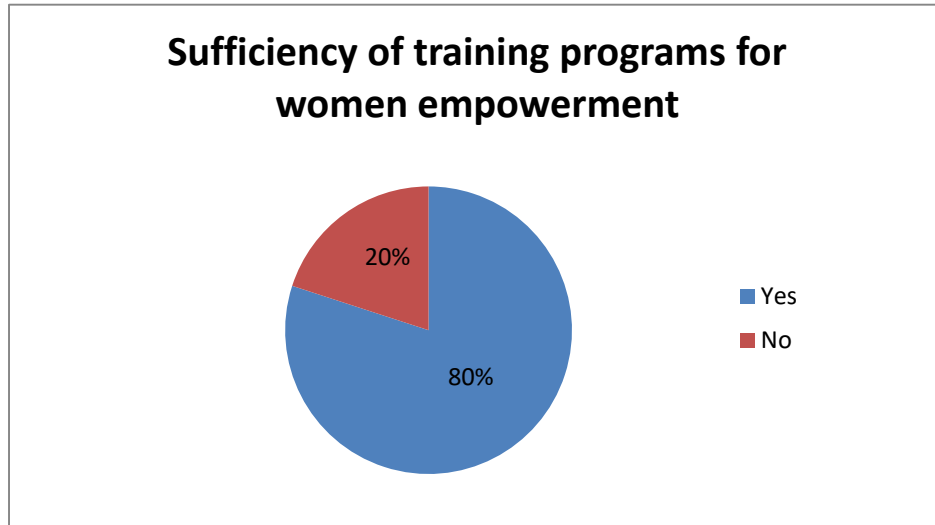


Figure 17 Sufficiency of training programs for women empowerment

Figure-19 shows that 67% of the government representatives think that the Quota System introduced by the Government is effective for women empowerment, whereas the remaining 33% think that the quota system is not effective.

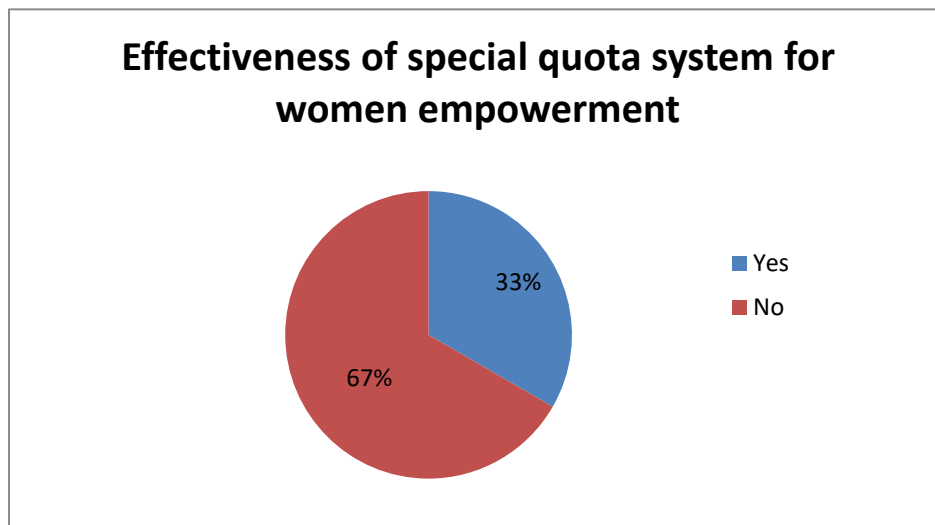


Figure 18 Effectiveness of special quota system for women empowerment

Figure-20 shows that 87% of the government representatives opined that opportunities of women participation in development activities is sufficient, whereas the remaining 13% stated it as not sufficient.

