EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH DIRECT ELECTION IN RESERVED SEATS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF RURAL AND URBAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS IN BANGLADESH

SHAJEDA AKTAR

BSS (Honours), MSS, M.Phil in Public Administration, *Rajshahi University*

October 2014

School of Social and Policy Studies

Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences

Flinders University, Australia

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

ABSTRACT

The thesis makes a contribution through a case study to investigate the way in which women candidates in Bangladesh are elected and the challenges that they face in striving to empower women through electoral representation. The study focuses on the grass-roots local government, in a comparative study between selected rural and urban local government institutions in different socio-economic, educational, and cultural contexts. Despite the achievements in terms of being elected and representing the needs of women, the elected representatives continue to face many challenges who face pressures within the domestic unit and from the local government administration that remains weighted in the favour of male candidates. Nevertheless the thesis shows how women make a contribution to changing the life chances of women through Local Government Ordinance 1997 with the provision of direct election in reserved seats. This study aims to explore the dynamics, challenges and the potential for women's empowerment through direct election under this Act.

Despite challenges, the findings of the study reveal some indications of women's agency and empowerment. *Firstly*, the findings show that women representatives of the survey area are able to develop agency and mobility starting from the decision to stand as candidates and to contest an election, continuing through the election campaign and then by performing roles in the LGIs. Women representatives show personal freedom as a result of their being able to talk to people beyond their immediate and extended family, to attend meetings with unknown officials and by visiting public places.

Secondly, the study evidences structural changes towards gender equity—at least in this study sample. The burden of domestic chores of many of the women representatives were eased after being elected. They were also more highly valued in the society and invited in community forums like school committees and to participate in Shalish[1].

Thirdly, the study shows how direct election can enhance well-being and empowerment of women in the wider community. The elected women representatives surveyed in this study appeared to be the very first people consulted for help by women in the community who face oppression, repression and injustice including dowry, rape, physical torture and fatwa. Women representatives also took on projects and training programs enhancing income generating activities for general women.

The study also identifies some critical hurdles that put restrictions achieving women's agency and empowerment in the local government institutions including non-cooperation from elected male representatives, lack of clear demarcation and overlapping of the constituency of the reserved seats with 3 general seats, non-identification of roles and responsibilities of the women representatives in the 1997 Act, religious and socio-cultural restrictions including restrictions on women's mobility outside home, etc. Findings of the study, thus, offer important policy implication in the endeavour of women's empowerment of the country.

---

[1] Shalish is the system of informal social adjudication in Bangladesh to solve petty disputes among villagers avoiding costly legal enforcement.

CANDIDATE DECLARATION

I certify that the thesis entitled

"EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH DIRECT ELECTION IN RESERVED SEATS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF RURAL AND URBAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS IN BANGLADESH"

submitted for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

is the result of my own work.

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

FULL NAME: SHAJEDA AKTAR

SIGNATURE:

DATE: OCTOBER 2014

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my hardworking parents

(it is because of you I am here today...)

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADB: Asian Development Bank

ASK: Ayeen-O-Shalish Kendra

AUD: Australian Dollar

BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation

BBS: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics

BPSC: Bangladesh Public Service Commission

CAPWIP: Centre for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics

CEDAW: Convention on the Elimination of all forms of
                Discrimination Against Women

DFID: Department For International Development

GAD: Gender and Development

GOB: Government of Bangladesh

HDR: Human Development Report

HSC: Higher Secondary Certificate

IDEA: Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

LGI: Local Government Institution

LGRD: Local Government and Rural Development

MDG: Millennium Development Goals

MP: Member of Parliament

NGO: Non Government Organization

PR: Proportionate Representation

RCC: Rajshahi City Corporation

SSC: Secondary School Certificate

TK: Taka (currency of Bangladesh)

ULGI:	Urban Local Government Institution
UN:	United Nations
UNDAW:	United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women
UNDP:	United Nation Development Programme
UNICEF:	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM:	United Nations Fund for Women
UP:	Union Parishad
USD:	United States Dollar
VGD:	Vulnerable Group Development
VGF:	Vulnerable Group Feeding
WAD:	Women and Development
WDR:	World Development Report
WFP:	World Food Programme
WID:	Women in Development

GLOSSARY

Apa: sister

Ayeen: law

Azaan: call for prayer (in Islam)

Baba: papa

Babosthya: system

Bazaar: market

Begum: Mrs

Biruddhe: against

Burqa: veil to cover woman's body to obey Purdah

Fatwa: religious decree by Islamic leaders

Gram: village

Grameen: rural

Hilla: interim marriage after divorce (a pre-condition to reunite)

Jatiyo: national

Jomi: land

Kendra: centre

Madrasha: Islamic school

Nari: woman

Neqab: scarf to cover head by woman

Nirbahi: executive

Parishad: council

Pouroshova:	municipality
Purdah:	covering body and face with veil by women (in Islam)
Salam:	Islamic way of greetings
Sangsad:	parliament
Sarkar:	government
Shaheb:	Sir/Madam
Shohor:	town
Shalish:	informal social adjudication
Sochibaloy:	secretariat
Sohinghsota:	violence
Sthaniyo:	local
Taka:	unit of Bangladeshi currency
Talak:	divorce
Upazilla:	sub-district
Zilla:	district

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The numbers matter. Because, if you are two in [government], you won't change anything. Two against 200, what are you? Nothing. You just get sucked in. Before you know it, after five years you are a man in a woman's skin. So, we need the numbers.

—Sheila Kawamara-Mishambi.[2]

1.1 Background

Underrepresentation of women in political office is a much talked of phenomenon world-wide. Research has shown that many women are marginalized and often excluded from politics in almost all nations, and that this can happen irrespective of their levels of income, literacy, culture and socio-religious norms (Usu 2010, Brody 2009, Krook 2007, Dahlerup 2006, Chowdhury 1994). Examples are found from Sub-Saharan Africa to the Arab world, communist Cuba, Asia and Latin America. The necessity of effective policy instruments is, therefore, strongly urged by the researchers to overthrow this age old male domination and install gender justice in political offices. Introduction of gender quota is advocated by development practitioners as the fast-track to trigger a dramatic jump of women's representation at various levels of government and to bring women in the mainstream political arena (Usu 2010, Tripp and Kang 2008, Dahlerup 2006, Krook 2005, Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005).

At the same time, decentralized government is considered an essential platform for the empowerment of the marginalized people in society including

---

[2] Former MP, Uganda, cited from (Brody 2009: 35).

women (Mukhophaddhay 2005, Goetz 2004, MacLean 2003, Magnusson 1996, Rondinelli and Cheema 1983). Researchers, women activists and international organizations view local government as an important entry point for pioneering gender interests because local institutions are smaller, closer and are readily accessible to the local community. Disempowered sections of society (e.g., women) are, therefore, more likely to become engaged in issues that directly affect their lives—for example, water and sewerage management, waste disposal, children's education and local infrastructure (Mukhophaddhay 2005, Vijayalakshmi 2002, Mukhopaddhay and Meer 2004, Goetz 2004). From the perspective of good governance that requires participation of people across all strata in the decision-making process local government provides the starting point for women's voices to be heard. This is particularly important for a country like Bangladesh—where due to conservative social structures, being confined at home, as well as poverty and income inequality, women are largely excluded from the rest of the world.

Although increased women's participation is now recognized worldwide, women's representation in political office across the world is still lower than that of men. Even after the Beijing Declaration in 1995 and the agreement by all the 189 participating countries on the agendas and targets set by the Declaration, improvement at this point is still far from satisfactory. Women's representation in parliamentary bodies is still only 20.4 percent across the world (International IDEA 2013). The necessity of increasing women's participation in politics continues to be argued across many fields, from academia to policy planning, by NGOs and development organizations (Usu 2010, Aktar 2006a, Haque 2003). The increasing participation of women is essential in a democratic society in order to

ensure representation of all social groups, ensuring every citizen's rights and promoting the widespread development of human well-being. Democratic rule cannot be meaningful in a society which keeps a large section under represented and under voiced (Chowdhury 2008, Sun 2004, Halder 2004, Haque 2003, 2000, UNDP 1997, UN 1992). In democratic society no discrimination should be considered acceptable irrespective of gender, race, religion or ethnicity. Political equality is a pre-requisite in democracy: women should be equal citizens with men and, therefore, should enjoy equal share in the political decision making process (Tremblay 2007, Lindberg 2004). Democracy stands for freedom of voices and expression, freedom of choices, human rights and equal opportunity. However, studies show that women's representation in political office, high salaried jobs, parliaments and ministerial positions are far from proportionate in terms of equity in the real world. The Beijing Declaration therefore, aimed to address these inequities and recommended quotas reserved for under-represented women across the world (Usu 2010, Sawer, Trembley, Trimble 2006, Aktar 2006b, Dahlerup 2006, Haque 2003, UN 1996).

As Dahlerup explained, the imposition of quotas as a form of affirmative action for the disadvantaged is a common step taken by the authorities to promote involvement of a particular section of the population in the decision making process. In parliamentary quota systems for women, a certain portion of the political and administrative positions are allocated where women are unable to secure those positions due to certain socio-economic and cultural drawbacks (Dahlerup 2005, Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005). Such quotas are often considered the cornerstone of increasing women's participation and involvement in the socio-economic arena of a country. From the developed countries to the

developing countries across Asia, Africa and Latin America, governments are now accelerating women's representation in different political and public wings through imposing direct or indirect quota systems. By 2013, 113 countries across the world had introduced women's quotas in their parliaments, compared to only 4 countries in 1985 (International IDEA 2013).

Many scholars observed that women are often kept out of the political turmoil in developing countries with the common excuse that women are not capable enough to shoulder responsible positions and not emotionally strong enough to carry on challenging jobs (Aktar 2009, Halder 2004, Goswami 1999, Chowdhury 1995, Falguni 1995,). Women's position in the society, as well as in the political power, income generating, and decision making arenas are lower. In Bangladesh, although women occupy high positions as exemplified in the present Prime Minister and the Leader of the Parliament, the Opposition Leader in the Parliament, the Deputy leader of the Parliament and some key ministers of the government, this differs from the general picture of overall women's political participation and empowerment[3]. Since the nation's independence in 1971, women have never occupied more than 10 per cent of positions in the cabinet, parliament, or in government employment (Firoz 2007, Aktar 2006a, Das 2005). Male domination is visible everywhere in this patriarchal society where women are traditionally seen as confined to a domestic role. For example, female literacy

---

[3] The 10th parliament election, held in 5th January 2014, was boycotted by major opposition. The ruling coalition managed to bring only a handful of small parties in the elction that followed violent protest from the boycotting rivals. Nevertheless, this controversial parliament also witnesses a woman prime minister, women opposition leader, deputy leader, as well as the speaker of the parliament—a continuation of the legacy of the immediate past parliament.

rates are below that of the men, as are their employment opportunities and income (BBS 2010). Common problems faced by Bangladeshi women include oppression, repression, domestic violence, dowry, acid throwing, rape and eve-teasing (a term used in Bangladesh to refer to the repeated verbal harassment of girls, that takes place often on the way to the girl's school/college, or office). To improve women's status in society, human right activists, women leaders, development practitioners, policy makers, NGOs, donors and community leaders are, therefore, all emphasizing increasing women's participation in development initiatives, as well as in the national and local government political process (Aktar 2006b, Rahman and Roy 2004, Ali 2003, Siddique 1995, Guhathakurta and Begum 1995).

Bangladesh is an active participant and signatory of the Beijing (1995) Declaration, and in line with this, in 1997 the national government amended existing legislation to permit the direct election of women into quota seats. This was done through the Local Government (Second Amendment) Act 1997 (Aktar 2009, Mahtab 2007, Moin 2004, Husain and Siddiqi 2002, Huq, Khaleda and Hamida 1997). It is important to note that the women of Bangladesh received the opportunity to vote in the rural local government institutions only in 1956, although a law was promulgated in 1923 allowing women to vote in the Calcutta municipal election (Alam 1984). During the British Colonial Era the right to vote in local government was restricted to males. However, after Partition and the subsequent independence of Bangladesh from West Pakistan in 1971, the government focused on bringing women into the mainstream of socio-political development. The government of Bangladesh promulgated the Local Government Ordinance 1976 that introduced a provision for reserving 2 seats for women in

each Union Parishad/Pouroshova.[4] The limitation of the 1976 Act, however, was that the quota seats would be filled by selection, not election, in each Union Parishad/Pouroshova. Women members, in this process, were selected or nominated by the elected (usually male) members and chairman. This was popularly known as indirect election. Thereafter the Local Government Ordinance 1983 was passed, and provisions were made for the reservation of 3 seats (increased by 1) for women, still to be picked up through selection rather than election, in each Union Parishad/Pouroshova.

Later, women's participation in local government institutions got a new twist with the enactment of the Local Government Second Amendment Act 1997. In this Act provision was made that one-third of seats in these bodies would be reserved for women and would be filled through universal adult franchise known as direct election[5]. Introduction of direct election in the reserved seats by this Act

---

[4] In Bangladesh, Union Parishad and Pouroshova are the lowest tier of government bodies in the rural and urban areas, respectively. A Union Parishad/Pouroshova is constituted of 9 Wards and 1 Member is elected from each Ward, so a Union Parishad/Pouroshova initially comprised of 9 elected members and the Chairman/Mayor as the head. In the 1976 Local Governance Ordinance, 2 more member positions were created and reserved for women with the provision that elected members and the chairman/mayor (typically male) would nominate two local women in those reserved member positions. Because women members in reserved seats were appointed not elected, they viewed the elected members and chairman as their 'selectors' and therefore superiors. Women were usually submissive and this reduced their meaningful participation in local governance issues.

[5] In the 1997 Local Governance Act, 3 Units are created in each Union Parishad/Pouroshova for the women, a Unit comprising 3 Wards. A Union Parishad/Pouroshova thus has 9 general Wards from which 9 Members are elected. Besides, there is now provision of 3 women members to be directly elected. The Union Parishad/Pouroshova is thus reconstituted as 9+3=12 members, headed by the Chairman/Mayor as before. The innovation of this Act was to introduce direct adult

created a positive atmosphere for the women of Bangladesh, including those in rural areas, to take part in politics. This led to a significant change in women's participation in the elections of 1997 and 2003. Prior to the introduction of direct election in the reserved seats, women could only contest in the general seats open for both men and women. Very few women contested the earlier elections because of cultural norms in this conservative society. For example, in the 1988 Union Parishad election out of a total of 114,699 candidates women comprised only 863 (0.7 percent) and in 1992 election there were 1135 women candidates out of 169,643 (0.7%) (Islam 2000). In the 1997 election (Union Parishad), after the enactment of the Act the situation changed, and as many as 44,134 women were contesting in 14,029 reserved seats for women, followed by 39,419 women candidates in the 2003 elections (Unnayan Padokkhep 2003). Clearly, these statistics document a visible enthusiasm among the women to take part in politics in Bangladesh. To maximise the societal benefits of that enthusiasm, it is essential to study how the provision of direct election affects and changes the electoral participation of the women representatives, their roles and performance, the hindrances they encounter, if any, in ensuring women's involvement and empowerment in these local government bodies. This dissertation explores all these issues in depth.

1.2 Rationale of the Study

As Garner pointed out in his early study, politics is integral to the existence of human civilisation, and history has shown that just as humankind cannot live

---

franchise in the quota seats for women. This opened the door for women to actively take part in politics for the first time in the history of Bangladesh.

without politics, so civilisation cannot progress without politics (Garner 1985). Because democracy aims to establish a pro-people government, people's political participation is essential for its success. In Lincoln's famous quote, democracy, "is the government by the people, for the people, of the people" (cited in Roskin et al 2007). Democracy and the empowerment of marginalised people thereby go hand in hand. But in reality, women in many developing democracies are marginalised and even across all the major democratic governments women are under-represented (Dahlerup 2006).

In addition women should have the right to take part in the decision making process that affects their lives. Studies have shown that men often cannot adequately represent women as women's perspectives and interests often differ from those of men (Lister 1997, Vickers 1997, European Network of Experts 1997). Scholars (e.g., Tamerius 2010, Niven 2010, Goetz 2009, Lister 1997, Vickers 1997 and Chowdhury 1994) have pointed out that women often possess different values, norms and ideas, and they often act differently from men. Women's participation in politics is also important from governance perspective and is a means to more effective and equitable allocation of state resources (Brody 2009, Goetz 2009, Fulton 2008, Chowdhury 1994). As Brody continues:

> While governance institutions can reinforce gender inequalities, they can also challenge them. So ensuring that women play an equal role in shaping the decisions, rules and structures that influence our lives is likely to lead to long-term, sustainable changes. For example, if more women are involved in developing school curricula, there is a good chance they will challenge the gender stereotypes often reinforced through school textbooks. If they have an equal voice in developing legal frameworks, it is likely they will ensure laws do not discriminate against women (Brody 2009: 22).

Historically, the notion of women's empowerment in developing countries grew from the feminist approach developed in the 1970s, popularly known as Women in Development (WID). WID emphasized women's involvement in mainstream economic activities in order to boost their confidence, consciousness and esteem (Boserup 1970). Later, the Gender And Development (GAD) approach, developed in the 1980s, also analysed unequal power relations between men and women at every level from household to national economy, e.g., workloads and unpaid work (Alba 2000, Reddock 2000, Porter and Judd 1999). Improving the status of women was no longer seen as solely a women's issue but as a goal that required active participation of both men and women. The GAD approach, through gender analysis, sought to understand the roles, responsibilities, resources and priorities of women and men within a specific context. It examined the social, economic and environmental factors which influence their roles and decision-making capacity, and saw men as allies (Alba 2000, Dreze and Sen 1999).

The Constitution of Bangladesh recognizes equal rights for men and women. As per Articles 27, 28 and 29 of the Constitution, no discrimination against women is allowed. The Constitution clearly states that steps should be taken to ensure participation of women in all spheres of life (Government of Bangladesh, 2008). Considering women as a disadvantaged section of society and recognizing women's roles in state functioning, the first Constitution reserved 5% of the general seats for women in the parliament. Thus, the first national parliament of 1973 initiated a quota of 15 seats for the women (in addition to the 300 general seats) (Chowdhury 1985, Salahuddin 1995). This women's quota later increased to 30 (10% of the general seats) in 1979 and finally to 50 (16.67%

of the general seats) in 2011). Women representatives in these seats are nominated by the parliament. Nevertheless, after 40 years as an independent nation, women in Bangladesh are still so disadvantaged and struggling that women activists and organizations are still in favour of the quota seats for women. However, participation in national politics through reservation of seats hardly reflects the level of political awareness of women of the country.

At the local level increased participation of women is essential to benefit from their existing consciousness of the local society's needs and demands. Because of women's strong awareness of local development issues, scholars and development activists strongly advocate for their increased participation in local level governance. Political organizations and parties like the British Conservative Party also recognize women's particular ability to perform in local government institutions. In its handbook it mentions,

> "women are extremely well equipped for local government. They have a vested interest in, and immediate knowledge of the schools, services, housing, care of children, and the environment, which are the responsibilities of the local government" (cited in Phillips 1998: 112).

Local government is generally considered more flexible that offers immediate opportunities for the participation of excluded sections of the society like women. Women can also use their household and community work experiences in the local government system. For example, Brody (2009: 38) pointed out that,

> "citizen-focused consultations are viewed as a means for women to express their own needs and to facilitate changes that will benefit whole communities, because their roles and responsibilities within

the household mean they are primary users of sanitation, solid waste disposal and water services, while their caring roles give them more vested interests than men in good health and educational provision".

In India, Basu (2003) demonstrated that women placed greater emphasis on the construction of wells, playgrounds, roads, public toilets and non-polluting stoves comparing to the male dominated Panchayets.[6] They also shut down illegal drug stores, attempted to achieve quality schooling and develop safer drinking water. In fact, Evertzen argued that "participation in local government is more practical for women than at the national level because eligibility criteria for the local level are less stringent, and local government is the closest to women's sphere of life, and easier to combine with the rearing of children" (Evertzen 2001: 3).

But in Bangladesh, unfortunately, the level of women's participation in local level politics has been as insignificant as in the national level. In the local government elections of 1988, before the introduction of the universal adult franchise, there were only 863 women candidates out of 114,699 (0.7%). The 1993 local government elections witnessed similar levels, with a mere 1135 women candidates of a total of 169,643 (Islam 2000). These poor participation figures clearly demonstrate the fact that politically women lagged behind men. Women are also lagging behind men in other socio-economic indicators. This is evident from the low literacy rate of women (38% compared to 69% of men), economic independence (female labour force participation 23% compared to 53% for males) (BBS 2010) and that only 10 percent of the high ranking positions in the public sector are reserved for the women (Bangladesh Public Service

---

[6] Panchayet is the lowest tier of the rural local government in India.

Commission (2013). Coupled with this socio-economic backwardness, there is also religious embargo and fatwa[7] against women's mobility out of home. This does not permit women to work out of their homes, to sit or talk with people other than close relatives, and it bars them from entry into local level politics. Women interested in politics are, therefore, in a position to topple very strong hurdles in their political endeavor in the country. In this context, social organizations, civil society and women activists of the country argue to take institutional measure and to create more opportunities for women to take part in local government.

As early as 1976, when the government of Bangladesh enacted the first Local Government Ordinance, it was in response to similar growing demands. As explained in the previous section, during the passage of 20 years to 1996 the nomination policy of women members in their reserved seats simply led to the appointment of submissive women members. Moreover, the elected members and chairman tended to select someone close to them (often relatives) or belonging to same status group, implying that women from disadvantaged social positions were excluded from the nomination process (Islam 2000, Chowdhury 1994a,

---

[7] Fatwa is religious rulings often delivered by the local clerics. In the Bangladesh context, fatwa against women occur mainly in rural areas and usually accusing violation of social norms, suspective extra-marital sexual relations that often curtails women's mobility to go out, being involved with NGOs and development organizations. Fatwa often comes as a form of punishing 'unruly' women by lashing severely or stone throwing till death, exclusion of the accused from society and cancelling works, employment, trading and even barred from talking. The High Court of Bangladesh denounced fatwa in 1999 and warned stern action against any attempt of fatwa terming it illegal and extra-constitutional. But despite the High Court verdict, fatwa continues to appear in rural remote villages as legal authority are not going to challenge them directly. However, there is no fatwa so far against women's quota seats in the local government in Bangladesh.

Chowdhury 2002, Aktar 2006). As well, the majority of the nominated women members at the local government bodies had very little political experience, almost no concern for local development issues and consequently no quest for further empowerment (Aktar 2009, Mahtab 2007, Zaman 2007, Chowdhury 2002, Slahuddin 1995, Chowdhury 1994a). Thus, the process of selection or indirect election came under serious criticism from scholars and civil society. Researchers, women activists and human rights organizations argued for universal adult franchise in the quota seats. In response to this growing demand the government of Bangladesh eventually enacted the Local Government Ordinance 1997 to introduce direct election in the reserved seats to allow meaningful political participation for women in the lowest tier of governance.[8] Ideally, this would also allow women to actively think of their ideas, to create their own identity and to lead society with their own vision (Rahman and Zaman 2004). The provision of direct election in the quota seats, thus, eliminated the deadlock to their enthusiastic representation and empowerment.

However, the provision of the direct election in the reserved seats through the 1997 Act is ambiguous that put women in a disadvantaged position. For example, the Union Parishad (the lowest tier of the rural LGIs) comprises nine Wards, and each Ward covers the constituency of a general (that is, non-reserved) seat. Although the general seats are open for both men and women, women

---

[8] The 1997 Act only introduces direct election in the women's reserved seats at the local government level and not at the national parliament. In fact, the women's reserved seats in the national parliament are still allocated among the parties proportionately based on their seats in the parliament. The party high-ups then nominate those women seats in the parliament. Furthermore, the women seats in the parliament do not have any specific constituency; the reserved seats are created in addition to the general seats.

usually do not contest these seats and so males are elected. The 1997 Act created 3 more reserved seats for women in each Union Parishad and each reserved seat covers 3 general Wards. This means that women members are facing a bigger and artificial constituency overlapping with three general seats. Similar rules for reserved seats apply to the urban LGIs. Thus, whenever a woman representative attempts to do something for her area, she has to deal with 3 male members' opinions. If any tension arises in the decision making process, the practice of majority rule can result in each woman representative's opinion being overshadowed by that of 3 male representatives. All these factors have rendered a promising attempt to empower women through the 1997 Local Government Ordinance to a fallacy of "disempowerment of the women representatives" (Mahtab 2007: 172).

It is to be noted that the roles and performance of women representatives and the obstacles they face are somewhat different across rural and urban Bangladesh. Mahtab (2007) showed that women representatives from urban areas are more politically conscious, more educated, have better involvement with socio-political organizations, better access to information, and enjoy more personal freedom and financial ability compared to rural women representatives. According to her findings, most of the elected women members in Dhaka City Corporation had education up to bachelor/masters level. The level of education was also higher for the husbands of these women representatives. On the other hand, Moin (2004) demonstrated that the average education level of the rural women representatives was high school level. In Bangladesh there exists positive relationship between income and education, and better socio-economic conditions in urban areas are reflected in higher education levels for urban women

representatives. Women commissioners of the city corporations also had considerable social and political involvement (Mahtab 2007 and Moin 2004). This often took the form of membership in school and college committees, social and political organizations, cooperative societies, NGOs, civil society and voluntary organizations, etc. Thus, it is expected that women representatives could contribute significantly at least in the urban local government bodies.

But most of the 160 million people of Bangladesh live in remote rural areas (around 78% of the total) (BBS 2010). There are 4498 union councils for the rural local government comparing to 314 municipalities and city corporations in the urban areas. Socio-economic conditions of the women in the rural areas are severely poor and studies have shown that they lack political awareness and organizational skills. Rural women are less mobilized, less connected with the institutional set up and know little of the legal safeguards by which they might be protected and benefitted (Aktar 2009, 2006a, Qadir 2004, Rahman and Roy 2004). In addition, their mobility, participation in outside home activities and even opportunity to go to the shops or to the city center for any purpose are often curtailed by social taboo, patriarchy and religious norms and fatwa (Qadir 2004).

The impact of women's increased political participation through direct election in reserved seats, therefore, cannot be fully understood without a comparative studies across rural and urban situations. The differences fall into three main areas. **First**, the challenge to overcome personal and family restrictions might be different for the urban and rural women. **Second**, the socio-economic obstacles in the election process and election campaign including the financial constraints and organizational experience (or inexperience) might be different. **Third**, the interaction of the elected women representatives with their male

counterparts, the government officials and local citizens might vary across rural and urban settings.

As I will discuss in more detail later, there are some empirical studies addressing the participation of women in the local government bodies in Bangladesh. However, the investigation into the effect of direct election in the quota seats on the participation of women in election and their empowerment across rural and urban local government institutions remained unexplored. In filling this gap, this study will enable policy makers to evaluate the effectiveness of direct elections across socio-economic and cultural variations. It also recommends appropriate policy suggestions for future course of action. Evaluating the Bangladesh experience will also be beneficial for policies of empowering disadvantaged communities in other developing countries as well as for the marginalised groups in the developed nations.