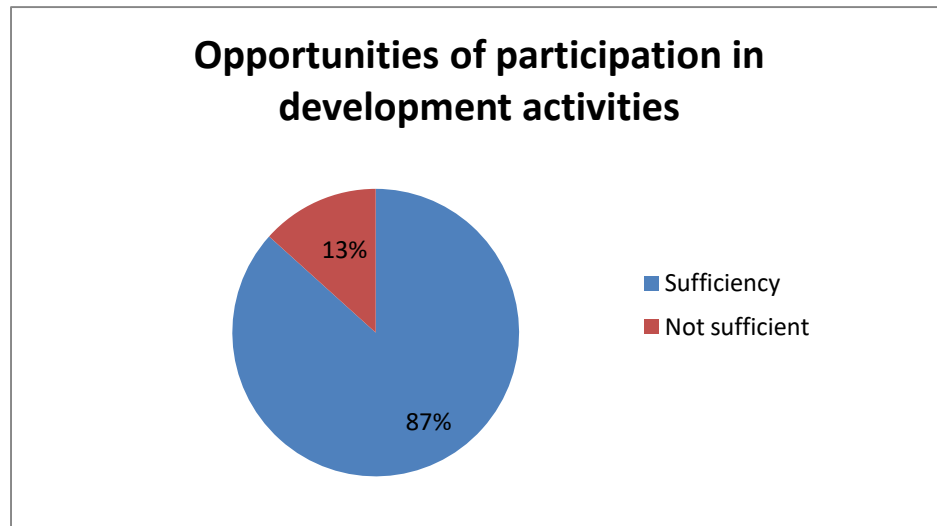


Figure 19 Opportunities of participation in development activities

Figure-21 shows that 67% of the government representatives think that women are not given importance in decision making process, whereas other 13% think they are not given importance. Only 20% of them stated that women are given importance to some extent in decision making process. Therefore, this can be said that most of the government representatives think that women's opinion is not given importance in decision making process.

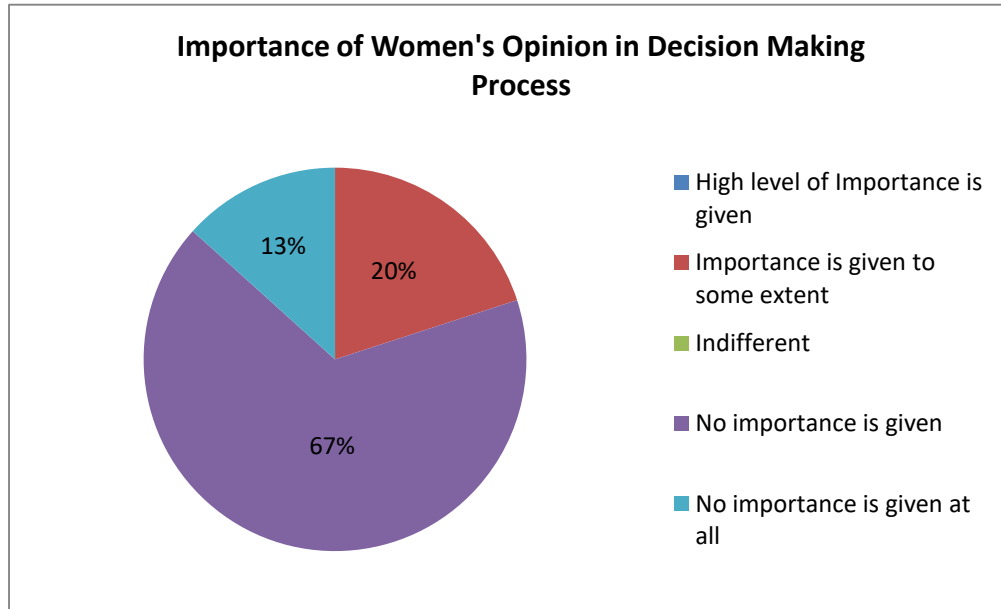


Figure 20 Importance of women's opinion in decision making process

Table 8 lists different types of gender discrimination encountered by women representatives in the local government. It can be seen that 93% of the respondents think that women representatives faces discrimination in decision making process. 67% commented that women representatives faces discrimination in skill development training opportunities. More than half of the respondents said that women representatives have insufficient access to information, whereas 47% think that women representatives do not get sufficient opportunities to participate in development activities.

Table 8 Gender discriminations encountered by women representatives

Types of Discriminations	Percentage of Respondents
Can't participate to development activities	47%
Insufficient access to information	53%
Lack of skill development training	67%
Discrimination in decision making process	93%

Table-9 shows the opinion of the government representatives as to how to remove discrimination against women. 90% of the government representatives think that Awareness build up about rights and duties of women is the foremost means to remove discrimination against women. 80% of them think that this discrimination can be removed by education and skill development training. 67% think that establishment of good governance is a way of eradicating discrimination. 53% commented that effective implementation of government procedures can eliminate discrimination against women representatives.

Table 9 Ways and means of removing discrimination against women

Ways to remove discrimination	Percentage of Respondents
Effective implementation of government procedures	53%
Education and Skill Development Training	80%
Awareness build up about rights and duties	90%
Establishment of Good Governance	67%

Table 10 Steps to be taken to accelerate women empowerment

Steps to be taken	Percentage of Respondents
Skill Development and Training	67%
Allocation of funds	53%
Women's Opinion and Participation	67%
Effective Monitoring System	40%
Awareness about women rights	67%
Changing social attitude of discrimination	53%
Increase support by male representatives	40%

The government representatives advised several measures to accelerate women empowerment. Table-10 shows that 67% of them commented that building awareness about women rights, skill development and training, and women's opinion and participation should be encouraged. 53% think that proper allocation of funds and changing social attitude towards discrimination can accelerate women empowerment. Other important measures are effective monitoring system and increased cooperation by male representatives can accelerate women empowerment.

4.1.4 Section D- Civil Society Members:

The age of the respondents are classified into five age groups, which are 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, and 60 years and above. Figure-22 shows that most of the respondents in this section fall into age group 50-59 (67% of the respondents), followed by 40-49 age group (27% of the respondents). In the case of educational qualification,, Figure-23 shows that most of them (53%) have BA degree followed by MA degree (40%). Therefore, it can be noted that most of the civil society members in the local government fall into high age bracket and have higher level of education.