1.3 Structure of Local Government in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, 3 tiers of Local Government Institutions (LGIs) operate in rural areas and 2 tiers in urban areas. The LGIs for rural areas are: Union Parishad (Union Council), Upazilla Parishad (Sub-District Council) and Zilla Parishad (District Council); while those for urban areas are: Pouroshova (Municipal, for smaller towns) and City Corporation (for larger metropolitan cities). In this dissertation, the lowest tier of the rural LGIs (namely, the Union Parishad) and the urban LGIs (City Corporation and Pouroshova) in the district of Rajshahi, Bangladesh has been the focus of the study. A detailed and comprehensive discussion of local government institutions and their functions is provided in

Chapter 2, but to facilitate this introductory discussion, the structure of the local government in Bangladesh is shown in figure 1.1 below.
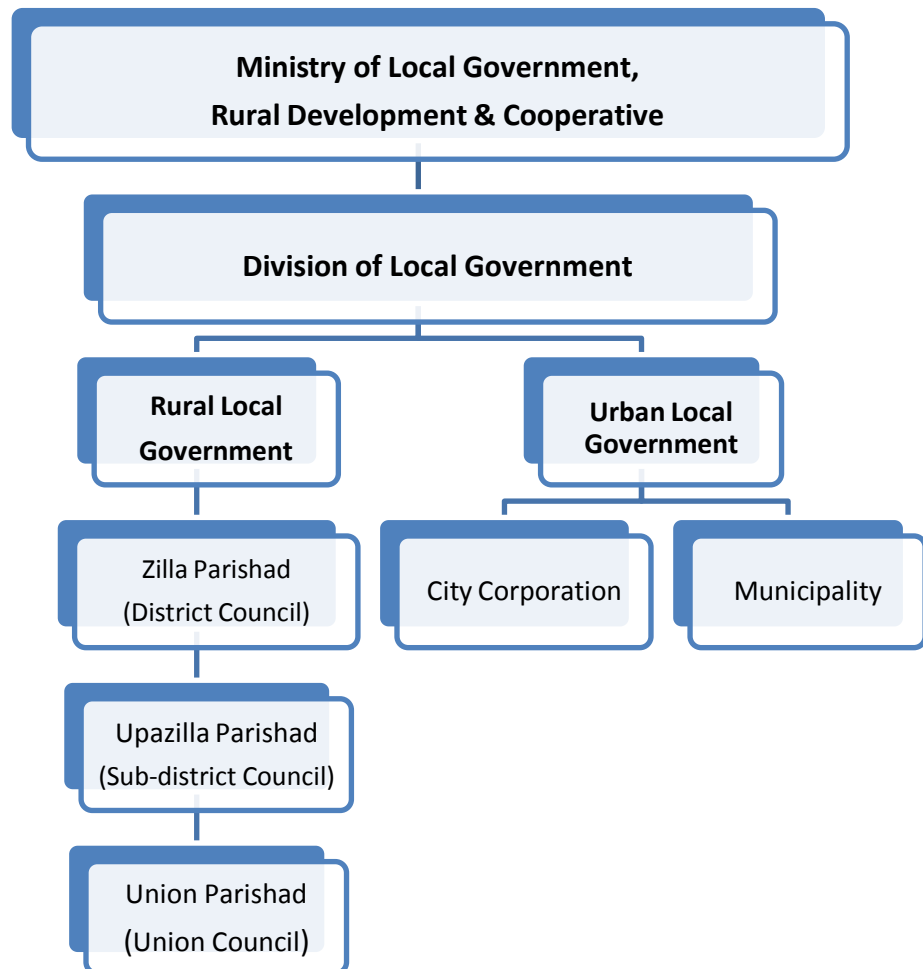
Figure 1.1: Structure of the Local Government in Bangladesh
Source: Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, Bangladesh.

1.4 Principal Research Questions and Hypotheses

The principal research questions of this study are as follows:

i) What impact does the reservation of seats for women in the local government system and direct election have in enhancing women's participation

and empowerment in the local level politics? Does the level of empowerment vary in the rural-urban context?

ii) Identify the obstacles women members face in effective participation across rural and urban local government institutions.

iii) What role do the legal guidelines, social awareness and training of the representatives play in ensuring women's empowerment?

iv) Does the quota system empower women in the wider local community, i.e., does improved political power for women flow down to meet the socio-economic needs of women in the surrounding community?

The study attempts to explore and test following hypotheses:

Reservation of seats for the women and direct election creates scope for women's participation and empowerment in the local politics and to play roles in local development activities.

Urban women representatives are more conscious and active than their rural partners in the functioning of the local government bodies and are more able to face the obstacles they encounter in local level politics.

Education, political involvement, social awareness and training have positive correlations with women's empowerment.

Legal specification of women representatives' roles and duties in the local government bodies is necessary in ensuring women's empowerment.

To do so, the study examines the following key variables which influence effective participation and its flow-on benefits.

i) Ability, competence and degree of awareness of women representatives.

ii) Prior political involvement/ experience of women representatives.

iii) Agency of women representatives in the local government decision-making process.

iv) Attitude of male counterparts in the local government bodies.

v) Legal protection to the role and duties of women representatives.

vi) Training and awareness programs by the government and non-government organizations.

1.5 Location of the Study

As stated above, the research was conducted in Rajshahi district of Bangladesh. There are 64 districts in Bangladesh and Rajshahi is one of the oldest. It is also one out of seven divisional headquarters in the country. The district of Rajshahi has a population of about 2.2 million of which around 93% are Muslims, 5.5% Hindus and 0.62% are Christian. For this study I chose Rajshahi because it includes both rural and urban local government institutions namely the City Corporation, Municipality (Pouroshova) and the Union Parishad and the district is away from the national capital. Moreover, the district's average per capita income and infrastructures suitably represent the country as a whole.

1.6 Methodology of the Study

Women's empowerment through direct election in the reserved seats is an ongoing process and requires in depth field research for which I choose the qualitative method. The research is an ethnographic study that attempts to explore

Figure 1.2: Map of Rajshahi, Bangladesh

the activities and behavior of the respondents, to describe the place and circumstances in which they live, and to analyze the changes they make to their community as well as the way they make those changes. An ethnographic study requires qualitative methods that are flexible (Denzin and Lincoln 2000). Ethnographic study is direct by nature and requires first hand observation of the participants, and engagement with them. To do this I used flexible options and research tools such as an interview, questionnaire survey, case study, participant observation, and focus group discussion.

Qualitative methods are particularly suitable to investigate real life insights where quantitative methods are not sufficient. For example, qualitative methods give valuable insights into the thoughts and ideas of the respondents. It provides opportunities to understand the value and meaning people inherit and share, and the way they are attached to particular things and events in their society (Babbie 2007). Since most of the respondents in this study are newcomers in local government bodies and are illiterate or lacking adequate education, using a range of qualitative methods enabled thoughtful responses for the purpose of the study.

Among the 55 Union Parishads in Rajshahi, 10 union parishads (randomly selected) from 3 Thanas, 5 Municipalities and 1 City Corporation were the focus of this study. There are 3 reserved seats in each union parishad for women representatives, so 30 women representatives are elected from 10 union parishads. From 5 Municipalities I selected 15 women representatives, and from the only City Corporation in my field study area I got 15 more representatives elected directly. Thus, (30+15+15) = 60 women representatives are the main respondents of this study. Besides I also collected data from 20 male representatives and 20 knowledgeable respondents outside politics who have valuable views about the

effectiveness of political representation, for example women community leaders, NGO officials, journalists, and academics. I also had conversations with numbers of local people, both men and women, about their perception and views on the roles and performances of elected women representatives.

1.7 Techniques of Data Collection and Data Analysis

1.7.1 Primary Data

As mentioned above, primary data were collected through participant observations, interviews, questionnaires and focus group discussions. The data collection techniques are explained below.

a) **Questionnaire:** Primary data were collected from elected women representatives, who were my main respondents. Sixty of these were interviewed, of which 30 came from rural local government institutions and 30 more from urban areas. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data. Multiple answers were given for each question and participants were required to pick their best response. Since most of my respondents had lower levels of education, especially from the rural local government institutions, this helped me to extract the most relevant responses. There were also some open ended questions so that respondents could provide comments and suggestions reflecting their experiences in the functions of the local government institutions. Finally the data were tabulated and coded as per the research objectives and analysis purposes.

b) **Interview:** After the questionnaire, I conducted in depth interviews with 20 elected women representatives chosen from the questionnaire session. Women representatives selected for closer interviews were those who appeared more conscious about their role and performance, demonstrated eagerness to contribute

to the decision making process of the local government, tried actively to contribute to the development of women of the wider society, and had the spirit to confront social and cultural barriers towards women's empowerment. This in depth interview enabled me to get further insights about key issues identified during the questionnaire survey. Since many of the elected women representatives were first timers in local government politics, understanding their personal experiences, wisdom and ideas was important. I also interviewed 20 knowledgeable respondents comprising community leaders (local elites and senior citizens—6 in total), 3 government officials, 4 NGO personnel, 3 academics and 4 journalists. Studies show that women organizations, NGOs, journalists and academics are contributing to the attainment of women's empowerment in the society (Aktar 2009, Chowdhury 2008, Unnayan Padokkhep 2003, Viswanathan et al. 1997, Greenberg et al. 1997, Carr et al. 1996, Goetz 1995, Moser 1993). They are working to eliminate discrimination and injustices towards women and to bring positive changes towards women's empowerment. Interview of these groups of respondents, therefore, enabled me to obtain valuable insights about their thoughts and recommendations on the problems and potentials for further empowerment of women in Bangladesh.

From these initial interviews, follow up interviews of 10 participants were further conducted for deeper discussions about their personal experiences, thoughts and advice on key issues. This three-stage process was helpful to build a trusting environment in which the respondents felt free to disclose their own story to the interviewer (Kothari 2005). Furthermore, the interviews were conducted in the local language and respectful of local culture so that respondents feel proximity with the interviewer. Finally, during interview the respondents were

assured that their anonymity and privacy will be maintained by which I secured their unhesitant responses.

c) Focus Group Discussion: The elected women members of the local government institutions were invited to participate in focus group discussions. I arranged 4 discussions: 2 for the rural elected women members and 2 for the urban women representatives. Each focus group had 13-15 respondents. The discussion was helpful to extract and justify further information about the issues identified in the questionnaire survey and interviews. It also helped me to observe how the respondents interact each other and consequently gave an impression of the respondents' inter-personal connection, cohesion and communication necessary to empower women respondents at their institutional settings.

d) Observation: For the purpose of the study, I also attended different functionary processes of the local government institutions. I attended some general and special meetings, and also visited development projects carried out under the responsibility of the elected women representatives. These include projects such as agricultural inputs distribution; building rural roads, bridges, culverts and flood dams; making and repairing of schools, mosques and temples; projects on fisheries, community forestry and nursery; and judicial mechanisms such as resolving of marital disputes and disputes over land/assets ownership, resolving of criminal offences like acid throwing, dowry, lost property and so on. All these helped me to observe the way elected women representatives were working, and how effectively they performed. They also helped me to explore factors such as limitations and attitude of the chairman and male members towards women members. Since many of the women representatives were first timers in local government politics they might be unaware of their role.

Observations were helpful in such a situation to get firsthand experience and response of my research.

e) Case Study: The questionnaires, interviews and focus groups were part of an overall case study approach. Being, "the in depth examination of a single instance of some social phenomenon" (Babbie 2007: 298), case studies provide an opportunity to get deeper insights from particular facts and phenomena the respondents might encounter (Roberts 2001). It attempts inquiry into real life contexts with evidence and helps to analyse the perspectives under consideration (Yin 1994). Since the elected women members were coming from different socio-economic strata, participants' own narratives provided valuable insights about the dynamics of the local government politics, the challenges women face in local government election and functioning, and the range of strategies used to overcome those problems.

1.7.2 Secondary Sources of Data

Secondary data were collected from government and NGO offices, newspapers, periodicals, journals and published books. These were helpful to collect data about the historical movement of reservation of quota seats for women in Bangladesh, the numerical statistics on women representation over time at various levels of government, the Acts and Ordinances of the government in different time periods relating local government and women's political participation, and the thoughts and movements of the civil society, women leaders and researchers in empowering women politically.

1.7.3 Techniques of Data Analysis

The questionnaire I used in this study had both open and close ended questions. The collected data were arranged in tables, and interviews are presented by observations and case studies. Data were tabulated in precise form so that valuable information can be obtained at a glance. Tabulations are designed in a way such that the factors affecting empowerment and variations in the rural-urban contexts can be easily traced. As well, case studies are presented to round out the statistical data and to postulate the deeper insights and perspectives women representatives could provide.

1.7.4 Problems of Data Collection

It is true that although the provision of reserving seats and direct election for women in each local government has provided opportunities for empowerment of the women, the fact remains that they are still part of a patriarchal society. Elected women representatives are generally semi-literate and new to the field of governance. Thus, there were many difficulties to extract data from them. Women representatives were hesitating at the beginning to talk to me as an outside person. They were afraid that their statements might be leaked out and they might face trouble due to this. They were especially concerned while talking about their relationship with male colleagues, and chairmen/mayors and about the working environment of the LGIs. As the researcher, I had to spend long hours to make sure they understood the real objective of the research, be friendly, dress in local clothing and talk in local dialect to earn their confidence. My professional position as part of a university faculty back in Rajshahi also helped me earn trust from the respondents. I also assured them that the names of the respondents will

never be published in any way as per the Ethics obligation of this research at Flinders University. The questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews were conducted at women respondents' homes to ensure their privacy and sense of security. However, the curiosity and unwanted presence of family members and often their interference appeared problematic during interviews. I had to be tactful in such instances, maintaining patience and easing the situation. There were times when questions had to be repeated or subsequent visits made at more convenient times. It is also important to note that during the first field visit in 2011 the elected representatives were new in office shortly after election. Consequently, these respondents, especially the newcomers, were not fully aware about their roles, responsibilities and the functioning of the LGIs. They were, thus, in a weaker position to comment on their opportunities, achievements and challenges. I, therefore, had to revisit the field one year later for their more informed opinions, comments and suggestions. Thus, adopting and adjusting a variety of strategies enabled me to gain necessary information for the purpose of the study.

Interviewing the key informants including the government officials, NGO personnel, academicians and journalists was difficult as they were very busy. I had to contact them over phone/email, set appointment and still had to wait long hours or reschedule meeting in many incidence. However, I did not lose patience and was able to achieve the required interviews and valuable insights from these knowledgeable professionals.

1.8 Limitation of the Study

As explained, this study investigates the effect of introducing direct election in the reserved seats in the local government. It does not investigate the political

participation of women at the national level. Secondly, the research is conducted in one particular geographic area. Nevertheless, as the following discussion shows, findings of the study provide an overall scenario of the challenges and opportunities of women's empowerment in the local government system in Bangladesh.

1.9 Summary of the Chapters

Chapter One: Introduction. It discusses the background of the study, presents the structure of the local government system in Bangladesh, explores the state of women's representation at the national and local level politics in Bangladesh, provides justification of the study, and discusses research area, data collection and methodology of the study.

Chapter Two: Making Women Count: Citizenship, Development Policy and The Local Government Ordinance 1997. This Chapter discusses the importance of political representation of women, the challenges to the electoral politics for women, quota as a fast track to increase women's political representation, and the context of Bangladesh leading to the enactment of the Local Government Ordinance 1997 introducing direct election in the reserved seats.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework: Capability Approach, Gender Planning and Conceptualization of Empowerment. This Chapter provides discussion on theories and frameworks of empowerment, the dimensions of empowerment and presents the empowerment framework used in this dissertation.

Chapter Four: Women in Electoral Politics: Entry to the Platform. In this Chapter I present the challenges women representatives faced while

contesting election in the LGIs. It also provides background information of the women representatives based on survey data.

Chapter Five: Women in Local Government: Functions, Challenges and Opportunities. This Chapter presents women representatives' roles and performance in the local government based upon the ethnographic survey of this study. It explores women members' know-how about the function of local government, capacity to perform, as well as their level of control and authority in the decision-making process.

Chapter Six: Direct Election in Reserved Seats: Empowerment of Women Representatives and Women in the Community. In this Chapter I discuss women representatives' capability, agency and empowerment at various levels from field study. It also explores the implication of direct election in reserved seats to improve the life chances of the women in the wider community.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion: Resource, Agency and Achievement Holding Public Offices. This Chapter concludes the study with discussion from empirical evidence. Policy implications for further women's empowerment at the local government institutions based on the study findings are drawn. The chapter also highlights scope for further research in this area.

MAKING WOMEN COUNT: CITIZENSHIP, DEVELOPMENT POLICY, AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ORDINANCE 1997

Until gender parity is reached in governance, women cannot reach full equality with men in any sphere. The absence of women's voices in shaping the most fundamental political instruments...has ensured the preservation of gender inequality.

—Banerjee & Oquist (2000).

2.1 Introduction

When Malala Yousufzai, the teenage Pakistani girl and the joint-winner of the Nobel Peace Prize 2014, was shot by the Taliban in October 2012 the tragedy soon became a topic of intense discussion across the world. It became a symbol of Taliban brutality in Pakistan. The incident soon received much attention from the media and Malala received sympathy from people irrespective of gender, norms or beliefs worldwide. The Taliban occupied the Swat Valley in 2007, from where Malala hails. Sharia Ayeen (Islamic laws) were enforced and anybody who did not follow the rule of Taliban faced the possibility of being tortured and killed. The beheaded corpses were put in the street squares to terrify people (Ellick 2012). In January 2009, the Taliban ordered all girls' schools in the Swat to shut down. Almost 200 girls' schools were blown up by the Taliban and about 50,000 girls were denied education. Malala along with her friends started campaigning for girl's education. She wrote to the BBC and approached government officials and foreign diplomats for help (Ellick 2012). Soon Malala became a target of the

Taliban and was shot in her school bus in October 2012. She was rushed to the Peshawar Military Hospital. The doctors removed the bullet from her head, and after some time at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Britain, eventually recovered.

But why did this incident create a storm when millions of girls (and boys) of similar ages are not getting any schooling in many Asian slums and villages? What distinguished Malala from children in those slums? Obviously, it is because Malala challenged the Taliban regime and soon became the symbol of protest-a representative of oppressed children deprived from education. As Amartya Sen (1999) argues, there are negative and positive freedoms that define the capability of human beings to lead a life of their choice that they have a reason to value. Accordingly, positive freedoms increase one's strategic life choices while a negative freedom or the denial of freedom decreases one's domain of choices that one might consider worth doing. In Sen's (1999) rhetoric, Malala's fight was to live a life of her choice and for a life of valuable functioning. She was denied her choice, while the children of the streets or in the slums were also denied such choices but may not have been as aware as Malala, because they had fewer educational opportunities. As Kabeer (1999) explains, "empowerment is about change, it refers to the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them" (Kabeer 1999: 437). Malala's fight was to meet and achieve choices pertinent to her life. By doing so she would also challenge the structural causes of the problems she faces.

The story of Malala, however, tells us about the structural barriers to women's empowerment in conservative countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh. Upholding an individual's choices and capabilities is the foundation of democracy irrespective of gender and identity. To clarify the issues further, this chapter

discusses the importance of formal politics for women, the barriers to participating in electoral politics, and quota as a fast track to trigger women's political representation. This is done in the context of Bangladesh and the Local Government Ordinance 1997.

2.2 Women in Formal Politics: Why Should We Care?

The most important feature of democracy is the recognition of human rights including political right across all strata of citizens and of both men and women (Brody 2009, UNIFEM 2008, Grugel and Piper 2007, UNDP 2002, Phillips 1991, 1995). In the normative theory of democracy women are equal citizens, entitled to an equal share in the decision-making process and in its absence democracy is incomplete. However, women have long been excluded from public decision-making. At the rise of democracy in ancient Greek civilization, women were out of the centre: only the male members from the Athenian families were given citizen status (Tremblay 2007). Even the great English Revolution (1688), the American Revolution (1783) and the French Revolution (1789) did not include much about the political rights of women. Women's democratic rights were also ignored by the eminent philosophers like Hobbes (1588-1679), Locke (1632-1704) and Rousseau (1712-1778) (Tremblay 2007). It was often argued that the sexual division of labour in which women were categorized for a domestic role made it difficult for women to enter in politics. However, the exclusion of women from formal politics came under serious attack in the nineteenth century. For example, J. S. Mill (1861) coined the exclusion of women from public office and the consequent waste of society's talents as "non-utilitarian idiocy" (cited from Reynolds 1999). Feminist activists, since then have

pushed for women's right to vote and to contest elections in order to have women's voices heard.

Today, equal representation of women alongside men in public decision-making is often considered to be a cornerstone of democratic governance. As mentioned in Chapter One, women representatives can better understand and recognize issues pertaining to women as a group because they have different life experiences to men (Tamerius 2010, Niven 2010, Goetz 2009, Lister 1997, Vickers 1997, Chowdhury 1994). Niven (2010) has stressed that female representation is essential to change the distribution and context of the decision making process. To Pringle and Watson (1996), it is not that the feminists are confronting a state representing interests against women, but a state as if there exists men's interests only. The European Network of Experts[9] (1997: 8) argued that,

> "a balanced representation of women and men at all levels of decision-making guarantees better government. Women have their own and unique perspective. They have different values and ideas and behave differently."

Representation and participation of women in public office can help to formulate policies necessary to meet women's needs and perspectives (Goetz 2009). As Fulton (2008: 17) argued, "if the concept of good governance is about the participation of all people in the decision-making process, there is an obvious entry point for the integration of women that has the potential to lead to a transformation of gender-relations and a greater voice for women".

---

[9] The European Network of Experts is a panel of legal experts on anti-discrimination in the European Commission to work and provide assistance to member states eliminating discrimination against women and marginalized community.

The literature also emphasised women's participation in formal politics from the perspective of ensuring basic human rights. The Beijing Platform (1995), for example, states that,

> "the improvement of women's social, economic and political status is essential for the achievement of both transparent and accountable government. Equal participation of women and men in decision-making process will also offer a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society needed to strengthen democracy" (UN: Beijing Platform, Section G).

The Convention for Elimination of all Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1979) advocated women's political empowerment as the cornerstone to any gender equality. Some also argue women's political representation as the pre-requisite for equality and democratic governance. Banerjee and Oquist (2000: 3), for example, emphasized that "until gender parity is reached in governance, women cannot reach full equality with men in any sphere". Chowdhury (1994: 21), thus, makes certain cases to ensure women's equitable representation in politics: i) proportional representation of women is analogous with basic human and civil rights, ii) it is essential for the legitimacy of the decision-making process, iii) women are more knowledgeable about their needs, and iv) women's greater involvement in decision-making process is important from the perspective of optimum use of society's human resources. However, after 18 years since the Beijing Declaration, IDEA (2013) evidence shows that women are still only one-fifth of the lawmakers in the national parliaments worldwide. In this context, the following section discusses the obstacles that prevent women's participation from formal politics, especially in the developing countries.

2.3 Obstacles to Women's Participation in Politics

Women are under-represented in formal politics worldwide (IDEA 2013). The socio-political and cultural environment that women face entering politics are often harsh and unpleasant. Like other developing countries, women in Bangladesh face various structural barriers and challenges steering their position and participation in politics. This section discusses these obstacles in brief.

2.3.1 Socio-Economic Factors

Social and economic factors influence women's aspiration and participation in politics. The supply of female candidates in politics is conditioned by their social and economic position (Hughes 2007, Krook 2005, Lovenduski and Norris 1995, Blumberg 1984, Chafetz 1984). Scholars often identified education and women's labour force participation as the key variables affecting women's representation (Paxton et al 2007, Gray, Kittilson and Sandholtz 2006, Paxton, Kunivich and McDonagh 2002, Kaiser 2001, Matland 1998). The structure of the economy (e.g., agricultural or industrial), per capita income, birth and death rates, education and health system are mentioned as significant (Matland 1998, Krook 2005). This is because higher levels of socioeconomic development enable women to achieve better education and employment, which in turn help them secure higher social status and political position (Inglehart and Norris 2003, McDonagh 2002, Norris and Inglehart 2001, Matland 1998). Paskeviciute (2001), however, found that the positive effect of women's labour force participation in the developed countries becomes insignificant over time.

Women in Bangladesh are lagging in terms of education and employment. The female literacy rate stands at 38% compared to that of male at 69%. The

labour force participation is also lower (24% compared to 76% for male) (BBS 2010). Thus, Razia Faiz, a former MP and government minister of Bangladesh stated,

> "The two most overwhelming obstacles for women in entering politics are lack of constituents and lack of financial resources. Women move from their father's home to their husband's home……They are like refugees. They have no base from which to develop contacts with the people or to build knowledge and experience about the issues. They have no money of their own; the money belongs to their fathers, their husbands or their in-laws. Given the rising cost of running an effective campaign, this poses another serious hurdle for women in the developing world" (cited from Shvedova 2010: 41).

The situation is worse in the rural areas compared to the urban areas—I will discuss in detail in Chapter 4. It is, therefore, important to investigate how such socioeconomic backgrounds affect women's political representation and empowerment.

2.3.2 Private-Public Divide

The private-public division of labour is traditional and has strong presence in developing countries (Brody 2009, Tambiah 2003, Waylen 2008; Mishra Panda 2008). Such gender based division of labour and the segregation of work often mean that women's voices are unheard and their interest in politics invisible (Nussbaum 2011, 2003, Jones 1988, Okin 1991). As Nussbaum (2003: 5) points out,

> The participation of women in governance has long been hindered by the assumption that their proper sphere is the private sphere.…... From

the very origins of Western political theory, theorists have carved society into two domains: a public domain, the domain of political authority and contestation, and a private realm, associated with family and the home. These spheres are conceived as operating in very different ways. In the public sphere, each person's actions must be constrained by the recognition that he is one among many citizens…. The private realm of the household is understood in a very different way. Here the traditional idea is that the male head of the household both may and should exercise a type of kingly authority. Because he is surrounded not by equals, but by inferiors, his job is to control them.

To D'Amico and Beckman (1995), these sorts of cultural norms create and reinforce inequality in gender-power relations. This is because, the dominant role of men in society resulted in men being more valued than women. This has weakened women's position in politics further (Sapiro 1983, Solheim 2000, Panday 2008b).

Women's political interest, importance and significance are also derived from their private role (Sapiro 1983 cited from Halder 2002). In a pioneer study Sapiro's (1983) model shows how women's role at home and within the family translates into specific political interest for women. The model shows that the strong public-private divide and the domestic confinement of women lead them to form and bring their interest somehow differently from the mainstream agendas of the dominant masculine political parties. Eventually, women's deviation from the main agendas lead them to be evaluated as low-profile and result in further marginalisation of women in formal politics (Halder 2002).

Table 2.1 Women's domestic roles and transformed political interest

Domestic Role	Political Interest	
Mother	Children's welfare:	Child labour Recreation Environment Morality
	Social welfare Education Peace	
Housekeeper	Environment Civic reform	
Guardian of domestic tranquillity and harmony	Peace Arts and culture	
Guardian of religion and domestic morality	Moral issues Education	
Consumer	Consumer	
Woman	Issues directly affecting the welfare and rights of women	

Source: Sapiro, 1983, P. 146.