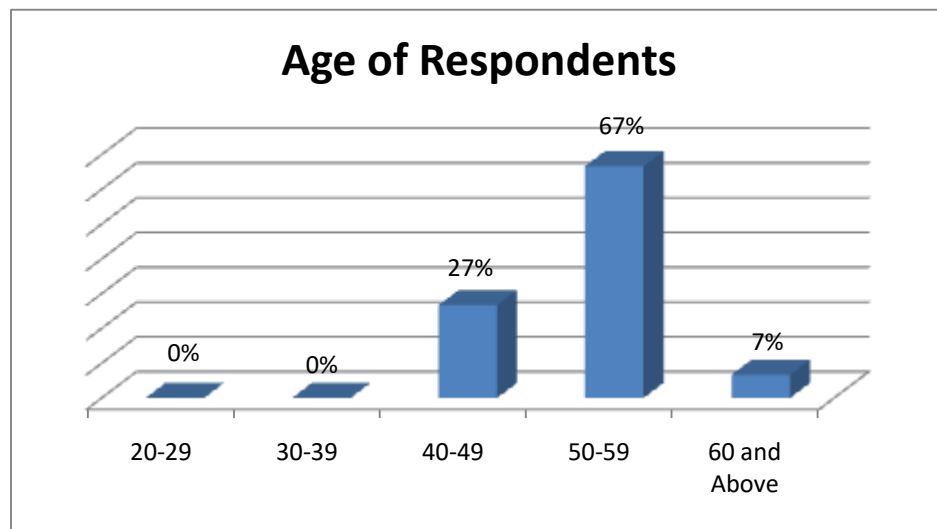


Figure 21 Age of the respondents

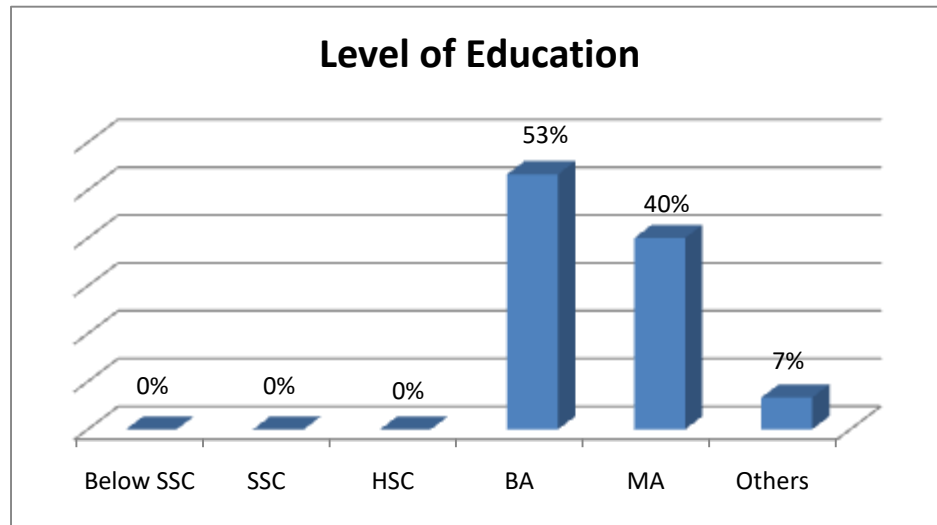


Figure 22 Level of education

Table-11 shows a list different socio-economic and political barriers to women empowerment. Here, we see that 67% of the civil society members commented that lack of education and training is a most important barrier to women empowerment, 60% think that male representatives' dominance is a one of the main barrier for women representatives in local government. 53% commented that unfavorable environment for women and fundamentalism are the barriers for women empowerment. Other major barriers are superstition and gender discrimination.

Table 11 Socio-economic and political barriers to women empowerment

Socio-economic and political barriers	% of Respondents
Lack of Education and Training	67%
Gender Discrimination	40%
Superstition	47%
Male Dominance	60%
Unfavorable environment	53%
Fundamentalism	53%

Table-12 shows that more than 66% of the civil society members opined that the initiatives taken by the government are not conducive and over 13% of the respondents opined that these are not conducive at all. This can be noted that only 20% of the respondents think that government initiatives are conducive.

Table 12 Conduciveness of Government initiatives for women empowerment

Level of Conduciveness	% of Respondents
Very much Conducive	0.00%
Conducive	20.00%
Indifferent	0.00%
Not Conducive	66.67%
Not Conducive at all	13.33%
Total No. of Respondents	100.00%

Figure-24 shows that 67% of the civil society members think that the laws made by the governments are not facilitative to women empowerment and the rest of them (33%) think that the laws are facilitative.

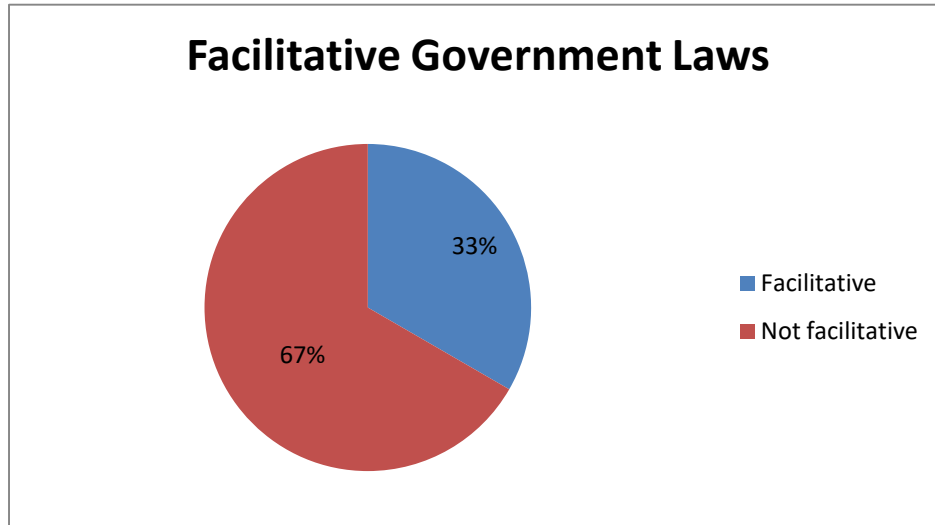


Figure 23 Facilitative government laws

Figure-25 shows that most of the civil society members (73%) believes that Special Quota System made by the governments are not effective for women empowerment.

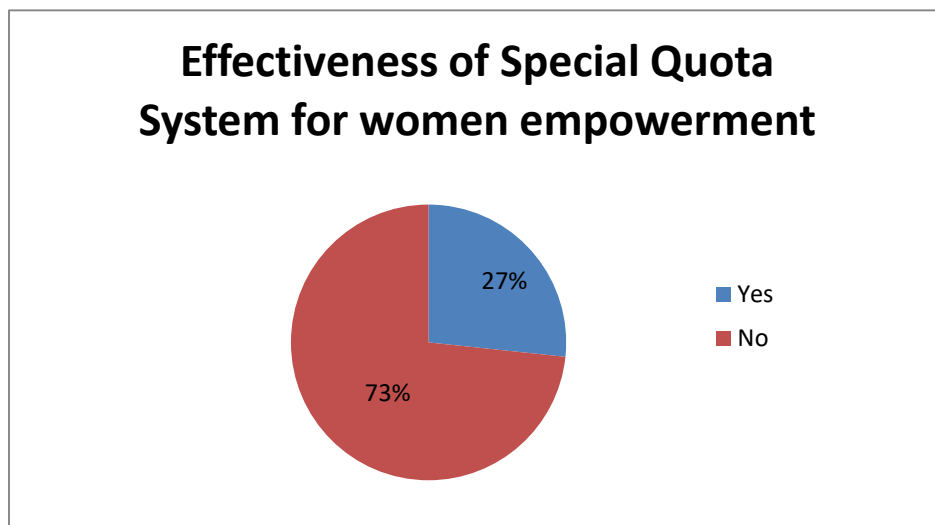


Figure 24 Effectiveness of special quota system for women empowerment

Table-13 lists different types of gender discrimination encountered by women representatives in the local government. It can be seen that 80% of the civil society members think that women representatives faces discrimination in decision making process. 67% commented that women representatives faces discrimination in allocation of funds. More than half of the respondents said that women representatives have insufficient skill development training, whereas 47% think that women representatives have insufficient access to information.

Table 13 Gender discriminations encountered by women representatives

Types of Discriminations	Percentage of Respondents
Insufficient access to information	47%
Lack of skill development training	53%
Discrimination in decision making process	80%
Discrimination in allocation of funds	67%

Table-14 shows the opinion of the civil society members as to how to remove discrimination against women. 85% of them think that awareness build up about rights and duties of women is the foremost means to remove discrimination against women. 80% of them think that this discrimination can be removed by education and skill development training. 53% think that increased cooperation by male representatives can eradicate discrimination.

Table 14 Ways and means of removing discrimination against women

Ways to remove discrimination	Percentage of Respondents
Education and Skill Development Training	80%
Awareness build up about rights and duties	85%
Increase cooperation by male representatives	53%

The civil society members advised several measures to accelerate women empowerment. Table-15 shows that 93% of them commented that women's awareness about their rights and duties should be increased. 84% of them commented that women should have equal opportunity to express their opinion in decision making process. Other suggestions are skill development and training, access to information, increased support by male representatives and establishment of effective monitoring system.

Table 15 Steps to be taken to accelerate women empowerment

Steps to be taken	Percentage of Respondents
Skill Development and Training	67%
Women's Opinion in decision making process	84%
Effective Monitoring System	53%
Awareness about women rights and duties	93%
Increase support by male representatives	67%
Sufficient access to information	67%

4.2 Findings of the Study

- Most of the male public representatives (80%) believes that these laws made by the governments are very much facilitative to women empowerment.
- Male public representatives also opined that the steps taken by the government are very much conducive.
- Male public representatives opined that women participation in development activities is very much sufficient.
- The male public representatives advised several measures to accelerate women empowerment. 67% of them commented that women are not encouraged to participate in the meetings and other activities. So, women should come forward to participate. 40% of the respondents emphasized women skill development and training. 40% suggested awareness building about women rights. Other suggestions included effective monitoring system and proper allocation of funds.
- As a representative in the local government, the male respondents have different experiences. 73% of them stated that the women representatives are not interested to participate in the meetings, 67% think that the activities of local government are mainly

dominated by the male members. 67% of them also think that the male members are not fully cooperative to the women representatives. 40% of them also complained about disproportional allocation of funds. However, 47% of them are satisfied with the development activities by the local government.