2.3.3 Cultural Barriers

Culture is another dominant factor in producing gender inequality. Strong conservative culture restricts and prohibits women from direct political participation (Hall 1992, D'Amico and Beckman 1995, Norris and Inglehart 2001, Paxton and Kunovich 2003, McEwan 2005, Fulton 2008). In majority of the cultures it has been directly or indirectly implied that men are superior to women and women are dependent on men in many occasions (D'Amico and Beckman 1995, Fulton 2008, Kabeer 2011). In an earlier study Hall (1992: 89) stated that "women's empowerment is least developed in the most traditional patriarchal societies". This is because cultural norms create gendered identity and division in the society. Butler (1990), therefore, claimed that as much as sex is constructed by nature, gender and gendered division are the construction of culture. Similarly, McEwan (2005) and Kabeer (2002) mentioned that the roles of citizens are shaped

by identity which is derived from culture. It is, therefore, argued that societies where women are subordinated by men at home also place women in lower positions in the social fabric (Rosaldo 1974, CAPWIP 2000, Haque 2003).

It is often argued that cultural beliefs and ideology play stronger roles in women's limited political representation than political and structural barriers (Norris and Inglehart 2004, Paxton and Kunovich 2003, CAPWIP 2000). In their study of Southeast Asian nations, researchers at CAPWIP (2000) found that the empowerment of women, particularly in the decision-making process, is substantially determined and shaped by cultural beliefs. The pervasive cultural norms may surpass legal and institutional practices especially when law enforcing agencies, civil servants and judiciary are influenced by such norms (Fulton 2008). Sinha (2003) further argued that institutional reforms can address some inequalities in the society but cultural belief and practices are stubborn and difficult to change through legislative decree. In her seminal work Kirkpatrick (1974:14-5) stated that,

> Politics, it is argued, is a good example of arbitrary cultural exclusion. While legal barriers to women's participation in political life have been abolished, cultural norms have preserved the definition of politics as man's work ....culture is often said to affect women's political behaviour by depriving them of the self-esteem necessary for political leadership. In a culture which values the male more highly than the female, women may never acquire the confidence and autonomy required to seek power or wield it effectively.

As early as 1977, Bourdieu warned that culture could not only allow men to exercise their authority and superiority over women but also could lead women to internalize traditional gender roles and subordination to men. Bourdieu called it

doxa in which culture leads women to internalize gendered division of labour and position in the society instead of challenging those to restore equality. The cultural barrier can put strong hurdles for women's empowerment even in the Western world. As the Family Violence Professional Education Taskforce (Australia) (1991: 2) asserts,

> Among the outstanding features revealed in a study of the religious, legal, political and economic structures of society is the nature and extent of male domination. Men have control of public life and the state, in that they dominate the upper echelons of the prestige professions, the church, the business, finance and the political system. Women have been relegated to subordinate status by the view that their proper role is in the home and by obstruction placed in their path should they wish to enter paid work and public life. This male domination is supported and sustained by social processes, such as socialisation in the family and in education as well as cultural representations of gender in literature and the mass media. The belief that women should remain in the home and be dependent on a male partner still underlies many of our employment practices, government policies regarding tax allowances or subsidies and pension support.

It is argued that there are certain cultural stereotypes prevailing in many Asian countries including: i) that women's primary task and responsibilities are to take care of family and children; ii) that women cannot take leadership and decision-making positions lacking necessary experience; iii) gendered division of roles in which the private domain is seen to be for women and the public, outside world is for men; and iv) women's role in the public domain is not seen to replace her role in private domain but in addition to that (CAPWIP 2000). Even in the case of Japan, the effect of modernization is only seen to take effect in economic

dimensions while adopting the classic paternalistic view of family defining woman as a "good wife and wise mother" (Kaku 2001).

Bangladesh is an example of classic patriarchy in which the husband is considered the head of the household with a subordinate position for the wife (Kabeer 2011, Rozario 2006, Khan 2005). Women move into their husband's house after marriage. In the absence of the husband the adult son or the next male kin becomes the household head. Women's dependency on men continues throughout their lives, from father to husband to son. Such economic and social dependency leaves women particularly vulnerable, in what Cain et al (1979) termed as "patriarchal risk". Women have rights to the parental property not in equal terms only up to half of what their brothers receive, and in practice they have to waive their rights to benefit their brothers (Kabeer 1999, 2011, Anderson and Eswaran 2009, Panday 2008b). Women in such a situation come with inferior position to their husband's place. The men give protection and financial safety to the women at the price of their loyalty and subordination. The demand for dowry and bride price often creates misery and women become easy prey to brutal violence in many instances (Bates et al 2004, Naved and Persson 2005). Chastity is considered the most precious jewel for women to possess. They are not allowed to talk to men outside of their immediate family including their male cousins. Older girls are not considered to be best match in the marriage market and consequently parents are more inclined to pursue their marriage and not their education (Chowdhury 2009). Educational investments are widely discriminated in favour of boys rather than girls who are expected to move into their husband's home after marriage (World Bank 2008). In this extreme patriarchy, girls are usually not allowed to have a say on whom to marry. Husbands often threaten

their wives with divorce if their daughters do not want to marry the grooms their fathers have chosen and their mothers fail to convince them to marry. Society puts out the lesson that a woman's heaven is under the feet of her husband and, therefore, a good wife should devote her life to her husband (Panday 2008b).

2.3.4 Religious Barriers

Social norms and practices are, historically, driven by religious beliefs and ideologies. Prophets and messengers of the world's major religions were men and religious doctrines and decrees put women in an inferior and subordinate position (Lerner 1987, Hall 1992). As Lerner (1987: 10) argued,

> The symbolic devaluing of women in relation to the divine becomes one of the founding metaphors of Western civilisation. The other founding metaphor is supplied by Aristotelian philosophy, which assumes as a given that women are incomplete and damaged human beings of an entirely different order than men.

In the Semitic religions, e.g., Judaism, Christianity and Islam, women have been considered submissive to men. In the Bible women are portrayed as imperfect humans and accidental beings. The superiority of men over women was clearly manifested in the narrative of the creation of men and women. The Book of Genesis stated that the very first men, Adam, was created by God from dust. God then made animals when Adam was asleep. God then took a rib from the sleeping Adam to create the first woman, Eve (De Beauvoir 1949).[10] In Luther's Catechism, women were assigned domestic lists:

---

[10] Similar narrative of the creation of very first man and woman (Adam and Eve) is also documented in the Koran.

> Wives be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church (Dowell and Hurcombe 1981: 33).

The Islamic doctrines are no different in this respect. The influential Al-Azhar issued fatwas declaring women's political rights as unacceptable. "The opinion of Al-Azhar about political rights (public guardianship) was categorical, holding that public guardianship is an exclusively male realm" (AbuKhalil 1994: 129). This view is still strongly referenced by the religious clerics in most of the Muslim countries including Bangladesh. Internationally, empirical evidence also shows that women's political representation is poor in more traditional and conservative societies. For example, Kenworthy and Malami (1999) and Reynolds (1999) found that fewer women were in politics in the Muslim and Catholic countries compared to that of the dominant Protestant countries. The status of Muslim women, however, varies across countries. For example, Arab women enjoy the least rights and freedom compared to women in other Muslim countries (AbuKhalil 1994 and Paxton 1997).

In Bangladesh, having a dominant Muslim majority (with 88% population), Islam plays a vital role shaping social as well as legal practice, often undermining women's position in the society. As Halder (2002: 49) mentioned, "Muslim women generally face tremendous opposition and are often criticized by religious fundamentalists on the ground that there is no provision for women to be state leaders under Islam". Following Islamic law, the son and daughter inherit parental property at a ratio of 2:1 respectively, and consequently a male child is more highly valued than a female child (Anderson and Eswaran 2009, Halder 2004). Azaan, the call for prayer, is broadcasted as a symbolic announcement of a

baby boy's birth but not for girl's (Huque and Akhter 1987, cited in Panday 2008a). A newly wed bride is blessed by the elderly people in the hope of a boy-child, and women in many instances continue giving birth until there is a son (Nath 1981, Hamid 1996). Girls are considered to be liabilities and are forced to wear Purdah[11] to be considered a good girl in society (Kabeer 2011, White 2010, Mahmud, Shah and Becker 2012). The enforcement of Purdah is such that women are confined within their home. They need to take permission from their male guardian and in-laws or at least inform them before they can go outside, especially at night (Mahmud, Shah and Becker 2012, Kabeer 2011). As Mukhopadhyay (2003:44) quoted from one of her male respondent whose wife was an elected women representative in the local government body, "this is a Muslim country and she is a woman. She cannot go out in the evening". The strict Purdah system directly opposes the idea of development by bringing women out of their domestic environs (White 2010).

There is also widespread use of fatwa against women which is often very harsh and binding. In many instances women are ordered to go for Hilla marriage[12] in the event of any verbal divorce during arguments between husband

---

[11] Purdah in Islam refers to set of obligatory restrictions for women, including covering face with Hijab or Neqab (veil) while going outside and not to talk to outside male (out of their immediate family).

[12] Hilla marriage in Islamic Sharia is the interim marriage of one's divorced wife with a third person before she can remarry her first husband. In rural Bangladesh where most of the villagers are poor, husbands and wives are often in confrontation and arguments over daily life. In those arguments often the husbands threaten their wives with divorce, a subtle weapon to 'treat' women without economic safety. The local leaders and religious groups often explain such verbal threat of divorce to take effect as final divorce. They therefore order the wife to leave husband's house. If the couple wants to restart their relationship they must go through a two-steps procedure under this fatwa of Hilla

and wife (Kabir 2002, Rashiduzzaman 1997). Even in the event of rape, the victim is often charged with being of bad character. The religious clerics in such cases order and execute brutal punishment including lashes or stoning to death (ASK 2011, Rashiduzzaman 1997). The rapists, however, are usually only fined. The fine eventually goes to the pocket of the local leaders and the perpetrator escapes serious punishment. According to newspaper reports, during 1995-2010 there were about 503 incidences of fatwa against women and at least 15 women succumbed to death from such fatwa-instigated violence (ASK 2011).[13] Women's leadership is declared Haram (a great sin) in Islamic Sharia laws. The practice and the provisions of religion are, in such, evidenced to produce very unequal status for men and women and put serious hindrances for women's participation in politics (Chowdhury 2009).

2.3.5 Political Factors

Political factors determine space for women in public offices and create demand for women in politics (Hughes 2008, Tremblay 2007, Krook 2005, Paxton and Kunovich 2003). Conducive political environments facilitate greater number of women in politics. On the other hand, adverse political culture discourages and often deters women and marginalized groups to enter political

marriage. First, according to the clerics the wife has to marry a third person, stay with at least 40 days and then get divorce (and thus called Hilla or interim marriage). In the second step, after this second divorce from her interim husband, the woman is required to remarry her first husband once again. If the couple do not follow the Hilla marriage and continue their conjugal life as usual after verbal divorce threats, the fundamentalist would convict the couple of having extra-marital sexual relationship for which harsh punishment is executed including lashes or even stoning to death.

[13] Ayeen O Shalish Kendra (2011), published in the Daily Prothom Alo (a Bengali newspaper), 21 February 2011.

terrain. Researchers have identified various political factors affecting women's representation in politics such as party ideology, legislative efficacy, constitutional history, gender quotas, electoral systems, and democratic practices (Hughes 2008, Tremblay 2007, Paxton, Hughes and Green 2006, Kunovich and Paxton 2005, Krook 2005, Reynolds 1999, Paxton 1997). Political factors can bee divided into two principal categories: political rights and citizenship of women; and the electoral system of a country (Tremblay 2007).

The political citizenship of women is a significant determinant of women's participation in public offices. The literature commonly identifies women's political citizenship with some proxy indicators such as the date women first got the right to vote in national elections; the time women first got elected in parliament, and if a woman was elected as the president or prime minister of the country (Hughes 2008, Tremblay 2007). The demand for women's representation in political offices is also affected by the extent of democratic practice in the country (Hughes 2008, Tripp and Kang 2008, Dahlerup 2006). A country with long tradition of democracy is likely to encourage women to take leadership challenges more than a non-democratic society. For example, Matland and Taylor (1997) argued that the representation of women in politics is much higher in Costa Rica than in many developed countries due to the long heritage of democracy despite the dominant culture of patriarchy in the country.

The literature also argues that democratic practices in the inner system of the political parties are also important in determining women's political participation. Paxton (1997) and Kishwar (1996) argued that since political parties are the very first platform for women to kick off the political dream, such platforms needs to have fair rules. Matland and Montgomery (2003) and

Lovenduski and Norris (1995) considered political parties as the gate-keepers for women's participation in politics. This is because there are various actors playing a role in a party's nomination process. For example, the rules and practices of nominating candidates might be formal or informal, and the nomination process might be conducted by the grassroots party workers as well as party top brass. As well, it is evidenced that the strong presence of progressive parties helps to accelerate women's political representation and redress under-representation of women in politics (Tremblay 2007, Farrell 2005, Miki 2001, 1999, Norris 1985). This is particularly true for developing countries like Bangladesh where discrimination exists based on race, ethnicity, religion and gender with the increasingly dominant use of Islam in politics, clashing with struggling secular principles and ideas.

The electoral system of a country has a direct effect on the participation of women in politics (Krook 2005, Paxton et al. 2006, Reynolds 1999, Lovenduski & Norris 1993). The proportional representative (PR) electoral system is found to bring more women representatives than the plurality-majority systems electing one particular candidate (Hughes 2007, Paxton et al. 2006, Ballington & Matland 2004, McAllister and Studlar 2002, Reynolds 1999, Kenworthy and Malami 1999, Paxton 1997, Norris 1997, Matland 1993). This is because in PR electoral systems, political parties try to incorporate candidates from all strata of the society in order to attract votes. Nominating women candidates becomes an inevitable strategy for the party leaders to reach half of the total voters. But in a plurality-majority system a political party nominates only a single candidate to contest. It forces them to choose a strong candidate promising victory in which the marginalized and disadvantaged group (e.g., women, the lower caste) were rarely

chosen. Kenworthy and Malami (1999) found evidence that the party list/multi-member district results in 12% more parliament members compared to a single member-district system in the world's most developed democratic countries. Feminist scholars, therefore, argue that in a single district candidate system party often prioritizes masculine characteristics, famous names, wealth and strong networks to dominate over rivals and accelerate election victory (Phillips 1995, Bacchi 2004, Shvedova 2010). Kishwar (1996) found that in India women are systematically disadvantaged and deprived in the leadership race as they fail to use 'money and muscle' for political purposes.

In Bangladesh, though the present prime minister and the opposition leader are women, the political parties are dominated by male leadership. The central committees of none of the top three political parties (i.e., Awami League, BNP, and Jatiyo Party) incorporate more than 20 percent women. The right wing parties often declare female leadership as anti-Islamic and issues fatwa not to vote for women candidates (Panday 2008a). The political culture is contaminated with money and violence in which women are found helpless (Halder 2002). Political parties, therefore, rarely choose women candidates to contest elections. In the last national parliament election (held in December 2008)[14], for example, there were only 55 women candidates nominated in a 300-seats house. Of those, only 17 women were elected (less than 6% of the total) although this is the highest in the country's history (The Daily Star 2009). Under such circumstances,

---

[14] A very recent parliament election, a controversial one, is held in Bangladesh on 5th January 2014 amidst violence and boycott by major opposition parties. Only the ruling coalition, a couple of small parties and some independent candidates contested in the election. As much as 154 candidates won uncontested in the 300 seats parliament leaving serious concern on the credibility of the election. Pressure from different quarters is mounting on the ruling alliance for a credible election soon.

mainstreaming gender as development strategy is advocated by donor agencies and scholars to eliminate obstacles towards women's access to and participation in governance and empowerment. The following section, in this respect, discusses the implication of women's right and agency in the attainment of citizenship and governance in a modern democratic state.

2.4 Citizenship and Governance: The Context of Women's Rights and Agency

Governance and citizenship practices are important in defining gender justice and equality. According to Brody (2009) governance and institutions shape roles of women and men in society, as well as determine their access to rights and resources. As Brody points out, the underlining assumption is that the inclusion of women in the governance institutions would make these institutions more responsive to the needs of women. Other scholars, also argue that effective and good governance is fundamental to combat poverty and for equal, democratic, accountable, and corruption-free societies necessary to the attainment of the rights of all citizens (Kabeer 1994, 2011, Sen 1999, Rai and Waylen 2008, Cornwall and Gaventa 2009, Gaventa and Barrett 2010).

The term citizenship often describes an individual's rights in a modern democratic state. As Marshall (1965: 92) stated in his seminal work, "citizenship is a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is bestowed". Brubaker (1992), Mouffe (1992) and Turner (1997) echoed this, arguing that citizenship is the defining construct of membership in a modern democratic nation-state. To them, citizenship is the political relationship between

individuals and the state in terms of reciprocal rights and mutual obligations defined within a legal framework. Kabeer (2002) considered citizenship as the path of defining personhood that links individual's rights with agency. It is a status that provides rights to live with dignity, has the right to act and to decline, to have a say in the society and to contribute.

However, citizenship is not only about rights and responsibilities but also about the interaction, dealings, influence and authority within a society (Da Matta 1987, Lister 1998, Gaventa and Valderrama 1999, Gaventa 2002, Meer and Sever 2004). Gaventa and Valderrama (1999: 4) explained citizenship participation as the "broad forms of engagement by citizens in policy formulation and decision making in key arenas which affect their lives". It emphasizes a citizen's active participation as the fundamental foundation of democratic practices which recognizes more active agency of citizens from users and choosers to makers and shapers (Cornwall and Gaventa 2001). As Lister (1998: 228) argued,

> "the right of participation in decision-making in social, economic, cultural and political life should be included in the nexus of basic human rights...Citizenship as participation can be seen as representing an expression of human agency in the political arena, broadly defined; citizenship as rights enables people to act as agents".

The concept of citizenship is often used as a barometer to evaluate the prevailing social inequality and development. Women, for example, are often found struggling to command meaningful citizenship in the developing countries. As Mukhopaddhay and Meer (2004) argued, the history of citizenship is not a history of rights but a history of the denial of rights and agency for certain groups of people in almost every society. Feminist scholars often emphasize the notion of

citizenship to overcome the public-private divide over political representation (Lister 1997, 2012, Yuval-Davis 1991, Voet 1998, Siim 2000). Accordingly, women's citizenship requires restoring democracy in the division of labour and in household chores for the emancipation of women (Kabeer 2002, Mukhopaddhay and Meer 2004). As the Regional Action Plan for Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, 1995-2001 mentioned, "only if women involve themselves actively in public life will they not only be able to satisfy their economic, social and cultural needs, but also contribute as full citizens with all rights and obligations that implies" (Comision Economica 1995: 11, cited in Clough-Riquelme 2007: 28).

Some scholars also argue for democratic local government institutions as the best place to promote citizenship of the mass. To Gaventa and Valderrama (1999: 4), for citizenship participation, "perhaps the best place to see and understand these new interactions is at the local level, where the concerns of the grassroots or locality intersect most directly with those of governance and the state". Gaventa (2002) considered citizenship as the linkage between citizens and the state machinery, specially the local level government. To him, "rebuilding relationships between citizens and their local government means working both sides of the equation—that is, going beyond civil society or state based approaches, to focus on their intersection, through new forms of participation, responsiveness and accountability" (Gaventa 2002: 30). Blair (2000) argued that local government can effectively promote participation of local people in the decision making process and promote citizenship. Accordingly,

> "the hope is that as government comes closer, more people will participate
> in politics...that will give the representation, a key element of

empowerment, which can be defined here as significant voice in public policy decisions which affect their futures. Local policy decisions reflecting this empowerment will serve these newer constituencies, better living conditions and enhanced economic growth. These improvements will then reduce poverty and enhance equity among all groups" (Blair 2000: 23).

In line with gender sensitive governance and citizenship, scholars and donor agencies emphasize bringing more women into political office (including parliaments and local governments) through gender quotas. A critical mass (e.g., at least 30% of reserved seats for women) is advocated in order for their voices to be heard. In this context, the subsequent section discusses the evolution and systematic progress in policy frameworks mainstreaming gender in international development through WID, WAD, GAD and CEDAW.

2.5 Mainstreaming Gender in Development Policy Frameworks

The development of women and their empowerment took on momentum in the last quarter of the twentieth century. As mentioned earlier, the first thoughts of this wave, known as Women In Development (WID), was elevated in the 1970s. The idea of WID is of inclusion: including women in the development efforts, policies and projects. The WID approach originated from the assertion that women are neglected in the mainstream development and economic opportunities. It is accepted that women are oppressed, marginalized and are deprived from the fundamental human needs like education, health, employment and income. To redress the situation, feminist economists including Boserup (1970) advocated for the inclusion of women in the development projects,

especially projects that might offer employment and income for women. WID approach aims at creating equitable outcome for women, to increase income, reduce poverty and vulnerability. The agenda soon got support from feminist economists, politicians, development practitioners and had become popular to the international community and donor agencies. However, WID did not focus on gender-power relations and did not challenge male domination over women. It was found that simply adding some education, employment and income opportunities for women without correcting for gender-power relations are inadequate to improve women's well-being in the long run (Pearson, Whitehead and Young 1984, Pearson and Jackson 1998, Rai 2002). It was further argued that the inclusive approach of WID often justifies women's secondary importance in the development discourse resulting in some token funding for them (Pearson, Whitehead and Young 1984).

As a result of the   backlashes of the WID approach, the concept of Women and Development (WAD) emerged in the 1970s. Behind the WAD approach is the dependency theory (Singer 1949, Prebisch 1950) which argues that the third world countries are serving the interest of the first world and both men and women are exploited as a result, for example, by the multinational companies. It, thus, does not distinguish women's development as separate from men's. As Bandarage (1984) argued, the WID approach only tends to address sexual inequality but overlooked the structural and socio-economic factors that beget such inequality. WAD approach considers that women are already in the production process and do not need to prioritize their inclusion. Rather, it seeks to enable both men and women in the third world to participate in the benefits of development. According to Naz (2006), the problem with the WAD approach,

however, is that it does not question the gender-power relations prevailing in the third world which is highly patriarchal. Furthermore, it considers women as a homogenous group irrespective of class, race and ethnicity. It, therefore, could not address problems of women at different strata of society.

A subsequent movement known as Gender and Development (GAD) developed in the 1980s against this background. The GAD approach demanded the end of inequality in addition to ending poverty. The GAD approach demands more than the creation of employment, income, education and health for women, but it seeks to eliminate existing discrimination against women (Moser 1993, Kabeer and Subramanian 1996). The GAD approach is progressive in nature in that sense. It argues for equal opportunities for women in the workspace, political decision-making and policy planning at all levels. It considers the equal status of men and women as fundamental to any society (Dreze and Sen 1999, Porter and Judd 1999, Alba 2000, Parpart et al 2000). The GAD approach "focuses on the socially constructed basis of differences between men and women and puts emphasis on the need to challenge existing gender roles and relations" (Baden and Reeves 2000: 3). It emphasises that men must accept and commit to promote gender equality. It argues that promoting the equality of gender, elimination of injustice and raising agency of men and women are fundamental to the attainment of sustainable development. It also asserts that gender-power relations are social, political, historical and cultural and, thus, relations are subject to retreat and reshape (Pearson and Jackson 1998). The GAD principle argues for a society in which everyone enjoys equal freedom and opportunity irrespective of gender, race and ethnicity. It seeks to transform programs targeting poverty elimination to that of elimination of discrimination against women.

The GAD approach was taken in the Platform of Action in 1995 at the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing (UNDAW 1995). The Beijing Declaration emphasized equal participation for women in the decision-making process both at the private and public sphere of life asserting that women's empowerment is imperative to alleviate poverty and social injustices and to enhance human development and democracy. The Beijing Declaration remains at the core of subsequent development and gender planning including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Paris Declaration. Being focused on equality, peace, gender and development the Beijing Declaration appeared as an important policy reference point for gender and empowerment (UN 2005).

Another critical policy framework is derived in the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted by the United Nations in 1979. The CEDAW is widely regarded as an international safeguard to the rights for women. It identifies discrimination against women and outlines agendas for each country to eradicate such discrimination. It defines discrimination against women as "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field" (UNDAW 2007: Article 1). By accepting the Convention, the signatory countries commit to undertake substantial measures to eliminate discrimination against women in every sphere. In line with this, the CEDAW provides the basis for promoting equality between women and men in political

and public life including the right to vote and to stand for election as well as in the areas of education, nutrition, health and employment. Being an active participant and signatory of the Beijing 1995 and CEDAW, Bangladesh promulgated the Local Government Ordinance (1997) to empower women in the local government institutions. The following section, in this context, sheds more light on the implication of quota and reserved seats as the strategy to promote equality in the gender power relations.

2.6 Quota and Reserved Seats: Changing Gender Power Relations

The introduction of gender quota in electoral politics across countries has been advocated under the Beijing Declaration (1995) and the GAD frameworks. The Local Government Ordinance (1997) was a direct response to Bangladesh's commitment to uphold the spirit of these policy frameworks as an active signatory. Scholars and other observers have suggested various strategies to improve gender equality, e.g., increased women's education and employment, elimination of legal and constitutional obstacles, social awareness and so on. However, it is gender quota that is often considered as the fast track to increase women representation in politics (Tripp and Kang 2008, Krook 2009, Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005). As Dahlerup (2006) argues, quota offers a viable instrument correcting the barriers of entry for women into politics, at least in the short run. Feminist organizations, human rights groups and donor agencies see reserved seats as a short-cut and straight forward way to correct gender inequality in politics. Evidence across the world also shows the varying level of efficacy of gender quota and reserved seats promoting women's representation in public

offices. At present, quota has been implemented in more than 113 countries (IDEA 2013).

The reservation of seats also emphasizes seeing women as a critical mass able to influence decision-making (Eschle 2001, Grey 2002, Dahlerup 2006, Studlar and McAllister 2002, Thomas 1997). By critical mass the researchers refer to a minimum number of women representatives to achieve change. For example, Dahlerup (2006) argued that gender quota should constitute at least a critical minority of 20-40 percent, or even to ensure true gender balance of 50-50 percent. The Local Government Ordinance (1997) in Bangladesh follows this threshold by reserving seats for women equivalent to one-third of the general seats (and hence one-fourth of the total).

Studlar and McAllister (2002), however, argued that just the numbers cannot bring those fundamental changes often envisaged by the quota proponents; instead, they argued that critical feminists are needed rather than critical mass to steer such changes. Nanivadekar (2003) also advocated that the efficacy of the women's critical mass is conditioned on their attitude towards gender-power relations and their attachment with the general women of the society. Meer, Sever and Mukhopadhyay (2004) further argued that the reservation of seats may undermine the possibility of fundamental changes in case women representatives are not gender sensitive.

There are pros and cons to quota systems. The most common criticism against them is that quotas bring inefficiency by promoting quantity rather than quality. One writer in The Economist (2008), for example, raised a query that, "if women candidates are good, voters will choose them anyway; if they are not good, why do they deserve to be elected?" (cited in Marshall 2009: 21). It further

argued that politicians should come to politics with their quality, not with their gender. The proponents of this line of argument often mention that Margaret Thatcher, Angela Merkel, Julia Gillard, Hilary Clinton, Indira Gandhi, etc did not need any quota system to be elected. They further argued that if those female leaders were forced to go with gender quota, it would have been great dishonour to their quality, capability and confidence.