- 80% of the female public representatives participated in training programs and the rest did not.
- 100% of the female public representatives of Upazilla Parishad opined that women participation in training program is very much sufficient.
- 67% of the female representatives in the local government face different types of barriers in performing their activities.
- 80% of the women representatives stated that male representatives' dominance is the most common barrier for women. 67% commented that women representatives do not have sufficient opportunity to participate in decision making process. Other 53% complained about disproportional allocation of funds.
- More than 53% of the women representatives think that women are not given importance at all in decision making process.

- More than 67% of the women representatives think that male representatives are not cooperative at all in the case of decision making.
- 80% of the women representatives stated that they get invitation regularly to join meetings.
- More than 86% of the women representatives stated that they get invitation regularly to participate development activities.
- 80% of the government representatives opined that the initiatives taken by the government are very much conducive and the rest opined these are only conducive to women empowerment.
- 87% of the government representatives attended training programs offered by the government and the remaining 13% did not.
- 80% of the government representatives opined that the training programs offered by the government are sufficient for women empowerment.
- 67% of the government representatives think that the Quota System introduced by the Government is effective for women empowerment, whereas the remaining 33% think that the quota system is not effective.

- 87% of the government representatives opined that opportunities of women participation in development activities is sufficient, whereas the remaining 13% stated it as not sufficient.
- 67% of the government representatives think that women are not given importance in decision making process, whereas other 13% think they are not given importance. Only 20% of them stated that women are given importance to some extent in decision making process.
- 93% of the respondents think that women representatives faces discrimination in decision making process. 67% commented that women representatives faces discrimination in skill development training opportunities. More than half of the respondents said that women representatives have insufficient access to information, whereas 47% think that women representatives do not get sufficient opportunities to participate in development activities.
- 90% of the government representatives think that Awareness build up about rights and duties of women is the foremost means to remove discrimination against women. 80% of them think that this discrimination can be removed by education and skill development training. 67% think that establishment of good governance is a way

of eradicating discrimination. 53% commented that effective implementation of government procedures can eliminate discrimination against women representatives.

- 67% of them commented that building awareness about women rights, skill development and training, and women's opinion and participation should be encouraged. 53% think that proper allocation of funds and changing social attitude towards discrimination can accelerate women empowerment. Other important measures are effective monitoring system and increased cooperation by male representatives can accelerate women empowerment.
- 67% of the civil society members commented that lack of education and training is a most important barrier to women empowerment, 60% think that male representatives' dominance is a one of the main barrier for women representatives in local government. 53% commented that unfavorable environment for women and fundamentalism are the barriers for women empowerment. Other major barriers are superstition and gender discrimination.

- 66% of the civil society members opined that the initiatives taken by the government are not conducive and over 13% of the respondents opined that these are not conducive at all. This can be noted that only 20% of the respondents think that government initiatives are conducive.
- 67% of the civil society members think that the laws made by the governments are not facilitative to women empowerment and the rest of them (33%) think that the laws are facilitative.
- Most of the civil society members (73%) believes that Special Quota System made by the governments are not effective for women empowerment.
- 80% of the civil society members think that women representatives faces discrimination in decision making process. 67% commented that women representatives faces discrimination in allocation of funds. More than half of the respondents said that women representatives have insufficient skill development training, whereas 47% think that women representatives have insufficient access to information.
- 85% of them think that awareness build up about rights and duties of women is the foremost means to remove discrimination against

women. 80% of them think that this discrimination can be removed by education and skill development training. 53% think that increased cooperation by male representatives can eradicate discrimination.

- 93% of them commented that women's awareness about their rights and duties should be increased. 84% of them commented that women should have equal opportunity to express their opinion in decision making process. Other suggestions are skill development and training, access to information, increased support by male representatives and establishment of effective monitoring system.

Chapter-5: Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

In the present context of Bangladesh, empowerment of women and their participation in Local Government is one of the most important and challenging phenomena. Since the women has different needs and perspective so their involvement in community activities create awareness among women community. The government of Bangladesh has introduced the provision of reserved seats (special quota) and changed several laws to ensure fair representation of gender in the local governance. All elected government in Bangladesh, since its independence, felt the need to have a viable local government for ensuring effective local governance. Through local government Act of 1997 the system of direct election for women was introduced for the first time. It is important to know the extent to which the system of women's participation in local government level contributes to women's development and also to what extent they are able to perform significant role in local governance. However, it is a matter of concern still there are many remaining challenges which have become constraints for women's participation in local governance. So it is necessary to ensure women's right, their participation in this sphere bears great importance to

all, specially to women, because without ensure their equal participation in all spheres of life, it is very difficult to improve the conditions of women. It is mentionable that as women of our country are lagging behind in respect of education, employment, social security and so on. Their empowerment and overall development are yet to get momentum. It is expected that women's greater participation in the decision-making process including participation in local government from grass root level may have positive influence on establishing their equal rights and enhancing their empowerment position.

Considering the present socio-economic, political and cultural constraints a supportive environment needs to be created to encourage women to come up with their full potential and active participation in local government. Besides governmental initiatives, civil society, media can play an important role to create awareness building among women at local level governance.

This study investigates such issues related to women's empowerment in Local Government Institutions. It was found that women representatives are dominated by the male representatives and are not given sufficient opportunity to participate in the decision making process. The other discriminations are improper allocation of funds, dominance by male, gender

discrimination and so on. Though the present government made several laws and acts to facilitate women empowerment, such as the Special Quota System, these laws and acts are not found to be as effective as expected in the case of promoting women empowerment.

Therefore, this can be said that the women empowerment conditions in our country is less than satisfactory. To improve the women empowerment situation the government and other stakeholders in the local government should develop such a supportive environment and create facilitative acts and laws to promote women empowerment. Otherwise, it would be difficult to capitalize the huge potential of women in Bangladesh in the way of achieving sustainable development goals.

5.2 Recommendations

In the light of this study some recommendations are suggested here to help formulate appropriate policies for the concerned authority as well as government, which will hopefully be able to reduce the existing problems and challenges in women's empowerment in Local Government Institutions.

- Female as well as mass education should be expanded and accelerated to develop consciousness, social awareness and positive attitude towards women's right.
- Government instructions regarding local government activities and the responsibilities of male and female members should be more clarified than the present and these should be accurately implemented to integrate women members in the overall activities of Local Government Institutions.
- Attitudinal change of the male members of the Local Government Institutions should be essential towards women's participation. The male members must be cordial in receiving the opinions of the women members and give them the opportunity to express their opinions.

- To reduce discrimination in participation of different projects or membership in different standing committees, allocation of specific work responsibilities should be mentioned and clarified in Local Government manual properly.
- Regular training programs or workshops on the roles and responsibilities of women members in Local Government Institutions should be arranged for the women members of LGIs to enhance their knowledge in this regard.
- Different women development programs should be initiated in the grass-root level and women members of the LGIs can be integrated with these to give them opportunity to contribute to women's development in our country.
- Administrative assistance should be ensured to the women members whenever they seek help to the administration in relation to resolve any problem of their localities.
- Increasing mobilization and growing consciousness among women as well as in the whole community need to be accelerated. Along with this, appropriate measures need to be undertaken by the government to promote the condition of women.

5.3 Further Research Indication

This study sets the ground for further research studies. Women empowerment and local government is vast concept that includes many components. It is very difficult to involve all the issues related to in a single dissertation. However, the study provokes further researchers to explore the new dimension on women empowerment and local government in the context of Bangladesh. In the light of the present study, the researcher intends to propose some future researchers on women empowerment in such a way, for example:

- Role of male member in local government institutions
- Role of female member in local government institutions
- Role of Government representatives institutions
- Role of Civil Society member institutions

Apart from that, further research can be conducted on the same issues to validate or nullify the current research in the perspective of rural local government bodies in order to explore the extent of women empowerment in local government.