The proponents of quota seats, however, argue that representation of women is the very basis for democracy. Democracy requires participation from all people in the society. They also claim that the world is mostly patriarchal, and most of the political institutions are male dominated "that will not change on its own" (Tripp and Kang 2008: 340). Accordingly, a quota of seats enables the correction of male domination and female marginalization. As Dahlerup (2006) argued, quota seats do not discriminate against men, nor against quality but it compensates for "the actual barriers that prevent women from their fair share of the political space", and that quota is only a temporary step "until the barriers for women's entry into politics are removed" (cited in Marshall 2009: 21-22).

There is also distinction between quota as reserved seats and the candidate quota. Quota as reserved seats is the electoral system that guarantees a certain number of women representations in political offices (Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005, Krook 2009). Candidate quotas, on the other hand, focus on bringing certain women numbers into electoral politics. Candidate quotas are seen to be of two types: legislative quota and party quota. The legislative quota is set by law or constitution through which parties are directed to nominate certain numbers of female candidates, whereas in party quota parties are selecting female candidates

following the rules and regulations of their own (Krook 2007, 2009, Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005).

Candidate quotas can have significantly different implications in increasing female numbers in political offices compared to quota as reserved seats (Krook 2007, 2009). Dahlerup and Freidenvall (2005) evidenced that there are 8.6% elected women representatives in the Brazilian Parliament compared to a 30% legal electoral quota. To Krook (2007) candidate quota may not necessarily result in women elected. Krook found, in particular, that in a multi-member district system, parties often put women candidates' name in the bottom of the list and consequently they can hardly win in the electoral battle. Reserved seats, on the other hand, eliminates such problem by assigning certain seats essentially for women. Because my thesis examines reserved seats, I am using quota interchangeably with reserved seats.

However, representation in the reserved seats also takes two different forms: reserved seats with indirect election, and reserved seats with direct election. In case of indirect election, the women representatives in the national parliament or in the local government are selected by other representatives who are directly elected. But in direct election in reserved seats (e.g., with the introduction of the Local Government 1997 Act in Bangladesh) women representatives are elected through universal adult franchise. The latter system is now evident in the countries like Bangladesh, India and Pakistan[15] especially in

---

[15] In Pakistan, however, many reserved seats for women in the local government remained vacant as no women were contesting in those seats due to Taliban threat. Taliban controls a large part of North-West Pakistan who declared women's mobility out of home and their leadership unacceptable. Anyone going against the Taliban order risks severe punishment including death (see for details, ADB 2004).

the local government institutions. Though the indirect reserved seats and the direct reserved seats may both offer the same numbers of female representation in political office, the process of election, and hence their accountability and representation may take opposite direction. It is likely that candidates are accountable to their respective electorates indicating that in case of direct election women representatives would be concerned for the people who voted for them, while in the indirect reserved seats women representatives would seek constant favours from the directly elected representative who nominated them. The following section, in this perspective, discusses the context and background of the Local Government Ordinance (1997) in Bangladesh.

2.7 The Local Government Ordinance (1997) and Direct Election in Reserved Seats

The constitution of Bangladesh, drafted first in 1972 shortly after country's independence in 1971, emphasized equal participation of men and women in every sphere (Panday 2011). In this connection, the Local Government Ordinance 1976 was the first attempt to ensure women's representation in local government by reserving 2 seats for women. The ordinance opened the door to bring women into grassroots administration though these seats were filled by nomination rather than election. Since women members were nominated by the government representative, close ties with the chairman, nepotism and clan relationship took central stage in the nomination (Panday 2008a). Women representatives were selected from the higher strata of society,, thus, leading to a lack of representation of women from the bottom (Mahtab 2007). Furthermore, the constituency of the women representatives was not demarcated, leaving little

space for women members' representation. The success of the ordinance to ensure equal participation of women, therefore, remained unfulfilled. This is perhaps not surprising, considering that the country was newly independent in 1971 after nine months war and policy makers and civil society were possibly more concerned with the rebuilding of the country, infrastructure development, education, employment and the rehabilitation of wounded war heroes and families of the martyrs. Gender inequality was possibly not a big concern at that time (Aktar 2009).

The second amendment of the Local Government Ordinance was promulgated in 1983. In this Act the number of women representatives was increased from 2 to 3. However, the nomination of the women representatives remained same in this Act and the constituencies of the women representatives were not specified too leaving the caveats of the previous ordinance aside. The Local Government Ordinance then saw another revision in 1993. In this Act provision of the nomination of women representatives was replaced with indirect election. The chairman and the nine directly elected members were given charge to select 3 women members in the reserved seats. As such, the selected women representatives remained subordinate to the directly elected male members and the chairman. Furthermore, the Act did not specify any role and responsibilities for women representatives. Their electoral constituencies were also not delineated. Women's effective participation and representation in the local government functioning in such a situation remained in doubt (Aktar 2009).

Considering all those facts and limitations and being an active signatory of the Beijing Declaration, the government of Bangladesh promulgated the Local Government Ordinance 1997. In this Act the constituencies of the women

representatives were demarcated and the provision of universal adult franchise to elect women representatives was introduced. The ordinance did not increase the number of women members from 3 but specified that one-third of the standing committees of the local government would be headed by the women representatives. For the purpose of elections, the Union Parishad (rural local government) is divided into 9 Wards from which nine members would be elected. In addition, a woman member will be elected from a constituency consisting of 3 general Wards thus leaving a disproportionate electoral constituency and representational burden on women's reserved seats. For the urban local government, the total number of general Wards will depend on the area and population of the town. However, the Act mentioned that every 3 general Wards in the urban local government will constitute a reserved seat for women and match with the ratio of the rural local government. This thesis, in this context, attempts to explore the extent to which the 1997 Act is able to promote women's representation, participation and empowerment through the provision of direct election in the reserved seats. However, to proceed with this it is necessary to understand the functioning and structure of the local government in Bangladesh discussed in the section below.

2.8 Structure and Functions of the Local Government in Bangladesh

Rural and urban local government institutions have different structures in Bangladesh. The rural local government is of three-tiers and the Local Government 1997 Ordinance is applicable to its lowest tier, namely the Union Parishad. The urban local government, on the other hand, has only one tier.

However, based on the population, area size, and income the urban local government takes two different forms: The Municipality (Pouroshova) for the relatively smaller town; and the City Corporation for the bigger metropolitan areas. At present there are 11 City Corporations and 315 Municipalities serving the urban areas; whereas there are 4498 Union Parishads for the rural areas of the country. The structure of the local government system in Bangladesh is shown in Figure 1.1 in Chapter 1 (page 17).

As shown in figure 1.1, at the top of the local government system is the Ministry of the Local Government, Rural Development & Cooperative (the LGRD ministry). The Ministry operates the local government system of the country through the Division of Local Government which comprises both the rural and urban local governments. The three-tier rural local government system comprises of the Zilla Parishad (District Council), Upazilla Parishad (Sub-district Council), and the Union Parishad. In contrast, the urban local government is single tier (the Municipality/ City Corporation). The structure of the local government system shows that the national government has significant influence and connection with the local government through the division of the local government at the LGRD ministry. The central government remains the primary source of financing for the local government. It is also operating under undesirable control and influence of the central government which is detrimental to the efficiency, self-sufficiency and autonomy of the local government bodies (Ahmed 2010). As Ahmed (1997:35) observed,

> The existing administrative structure and elected local bodies do reach the grass-roots level and have almost all the features necessary for participatory decentralized administration. But this structure has failed so far to perform efficiently for two reasons. Despite the strong

support for local government enshrined in the Constitution, the central government has compromised these advantages by exercising control over local government and starving these agencies of resources. Most administrative decisions still remain to be taken centrally. Frequently they involve top-level officials in the secretariat, even some ministers depending on the subject. Several abortive attempts have been made at decentralization, but the system has remained highly centralized. As of such, local bodies are characterized by weak administrative capacity, a limited financial and human resource base and little public participation.

2.8.1 Rural Local Government Institutions (RLGIs)

a) Union Parishad: At the bottom of the rural local government institutions is the Union Parishad. As shown in figure 2.1 below, the Union Parishad (UP) is headed by a chairman and 12 members (9 general and 3 reserved seats). It is divided into 9 Wards and from each of the Wards 1 member is elected through universal adult franchise. Nine (9) UP members are, therefore, directly elected from the 9 Wards of the Union Parishad. Election in these Wards is open to both male and female permanent inhabitants of the respective UPs although, as mentioned earlier, there has been minimal participation of women in the general seats. Besides the general seats, there are provisions of reserving three (3) member positions for women in each Union Parishad. To achieve this, the entire Union
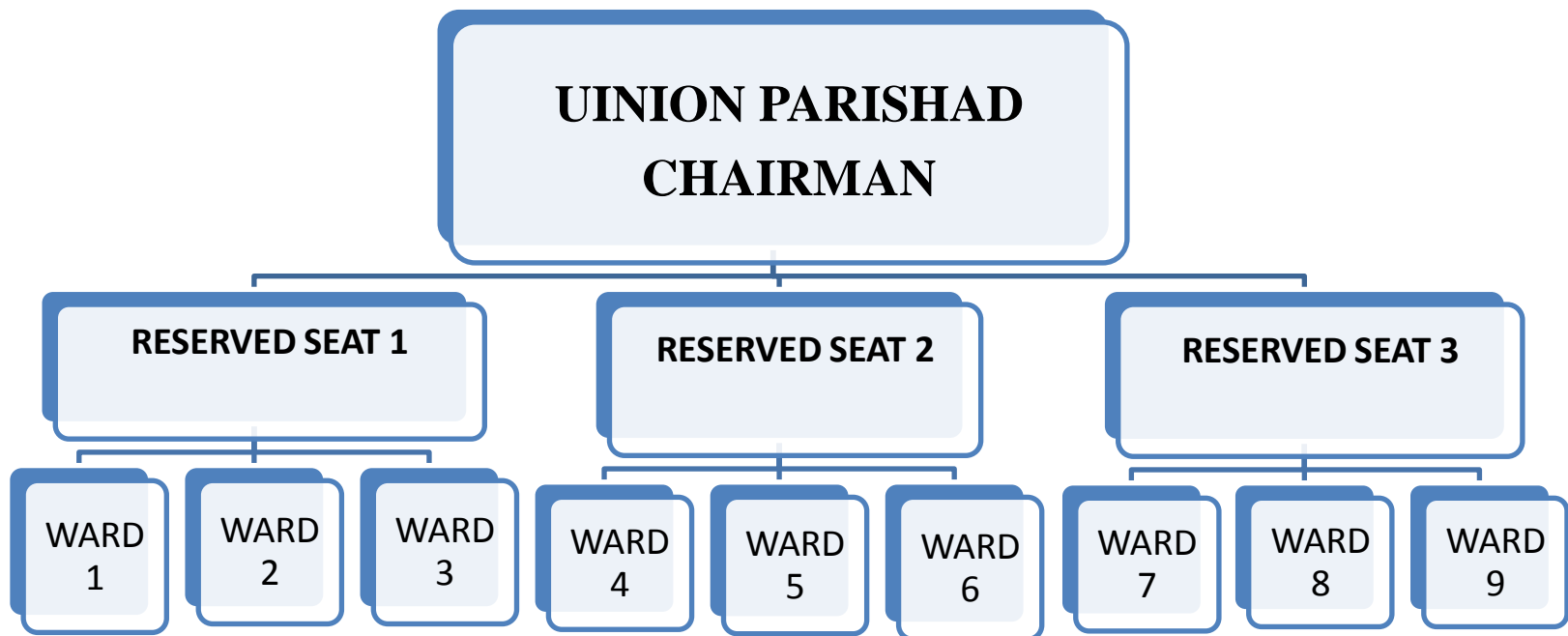
Figure 2.1: Organizational structure of Union Parishad in Bangladesh

Source of information: Local Government Ordinance 1997 (figure drawn by author)

Parishad is divided into 3 Units, each unit comprising 3 wards of the UP. A Woman Member elected from these reserved Units, in such, represents a constituency of 3 Wards from which 3 (usually male) members are elected to general seats. To avoid confusion, throughout this thesis I use the term 'Woman Member' to signify a member elected from these reserved Units (comprising 3 Wards) and 'Male Member' as a member elected in the general seats of a Ward.

b) Upazilla Parishad: An Upazilla is an administrative unit and consists of the Union Parishads (generally 6-12) within its territory. An Upazilla Parishad is headed by a Chairman, elected directly by popular votes. Furthermore, all the Union Parishad chairmen, ex-officio, serve as members of the Upazilla Parishad.

c) Zilla Parishad: A Zilla Parishad consists of a Chairman nominated by the government and the Upazilla Chairmen as members of the body.

2.8.2 Urban Local Government Institutions (ULGIs)

a) Pouroshova/Municipals: The composition of a Pouroshova/Municipal is like that of a Union Parishad. It is headed by a Mayor. A Pouroshova/Municipal is divided into 9 Wards which each have 1 directly-elected representative called the Councillor. Therefore, there are 9 Councillors Furthermore, there are provisions of 3 reserved Councillor seats for women. Thus, each female Councillor of these reserved seats has a constituency of a Unit comprising 3 general Wards.

b) City Corporation: Composition of a City Corporation is similar to that of the Pouroshova/Municipals. A City Corporation is headed by a Mayor who is elected directly. However, the number of Wards in a City Corporation may vary from one city to another depending on the area and population. As an illustration,

the urban study area of this thesis covers 1 city corporation, namely the Rajshahi City Corporation which has 30 wards. Each Ward directly elects 1 Councillor along with one-third reserved seats for women. The central focus of this thesis, however, is on the lowest tier of the rural government body (Union Parishad) as well as the only tier of the urban local government (Pouroshova/City Corporation).

The local government ordinance assigns a broad range of activities to the rural and urban local government institutions encompassing local development, civic management and community welfare. The functions of the LGIs are classified into two types: the fundamental/obligatory functions; and optional functions. The obligatory functions are as follows:

- Maintenance of law and order in the local government areas;

- To assist administration controlling crime and social disorder;

- Undertake development projects in the areas of agriculture, fisheries, forestry, health, sanitation and cottage industry;

- Assisting to expand family planning programmes;

- Maintenance of public properties;

- Register birth and death and listing of destitute people;

- Conducting census and assisting surveys.

Apart from these mandatory duties, the LGIs are often delegated other tasks to facilitate and implement the national government's agendas and services to local residents. These tasks vary across localities and seasons. These additional jobs include distribution of relief and welfare transfer, judicial probe, sports and playground development, promotion of microcredit, tree plantation, assisting in

vaccination, water and energy supply, environment and domestic cleanliness, awareness campaign against dowry and other social stigma, etc.

2.9 Conclusion

Democracy nurtures human rights, including the political rights of individuals irrespective of gender, class, caste and ethnicity. Upholding individual choice and capability is a building block of modern democracy. Women's participation in the decision-making process is imperative considering that women representatives can better understand the needs of women from their own experience. However, there are numerous social, economic, cultural and political constraints to the attainment of women's participation in the political offices. Considering such obstacles, the government of Bangladesh promulgated the Local Government Ordinance 1997 to introduce direct election in the reserved seats. The following chapters will explore the extent to which that was successful in empowering women in Bangladesh.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: CAPABILITY APPROACH, GENDER PLANNING AND CONCEPTUALIZATION OF EMPOWERMENT

The real wealth of a nation is its people. And the purpose of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy, and creative lives. This simple but powerful truth is too often forgotten in the pursuit of material and financial wealth.

—Mahbub Ul Haq.[16]

3.1 Introduction

Scholars have discussed empowerment from different perspectives and offered different frameworks for its pursuit. These varying theories not only discuss the factors underlying the causes of gender inequality, but also outlines agendas for gender planning and empowerment. This Chapter discusses theories of empowerment, the dimensions of empowerment and finally presents the empowerment framework I am using in this dissertation.

3.2 Human Capability Approach: Ability to Pursue One's Own Goal

The Capability Approach considers the true manifestation of development to be freedom of people to live a life they value (Sen 1999, Nussbaum 1999, 2000). In Sen's (1999) words, development is the expansion of people's capability

---

[16] cited from Human Development Report, 1990.

in working, educating, learning, being sheltered, being politically active and enjoying a healthy life. To him, the key focus of development should not emphasize income levels or consumption, rather capabilities—people's potential for doing and being: "the ability to satisfy certain crucially important functionings up to certain minimally adequate levels" (Sen 1999: 41). Accordingly, resources are only means which often cannot guarantee people's well-being as people's abilities to convert resources into capabilities and functioning differ due to personal, socio-political or environmental constraints. These constraints include norms and values, traditions, legal rules and so on. The average household income, for example, does not offer any indication of the gender-power relations and the ability of women to make any life choices. Capability Approach, therefore, focuses on *agency*: the ability of people to set and pursue their own goals and interests (Sen 1999). It emphasizes individual action at the forefront: how she acts or refuses to act; and how she chooses or declines. It views people as *active agents* rather than as *patients* who might or might not have material well-being.

Nussbaum (1999, 2000, 2007, 2011) considered capabilities to be closely linked with human rights. She argued that there are certain capabilities that can be considered to have universal value. Nussbaum emphasized a dignified life for women as human beings,a life that has truly human functioning. To her, conventional development measures such as GDP and economic growth have overlooked the issues of distribution and equality, and also failed to disaggregate and separately consider the diverse elements of a human being's quality of life (Nussbaum 1999, 2000, 2011). Accordingly, certain rights for women are necessary to establish gender equality, such as, bodily integrity, the right to live

free from domestic violence, and freedom from sexual harassment at home and in the workplace. In her own words Nussbaum (2011: 1) stated,

> "Consider Vasanti, a woman in her thirties, in the Indian state of Gujarat. Vasanti's husband was a gambler and an alcoholic. He used the household money to get drunk, and when he ran out of that money he got a vasectomy in order to take the cash incentive payment offered by local government. So Vasanti had no children to help her. Eventually, as her husband became more abusive, she could no longer live with him, and returned to her own family."

Nussbaum (1999, 2000, 2011) argued that the measure of GDP simply cannot answer how Vasanti's familial, social, and political circumstances affected her ability to enjoy good health, her bodily integrity, self-respect and the sense of her own as a person and citizen. In the cases like Vasanti, she argues, development policies should focus beyond the increase of GDP, and promote a wide range of human capabilities, that is the policy choice enabling people to function effectively with the opportunities and capabilities they have to fully command human life. There are 10 capabilities that she claimed as central requirements to a dignified life. She argued that these ten capabilities are a minimum requirement for social justice; and a society that fails to ensure such capabilities for all of its citizens at a certain threshold level is not a just society irrespective of its level of prosperity. Malhotra, Schuler and Boender (2002) also argued that such universal ideals and complete standards are essential to identify empowerment across countries and social settings. These human capabilities are often considered as the barometer in the analysis of women's empowerment. The lists and the ideals provided by Nussbaum (1999, 2000) can be considered as the focal point to assess the material and non-material well-being of women.

Central Human Capabilities

1. Life. Being able to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so diminished as to be not worth doing.

2. Bodily health. Being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter.

3. Bodily integrity. Being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction.

4. Senses, imagination and thought. Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think and reason-and to do these things in a truly human way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing works and events of one's own choice, religious, literary, musical and so forth. Being able to use one's mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able o have pleasurable experiences, and to avoid non-necessary pain.

5. Emotions. Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one's emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety.

6. Practical reason. Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life (which entails one's protection for the liberty of conscience).

7. Affiliation.

A. Being able to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another and to have compassion for that situation; to have the capability for both justice and friendship. (Protecting this capability means protecting institutions that constitute and nourish such forms of affiliation, and also protecting the freedom of assembly and political speech).

B. Having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails protections against discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, religion, caste, ethnicity, or national origin.

8. Other species. Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants and the world of nature.

9. Play. Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.

10. Control over one's environment.

A. Political. Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life; having the right of political participation, protection of free speech and association.

B. Material. Being able to hold property (both land and moveable goods); having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others; having freedom from unwanted search and seizure. In work, being able to work as a human being, exercising practical reason and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers.

Source: Nussbaum (2011: 7-9).

As Nussbaum (2000: 36) mentioned,

> What this approach is after is a society in which persons are treated as each worthy of regard and in which each has been put in a position to live really humanly......we say that beneath a certain level of capability a person has not been enabled to live in a truly human way.....the capabilities are sought *for each and every person*......The ultimate political goal is always promotion of the capabilities of *each person.*

A number of countries now endorse these rights (Nussbaum 1999, 2000, 2007, 2011). The constitution of Bangladesh also upholds that the citizens will have the freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom of religious exercise, to assemble peacefully, to form associations, and to be treated equally irrespective

of gender, race and religion. The reservation of seats for women and the provision of direct election can also be seen in line with the capability approach that attempts to promote political participation for all citizens.

3.3 Gender and Development Planning: Moser's Framework

Moser (1993) considered empowerment at the individual level with control over resources as the primary means for redistribution of power. Accordingly, empowerment comprises control over material and non-material resources, ability to make choices as well as influencing the direction of changes. To Moser (1989: 1815), empowerment is the "ability to enhance women's self-confidence and internal strength". Apart from economic empowerment, women's psychological empowerment is equally important to raise self-esteem and confidence necessary to bring tangible changes within family and the surroundings. It refutes the WID approach of the 1970s which encouraged women's issues as separate concerns. Instead it was part of the GAD approach advocating for integrated gender development planning in all development works and interventions (March, Smyth and Mukhopadhyay 2000).

The Moser framework (Moser 1993) is designed to set up gender planning. The goal of gender planning is "the emancipation of women from their subordination, and their achievement of equality, equity and empowerment" (Moser 1993:1). The Moser framework consists of three core concepts:

i)   Women's triple role

ii) Practical and strategic gender needs of women

iii) Policy matrix in line with GAD/WID approaches.

i) **Women's triple role:** Moser argued that women in the lower income groups are burdened with a triple role in most societies: the reproductive role, the productive role and the community role. In contrast, men are primarily performing productive and community roles only.

a) *Reproductive work:* Moser identified reproductive work as care and maintenance of the households and family members, rearing children, preparing food, collecting water and fuel, shopping, housekeeping and health care. In the developing countries like Bangladesh, reproductive work is labour-intensive but non-marketed and, therefore, remains invisible. It is always seen to be women's role. Moser argued that the reproductive role is important for the production and reproduction of human labour necessary for production, yet it is seldom considered as real work.

b) *Productive work:* This includes work relating to production of goods and services for consumption and trade. Such works can be both self-employment and paid employment, and both men and women are involved in productive work. However, in the patriarchal societies like Bangladesh women's work, though productive, is often less visible and less valued than men's. Furthermore, being engaged with the reproductive role, women are getting less time available to be engaged in productive work.

c) *Community work:* These consist of social events and volunteer associations including ceremonies, celebrations, festivals, social gatherings and political or organisational involvement. Both men and women are part of these but in a conservative social setting like Bangladesh women find it difficult to lead social events. Moser argued that women are often involved in unpaid and voluntary community activities such as water, environment and education

management,which is an extension of their reproductive role. Men, on the other hand, occupy the political and organizational positions and benefit directly or indirectly from such.

ii) Gender needs assessment: Like Molyneux (1985), Moser argued that women as a particular group have certain needs different from men, not only because that they are different from men and they have to fulfil their triple roles, but also because of their distressing position in most societies. Moser distinguishes two types of needs important for women:

a) *Practical gender needs:* Moser defined practical gender needs as those which are important to the life of women in a given context. It does not challenge the existing gender-power relations and therefore, does not attempt to reverse women's subordinate position. In the context of Bangladesh, women's practical gender needs may include water provision, health-care provision, earning for maintaining households, provision for housing and basic services, and distribution of food.

b) *Strategic gender needs:* These are necessary to transform existing gender relations. These needs arise because of women's subordinate position to men. Strategic gender needs vary across societies and depend on the particular nature of subordination of women. Meeting strategic gender needs help to ensure equality of women with that of men and eliminate any biases against women. In the socio-economic perspective of Bangladesh, strategic gender needs may include elimination of gendered division of labour, alleviation of domestic role and child rearing, elimination of discrimination in legal rights, provision of reproductive health, and the elimination of violence against women.

iii) Policy mix for gendered development: Moser framework presented five different types of policy mixes to meet practical and strategic gender needs and for empowering women.

a) *Welfare:* It focuses on women's practical gender needs as mother and care-giver. In the context of Bangladesh it may include food assistance, intervention against malnutrition, provision of safe water, family planning and so on. The welfare approach is essentially top-down strategy and does not challenge existing gender relations.

b) *Equity:* It recognises women's triple role and seeks to meet both practical and strategic gender needs for women. In the case of Bangladesh, equity may require state intervention to eliminate institutional and legal inequalities against women, and therefore, requires top-down strategies.

c) *Anti-poverty:* This approach argued that women are disproportionately poorest of the poor. The objective of the anti-poverty policy is, therefore, to bring women out of poverty trap. It emphasizes women's productive work, income-generating projects and seeks to meet practical gender needs.

d) *Efficiency:* It recognizes women's triple role and seeks to increase efficiency in women's allocation of time in each role. It is often criticised for not targeting gender-power relations and is accused of reproducing systematic gender inequality. However, it is popular among the policy-makers as it stresses women's welfare without any associated cost for the men.

e) *Empowerment:* It recognizes that women's subordinate position is a systematic function of various factors including social-legal-racial and institutional factors. It seeks to address gender inequality in order to provide them meaningful and valuable life of their own choice. It recognizes triple role and

targets to meet strategic gender needs through grassroots mobilisation, legal formulation and welfare measures.

The Moser Framework offers a methodology to identify strategies to integrate gender in development intervention and to combat gender inequality in communities, organizations and institutions. The concept of practical and strategic gender needs is important for any policy intervention for women's empowerment. At the same time, the identification of the triple role provides visible area of policy intervention from gender perspective. However, Kabeer (1994) argued that it was not clear in Moser's framework who does what and how, and what is produced. Kabeer was also concerned whether community work should be considered to generate third type of resource and whether labour is organised individually or collectively.

3.4 Institutions, Inequality and Empowerment: Social Relations Approach

Kabeer (1994) presents the social relations approach to analyse existing gender inequalities in the distribution of resources, power and responsibilities. In the social relations approach, development is seen essentially to enhance human well-being in terms of survival, security and autonomy, where autonomy is individual's ability and complete participation in the decisions that affects one's choice and life chances. The social relations approach is based on some key concepts:

i) Development as increasing human well-being: To the social relations approach, development is not just market production but also those activities that

contribute to human well-being, including those tasks to reproduce human labour (e.g., caring and nurturing), those tasks important for the poor to survive, and those which people carry out to maintain their environment and to defend their livelihood.

ii) **Social relations, inequality and poverty:** Kabeer (1994) argued that social relations indicate the structural relationship that creates and reproduces systematic differences and inequalities among groups of people. Social relations determine one's identity in a given context, her roles and responsibilities, rights, claims and obligations. They determine one's control over one's own life and choices as well as those of others. Social relations also determine the tangible and non-tangible assets one might possess individually as well as collectively. Social relations are, thus, seen to produce cross-cutting inequalities that determine one's position in the hierarchy of the society, and gender relations are only a part of the social relations. Poverty is argued to be the outcome of unequal social relations that results in unequal claim of individuals on resources, relationships and responsibilities. It is argued that disadvantaged people, particularly women are excluded from the formal allocation of resources, and hence are more dependent on their stock of social relations. They rely more on their friends, relatives and neighbours to sustain livelihood. Resources of this kind available through social relations are so important that often it is argued that "poverty is being alone" (Kabeer 1994, cited from March, Smyth and Mukhopadhyay 2000: 104).

iii) **Institutions and inequality:** Kabeer (1994) argued that gender inequality is not only produced at the household level but also may be present and systematically reproduced at the institutions and organisations. According to Kabeer, institutions are the framework of rules and organisations, which are the

structural forms that institutions take. Institutions are assumed to produce, reproduce and reinforce existing social relations and thereby, gender inequality. To Kabeer, institutions are placed in four phases: the state, market, community and family levels. At the state level, there are legal, political, military and administrative institutions; at the market level institutions are taking places in firms and financial institutions; while community level institutions comprises of village tribunals, cooperatives, informal associations, NGOs, and patron-client relationships; and finally family level institutions are the households, extended families, lineage groupings and so on. Kabeer argued that the institutions are not independent, rather, inter-dependent in producing and reproducing gender inequalities in a society. For example, any state intervention that provides high yielding seeds of cash crops to the men will affect the gender-power relations at the households.

There are five aspects in Kabeer's analysis of institutions:

a) *Rules:* how things get done;

b) *Activities:* what is done;

c) *Resources:* what is used and what is produced;

d) *People:* who is in, who is out and who does what; and

e) *Power:* who decides, and whose interests are served.

iv) Institutions and gender policies: Kabeer (1994) identified institutional policies in different categories to the extent they recognize and address existing gender relations.

a) *Gender-blind policies:* These are the institutional policies that do not put any emphasis on particular sexes in considering development initiatives. As such, they are producing existing social relations and gender inequalities in due course.

b) *Gender-neutral policies:* These policies identify specific gender needs for both sexes and policies are designed such that the needs of both sexes are met. Gender-neutral policies, thus, work within the existing gender-power relations and do not challenge patriarchy.

c) *Gender-specific policies:* These are the policies that recognize and attempt to reverse existing gender differences. They work within existing gender relations and envisage empowering the disempowered with certain interventions.

Thus, the Social Relations Approach offers an in depth understanding of how various institutions are inter-related. It explores the roots of powerlessness, poverty and women's subordination and at the same time shows how institutions can bring changes. It shows how household dynamics may subvert the policies of the state and also how policy intervention in community organizations can influence those relationships. The essence of this approach indicates that the reservation of women's seats in the LGIs has the potential to bring significant improvement in the gender-power relations in Bangladesh across household as well as community levels.

3.5 Empowerment and Choice: Kabeer's Framework

Kabeer (1999, 2001, 2002) considered empowerment in terms of *ability to make choices* where those choices had previously been unavailable. To her, "empowerment is the expansion of people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them" (Kabeer 1999:

437). Empowerment in such condition is the process by which individuals attain certain abilities. As Kabeer (1999: 437) also explained, "empowerment entails a process of change". To Kabeer (1999), people who are powerful may command an enormous sphere of choices but it is not empowerment as they are not disempowered at the beginning. Kabeer (1999, 2003) also argued that real choice must possess two characteristics in common:

(i) *There must be alternative to choose*. Here disempowerment may go hand in hand with poverty. As Kabeer (1999) argued, poverty implies inadequate means of meeting one's choice. She, however, mentioned that choices may be of different orders. Some choices are strategic and critical to one's life such as choice of livelihood, choice to marry, to have children, freedom of movement, choice of association, choice of friends, etc. Kabeer called them as first order choices. In contrast, second order choices are less consequential but imperative to improve the quality of one's life.

(ii) *Alternatives must not only exist but also need to be visible*. She argued that women who internalize traditional gender roles or considers violence by husbands as normal may do so assuming non-existence of alternatives. These behaviours of women are, therefore, not reflecting their choice but absence of choice.

Kabeer (1999, 2003) explained individual's ability to make strategic choices and the process of empowerment through three inter-related dimensions:

Resources	*Agency*	*Achievement*
(pre-conditions)	(process)	(outcomes)

Kabeer (2003) argued that *Resources* are required for individuals to exercise agency. Resources can be material as well as human and social. Resources enable individuals to bargain. As Kabeer argued, paid work for women, for example, provides women with stronger fall-back positions from which to bargain, andconsequently, can be seen to increase her agency within the household. She further argued that the more visible the resource is, the greater is the fall-back position and the stronger is the agency. However, some individuals might have greater control of the distribution of resources, such as, the heads of the households, chiefs of the tribes, director of firms, etc. Access to and the distributions of resources, accordingly, depend on people's ability to define priorities and enforce claims.

Agency comprises of the action of the individuals to exercise choice, including decision-making, protesting, bargaining and declining. It refers to the meaning, motivation and purpose of the individual's action. It is, therefore, more than one's observable action, the purpose that brought people to certain activity, their *sense* of agency, or the power within. Agency is argued to take both negative and positive form:

a) *Positive sense*—power to: it refers to individual's ability to make their own life choices and to act accordingly even in the event of other's opposition.

b) *Negative sense*—power over: it refers to certain individual's ability to interrupt and influence agency of the others in the form of exercising authority, control and even violence.

The notion of power to, thus, states that people make their own life choices and act on those choices even if there is resistance from others. But power over

refers that people might have denied choices by the powerful, and hence lays the ground for empowerment. That is, agency in relation to empowerment not only indicates the exercise of choice by individuals but also to challenge the power relations.

Kabeer's *achievement* is similar to Sen's *capability* (Sen 1987, 1999) which allows people to live lives of their own choice using *agency* and *resources.* According to Kabeer achievement has to be seen through two perspectives: the agency exercised by the people, and the outcome of such agency. For example, women's paid work may reflect their agency and self-reliance. Again it might be the case that such paid work is in fact a distress-sale of labour, having no choice of alternatives. In the first case, paid work is empowerment of women, but it is disempowerment in the latter. This is similar to what Sen (1987, 1999) coined as functioning achievement, the particular ways of being and doing valued by people.

Kabeer (1999, 2001) argued that the ability to choose in the process of empowerment might require changes at various levels. The individual level consists of changes in the sense of oneself: how an individual perceives one's interests and outcomes and how he/she acts to achieve such outcomes. In this context changes in the relationship at the personal level and about the rules and procedures at the socio-political and economic spheres indicate an intermediate level of empowerment. In contrast, structural changes at the governance and policy level that decreases inequality resembles changes at the deeper levels. Accordingly, an improved economic condition does not necessarily bring empowerment as it might not challenge existing power relations. Similarly, changes that reduce structural inequality must make real changes in terms of

choice and outcomes to reflect meaningful empowerment (Kabeer 2001, Sen 1987, Dreze and Sen 1999).

3.6 Women and Politics: Institutional Approach

Institutions such as electoral rules, ballot systems, district size, and the number of political parties are important factors affecting political participation (Rule 1987, Rule and Zimmerman 1994, Caul 1999). March and Olsen (1984, 1989, 1995) and Krook (2003) further emphasized informal institutions such as routines, conventions, norms and cognitive beliefs to affect women's political participation.

Institutions are often analysed from three broad spectrums, namely: the historical perspective, the rational choice perspective and the sociological perspective (Hall and Taylor 2006). The historical analysis considers institutions at the macro or meso level. It considers institutions as long term ramifications of certain formal and informal conventions, routines and practices in various political, societal and economic organizations (Thelen 1999, Mahoney 2000). Accordingly, the inequality of power arises from unequal provision in those institutions and consequently women's empowerment requires changes in such institutions.

The rational choice paradigm takes institutions at the micro level and emphasizes restructuring particular incentives and reducing uncertainty in order to create conducive participatory environment for all (North 1990, Weingast 2002). The rational choice scholars emphasize the origin of the institutions and mechanism of their functioning. Accordingly, institutions are the conventions and

practices that the actors at various organisations follow in solving collective action phenomenon (Ostrom 1990, Weingast 2002). Finally, sociological institutionalists consider institutions between the micro and macro level political interactions. They consider institutions as formal procedures, rules and practices as well as social norms, symbols, cognitive scripts and moral templates which guide and affect human action (March and Olsen 1989, DiMaggio and Powell 1983). They argue that the institutional practices, procedures and changes need social acceptance in order to sustain their effect (Krook 2003).

The general consensus of different institutional paradigms is that there are two channels to affect political participation of women:

i) Institutions as rules to shape politics: Rules are the most important determinant to define institutions and to shape the governing behaviour of any institutions (Peters 1999). Rules may also set incentives for individuals to conform and sanction for disobeying certain institutional practices (Knight 1992). Institutional rules, accordingly, define who will do what, how and when. In respective to the local government system in Bangladesh, it indicates that rules defining electoral districts, size of the constituency, and role and responsibilities of the elected representatives would play important role shaping women's empowerment. It is important to note here that the Local Government Ordinance (1997) only reserves seats for women equivalent to one-third of the general seats which are supposed to be occupied by the male candidates. The rule, therefore, ensures on the one hand women's representation in local government, and on the other, women's minority participation in the local government system (1 reserved seat for women for every 3 general seats). As well, the ordinance did not specify the role and responsibilities of women representatives,creating a caveat on the

performance of women. Considering the age old patriarchy and being the minority in the local government body it is likely that such an institutional caveat would put women representatives in difficult circumstances to perform their roles. Institutional reforms may appear necessary in such conditions in order to enable women representatives to truly function.

ii) Institutions as history: Institutional functioning and governing practices also depend on historical growth (Douglas 1982, Berman 1983, Patterson 1995). Institutions develop over time through the interaction of the personnel it is served by, the interest groups it generates, the focus interests it develops, and the manner in which it copes with the rest of the social settings (Yukl 1981). Since each institution has its own history, its courses of action grow uniquely in its time-dependent path of development (Scott 1995). The US Constitution, for example, reached its present state over a period of 200 years (Patterson and Copeland 1994).

The local government institution in Bangladesh has a long tradition to serve the community although society is based on a strong patriarchy seeking the confinement of women in the household. The reservation of seats came only in 1976. Considering this historical socio-cultural perspective, it is perhaps not surprising that the regulations and provisions in the 1997 Act would take some time to bring positive change in empowering women.

3.7 Empowerment: Definitions and Dimensions

3.7.1 Empowerment: Various Focuses, Diverse Terminologies

The literature on women's empowerment uses various terminologies and assorted definitions. Various studies attempted to explore women's well-being as

women's autonomy (Dixon 1978, Dyson and Moore 1983, Basu and Basu 1991, Jeejebhoy and Sathar 2001), women's agency and status (Gage 1995, Tzannatos 1999), gender equality and gender discrimination (World Bank 2001a, 2001b) and gender equity (Reeves and Baden 2000). The common notion of all these terms is that empowerment (or autonomy and gender equality) is a process that makes women capable of having control over their own lives in the family as well as in the community, society, markets and states. Some writers (e.g., Mason 1998, Mason and Smith 2000, Jeejebhoy 2000) also used these terms interchangeably.

Dyson and Moore (1983:45) described female autonomy as the capacity of a woman to manipulate her personal environment, "autonomy indicates the ability—technical, social, and psychological—to obtain information and to use it as the basis for making decisions about one's private concerns and those of one's intimates. Thus, equality of autonomy between the sexes in the present sense implies equal decision-making ability with regard to personal affairs". Dixon (1978:6) defined autonomy in terms of women's control over the very basic issues pertinent for a valued life. Accordingly, women's autonomy is, "the degree of women's access to (and control over) material resources (including food, income, land, and other forms of wealth) and to social resources (including knowledge, power, and prestige) within the family, in the community, and in the society at large". Jeejebhoy and Sathar (2001: 688) also emphasized women's control over material and non-material resources in relation to others in the family. They define female autonomy by the, "control women have over their own lives—the extent to which they have an equal voice with their husbands in matters affecting themselves and their families, control over material and other resources, access to knowledge and information, the authority to make independent decisions, freedom

from constraints on physical mobility, and the ability to forge equitable power relationships within families".

The World Bank (2001a: 2) considers gender equality as equality under the law, equal opportunity for work, education and other productive resources and equality of voice and expression. As such, gender equality is the "equivalence in life outcomes for women and men, recognizing their different needs and interests, and requiring a redistribution of power and resources". Gender equity, also asserts diverse interests of men and women. Accordingly, "women and men have different needs, preferences, and interests and that equality of outcomes may necessitate different treatment of men and women" (Reeves and Baden 2000: 10).

The concept of empowerment, however, has some distinguishing elements from other concepts. *First,* the fundamental feature of empowerment is that it is a process to bring changes in existing gender relations (Chen 1992, Rowlands 1995, Kabeer 2001). *Second,* empowerment emphasizes agency, that is, women themselves must be the actor of the changes. If women are just the recipient of changes rather than being agents, it is not empowerment (Kabeer 2001, Rowlands 1995). It is, thus, a bottom-up approach of development rather than the top-down. Jejeebhoy (2000), therefore, argued that empowerment is a dynamic notion that measures changes over time, whereas, autonomy refers a static state and, hence, can be measured with available indicators.

3.7.2 Empowerment, Poverty and Development

The term empowerment has been used to describe various metaphors and outcomes. The top-down (or the trickle-down) approach of development considered empowerment closely related with poverty (Chambers 1997).

Accordingly, poverty is the state and source of disempowerment and empowerment requires bringing the lower levels into the development process.

Bennett (2002: 13) considered empowerment as closely related with social inclusion. To her, "empowerment is the enhancement of assets and capabilities of diverse individuals and groups to engage influence and hold accountable the institutions which affect them". Social inclusion, in contrast, is "the removal of institutional barriers and the enhancement of incentives to increase the access of diverse individuals and groups to assets and development opportunities". She further argued that empowerment is the process operating "from below", whereas social inclusion is initiated "from above". This requires systematic changes taken from the top. Ravallion and Chen (2003) and Narayan (2002) also emphasized social inclusion from above for the empowerment of the poor. They argued that the development coming from the top is important so that the rules of the game are altered and the institutions are reorganised in order to provide spaces for the poor and to share the benefit of the growth by all.

The widely used conception of empowerment, however, focuses on the enhancement of freedom of choice and action (Sen 1999, Kabeer 2001, 2002, Nussbaum 2000). Empowerment in such is seen to have universal application for the distressed and disempowered, e.g., the poor or ethnic minorities. However, the feminist scholars argue that empowerment of women has several unique elements to consider. *First,* women are not just one group among many disadvantaged groups. Rather, they are individuals who overlap with all other groups. *Second,* the household and intra-family relations are one of the central focuses of women's empowerment which is not evidenced in the event among other disempowered groups. *Third,* women empowerment requires not only changes in women's lives

and capacity but also in the institutions that support patriarchal structures (Batliwala 1994, Sen 1999, Kabeer 2001).

3.7.3 Empowerment: The Process and Elements

The literature argued various elements and changes required for women's empowerment. Chen (1992) considered resources, perceptions, relationships and power as the central constructs of empowerment. Similar arguments are also found in Batliwala (1994) who emphasized empowerment as control over resources and ideology. Rowlands (1995: 89) stated empowerment as the "process whereby women become able to organise themselves to increase their own self-reliance, to assert their independent right to make choices and control resources which will assist in challenging and eliminating their own subordination". To her, empowerment at the individual level is associated with psychological processes such as self-esteem, self-confidence and sense of being active agent. Furthermore, individual empowerment is closely related with collective empowerment and changes in one dimension are interlinked with the other. UNICEF (2001) argued for access to and control over resources, awareness, participation, and welfare as the condition of empowerment. The Inter-American Development Bank (2010: 3) defined women's empowerment in terms of "expanding the rights, resources, and capacity of women to make decisions and act independently in social, economic and political spheres".

Friedmann (1992) considered empowerment from three types of power: social, political and psychological. Accordingly, social power emanates from possessing knowledge, information and skills. All these enable individuals to enhance household production and to create political power. Political power is the

mechanism to affect and influence policy changes at the macro and micro level. Psychological power is cognitive in nature, manifested in self-confidence and enhanced self-esteem. Moser (1993) emphasized women's economic empowerment as well as psychological empowerment. Accordingly, psychological empowerment consisting of self-confidence and esteem is as important as economic empowerment in order to enhance the material and non-material well-being of women. Mayoux (2000: 3) also echoed that, "women's empowerment is more than simply marginal increase in income—it requires a transformation of power relations....this means that development must take into account, not only income level but also relations within households, markets, and communities, national and international economies".

Recent trends in the literature conceptualize empowerment in terms of women's agency and capability of making choices (Malhotra et al 2002, Alsop and Heinsohn 2005, WDR 2012). Kabeer (1994, 1999 & 2001) described empowerment as choice which is inter-related with agency and achievement necessary for valued living. She argued that, "empowerment should be considered as an aspect of perceiving oneself as an active agent capable of making decision" (Kabeer 1994). Sen (1999) mentioned agency as the process to eliminate numerous sort of unfreedoms that limits one's choice and agency. The UN (2001) defined women's empowerment in terms of five components: "women's sense of self-worth; their right to have and determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally" (cited from Kabeer 2012a: 7). Alsop and

Heinsohn (2005: 6) considered women empowerment when "they possess the capacity to make effective choices: that is, to translate these choices into desired actions and outcomes". The World Development Report (2012) argued women's empowerment in broader dimensions of agency including control over resources, freedom of movement, freedom from violence, and voice over collective decision-making processes.

3.8 Empowerment Framework in this Dissertation

The empowerment framework applied in this dissertation is, in particular, grounded on the scholarly works of Chen (1992), Friedmann (1992), Moser (1993), Kabeer (1994, 1999), Rowlands (1995), Sen (1999), Mayoux (2000), UN (2001) and Alsop and Heinsohn (2005). The term 'empowerment' has been explained and defined from diverse perspectives. The common argument is that empowerment is the process that brings changes in existing gender relations and makes women capable of having control over their own lives (Chen 1992, Rowlands 1995, Kabeer 1999, Inter-American Development Bank 2010). In Kabeer's framework (1999), choice is inter-related with resources, agency and achievement necessary to pursue one's own goal and interest for valued living. The empowerment framework of my thesis (see figure 3.1), in this context, will focus on women representative's agency in performing their roles and responsibilities, the resources they control and use and the outcome achieved in terms of the life they command and the development initiatives they lead.

Moser (1993), Rowlands (1995) and Kabeer (1999, 2001) considered empowerment as women's ability to enhance self-confidence and internal strength. Accordingly, women's psychological empowerment is equally important

along with economic empowerment to raise self-esteem and confidence necessary to bring tangible changes within family and the surroundings. Moser's framework considers three core issues: women's triple role; practical and strategic gender needs; and policy mix comprising welfare, efficiency, equity, anti-poverty and empowerment. Hence, this thesis investigates women representatives' personal development as a key indicator for empowerment. It explores women representative's self-esteem, confidence and sense of agency in order to measure their empowerment (figure 3.1). It also considers women's control over economic resources as a way to the attainment of other freedoms and agency pertinent to their life choices.

Sen's (1999) Capability Approach, on the other hand, focuses on people's ability to pursue their own goals and emphasizes on individual's action at the forefront: how she acts or refuses to act; and how she chooses or how declines. It views people as an active agent rather than as patient who might or might not have material well-being. The UN (2001), Alsop and Heinsohn (2005) and WDR (2012) also argued for women's active agency as a measure for empowerment. However, it can be argued that the reservation of seats may not necessarily empower women, rather, may create certain vacuums to be filled up by women as proxies for their male guardians (Nanivadekar 2003). This dissertation, in this context, explores whether elected women representatives perform roles and responsibilities of their own or serve as proxies. It investigates not only their outcome or achievement through local government but also the agency: who does what.

The Social Relations Approach (Kabeer 1994) analyses the role of institutions in generating gender inequalities in the distribution of resources,

power and responsibilities. Accordingly, institutions are assumed to produce, reproduce and reinforce existing social relations and hence, gender inequality. There are five aspects in the analysis of institutions: the rules, activities, resources, people and power of the actors. In this context, this thesis will examine the rules, procedures and the people of the local government institutions, and their power and inter-relationships that may shape roles of the elected women representatives and their empowerment.

Scholars also considered empowerment as a top-down strategy. Bennett (2002) considered empowerment as closely related with social inclusion through removal of institutional barriers and to increase the access to assets and development opportunities for diverse groups. Ravallion and Chen (2003) and Narayan (2002) emphasized that such top-down approaches are necessary so that the rules of the game are modified and the institutions are transformed in order to provide spaces for the poor and to share the benefit of the growth by all. In this context, this thesis will investigate the efficacy as well as the limitation of the introduction of direct election in the reserved seats through 1997 Act as a top-down strategy empowering women.

Friedmann (1992), on the other hand, considered empowerment from three kinds of power: social, political and psychological. Accordingly, social power emanates from possessing knowledge, information and skills. All these enable individuals to enhance household production and to create political power. Political power is the mechanism to affect and influence policy changes at the macro and micro level. Psychological power is cognitive in nature, manifested in self-confidence and enhanced self-esteem. This thesis also examines Friedmann's dimensions of power. It will investigate women representatives' self-esteem and

confidence performing roles and responsibilities to measure psychological empowerment. It explores women's mobility out of home, and acceptance and recognition in the society to measure social empowerment. Finally, it explores their role shaping policy and agendas of the local government institutions to quantify political empowerment of the elected women representatives.

The constitution of Bangladesh upholds the principle that citizens have the right to freedom of speech, expression, religious exercise, to assemble peacefully, form association, and treated equally irrespective of gender, race and religion. The reservation of seats for women and the provision of direct election can be seen in line with the above definitions and to analyse women's political participation and empowerment. The empowerment framework of this dissertation resembles these constitutional safeguards along with the scholarly views of the researchers. It emphasizes capacity building which transforms gender relations as the objective for empowering women. Such transformation includes changes in behaviour at various levels: family, reproduction, social and political arenas. It is expected that the performance of the elected women representatives at the local government institutions would also lead to changes in the gender-power relations in other institutions of the society. Transformative capacity building for women representatives is important not only to ensure women representative's better understanding of their roles and functioning but also to empower women in the rest of society, which is the explicit goal of the reservation of women's seats in the 1997 Act.
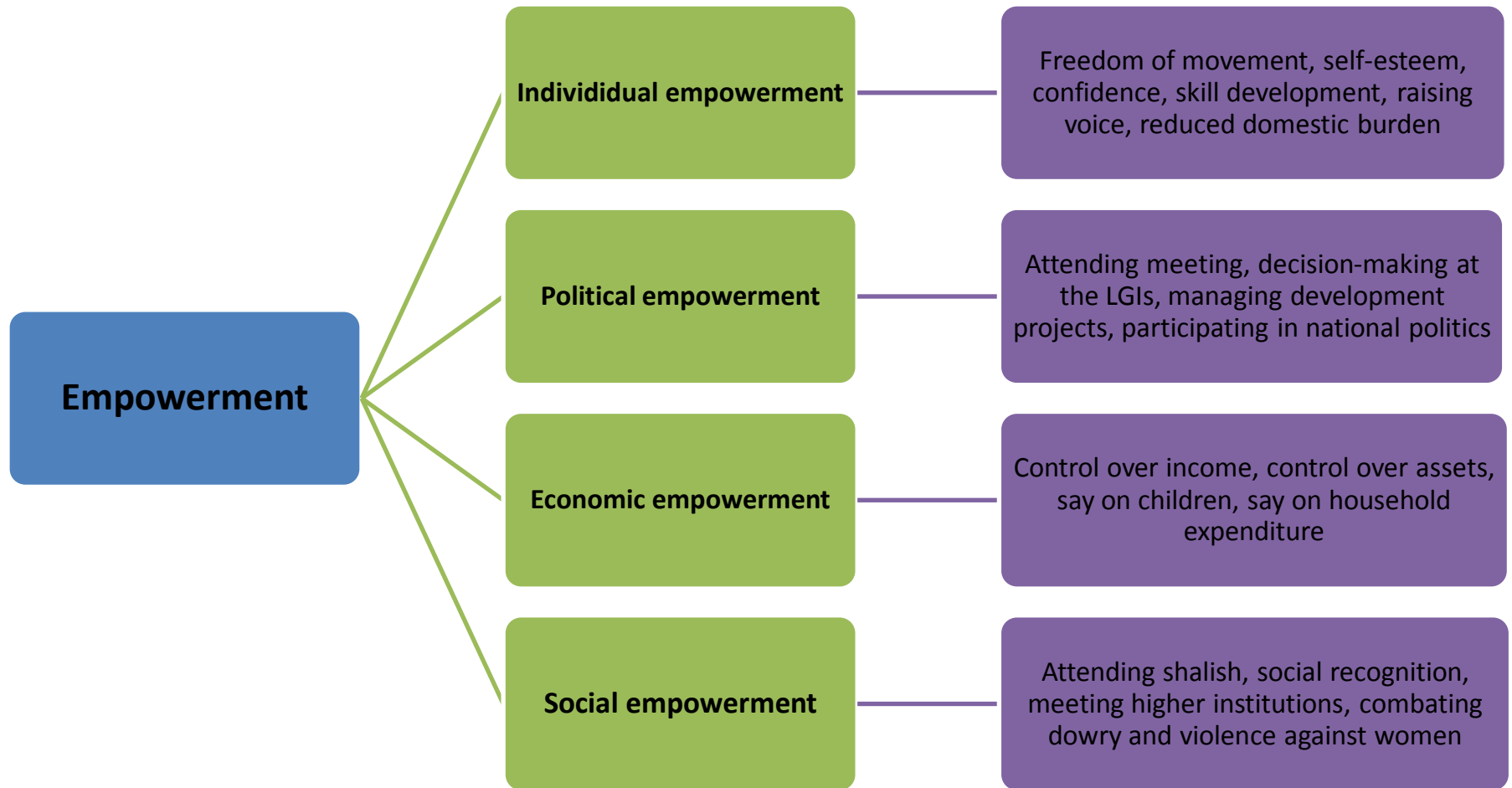
Figure 3.1: Empowerment framework for this study

CHAPTER FOUR

WOMEN IN ELECTORAL POLITICS: ENTRY TO THE PLATFORM

The extensive reach of women's agency is one of the more neglected areas of development studies, and most urgently in need of correction. Nothing, arguably, is as important today in the political economy of development as an adequate recognition of political, economic and social participation and leadership of women.

—Amartya Sen, Development As Freedom, 1999: 203.

4.1 Introduction

It is now almost fifteen years since Sen's (1999) compelling argument that development research and policy interventions should focus on promoting individuals' freedom, agency and capability as the instrumental determinants of meaningful development. Yet after years of intellectual rhetoric and campaigns across the world by donor agencies including the UN the condition of women's empowerment and development remain dismal in the developing world.

The Local Government Ordinance (1997) provided Bangladeshi women the opportunity to take part in direct election in reserved seats for the first time. It is essential to investigate to what extent women were able to make their own decisions regarding whether to stand for election and whether they are able to make political or policy decisions once they have been elected, This chapter explores the extent to which their election opportunities make a difference to the role of women as leaders who act on behalf of women as opposed to puppets. It sheds lights on women representatives' ability and opportunity to choose and, in

such, examines their achievements and empowerment in the decision making process. It is also worthwhile to uncover the characteristics of the female respondents to figure out who are grasping the opportunity opened by the introduction of direct election in the reserved seats. To answer these issues, in particular who are coming into electoral politics and how they are coming into it, I discuss here the socio-economic background of the elected women representatives and also discuss the issues and challenges women representatives have faced in contesting elections.

4.2 Socio-Economic Background of the Elected Women Representatives

So, which women stand for election? Does socio-economic background influence the confidence of women and their ability? Based on my survey data, this section presents a brief picture of the female representatives in Rajshahi to understand the societal and economic conditions they are coming from. These are important to understand the challenge women representatives face within their home and society. It also helps to understand the role that the quota seat system plays in political representation and empowerment of women in local government bodies. The socio-economic indicators under consideration include age, education, income, marital status and profession. In addition, information are also collected regarding the education and income levels of female members' husbands because their position often influences womens' position in the society (Huq 2010, WFP 1999). This will help to build a comprehensive idea about the personal and social profile of the elected women representatives in the local government system of the country.

4.2.1 Age Distribution

Table 4.1 presents the age distribution of the elected women representatives, in categories divided into five year groups. In Bangladesh the minimum age to contest in any election is set at 25 years (Siddiqui 2005). The descriptive weightings of the survey data states that about 63% of the rural women representatives in Rajshahi were below the age of 39. Around 33% of the rural respondents were from the 40s age cohort and only 3.3% of the respondents are 50+ years of age. For the urban local government institutions (ULGIs), the age groups from 40 to 49 are dominant, comprising 53% of respondents. Younger age groups still constitute a significant share of the urban respondents with 47% aged below 39 and none from 50 and above age group.

Table 4.1. Age of the elected women representatives

Age	Rural	Urban	Total
25-29	4 (13.3%)	3 (10%)	7 (11.6%)
30-34	4 (13.3%)	6 (20.0%)	10 (16.7%)
35-39	11 (36.7%)	5 (16.7%)	16 (26.7%)
40-44	6 (20%)	9 (30.0%)	15 (25%)
45-49	4 (13.3%)	7 (23.3%)	11 (18.3%)
50+	1 (3.3%)	-	1 (1.7%)
Total	30 (100.0%)	30 (100.0%)	60 (100.0%)

The age pattern clearly shows a trend towards younger and middle aged women participants in local government politics in the survey area. A similar younger age dominance is also evidenced by, Aktar (2009), Panday (2008a), Rahman and Zaman (2004), and Rahman and Roy (2004) in their studies. Findings of this study show that the introduction of the quota seats has accelerated enthusiasm among the younger generation of women in Rajshahi who have

energy, vision and desire for challenging jobs in public office. Their striving for greater personal freedom, political ambition, and economic independence leads them to take part in the election. This younger generation dominance is not surprising considering the conservative social structure of this Muslim majority country like Bangladesh[17]—where older women are lagging behind due to social norms which have hampered their chances for education and employment. The younger generation with better education and knowledge comes forward in an aspiration for greater economic and political freedom. This is consistent with the thesis that young people are the driving force in the intellectual and organizational leadership of many countries across Asia, Africa and the Latin America (Moller 1968, Jennings et al. 2006, Aguilar-Francis 2012). Accordingly, young people are more active in changing government policies and structural barriers in the developing countries like Bangladesh. They are more pragmatic to be the change maker in a dynamic world (Ross and Mirowsky 1984, Jennings et al 2006). Henn, Wenstein and Wring (2002) and O'Neill (2007) further argued that young people are interested in different sorts of politics that is more inclusive and focused more on localised, immediate and material issues. Referring to young Canadians' engagement in politics, O'Neill (2007: iii) mentioned, "young Canadians display a pattern of civic and political engagement that differentiates them from other Canadians… They show levels of engagement in non-traditional political activities—signing petitions, boycotting… volunteering and becoming members of a group or organization".

---

[17] Muslims constitute 88% of the total population in Bangladesh. This is 93% in my survey area, Rajshahi.

4.2.2 Educational Qualification

Education is considered an important determinant of political awareness, participation and empowerment (Kabeer 2005, Halder 2004, Vijayalakshmi 2002, Villaluz 2000). Education levels of political representatives also influence their understanding of roles and responsibilities, and therefore, impact upon their effectiveness when in office (Fulton 2008, Halder 2004 James and Trail 1995). Studies have also shown that voters have more confidence in candidates with higher levels of education.

Table 4.2. Education of the elected women members/councillors

Education	Rural	Urban	Total
Primary (1-5)	6 (20.0%)	3 (10.0%)	9 (15.0%)
Secondary (6-10)	15 (50%)	3 (10.0%)	18 (30%)
SSC	7 (23.3%)	10 (33.3%)	17 (28.3%)
HSC	2 (6.7%)	11 (36.7%)	13 (21.7%)
Graduate	-	2 (6.7%)	2 (3.33%)
Post Graduate	-	1 (3.3%)	1 (1.7%)
Total	30 (100.0%)	30 (100.0%)	60 (100.0%)

In this study education is categorized into six different groupings: from year 1 to year 5, year 6 to year 10, secondary school certificate (SSC), higher secondary certificate (HSC), graduate (bachelor) and post graduate. In Bangladesh, the first educational certificate a student can get is SSC after 10 years of schooling. The summary statistics in Table 4.2 show that 70% of the rural respondents of my survey area have less than 10 years of schooling, whereas this rate is only 20% for the urban respondents. About 30% of the rural respondents have 10 to 12 years of schooling (SSC and HSC level of education). No rural

respondent had either a graduate or post graduate degree in this survey. On the other hand, a majority of the urban respondents (70%) have SSC or HSC degrees, and a further 10% of the urban respondents have graduate and post graduate levels of education. The data show a clear educational difference across rural and urban women representatives in Rajshahi. Whereas 70% of the rural respondents do not have any formal educational qualification, around 80% of the urban respondents do.

In this study it is, thus, found that educated women in the rural areas were reluctant to take part in elections as candidates. The key informants who had been interviewed in this study explained that rural educated families are abstaining from standing in elections, considering the dirty nature of politics (e.g., use of money, muscle and hooligans) in Bangladesh. Furthermore, the educated families were migrating to nearby towns (e.g., Rajshahi, Dhaka) to secure better employment, schooling for children and other advantages of urban life. They are, therefore, not interested in getting involved in local politics. Similar evidence is also found by Panday (2008a) in Bangladesh and Kishwar (1996) and James and Trail in rural India (1995). Kishwar (1996) further mentioned that even the high education rate in the state of Kerala, India, did not result in higher participation of women. Moore and Shackman (1996), in this context, argued that it is not the level of education per se but the socio-economic and political context that defines participation of women in politics. However, education is a key factor in political awareness that helps to generate personal freedom, productive employment, institutional settings and legal procedures (Kabeer 2005, Loewenberg and Patterson 1979, Putnam 1976). The educational differences across rural and urban women representatives, accordingly, may result in significant differences in

political participation and the empowerment of the elected women members in this study—an issue that I will explore further in Chapter 5.

It is also important to note that no respondent in this survey in Rajshahi was found to be illiterate, though in Bangladesh the literacy rate is only 56%, and only 42.3% have had secondary school education (UNDP 2011). The respondents pointed out that illiteracy reduces voter's confidence in the capability of a candidate shouldering local government responsibilities. Voters, therefore, seldom elect those illiterate candidates.[18] This finding is consistent with the findings of Kishwar (1996) who mentioned that illiterate women representatives feel helpless and incapable of understanding and performing their roles in Indian Panchayats. This finding is also supported by the NGO leaders, government officials and local elites I interviewed.

The story of Mrs S. I. is worthwhile to mention here.

> ### *S.I's fight against money and muscle: Knowledge is power*
>
> Mrs S.I. was elected to Rajshahi City Corporation in 2008. She was a post-graduate in History, engaged in a range of socio-cultural activities along with paid employment. As an educated and active social worker, Mrs S.I. was widely regarded in the community while most of her opponents were illiterate. But during the election campaign she found it difficult, as her opponents and their supporters went for violent attacks (both verbal and physical assault) against her supporters, tore off her posters and banners, and spread money to buy votes. Some of her close relatives were also working for her opponents for money. However, she countered this by

---

[18] The respondents of this study are elected women representatives. Surveying all candidates who contested local government election would have been ideal to explore the issue further but was beyond the scope of this thesis.

arguing that because of her knowledge and education and her close ties with the mass of the people she could best understand the needs of society, and would not become a puppet of political elites. She convinced the voters, especially women, that if elected she has the education, courage and capability to fight against any misdeed and against the unjust social structure prevailing. She mentioned that she won a convincing victory because voters trusted her educational achievement, knowledge, wisdom and integrity to carry out the challenging job in the local government.

The story of S.I. adds weight to the Francis Bacon's famous statement, "knowledge is power". This is fundamental to the ideas of modernity and Enlightenment: "the more rationality, the better" (Flyvbjerg 1998: 319). It is the kind of resource that determines the balance and boundaries of challenging gender-power relations (Gaventa and Cornwall 2001). Accordingly, knowledge gives agents the necessary confidence and capability to raise their voice and establish agency in the decision-making process. The educational achievement of Mrs SI offered her certain advantages in the voting battle by boosting voters' confidence on her.

It is, however, important to note that knowledge and power are linked (Foucault 1984, cited from Flyvbjerg 1998). Accordingly;

Not only is knowledge power, but, more importantly, power is knowledge. Power determines what counts as knowledge, what kind of interpretation attains authority as the dominant interpretation. Power procures the knowledge which supports its purposes, while it ignores or suppresses that knowledge which does not serve it (Flyvbjerg 1998: 319).

Thus, in a strong patriarchal society like Bangladesh where women are marginalized and men dominate the realm, it is imperative to explore to what extent education and knowledge enable women representatives to overcome the structural barriers in their quest towards empowerment—an issue I will investigate in Chapters 5 and 6.

Table 4.3. Marital Status of the women members/councillors

Marital status	LGIs		Total
	Rural	**Urban**	
Married	29 (96.7%)	27 (90%)	56 (93.3%)
Unmarried	-	1 (3.3%)	1 (1.7%)
Widow	1(3.3%)	2 (6.7%)	3 (5.0%)
Total	30 (100.0%)	30 (100.0%)	60 (100.0%)

4.2.3 Marital Status

Material and psychological support from the family are very important factors in political participation for the women representatives. This is partly because in a patriarchal society like Bangladesh women's positions are determined by their marital status or by the status of their male guardian (Kabeer 2011, Parveen and Leonhauser 2004, WFP 1999). Women in general are recognized and valued based on their husbands' identity in society. The empirical findings of my study also support this argument. My survey data show that about 97% of rural women representatives in Rajshahi are married and the remaining 3% are widows (Table 4.3). While 90% of the urban representatives are married, 6.7% are widows and 3.3% are unmarried. No unmarried respondents were elected in the rural areas of my study. These figures are similar to the earlier

findings by Aktar (2006) in Rajshahi, Rahman and Roy (2004) and Shamim and Kumari (2002) in Cox's Bazar, indicating that attitudes are slow to change.

In my interviews, NGO leaders and social activists explained that unmarried women are still considered unacceptable, immature and unfit for representing. Unmarried women, therefore, had to struggle to gain the support of the voters and to fight against patriarchal social barriers and fundamentalist views to eventually win in elections against married counterparts. The struggle of Ms R.B. illustrates this point:

Ms R.B's struggle to end social stigma

Ms R.B is elected in Puthiya Municipality. She is educated, employed in a paid job but unmarried. During election she was facing tough and dirty propaganda about her marital status. The sitting Mayor was against her and other local elites, religious fundamentalists and the rival candidates described her as an inappropriate person to lead the community as she was not married. She was struggling hard initially but she never gave up. She tried to reach every voter with the message that she is the most suitable candidate in terms of education and relevant knowledge to shoulder the responsibilities of local government. To her, it was a hard fought election campaign and the social stigma about women's marital status was difficult to overcome. She stated that strong support from family, neighbours and local youth helped her to overcome social misconceptions about women and their roles.

The story of Ms R.B. recalls the argument of patriarchal social relations that considers women from triple role perspective: reproductive work, productive work and community work (Moser 1989, 1993). Bangladeshi society considers the reproductive role as the first and foremost duty for a socially acceptable woman and deviation from such role is considered as violation of social relations

across genders. In "social relation approach", Kabeer (1994) further argued that structural social inequalities create and reproduce systematic inequalities among different groups in the society. Social relations in such determine one's identity in society, her roles, responsibilities, rights and obligations. The success of Ms R.B. being an unmarried candidate shows the implication of direct election in the reserved seats to overcome such patriarchal social relations that identify woman solely as child-bearer.

Field research also shows that all the representatives who are widows are contesting elections in place of their late husbands' positions. During interviews these representatives stated that they contested elections with an appeal to the people to vote them to fulfil their late husbands' dreams. The position of the husbands, even of the deceased, thus, appear important to winning election for these women rather than suitability of the candidates per se. This is explained by D'Amico (1995) as the widow's walk in which the political vacuum left by the deceased leaders (men) is filled by politically inexperienced widows. The survey data, therefore, shows women's dependence in their patronage network in accessing power and position in society. The findings are consistent with the national figure. For example, the position of Prime Minister and Opposition Leader are held interchangeably by Sheikh Hasina and Begum Khaleda Zia since 1991 till the last controversial election in 5th January 2014 in which Mrs Zia did not take part. However, these two female leaders are occupying offices inheriting a late father's or husband's legacy respectively. However, it is evidenced from the field study that once elected, the women representatives were found to develop confidence over time and enthusiasm to contribute in the decision-making process in the LGIs.

4.2.4 Profession of the Elected Women Members

Profession is a good indicator of women's economic and personal freedom, as well as of the socio-economic conditions they belong to and the opportunities available to them (Chowdhury 2009). Professional persons are well positioned in society, generally educated, familiar with electoral processes and trained in bridging with the masses of people that provides political advantages and success. As Halder (2002: 63) mentioned, "jobs can provide funds to help launch political campaigns; they can yield political contacts; and they may offer an organisational basis for political activity through business groups and unions". Women, therefore, cannot access political power if are disproportionately positioned in the labour market and hence lack the capacity to mobilise necessary resources (Kabeer 2012a, 2012b, Paxton 1997). Even in developed societies like Australia and the United Kingdom the overwhelming majority of the elected officials in the national parliaments come from professional occupations (Norris 1997, Norrander Wilcox 2005, Miragliotta and Errington 2008).

In my study in Rajshahi, however, I found that about 80% of the rural respondents are unpaid housewives, only 17% are involved with business and services, and 3% do unpaid social and voluntary work (Table 4.4). On the other hand, the scenario is different in the urban area. In the urban areas (comprising 1 City Corporation and 5 Municipalities in this district) around 47% of the elected women representatives are involved in services and businesses, while unpaid housewives constitute 33% and 20% do social and voluntary work. These statistics are consistent with the educational background findings presented in Table 4.2 above, where we see that about 70% of the rural respondents have no formal education to assist them in finding paid employment, while 80% of the

urban respondents have formal qualifications. It is to be mentioned that about 75% of the women members of the current national parliament (2009-2013) in Bangladesh are housewives or women do unpaid volunteer jobs.[19, 20]

The finding of my study is also consistent with the national level. It is important to note that though most of the respondents were housewives or doing voluntary jobs, some of them mentioned having some income-generating activities. About 40% of the rural housewives mentioned working in income generating activities, including vegetable gardening, cattle rearing, poultry and nursery farming. However, these respondents mentioned that income from such activities is small and irregular. In contrast, about 30% of urban housewives and social workers mentioned having some income from owning land, shops, houses, rickshaws and auto-rickshaws which they leased to others. They mentioned that they use the proceeds from these sources as their personal income and savings. These respondents further mentioned that these personal incomes enabled them to meet their practical gender needs, such as, buying utensils for household consumption, books and pens for children, medicines, clothes and cosmetics for themselves and their children. As Kabeer points out, these incomes, though low, help raise the sense of pride of one's economic contribution, self-reliance, voice and status for women within the family and wider society (Kabeer 2011).

---

[19] Source: own calculation from the archives of bio-data of the member of parliaments, obtained from Jatiyo Sangsod Sochibaloy (Secretariat of the National Parliament), Dhaka.

[20] The 10th parliament election of the country is held in 5th January 2014 amidst boycott by major opposition parties. However, the election in the reserved seats for women in this parliament is still underway.

Table 4.4. Profession of the elected women members/councillors

Profession	LGIs		Total
	Rural	**Urban**	
Housewife	24 (80%)	10 (33.0%)	34 (56.5%)
Self-employed/Business	2 (6.7%)	8 (26.66%)	10 (16.66%)
Paid Job/Service	3 (10%)	6 (20%)	9 (15%)
Voluntary/Social work	1 (3.3%)	6 (20%)	7 (11.66%)
Total	30 (100.0%)	30 (100.0%)	60 (100.0%)

4.2.5 Income Distribution of the Elected Women Members

Income is another important indicator of respondents' economic and social position. Kabeer (2011, 2012a) and Basu (2006) argued that women's access to financial resources is important in empowering women. Earning regular income provides women with the self-esteem, confidence and prestige necessary to participate in the decision-making process within and outside households (Mahmud, Shah and Becker 2012, Schuler and Rottach 2010, Anderson and Eswaran 2009).

Table 4.5. Monthly Income of the elected women members/councillors

Monthly Income (Group)	LGIs		Total
	Rural	**Urban**	
No income	12 (40%)	7 (23.3%)	19 (31.7%)
<2000	12 (40%)	3 (10%)	15 (25%)
2000-4000	4 (13.3%)	6 (20%)	10 (16.6%)
4000-8000	2 (6.6%)	7 (23.3%)	9 (15%)
8000-12000	-	5 (16.6%)	5 (8.3%)
12000+	-	2 (6.6%)	2 (3.3%)
Total	30 (100.0%)	30 (100.0%)	60 (100.0%)

In Table 4.5 it is evidenced that about 40% of the rural and 23% of the urban respondents of this study had no income. These respondents mentioned that honoraria from the local government institutions were the only source of their income. A further 40% of rural and 10% of urban respondents belong to the lowest income group (less than 2000 Taka[21]). About 13.3% of rural and 20% of urban members fell in the income ranging from 2000 to 4000 Taka. In the medium income group, ranging from 4000-8000 Taka, there were only 6.6% of rural and 26.6% of urban respondents. No rural members were found to have income above 8000 Taka whereas 23% of the urban respondents belonged to this income group of which 6.6% had monthly income higher than 12000 Taka. Most of the rural elected women members of this study, thus, came from the lower socio-economic level. The urban members' personal income was also moderate, though substantially higher than the rural women representatives'. This is typical with the rural-urban differences in Bangladesh where literacy, income and employment rates are all higher in the urban areas comparing to those of the rural households (BBS 2010).

However, a significant finding of this study is that the introduction of direct election has encouraged women to come from a diverse range of income backgrounds in Rajshahi, especially in the rural areas. Prior to enactment of the 1997 Act, female quotas are filled up by nominations of the Chairmen of the local government institutions. Most of these nominated candidates came from the

---

[21] 1 USD = 75 Taka at the time of data collection in February 2011. The minimum monthly wage rate for full time paid employment was fixed by the government at 4,000 Taka in 2009.

kinship groups of the chairmen, and had well-off family backgrounds (Mahtab 2007, Chawdhury 1994a, Chowdhury 1985). The survey and interview data in this study demonstrate that the quotas have reduced nepotism and promoted political participation and representation from broader strata of the society. This finding is consistent with the study of Panday (2008a) and the ADB (2004). In these studies such representation of women from poorer households indicates a changing power-structure of the rural community in Bangladesh.

It is also important to mention that in interviews I found women respondents with higher incomes were more confident and vibrant than those in weaker financial positions. The first group of women were seen to enjoy greater personal freedom in terms of increased mobility out of home, increased voice in the local government institutions, better awareness of the organizational process and better connections with government and non-government institutions, which in turn help them perform their roles in LGIs. This justifies Kabeer's (1999) view that resources are necessary to exercise agency and to command desired achievement. It might be the case that their greater income had brought to them greater opportunity and connection to the outside world, while at the same time their greater exposure to the outside world may have enabled them to engage in more income generating activities as well.

4.2.6 Husband's Education Levels

In a patriarchal society like Bangladesh, the true socio-economic background of the elected women representatives cannot be understood without analysing the socio-economic profiles of their husbands. Women move into their husband's home after marriage. Their maiden surnames are replaced with that of

their husbands', and they become familiar to society not by their own names and identities but as wives of their husbands. They are denied access to parental property and become dependent on their husbands' incomes (Kabeer 2011), a situation which Kandiyoti (1988) described as classic patriarchy. In this section I, therefore, discuss the educational backgrounds of the husbands to get a general idea of the background of the women representatives' husbands' families. It can be seen from Table 4.6 that 55% of the rural respondents' husbands of this study do not have any formal qualification (education less than SSC). About 52% of the rural respondents' husbands have SSC (10 years of schooling) or HSC (12 years of schooling) level certificates and only 3.5% have a Bachelor (14 years' schooling) degree. On the other hand, all urban respondents' husbands are found to have at least 10 years of schooling. It is found that 11% of them have SSC, 44% HSC, and remaining 45% have Graduate/Post Graduate degrees. The data, therefore, show a clear difference in educational attainment of the women representatives' husbands across rural and urban areas, similar to the differences evidenced in Table 4.2 in the case of elected women members of my study area.

Thus, the survey data show that elected women members have less education than their husbands (see Table 4.2). The results are similar with the older findings of the WFP (1999). The differences, however, are more distinct in the urban areas where, for example, only 10% of elected women representatives have Graduate education or higher (Table 4.2) compared to 45% for their husbands (Table 4.6). Since education is an important determinant of employment, income, and political awareness, this also implies that both the rural and urban women representatives are lagging behind their husbands in those fields.

Table 4.6. Husband's education

Education	LGIs		Total
	Rural	**Urban**	
Primary (1-5)	5 (17.3%)	-	5 (8.6%)
Secondary (6-10)	8 (27.6%)	-	8 (13.8%)
SSC	10 (34.5%)	3 (11.1%)	13 (22.3%)
HSC	5 (17.2%)	12 (44.4%)	17 (30.8%)
Graduate	1 (3.5%)	10 (37%)	11 (21.3%)
Post graduate	-	2 (7.4%)	2 (3.7%)
Total	29 (100.0%)	27 (100.0%)	56 (100.0%)

4.2.7 Husband's Income Level

A husband's income is the source of power and strength for women in Bangladesh (Halder 2002, World Food Programme 1999). Women in Bangladesh are mostly confined to unpaid domestic work and the predominant share of paid work is conducted by men in a society with a strong presence of the public/private divide[22] (Schuler and Rottach 2010, Anderson and Eswaran 2009, Chowdhury 1994b, 1994c). As we have seen above, where women have an income, it is usually a secondary source of household revenue. In this strong patriarchal social setting a husband's income constitutes the dominant share of income for the household and is used to indicate the wealth of a family.

Table 4.7 shows that no husbands of women members in my survey are without income in both rural and urban areas, whereas 37% of elected women members are without income (Table 4.5). A further 57% of the rural and 20% of urban women representatives had incomes less than 2000 Taka per month (Table

---

[22] See Section 2.3.2 (page 36) for detail discussion on public-private divide.

4.5) in contrast to a total of 7% of their husbands altogether in these areas. In the rural areas no women members had monthly incomes over 4000 Taka (Table 4.5), but it is 59% for their husbands. Similarly, for the urban areas, we do not see any women members earning above 12000 Taka/month (Table 4.5) but this is about 52% for their husbands. All these clearly show that men in general enjoy greater income over women in Bangladeshi society (across rural and urban settings) and income in the urban areas are larger than that of rural respondents (BBS 2010). UNDP (2010) shows that Bangladesh positions 116th out of 169 countries on the Gender Inequality Index. Only 30.8% of women have secondary education compared to 56% for men; female labour force participation is 61% as compared to 86% for men and as many as 82% of births are unattended by skilled health personnel. The income differences, hence, confirms women's lower position in Rajshahi, Bangladesh in general and emphasizes the need for positive action to bring women towards the centre.

Table 4.7. Monthly income of the Husbands of the elected women members/councillors

Husband's Income (Taka)	LGIs		Total
	Rural	**Urban**	
No income	-	-	-
< 2000	2 (7%)	2 (7.4%)	4 (7.2%)
2000-4000	10 (34.4%)	-	10 (17.2%)
4000-8000	14 (51%)	1 (3.4%)	15 (27.2%)
8000-12000	3 (10.3%)	9 (33.3%)	12 (21.4%)
12000 – 16000	-	8 (29.6%)	8 (14.2%)
16000 – 20000	-	3 (11.11%)	3 (5.4%)
20000 +	-	3 (11.11%)	3 (5.4%)
Total	29 (100.0%)	27 (100.0%)	56 (100.0%)

4.2.8 Possession of Land

Possession of assets is an important determinant to raise one's position and voice in society (World Bank 1999). In an agrarian economy land is the most viable and productive asset that not only gives households a necessary source of income but also prestige and power (Anderson and Eswaran 2009, Agarwal 1994, Boserup 1970). Bangladesh is an agricultural country, where 62% of the country's population live on agricultural income and 75% of rural employment comes from agriculture. Traditionally, the size of landholdings is accompanied by greater control in an agrarian economy and in electoral politics as well. Prior to the introduction of quota seats, most women members in local government institutions come from relatively well-off families (Mahtab 2007, Chowdhury 1994a, Chowdhury 1985). Because of that, I asked respondents about their possession of land (agricultural land) in 6 different categories, ranging from landless to larger land holdings presented in Table 4.8.

As evident in Table 4.8, about 6.6% of the rural respondents of the survey are landless. About 23.3% of the rural women members' families own less than 0.50 acre of land and are, therefore, considered marginal farmers. Among the rural households, 43% have land from 0.50 to 2 acres, considered as small farmers, and 26.6% are medium farmers with 2-4 acres of land (BBS 2010, Alamgir 1991). No woman member was evidenced to come from large land-holding families having more than 4 acres of land. All respondents in urban areas possessed some agricultural land.[23] Around 10% of the urban respondents belong

---

[23] Usually urban life is not attached with the concept of agricultural production. However, in Bangladesh, most of the urban residents are migrants from the rural areas. They migrate to the urban areas for better education, health and employment

to the category of marginal farming, having land below 0.50 acres, 27% small farming with land amounting to 0.50-2 acres, and the remaining 63.3% are classed under medium farming with land 2-4 acres.

Table 4.8. Land- Agricultural (in acre)

Land	LGIs		Total
	Rural	**Urban**	
Landless	2 (6.6%)	-	2 (3.3%)
0.01-0.50	7 (23.3%)	3 (10.0%)	10 (22.7%)
0.50 – 2	13 (43.3%)	8 (26.7%)	21 (35%)
2 – 4	8 (26.6%)	19 (63.3%)	27 (45%)
Total	30 (100.0%)	30 (100.0%)	60 (100.0%)

The data, thus, show that women respondents from the urban areas come from relatively larger land holding families where over 63% of the respondents possess over 2 acres of land compared to only 26.6% for the rural elected representatives. On the other hand, exactly one half of the rural representatives come from landless and marginal farming backgrounds, compared to only 10% for the urban respondents. This clearly shows that urban respondents are relative well off compared to rural representatives, as shown in Tables 4.5 and 4.7 above.

---

consideration but at the same time most of them keep continuing to possess agricultural land-holdings back to their rural origin. This gives them opportunity to retain social position in their origin as well as a means to diverse their portfolio of investment. Such agricultural land-holdings by the urban citizen is especially evidenced in the Municipalities but are less evidenced in the City Corporation where alternative investment opportunities are larger.

However, an important finding of this study is that the introduction of reserved seats for women is seen to have an impact on decreasing the power and control of landlords in local level politics, especially in the rural local government institutions. The case studies show that in the fieldwork areas, direct election instead of the former selection of women representatives, has provided participatory opportunities for women across wider social groupings, including those from landless, marginal and small farming family backgrounds. This finding corresponds to that in Table 4.5 above. It can, therefore, be argued that the introduction of direct election helped to breach, at least in the survey area, what Kabeer (1994) called social relations that create and reproduce systematic inequality in society.

In sum, the socio-economic profile of the women representatives show that the younger women (Table 4.1) are the majority in both the rural and urban local government institutions in this study. It shows that younger women are more enthusiastic to participate in politics and to overcome social barriers against establishing their rights in the society compared to older women. This might be due to increasing education (Table 4.2), employment (Table 4.4) and awareness through newspapers, radio/television and the internet among the younger generation. The data also show that urban women and their families tend to have better education (Table 4.2) and higher income (Table 4.5) compared to those of rural representatives. These differences also correspond to the national data of the country across rural and urban settings. For example, the adult literacy rate in the rural areas across the nation is 59.4% compared to 82.3% for urban areas. The rural poverty rate stands at 43.8% while that is 28.4% for urban (BBS 2012). The paid employment is only 7% in the rural areas compared to 34.6% in the urban

areas. Unpaid family helper rate is 42.5% for the rural against 15.4% for urban (ADB 2001). The lower level of education of the rural representatives might also reflect their lower levels of understanding and participation in local government activities. This also calls for effective training and awareness programs for women representatives, especially for the rural women.

4.3 Contesting Local Government Election: Decision, Choice and Challenges

This section discusses the issues and obstacles women representatives face when participating in local government elections and during election campaigns. A congenial atmosphere is essential to bring women into the electoral political process, considering the traditionally conservative social structure of Bangladesh. It is, therefore, important to explore the nature and extent of challenges women face when contesting elections, particularly in deciding to contest an election, in mobility while campaigning, financing election expenditure, and other socio-religious constraints. It is also important to mention that the decision to contest an election involves complicated intra-household bargaining and, therefore, the agency in such decision-making is a significant indicator of women's empowerment. Analysing electoral decisions and associated challenges will, therefore, help to understand the issues women representatives face in contesting elections as well as the extent of women's empowerment in the decision-making process delegated by the provision of direct election in the quota seats.

4.3.1 Decision to Contest Elections

One aim of the 1997 Act was to encourage women from all strata to come forward and take part in local government politics. The venture of empowerment through direct election in quota seats begins from the decision to contest elections. As UNIFEM (2002) mentioned, women's political empowerment is essentially their increased control over the decisions influencing their lives within as well as outside their households. In line with that, I investigate the factors affecting such decisions, to evaluate the extent to which women were really self-motivated and made their own decisions. Respondents were asked if contesting in elections was their own decision at all.

A majority of the respondents in this study (63% rural and 70% urban) mentioned that contesting elections was decided jointly by themselves along with their families. Most of these respondents mentioned that winning the quota seat would enhance the socio-political position of their family in society. Therefore, they wished to contest elections and their families were motivated to support their candidature. On the other hand it was evidenced from the survey data that some of the respondents, though very few, from both rural and urban areas (13% and 23% respectively) took the decision to contest election solely by themselves. These respondents mentioned that they aspired to be elected women representatives, so they took the decision to stand and persuaded their families to support their candidature. As one urban women representative mentioned:

> Introduction of direct elections opened a new avenue for women to
> come forward, contest elections and participate in the governance
> process. We were denied our rights in society for a long time, and
> just got this chance to establish our voice. I, therefore, decided to

contest in election to take the opportunity and convinced my husband to support my candidature.

This finding shows that the introduction of direct election has offered certain spaces for women to think what they actually want to do and to be (Sen 1999, Nussbaum 2000, Deshmukh-Ranadive 2005). Women representatives' voices and participation in the election decision led to many unheard voices being heard in this patriarchal society, a very first indicator for women's empowerment (Diener and Biswas-Diener 2005, Malhotra and Schuler 2005).

However, a smaller share of the respondents (24% rural and 7% urban) in this survey emphasized that they were pushed by their families to stand for election. These women representatives mentioned that they did not know and did not feel comfortable about politics. However, their families assured them the necessary support for victory that helped to make up their minds to join in the election contest. One rural women member mentioned:

> I was nervous at the beginning when my husband proposed to stand in election. I was not ready even to think it seriously. But he mobilised my entire in-laws who promised me all out support from campaigning to victory. I did not have any reason than to say no. In fact all my family members, in-laws, and relatives worked hard to make me win. I firmly believe without their inspiration I could not even dream it.

It is also important to mention that none of these women representatives mentioned that their families forced them to contest elections against their will. Rather, it emanated from the lively discussions in the focus group meetings that women representatives' tacit desire to contest elections was understood by the

family and they also participated in the family's discussion to make the final decision. As one rural women member reported:

> Contesting election is not a joke that can be made without a second thought. It's a very big decision and the entire family is involved with it, especially the huge expenditure associated with election. I cannot take such a big decision alone rather I let my family to know my positive desire and my family opted to go for it.

On the other hand, respondents who claimed that standing for public office was of their own decision also stated that they received full support from their families. The study does not find any incidence where families opposed the women's decision to contest elections.[24] The findings, thus, indicate the importance of family background and patronage network for women's participation in politics. The story of Mrs N. B. is worthwhile here to mention.

Mrs N. B: the light and shadow

Mrs N. B. has been an elected Mayor of a municipality since January, 2010. She is the wife of an ex-member of parliament (MP) from the ruling party of the country. In the last parliamentary election in 2008 her husband sought nomination for the parliamentary seat supported by the local party councillors. But the party high command nominated a business magnate instead of him. After the election, the newly elected member (MP) attempted to sideline him in party politics. When Municipality elections were announced in January 2010, his supporters saw it as the last opportunity to exist in

---

[24] I interviewed only the elected women representatives. The limitation of this purposive sampling is that the possibility cannot be denied that there might be some women who were interested to contest election but could not, or contested election but lost due to family resistance. This hypothesis could be tested only by surveying all households of the concerned area which is beyond scope of this thesis.

power-politics and wished to contest. The MP opposed his candidature and pushed another candidate as party nominee. In such a situation he pushed Mrs N. B. to contest for the Mayoral position as an independent candidate. She mentioned that though she was not involved in politics, the situation brought her there. She contested the election and won convincingly, enjoying the popularity of her husband as an ex-MP and respected leader. During this interview, Mrs N. B. was still surrounded by the party workers and supporters of her husband. In a private chat with me at her residence, Mrs N. B. said that she is guided by her husband and his party workers for most of the work in the Municipality, especially for the important jobs.

However, the story of Mrs. N.B. also tells us that participation and representation of women in local government institutions might just work to strengthen the positions of their husbands and families rather than the women themselves. It implies patron-client relations determine certain aspects of institutional order: the flow of resources, exchange and power relations (Eisenstadt and Roniger 1980). Power relations are characterized by simultaneous exchange of resources on the one hand (e.g., money, vote, protection and support) and promises of solidarity and loyalty on the other. In few cases it was evidenced that women representatives acted as proxies for their husbands and seldom focused beyond extending their family's political position in society.

The decision to contest elections here can also be evaluated in Kabeer's (1999) framework to assess women representatives' empowerment through direct election. It is apparent that a significant number of women representatives claimed to contest elections by their own choice. On the other hand, though there were some women representatives who mention that the decision to participate came from their families, they were also part of their family's decision-making process. The achievement is evident in the jubilant participation of women in

contesting local government elections; participation by choice- a first order indicator of empowerment. The decision to contest elections also demonstrates the very first mark in the endeavour of women's active citizenship and participation in politics for most of the rural as well as for majority of the urban women respondents.

4.3.2 Respondents' Motivation to Take Part in Local Government Election

To understand their focus and priority in local government functioning, women representatives were also asked about the reasons which motivated them to take part in local government elections. They were asked open ended questions which encouraged them to consider a wide range of reasons, to help them to comment on their personal motives and to clarify their own perspectives.

Table 4.9 shows that a vast majority of the women across rural and urban areas reported that they contested elections principally to serve local people, but also to improve their position and voice in the family and community. Though reasons of social engagement are dominant, self-interest is higher amongst the rural women of this study, as I analyse further below. Almost every woman representative mentioned that they opted to contest the election in order to work for women. The reason behind this motivation of the women representatives is intuitive. Women representatives mentioned that they realize the problems faced by women in a patriarchal society and the role they could play to tackle these issues. It is also evidenced from the interview that the elected women representatives prioritized reaching the women voters of their constituency and to become established as the best candidates for the women. Similar evidence is also

mentioned by Getz (2005) in studying local government institutions in India, where due to social segregation between men and women, women representatives primarily campaigned to women voters. Women representatives' motivation to work for women, however, is important to empower the wider women's community as a key objective of the introduction of direct election by the 1997 Act, an issue I will shed light on in Chapter 6.

Table 4.9 Motivation for contesting election (multiple responses)

Motivation	Rural	Urban	Total
To serve local people	29 (97%)	30 (100%)	59 (98.5%)
To work for women development	29 (97%)	28 (93.67%)	57 (95%)
To raise local needs in the local government body	25 (84%)	28 (96%)	53 (90%)
To improve my position and voice in the family and society	25 (83%)	26 (85%)	51 (84%)
Expecting material and non-material benefits for family	21 (70%)	5 (15.33%)	36 (60%)
Further political interest beyond reserved seats	3 (10%)	18 (60%)	21 (35%)
Other reasons	6 (20%)	2 (6.6%)	8 (13.33%)
Total	30 (100%)	30 (100%)	60 (100%)

About 60% of the urban respondents reported that they were contesting elections with further and future political interests, in contrast to 10% of the rural respondents. These women representatives mentioned during in-depth interviews that their motivation to join in electoral contests goes beyond the horizon of quota seats. They contested elections in fact as a step forward to fulfil their larger political ambitions. One urban respondent, thus, mentioned,

> I dream to be a member of parliament (MP) one day. It is my long-time dream. But I am too young to the voters and inexperienced. Serving in local government could give me that experience. Also if I can fulfil my election promises and administer necessary development works in my constituency it will create a definite good-will for me to contest in national election.

Another urban woman representative mentioned,

> I want to contest for the Mayor position in next election. But before that I want to come to the Municipality to learn how it actually works and what its functioning frontiers are. I also wanted to go to the voters to understand what are their priorities and their expectations from elected representatives.

The political aspiration of the women representatives in my study, therefore, indicates the role of quota seats to foster agency and capability of women in changing gender-power relations, what Murthy (2001) called as transformative capacity building for women. For these women, the provision of direct election in the quota seats has opened an opportunity to live a life of their choice that has reason for value—as emphasized in the capability approach by Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (1999, 2000, 2003).

About 96% of my urban respondents further mentioned to raise community issues in the local government bodies, compared to 84% of the rural respondents. To these women representatives, their localities were ignored by the previous elected representatives, their local needs were not addressed properly and were often discriminated in terms of development, and they wanted to halt this trend. As one urban women representative mentioned during my field re-visit,

> We did not see any development work manoeuvred in our area by the Municipality. For example, the drainage problem is acute everywhere, water logging appears as part and parcel of our life but the municipality takes no such initiative. The similar experience is with roads which are very narrow causing fatal accidents often. I contested election because as an elected representative I can surely raise these issues and force the municipality to solve these local issues.

On the other hand, it was evident that 70% of the rural and 15% of urban women members mentioned economic gain from LGIs as their motivation to contest elections. These women viewed their honorarium and other financial benefits as a way to contribute to their families. To these women, they aimed to contribute to their families by bringing some financial and non-financial advantages which would not otherwise be possible for them to acquire. One rural woman member explained in my follow-up interview that,

> I have three daughters and two sons. The elder one is a girl who is married some years ago. She was only 14, going to school but all in a sudden my husband set her marriage. When I opposed my husband he asked me: "if not married, will you feed her? Will you manage her educational expenses?" I was helpless as not earning anything for my family. Since then I was thinking to do something for my family so that my other children can have proper education, not joins to child-labour or my teen daughters are not forced to marry again. In fact the honorarium and other allowances I get from the Union Parishad, though meagre in amount, helped me to support my kids.

Women representatives in Rajshahi are, thus, seen to attain certain ends necessary to support the lives of their families and communities, what Moser (1989, 1993) called practical gender needs. To Moser, meeting these needs

enable women to raise their voice and position in the family and in the community as well. However, it can be evidenced that this motivation for self-interest and practical gender needs is dominant among the rural women members who are income poor compared to the urban women representatives (see Table 4.5). Aktar (2009), Mahtab (2007) and Moin (2004) also evidenced similar findings for rural elected women representatives. In studying ultra-poor women, Huda et al. (2008) also mentioned that even in groups targeting the extreme poor in rural Bangladesh, women were found to be motivated by self-gain. This might distract women representatives from social motives and achieving strategic gender needs, in Moser's (1989, 1993) terms. As Bourdieu (1977) mentioned, an individual's manoeuvring for self-interest could result in negative social dynamics. I will examine these issues further in Chapters 5 and 6, specifically in performing their roles in the local government institutions and its implication for women in the wider community.

In the urban areas, however, motivation for women's development and work for the community is stronger among the respondents. The case of Mrs K. B. is typical:

> ### Mrs K. B.: it's a new war for liberation
>
> Mrs K. B. is the elected councillor from Shopura, Rajshahi City Corporation. Her husband is a veteran freedom fighter and fought for the country's independence in 1971. In Bangladesh the freedom fighters are recognised as carrying the flag of progressiveness and fight against any form of oppression, discrimination and injustice. Being a freedom fighter's wife, Mrs K.B is also motivated, inspired and dedicated to do something for society, for the emancipation of women and the marginalised poor. She has long been a known social activist in her locality. Before standing for election, she was helping distressed women buy sewing machines, helping them to establish boutique shops and so on. However, when

> the government introduced direct election in the quota seats, she decided to stand, considering that she could better serve disadvantaged people and women in particular by holding an elected position and using the resources of the local government. As Mrs K. B said, "My sons are employed and settled, my husband is always busy with the freedom fighter association. So, I have plenty of spare time, and I wish to use my time for the betterment of the neglected people." She mentioned that achieving women's freedom is the new wave of war for liberation for our country and that she has engaged herself to fight for that.

The story of Mrs K.B. shows that women representatives are also striving for structural change in society by emancipating women in the wider community from poverty, unemployment, deprivation and exploitation.

However, this sort of benevolent motivation is not free from question and needs strong evidence to justify. In the normative issues like the stated one, social desirability bias is common. Respondents tend to answer questions by saying what others presumably want to hear (Ross and Mirowsky 1984, Guerin 1986, Underwood 2003). It, therefore, leads to over-reporting of good-behaviour and under-reporting of bad or undesirable behaviour. Festinger (1957) coined this as cognitive dissonance of human psychology in which people exaggerate what they believe worth-telling and understate the opposite. The stated social and benevolent motivations of the respondents in this study, therefore, require careful investigation and I will examine this in detail in Chapters 5 and 6. Apart from this, a smaller percentage of women (20% rural and 6% urban) were motivated by other reasons, mainly as the successor of their husband/fathers' political legacy, or to tackle pressure from and establish superiority over their socio-political rivals.

This study shows that female candidates were motivated by a wide range of factors. Overall, according to interview responses, the urban women

representatives held stronger social objectives while the rural respondents anticipated improvements to their personal position in the family through their contribution earned from local government bodies. This is not surprising considering the lower level of education and economic condition amongst the rural women members (see Table 4.2 and 4.5 respectively) compared to their urban counterparts. Nevertheless, direct election in the reserved seats in the LGIs clearly offered opportunities for women to harness socio-cultural, economic, personal, and political spaces necessary for pushing strategic gender needs and to challenge traditional gender-power relations (Deshmukh-Ranadive 2005, Malhotra and Schuler 2005).

4.3.3 Political Involvement of the Respondents Prior to Election

Respondents were asked if they were involved in politics and political parties before contesting local government elections. This is important because involvement in the political process is imperative in the decision-making process (Brody 2009, Eschle 2001, Gurumurthy 1998, Thomas 1997). It is, however, important to note that in Bangladesh the Local Government Act prohibits party candidacy in elections. Candidates, therefore, though they might have party affiliation, do not mention it officially. In this study, it is evidenced that about 47% of urban and 13% of rural respondents had early experience of political involvement before being elected in the local government. This is consistent with the fact that the rural respondents have less than 10 years of schooling, and that they do not go outside of their homes very often in this patriarchal society, since politics is an outdoor activity it has been a male domain. However, participation in prior politics among the urban respondents is larger where 80% of them have

had over 10 years of schooling. Since student politics[25] is a regular phenomenon at the College and University levels of the country, many of the urban respondents have been familiar with politics since their student lives, and a significant share of them were involved in politics before contesting elections.

Table 4.10. Were you involved in politics before contesting local government election?

Involvement in politics	LGIs		Total
	Rural	**Urban**	
No	26 (86.7%)	16 (53.3%)	42 (70.0%)
Yes	4 (13.3%)	14 (46.7%)	18(30.0%)
Total	30 (100.0%)	30 (100.0%)	60(100.0%)

Table 4.10 shows that a vast majority of the respondents, especially in the rural areas are new to local level politics. This is a significant point, which illustrates that the quota system and direct election is involving more women in political participation. Amongst the women in this research sample, it is clear that once government introduces direct election in the quota seats, it creates enthusiasm among the women to come forward and take a political role. As many as 87% of rural and 53% of urban respondents told me that they became involved in politics because of the introduction of direct elections in the quota seats, as illustrated by the story of Mrs S. K.

---

[25] In Bangladesh political parties have student wings in College and Universities. Some students often join to party politics by being member of these student wings, though majority of the students do not join parties due to violent nature of politics in the country.

Mrs S.K.: it is quota, not money and muscle anymore

Mrs S.K is an elected councillor from a municipality area. She is a college graduate, is employed, and prior to being elected, she was engaged in various social activities. Mrs S.K said that during her college life she saw some of her friends involved in politics. She never thought to join them, seeing no future in politics because in Bangladesh the field is male dominated and controlled by money and political muscle power. According to Mrs S.K, it was almost impossible for honest, committed and sincere people to survive in corrupt party politics. So she never felt interested to join politics, though she believed politics could be the best way to serve our society. Instead, she became a school teacher and engaged herself in social welfare activities. However, after the introduction of direct elections in the quota seats in 1997, she changed her stand. To Mrs S.K, quota and direct elections have replaced the process of 'oiling' the chairman for nomination, and the need for money or muscle. It has opened a space for women from all strata to come forward and take part in governance and to serve local people. As she stated, quotas were there for a long time, but it was the introduction of direct elections that offered a level playing field, and she joined politics as a result.

The story of Mrs SK supports the findings of others that the quota system works as the fast track to bring women into political representation (Dahlerup 2006, Tripp and Kang 2008, Krook 2009). Though the quota system has drawbacks in regard to empowering women (Krook 2006), it is an effective strategy to bring the numbers to the table. In Bangladesh, for example, the direct election in the quota seats through the 1997 Act brought women into one-third of the positions in local government, whereas only 0.7% of the contestants were women in the previous election (Islam 2000).

4.3.4 Family Involvement and Prior History in Electoral Politics

Since most of the respondents mentioned that they are new in electoral politics, I asked if any of their family members ever contested local or national elections in the past. This is important because political efficacy is highly influenced by familial ties and one's political interest burgeons from the direct political incidence and the happenings she encounters among her family, friends and relatives (Halder 2004, Eulau 1962). This is particularly important for women as social restrictions often deter women from entry into politics (Brody 2009, Darcy et al 1987, Stacey and Price 1981) and Bangladesh is a developing country with strong presence of patriarchy. However, familial ties are could be seen as equally important in politics across the world, the example of the Kennedys, Hilary Clinton, George W. Bush, Al Gore, Indira Gandhi, Benazir Bhutto, Suu Kyi, Meghawati Sukornoputri are just a few of note. These people have used the strength of family ties to help them achieve political success and, in some cases, to leave a legacy of patronage and rent seeking. In Bangladesh the present prime minister and the opposition leader (both women) are successors of family dynasties, and most of the 50 women members in the reserved seats in the 9th parliament (2008-2013) are nominated based on family political history.[26]

In my study about 23% of the rural and 36% of the urban respondents mentioned that their families (including extended families) had election histories. These respondents mentioned that politics is part of their family and they come to contest elections as their families have already been involved in electoral politics

---

[26] The 10th parliament (2014-2019), so far, has not received women members in the reseved seats. The election commission, though, has indicated the number of reserved seats each political party will get—based on the percentage of votes they received in the general election. However, the parties are yet to finalise their nominations in those seats.

for many years. To them, once direct election was introduced in the quota seats, their families decided to participate to further strengthen their political hold. Familial networks, by providing a ready team to work also boosts a candidate's confidence while campaigning. One rural woman respondent mentioned:

> My father-in law was Chairman of this union for 17 years. Our family has a long history of politics and everybody counts on it. However, all of his three sons are in government jobs and were not contesting in elections after his death in 2001. All of his daughters are married out in distant towns. The balance of power, has, therefore, moved away from us and in favour of our rivals in recent times. My in-laws, therefore, asked me to stand for election to restore our pride and position in society. Once I decided to contest, a lot of known and unknown people who were followers of my father-in law joined my campaigning team. The socio-political network I got was readily inherited from my late father-in law. It made my campaigning easy, and I felt confident with such an experienced and trusted team. After all, election depends on team-work and a ready team is surely a huge advantage.

This story shows the implication of patronage networks for the political participation of women in LGIs (Aktar 2009, Eisenstadt and Roniger 1980). This is particularly important and emphasized by the rural respondents in this study who are not highly educated, have lower levels of income and employment and hence lack self-confidence.

However, for about 57% of the rural and 46% of my urban respondents this is the first time their families have become involved in electoral politics, having had no prior election incidence. They mentioned that the provision of direct elections brought them into politics and elections. While I asked them if being involved in electoral politics for the first-time was a problem for them, many of

them replied in the affirmative. The inexperience of the respondents themselves as well as of their families made it difficult for them to contest elections. One rural woman member summed up:

> Contesting election was not in my mind. But the direct election in the reserved seats offered a chance to take part in the development effort of the society. Once I decided to take part in the elections as a candidate, I found it difficult due to the complexity of electoral politics and my inexperience in handling these situations. Contesting elections involves huge financial expenditure and tackling pressures, threats and harassment from rivals, as well as campaigning day and night. Supporters of one of my rivals tore off my posters and barred my workers from campaigning in her village. They snatched away our microphone used for campaigning and broke it into pieces. We had to lodge a complaint at the police station and the election office. We had never been in such a situation and been completely lost. Many times I lost my appetite to compete in the election and thought to withdraw myself from candidature. I was feeling guilty bringing those pressures on my family. The only thing is that my husband and my family were beside me, never giving up and managed somehow at the end. But surely things would have been different if we had prior electoral experience.

Some of the newcomers, however, explained me during the follow-up interview that although their families did not previously contest in any election, they were familiar with the entire election process. These respondents reported that their husbands and in-laws have active participation in elections in the past, working for other candidates and, therefore, they were familiar with the processes and issues. They added that contesting elections is always challenging and though this was the first election, they were not scared of the challenge. As one urban women respondent stated:

> We have lived in this area for 50 years. I was born here, grew up here, studied here and married here. We know every single household in this area. I believe I have access to every household of this village (gram). Anytime I can go to talk to them and to seek their vote for me. We were, therefore, not worried being a first timer in election, rather we were hopeful that people would love to test a new face in politics.

This study, thus, finds that family history of political activity and experience encourage women to come into politics, providing necessary courage, confidence and the financial and human resources. Such confidence and self-esteem are necessary to widen women representatives' capability and choice (Sen 1999, Nussbaum 2000). The findings further indicate that family history works as an in-built socio-political platform to strengthen candidacy and also gives some useful socio-political network to the woman contestant (Getz 2005). During the focus group discussion and follow-up interview there has been further evidence that the women representatives with prior political history are more vocal in seeking their due role and authority in local government . They were familiar with the precinct and the chores of local government and with the mechanism it works. In such, the socio-political capital of the family gave them the necessary confidence and platform to raise their voice and to exercise agency in the local government bodies which were not exercised equally by the new comers in politics. Similar findings of the usefulness of prior political experience are also evidenced by Meer and Sever (2004) in rural India. These findings also indicate necessity of capacity building training for the newly elected women representatives who did not have prior political history and involvement for effective participation in the functioning of the LGIs.

4.3.5 Campaigning for Election

Campaigning for election is an important phase of participating because it forms the bridge between the candidates and the community (Getz 2005, Chowdhury 1994c). This requires women candidates' mobility out of home, personal freedom, ability to express and argue their own ideas, and demonstration of commitment to the local community. Mobility is considered as an important criterion of women's empowerment (Mahmud, Shah and Becker 2012, Kabeer 2011, Mason 1984). The social interaction exerted through participation in an election campaign is important in a patriarchal society like Bangladesh and in Rajshahi where women's mobility to go out of their homes is restricted. The data presented in Table 4.11 shows that 10% of the rural respondents mentioned that they did not campaign on their own. Instead, their family members did it for them. Apart from this, most of the women members were able to engage in campaigning for their candidature. As one urban member explained:

> Voters want to see me, to talk to me and to know my motivation. Voters are not anyone's blind supporters; they want to pick up the best candidate. They want to know what exactly we are going to do in the local government. They want to hear directly from the candidate for whom they are voting, they don't want to hear from their husbands or parents.

Table 4.11. Did you campaign for election by yourself?

Campaign yousrself	LGIs		Total
	Rural	**Urban**	
No	3 (10.0%)	-	3 (5.0%)
Yes	27 (90.0%)	30 (100.0%)	57 (95.0%)
Total	30 (100.0%)	30 (100.0%)	60 (100.0%)

Campaigning for election gave women respondents a rare opportunity to go public. To most of the respondents it was found that this was the first time they were able to meet so many people out of their private domain. In the conservative social structure of Bangladesh there is strong public-private divide in which women are supposed to stay within the boundary of their home. Women representatives' campaigning in the election in such a situation was a great opportunity for them to come out of the home. One rural respondent, along these lines, mentioned that,

> I am married and have been living in this area for 18 years. We are a religious family and our girls are not allowed to talk to men who are not relatives. But this is the first time I am out, truly out to go to the public. During election campaign my husband, and even my father-in-law, know that I am talking to the common villagers and they accepted it without any objection. This is the first time I realized that I have something to talk about and that there are people who want to listen to me. It gives me a feeling of a new life, a new world that I never thought existed.

Another rural woman representative mentioned during in an in-depth interview,

> My road had only two dead-ends: starting at my baba's (parent's) place to end up at my husband's. It took no turn, no intersection before I contested an election. I used to step out of my husband's place only to visit my parents and return straight back. But during the election campaign I saw hundred avenues crossing my narrow road. I used to walk all through these narrow paths, meet people down the road, talked to them irrespective of gender, age and religion. I sought their vote, no doubt, but I was more delighted to have so many new friends and networks in the end.

One of the key informants of this study also mentioned that she went to some villages prior to election and was astonished to see women candidates campaigning door to door by themselves. What was more surprising to her was that women candidates were campaigning at night, which was unthinkable previously in the context of Rajshahi. This enhanced mobility of the women representatives demonstrate enhanced sociocultural spaces for women (Deshmukh-Ranadive 2005, Malhotra and Schuler 2005) and their increased capability for pursuing what they believe worth doing (Sen 1999, Nussbaum 2000, 2011).

Women respondents mentioned that campaigning helped them to know local problems and people's expectations, which enabled them to plan relevant policies, which they considered a step towards empowerment. It also helped them raise their voice in the LGIs and to convince others to support their case. Thus, apart from increasing women's mobility out of home, campaigning for election led to an increase in women representatives' social capital and to have their voice heard in public (ADB 2004, Khan and Mohsin 2008). Women's participation in election campaigns, thus, offered the corner-stones of the pillars of women empowerment, namely: resource, agency and achievement emphasized by Kabeer (1999). It provided resources by accelerating women representatives' confidence, self-esteem, mobility, personal freedom, social network and social capital; grounded agency for women representatives by chalking out their work plan exerted from the expectation and demand from the community during election campaign; and finally it motivated women representatives to put effort in the functioning of the local government bodies with enhanced agency and resources to attain their targeted objectives,   their achievement. The visible and observable

election campaign of women contestants might also have some spill-over effects in increasing women's mobility across society, to posit a silent challenge to the private-public divide and hence increasing women's position in household decision-making in the broader community which I will discuss in detail in Chapter 6.

4.3.6 Respondents' Ability to Campaign Day and Night

Campaigning for election is a time consuming job and often requires that the candidates are campaigning both day and night (Getz 2005, Frankl 2004, and Siddiqui 2002). The latter is usually only available to male candidates (Mahtab 2007) because in this conservative society women are not allowed to go outside at night. As Mukhopadhyay (2003) and Murshid (2004) mentioned, Muslim women are not allowed to visit outside in the evening. This study also finds evidence of gender discrimination in terms of mobility and personal freedom. Most of the respondents (95%) of my study mentioned encountering gender discrimination during the election campaign. Women faced various problems during campaigns that were not faced by their male colleagues. As one woman representative from a municipality pointed out:

> I could not campaign in the public places e.g., shops, tea-stalls, markets, roadsides, etc., but the male candidates were free to do that. I had to rely solely on door to door campaigning to reach the voters. I couldn't lead the rallies although our supporters were rallying the streets chanting slogans for us. This is all because I am a woman and women in our society are not supposed to do all those outdoor activities.

However, since it is essential to reach all the voters, most of the women members (83% from rural and 93% from urban areas) managed somehow to campaign day and night. In the focus group discussion, the women representatives mentioned that reaching all the voters is imperative but going out at night is not socially accepted, and women overcame the social restrictions in the following way:

> To campaign at night we took family members, supporters and party workers to accompany us for safety and security. Also in most of the cases we canvassed the long distant remote areas during daytime and the neighbourhood, friends and relatives at nights with relatively easier access for us.

It is, therefore, evident that although women were not normally free to move alone during night time, they were able to manage campaigning by adjusting their strategies and combat gender discrimination to some extent. Nevertheless, the restrictions put limits on their choice, a significant fabric of women empowerment (Kabeer 1999). Often it also contributed to dampening their self-confidence and increase dependency on their husbands and male family members. Following Kabeer (1999), it can be argued that such dependency on men cannot accelerate women's empowerment. Rather it restricts women's boundaries in terms of choice, agency and action. Women's dependency on men in election campaigning was later evidenced to bring unwanted intervention in women representatives' functioning in the local bodies due to patron-client hypothesis (Aktar 2009, Eisenstadt and Roniger 1980). The socio-cultural stigma and restrictions on women's mobility during election campaign was, therefore, evidenced as a detrimental factor in empowering women.

4.3.7 Reaching All the Voters

Local government elections in Bangladesh are festive events demonstrating strong interest of the masses. There is often a high voter turnout of up to 95% despite voting is not being mandatory (Mahtab 2007, Thorlind 2003, Choudhury 1994b). It is important, therefore, that candidates should contact every possible voter. To do this, women representatives often mentioned to have had help from their husbands, family members, supporters and well-wishers. Yet, the survey data show that women representatives were constrained by the larger size of the constituency of quota seats compared to general seats. About 47% of rural and 43% of urban women members reported that they could not reach all voters. One urban woman representative stated:

> Quota seat constituency is too big to reach all voters. A quota seat comprises 3 Units whereas a general seat is for 1 Unit only. It is, therefore, difficult for us to cover the entire area in limited time allowed for campaigning.

This justifies Kabeer's (1994) argument that gender inequality is not only produced at the households but also can be present and systematically reproduced in institutions and organizations. She termed these sorts of institutional policies as 'gender blind' that fail to address existing gender inequalities and hence needs urgent correction. The women respondents of this study, thus, mentioned that their constituency should be smaller, e.g., similar size to the general seat, in order to ensure effective participation of women in local level politics. Women members also mentioned that they only got 4 weeks for election campaigning which is inadequate to reach voters. But they emphasized that reaching voters is important in order to

truly represent the constituency. One woman councillor from a municipality argued that:

> If I cannot reach all my voters, how can I bear their voice? Am I truly representing them and their needs? How can I contribute to the development of my area?

The survey data, therefore, reveal that though the provision of direct election in the quota seats has increased participation of women in local government bodies, female representation is yet to be achieved because of the existing quota system in Bangladesh. These findings also warn about the danger of considering top-down policy as the sole strategy in formulating policies to empower women. Rather it recalls the importance of listening to women at the grassroots, an alternative bottom-up policy for development intervention in Chambers' (1983) term.

In the follow-up interview the women representatives were asked to elaborate upon particular issues they faced while campaigning in an attempt to reach voters in such a bigger constituency. Most of the women representatives mentioned this time that communication was the major challenge. The rural women members (87%) mentioned that the only means of transport they could use was Rickshaw which was expensive for them, considering their poor financial position. On the other hand, riding on a bicycle or a motor-bike by a woman or to be a passenger in those was not accepted in this conservative social structure, a popular and cheaper mode of transport for men (Panday 2008a). For the urban women members, however, transport was relatively better with alternative options including private car, motorbike, bus and auto-rickshaw. But they also spoke

about costly transport and their difficulty in reaching voters. It is clear, thus, that the larger constituency for the women quota seat posits a real threat to discourage women to contest in elections, downplaying government's initiative to women empowerment. This is particularly important for the rural areas where transport is a big problem, coupled with social stigma and women representative's poor financial position. All these problems caused women members' increased dependency on men to campaign for them resulting in lack of self-confidence, and reduced networks and esteem necessary to women's agency and empowerment. Thus, it can be argued that the size of quota seats which is three-times bigger than the general seats puts considerable impediments in achieving necessary social networks, resources and agency for women representatives important for their empowerment and achievement in Kabeer's (1999) framework.

Table 4.12. Who financed your election expenses (multiple answers)?

Who financed	Rural	Urban	Total
Myself	18 (60%)	23 (77 %)	41 (68%)
Husband	29 (97%)	27 (90%)	56 (94%)
Parents/siblings	5 (17.7%)	9 (30%)	14 (23.33%)
NGO	1 (3.33%)	-	1 (1.67%)
Political party	-	-	-
Chairman/Mayor candidate	-	-	-
Total	30 (100%)	30 (100%)	60 (100%)

4.3.8 Election Expenditure

Financial issues often create challenges for women to take part in local government elections (Karl 1995). Without economic resources and freedom

women cannot simply contest in elections and cannot establish their own voices. It is, however, evidenced from the socio-economic background of the women members that significant numbers of them have little or no income. Respondents were, therefore, asked about how and who financed their election expenditure.

About 97% of rural and 90% of urban respondents mentioned that their husbands shared election expenditures with them (Table 4.12). These figures also correspond to the numbers of married women representatives, essentially implying that all the married women candidates were supported by their husbands bearing election expenses. About 60% of rural and 77% of urban respondents mentioned that they also contributed to election expenditures by themselves, while 30% of urban and 18% of rural respondents also had financial support from their parents and siblings. Women representatives were further asked about the relative contribution between themselves and their husbands. The rural women representatives mentioned that most of the expenditures (about 80-85%) were shouldered by their husbands, while this was about 60-70% for urban women representatives. There was no evidence of financial contribution from political parties or local government Mayors/Chairmen, and that from NGOs was reported by only 3% of respondents in the rural area. The data show that women members were dependent heavily on their husbands and family members, especially in the rural areas, consistent with the fact that most of them are less educated or unemployed and consequently depended on their husbands' incomes. This also hints at the emergence of a patron-client relationship emanating from the financial dependency of women representatives. Empowering women would appear challenging in such a situation where women members are dependent on their husbands' incomes and consequently on their husbands' dictation once elected.

As Eisenstadt and Roniger (1980, Khan 1998) argued, power relations in a patron-client network are characterized by exchange of resources from the patron against indicated loyalty of the client. The story of Mrs F. N. can give further insight in this respect.

Mrs F.N: money matters most!

Mrs F.N. is a member elected from Nimpara Union Parishad. She is an uneducated housewife having no personal income of her own. Her husband pushed her to contest the election, and after submitting nomination papers for election she realised the financial constraints. Her husband assured her that he would manage the finance, and in fact he did. But because of this she was entirely under the will by her husband during her election campaign: from printing posters to organizing rallies, everything was done by her husband. After winning the election she found that she was more helpless because her husband was controlling her all the way. She found that her husband was finalising the relief lists, development site selection, etc, in the Union Parishad in exchange for financial benefits.[27] Though she felt disgraced by these unwanted and ill-motivated acts of her husband she is powerless to bar him from doing such as he often points to her election expenditure to rationalise his actions. Thus, she has become a tool for her husband to gain financial and social power.

This justifies Wade's (1984) argument (see also Khan1998) that the typical patron-client relationship in South Asia begets rent-seeking behaviour and

---

[27] The local government institutions in Bangladesh are in charge of, on behalf of the national government, to list, allocate and distribute relief items (e.g., rice, wheat, flour, cloths, tube-wells, etc) to distress households. Note that like many developing countries, Bangladesh doesn't have pension system for its citizens. Instead, poor and extreme poor households are provided regular assistance (mainly food) through local government institutions. Due to low supply and high demand of such relief operation bribery, corruption and nepotism are heard very often.

corruption. The dependency of women members on their husbands in meeting election expenditure also reflects women member's lack of necessary agency which eventually undermines their achievement and empowerment in the local government system in the sense used by Kabeer (1999). The women respondents mentioned that their husbands (and other family members) often help them to accomplish certain tasks of the LGIs but they claim that they do not allow any dictation subversive to their position and image in the LGIs. As one rural women member argued,

> I take help from my husband and other family members to accomplish my tasks. Especially if there is any road maintenance work, relief distribution for the flood victims and other disasters, it becomes easy to manage if I take their help.[28] These are very stressful and help from the family is important. But I do not sit idle at home. I go to the LGI office, visit development site and monitor relief distribution. They only assist me.

During the follow-up field research one year after the initial fieldwork, I investigated further whether the elected women representatives who were entirely relying on their husband's financing during election could perform LGI activities independently. It is evidenced that over the twelve month period, the women representatives became more confident to perform their roles in local government institutions. They mentioned that they got capacity building training from government and non-government organizations that helped them to understand the

---

[28] In Bangladesh, elected officials are responsible to supervise and monitor the development works of the LGIs, e.g., building roads and culverts, tree plantation, relief distribution etc. The elected representatives are often assisted by their friends and family members to oversee these projects.

functioning of the LGIs and their role as elected representatives. As one rural woman member mentioned,

> Earlier, I had no idea about LGIs. I even did not know many of my villagers. Often the villagers came to me seeking help but I was not familiar with the local government system (sthaniyo sarkar babosthya). I was invited to solve petty disputes between villagers but I used to sit idle and talk less in those meetings as I was not sure about it. But now I know almost all my voters and know their problems. The training I got from *Sharik* (a local NGO) also taught us what we can do as elected representatives. I can go alone to these meetings now, can participate in discussion and give my opinion independently.

This proves the justification of training for women members in transformative capacity building (Murthy 2001). In a typical patriarchal society like Bangladesh such training can effectively help women feel confident, raise self-esteem and overcome patriarchal barriers. It indicates the importance of elimination of institutional drawbacks and of capacity building for effective participation of women representatives in local government functions.

4.3.9 Religious Problems Faced by the Women Representatives

Social conservatism in Bangladesh is related to religion, in particular to Islam (Mahmud, Shah and Becker 2012, White 2010). Mahmud, Shah and Becker (2012: 617) mentioned that, "the practice of purdah confines women within the homestead and compound and they generally have to seek permission either from the husband or older in-laws, or at least inform them when going outside". Kabeer (2011) mentioned that purdah often leads to social seclusion especially for poor women. Majority of the representatives of this study mentioned that they felt

religious and patriarchal pressure during election campaigning. These included fatwa (compulsory instructions) issued by fundamentalist religious leaders who oppose female leadership in Islam and object to women entering public office, while putting restrictions on women's mobility out of home (Riaz 2005). Most women representatives of this study   appeared to be practising Muslims and dressed following Islamic code (see photograph below). Most of them mentioned taking a male companion when going outside, especially after sunset to avoid possible harassment.

Picture of elected women (and male) members from Sholua UP, Charghat, Rajshahi.

About 79% of the women representatives claimed to wear clothing acceptable for purdah because of religious, family and social pressures. Women members explained that they could not win in election while denying the expectation of the society. They mentioned that their families also pressured them

to follow the Purdah if they were to go outside of their homes. Women members across rural and urban areas mentioned the importance to show their modesty and conformity to social practices to convince their families to allow them to go out and do politics. This is also important to get voters' empathy and support. A non-practising Muslim woman often becomes the target of religious fatwa which is also evidenced by Panday (2008a), Halder (2004) and Moin (2004). Panday (2008a) mentioned that women representatives even faced the threat of divorce from their husbands if they did not wear the Purdah when going out.

The religious restrictions are more visible in the rural areas than in the urban areas. Rural women members mentioned about not visiting local markets, government offices and other public spaces without having a male for company as people do not like it. One rural woman member who is educated and employed mentioned that understanding religious values of the voters is important in getting their support. She mentioned that she won the election with a convincing margin as she knew what people wanted to see in her. She explained,

Being a candidate in the election is a test of conformity to social values. It requires how good a candidate is in socially representative metaphor. Thus, if people feel that wearing purdah is a symbol of chastity, a symbol of submission to Allah, I must have to practice purdah to show that I truly represent them and they can vote me without hesitation. If I do not practice Islam and do not show it off publicly, I cannot secure their confidence and vote.

Another rural woman representative mentioned,

Going public by women is not liked in my village and women are not likely to talk to the outside men. I knew it and so talked mostly to the women when campaigning for election. If I knew that there is any man inside

home, I just said *Salam*[29] to him and moved talking to the women keeping my voice mild. I talked to men only when it seems that they want to talk to me and it is worth talking. However, before talking to the men I used to make sure that my head is covered by scarf and no part of my body is visible confirming Purdah.

The religious pressure is also evidenced in the urban areas of Rajshahi. The similar *Purdah* norms and practices are also maintained by the urban women representatives without any choice but as given. An urban member, thus, mentioned,

> Covering head by a long scarf is the very first thing I was used to do while going outside for election campaigning. Then it followed by Salam. Without Purdah and Salam one cannot dare to win election in this society. Furthermore, women with no Purdah and Salam were often teased by the young hooligans and also faced criticism from her rival candidates as anti-social and anti-Islamic.

These experiences show that personal choice, a key indicator of empowerment (Kabeer 1999), is severely curtailed by the widespread conservative social norms and religious practices in both rural and urban areas. It is also apparent that unless such religious and social inequalities are tackled by appropriate educative and legal measures, many women will be deterred from entering the political sphere.

---

[29] Salam is the Islamic way of wishing and greeting. In full meaning it means, may Allah bless you peace and tranquillity. Saying Salam is considered as reflection of one's humbleness to the elderly, modesty and religiosity.

4.3.10 Factors Influencing Election Victory

The discussion above shows that the women members came from different socio-economic strata and they had to come through various challenges during their election effort. It is, therefore, important to explore the factors women respondents consider pertinent to help them win in the election battle. The respondents were asked to identify such factors presented in Table 4.13. Most of the women members, 97% rural and 100% urban, claimed that they won election because the voters believed them as the candidate able to perform roles in the local government better than the rival candidates. A majority of the respondents, 67% rural and 50% urban, also mentioned that they were able to mobilize women voters to support them.[30] In particular they did this by raising women's issues.

Table 4.13. What factors do you think helped to win the election? (multiple answers)

Factors affecting win	LGIs		Total
	Rural	**Urban**	
Your suitability as a candidate	29 (96.67%)	30 (100%)	59 (98.66%)
Family factor/influence	21 (70%)	17 (56.67%)	38(64%)
Support from women	20 (66.67%)	15 (50%)	35 (58.33%)
Support from Chairman/Mayor	7 (23.33%)	7 (23.33%)	14 (23.33%)
Support from Political party	2 (6.67%)	5 (16.67%)	7 (11.66%)
Other	1(3.33%)	-	1 (1.67%)
Total	30 (100.0%)	30 (100.0%)	60 (100.0%)

---

[30] Though men and women both have votes to elect women members in the quota seats, it is interesting, however, to see that most of the women candidates generally seek women voters' support and often credit women's support for their victory.

About 57% of the urban women respondents of this study mentioned that family influence helped them in winning elections comparing to 70% for the rural women. Apart from these, 23.3% of respondents from both the rural and urban areas mentioned the local chairman/mayor's support in their favour. In contrast, political party support was not emphasised by the women members. As mentioned previously, election laws in Bangladesh do not allow political party nomination or party campaigning in local government. Any sort of political posters of the candidates, use of political party involvement, national leaders and their pictures, party election symbols, etc. are not allowed. Although some candidates, especially in the urban areas, had political party affiliations they could not approach voters officially as a party candidate. In some cases, there were even multiple candidates from the same party affiliation in the same constituency, thus competition was more personal than party related.

Candidates with party affiliations, however, claimed to receive support from parties during election campaigns. Personal experience and educational and professional achievement are mentioned by most of the women representatives as having helped them win in the election. One rural woman member mentioned,

> I have been a school teacher here for long time. I used to help all my students in their studies. Many times a student's parents come to me to share difficulties their children face in school. This ranges from tuition to examination fee and I tried to help them at my best. Some students cannot pay private tuition because of poverty. I used to teach them after school for free. Sometimes there are dropouts too from school. I used to visit those families and convince them to send their children back to school. All these gave me a great advantage in election battle. It was evidenced that in almost every house I had my student who campaigned for me. Furthermore, my supportive role as a school

teacher helped me to claim as the best candidate to shoulder local government responsibilities.

Personal traits and civic engagements were also emphasized by the urban women representatives. One urban woman member mentioned,

> I was involved with various social organizations to fight against dowry, violence against women, incidence of fatwa, drug selling and child labour. I was also involved with campaigning for promoting safe maternal health, increasing family planning, promoting girl's education, tree plantation, sanitation, etc. I was, therefore, known to the community for a long time as a devoted social worker. It helped me to win the election.

Thus, the findings of the study show that self-esteem, confidence and personal qualities such as education, employment and social engagement were key factors in empowering women (Malhotra and Schuler 2005, Friedmann 1992, Rowlands 1997). Accordingly, women's personal empowerment is closely linked with their political empowerment. On the other hand, family influence and social capital are also emphasized by women respondents. One rural women member mentioned,

> My husband is a village doctor. He is very popular in this area for his service. He used to visit every single door; every single men and women of this village treat him as a family member. Whenever someone is sick, people used to come to him day and night. His popularity and service gave me a clear edge in the election.

This study finds that social capital achieved through the individual social skills, good will and trustfulness (Coleman 1988, Putnam 1993, Glaser, Laibson and Sacerdote 2002) of the women respondents helped them in winning elections.

This is consistent with Glaeser, Laibson and Sacerdote (2002: F438) who argued that social capital is, "a person's social characteristics including social skills, charisma and networks which enable him to reap market and non-market returns from interaction with others".

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter discusses the issues women representatives faced in contesting election the rural and urban local government institutions in Bangladesh. It is evidenced that the decision to contest elections was taken mostly jointly by the women representatives and their families across rural and urban areas in Bangladesh. Though the introduction of direct election was a top-down approach, it is evidenced to broaden women's choice-the underlying indicator to ensure women's active citizenship and empowerment (Gaventa and Barrett 2010, Cornwall and Coelho 2009, Kabeer 1999). To Kabeer (1999), the empowerment of women must have to be analysed in the dimensions of making choices relevant to women's lives and livelihood where the dimensions of choice are: resources, agency and achievement mentioned earlier. In this study, women members across rural and urban LGIs were found to enjoy an increasing amount of agency and resources in terms of broader socio-political network while campaigning for election. Electoral campaigning gave women members a rare opportunity to go out of their homes and talk to people who are not their kin. The decision to contest elections, therefore, provides women members an implicit platform to overcome patriarchal barriers and to breach the private-public domain existing in this conservative society. Some women representatives also mentioned that they

decided to contest elections and convinced their families. This further indicates women's increasing account of agency accomplishing their wishes and choices.

It is, on other hand, evidenced that women members had to rely on their families, in particular, to their husbands for election expenditure. Though the urban women representatives had higher personal income, they were equally dependent to their husbands for election expenditure like the rural women. Women representatives also had to rely on their husbands for election campaigning at night and in distant places. Such dependency of women representatives on males undermined the effort of the women in achieving resource and agency in broadening their choice and empowerment. Women representatives further mentioned that religious and cultural restrictions constrained their mobility outside the home, and this limited their ability to reach the male voters, which further limited their ability to build necessary socio-political skills, resources and networks. This can be considered putting a ceiling on women representatives' achievement in terms of resources and agency. However, women representatives conceded to realities and mentioned blending their election strategies to overcome such socio-religious restrictions.

Introduction of direct elections in the reserved seats, hence, offered women the opportunity to effectively build and employ their skills, resources and networks to attain certain goals of their choice. However, being elected is only the first phase of the challenge. Just entering into the first stage of the dynamics of politics, and empowerment requires that women representatives effectively play a role in the local government bodies in order to fulfil their election promises and to justify their capabilities as elected representatives, an issue I will discuss in detail in the following two chapters.

CHAPTER FIVE

WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT: FUNCTIONS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Empowerment is the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them.

—Kabeer (1999).

5.1 Introduction

Although the Local Government Ordinance (1997) introduces direct election in reserved seats to bring women into mainstream politics; it does not specify any particular job or function for women representatives (Siddiqui 2002). Therefore, my research strives to investigate the extent to which women members are indeed able to participate meaningfully in local government activities in ways that enhance women's position in society. Are these elected women representatives performing well at the local government bodies? Is the top-down approach effective at all in empowering women at the grass-roots level of politics? Are the elected women representative exercising agency by themselves independently or do they serve merely as proxies for their husbands and families? Does the election of women representatives make any real difference to the doing and being of the womenfolk in this patriarchal setting? This chapter attempts to explore all these issues by analysing and discussing women members' roles, performance, participation and empowerment in the functions of local government. In particular, I explore here women members' knowledge about the

function of local government, their ability in decision making, capacity of execution, as well as their level of control and authority in local government institutions.

5.2 Familiarity With Local Government Functioning

The performance of the elected women members depends on the extent to which they are familiar with the functions and scope of the local government institution. The elected women representatives were, therefore, asked if they were familiar with, or have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities at the local government level. The survey data presented in Table 5.1 show that most of the urban women members of this study claimed their understanding of local government functions ranged from substantial (53%) to moderate (47%). No urban members acknowledged little or no knowledge about local government duties and responsibilities. However, most of the rural elected members (73%) mentioned that they had moderate knowledge and only 6.7% claimed to have substantial knowledge. Approximately 20% rural respondent mentioned very little or no understanding of local government and the potential role of women.

Table 5.1. To what extent are you familiar with LGIs functioning?

	LGIs		Total
	Rural	**Urban**	
Not at all	1(3.3%)		1(1.7%)
Very little	5(16.7%)		5(8.3%)
Moderate	22 (73.3%)	14 (46.7%)	36 (60.3%)
Substantial	2 (6.7%)	16 (53.3%)	18 (30%)
Total	30 (100.0%)	30 (100.0%)	60 (100.0%)

During focus group discussions it was also evidenced that urban women representatives' know-how about how local government functions was better than that of the rural respondents in this study. The poorer knowledge of the rural women representatives is also evidenced in a study by the ADB (2004) where 70% of the rural respondents were found to be unfamiliar with their roles and responsibilities. The data, therefore, clearly resembles some rural-urban differences among the elected women representatives in the survey area which can be attributed to differences in educational attainment, employment, income, and organizational involvement mentioned in chapter 4 (Tables 4.2, 4.4). Fulton (2008) also mentioned that 90% of her respondents pointed out that lack of education and information was responsible for their poor knowledge of LGIs. It can also be recalled that most of the rural women representatives did not access newspapers, did not own a radio or television and consequently were lagging behind in accessing information. They were also less involved with political parties. All these factors contributed to rural women's limited knowledge about the functioning of the local government bodies which might seriously impede women's empowerment in the LGIs that I will discuss later in this chapter. While I talk to the key informants of this study, one NGO activist explained:

> The problem is that some women members especially from rural areas are not familiar with the functioning of LGIs. They are unaware what they can do and what they are elected for. Some women representatives cannot read posters and pamphlets. They have, thus, insufficient knowledge about their roles and responsibilities. Government should introduce a necessary capacity building program to boost their confidence, capability and commitment in the local government functioning.

During the first interview taken after six-months of the LGI elections[31], most of the elected rural women representatives of this study mentioned relief distribution, e.g., VGD and VGF cards[32], and construction of roads, bridges and culverts as their important tasks. They considered other work, such as women's development, reproductive health, vaccination, child marriage, dowry, disaster management, the issue of school dropouts, and tree plantation