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Annexure

Questionnaire

Department of Political Science, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

A survey on M.Phil research entitled “Women Empowerment in Local Government in Bangladesh”: A Study of Keshabpur Upazilla of Jessore District.

(This survey is exclusively designed for academic research. Everyone is cordially requested to extend his/her cooperation)

(Personal Information of Interviewees)

1.1. Name: Male/ Female 1.2. Father’s/Husband’s Name:.....

1.3. Address: Village:..... Union/Ward:.....

Upazilla/Thana..... District.....

1.4. Present Age: 1.5: Educational Qualification: (Please tick any one of the following)

a). S.S.C b). H. S. C c). B. A d). M. A e). Others

SECTION- A

(Opinions of male representative about Women Empowerment in Local Government)

2.1. To what extent, you think, are the laws of different governments facilitative to women empowerment? Yes/No

.....

2.2. Do you think that the steps taken by the government are conducive for women empowerment in local government structure in the present socio-economic and political environment?

2.3. How sufficient do you think are the opportunity for women representatives to participation in local development activities?.....

2.4. What steps do you think should be taken to accelerate women empowerment in local government? Please comment.

2.5. Describe your working experiences as a public representative in local government?...

SECTION-B

(Opinions of female representative about Women Empowerment in Local Government)

- 4.1. Did you participate as a female representative to any training program offered by the government? If yes, please share your experiences.
- 4.2. Do you think that the training program offered by the government is sufficient for women empowerment? Yes/No
If you don't, what are the reasons?
- 4.3. Do you encounter any barrier in performing your activities as a female public representative? Yes/No
If you do, what are the reasons?
- 4.4. What types of barriers do you encounter as a female representative in local development activities?.....
- 4.5. How much importance do you think is given to women in decision making process in local government?.....
- 4.6. Do you think the male representatives are supportive to their female counterpart in decision making process? Yes/No
- 4.7. Do you get regular invitation as a female representative to participate in meeting arranged by local government? Yes/No
- 4.8. Do you get invitation as a female representative to participation in local development activities? Yes/No

SECTION-C

(Opinions of government officials about Women Empowerment in Local Government)

- 6.1. Do you think that the steps taken by the government are conducive for women empowerment in local government structure in the present socio-economic and political environment?.....
- 6.2. Did you participate as a female representative to any training program offered by the government? Yes/No
- 6.3. Do you think that the training program offered by the government is sufficient for women empowerment? Yes/No
- 6.4. Do you think that the “ special quota system” is sufficient for women empowerment in local government? Yes/No
- 6.5. Do you think the opportunity for women representatives to participation in local development activities is sufficient? Yes/No
- 6.6. How much importance do you think is given to women in decision making process in local government?.....
- 6.7. What types of discriminations do you think the women representatives encounter in local government ? Please give your opinion.....
- 6.8. What are the ways and means of removing their representation in local government? Please give your opinion.
- 6.9. What steps should be taken to accelerate women empowerment in local government structure, you think?.....

SECTION-D

(Opinions of members of civil society about Women Empowerment in Local Government)

- 8.1. What are the socio-economic and political barriers of Bangladesh to women empowerment?
- 8.2. How much conducive, do you think, are the steps taken by the government for women empowerment in local government structure in the present socio-economic and political environment?.....
- 8.3. Do you think the laws of present government are facilitative to women empowerment? Yes/No
- 8.4. Do you think that the “Special Quota System” is sufficient for women empowerment in local government? Yes/No
- 8.5. What types of discrimination do you think the women representatives encounter in local government? Please give your opinion.
- 8.6. What are the ways and means of removing discrimination against women in terms of their representation in local government? Please give your opinion.....
- 8.7. What steps should be taken, you think, to accelerate women empowerment in local government structure?..;.....

Thank You Very Much For Your Kind Cooperation

Dated:

Name of the information collector

Signature: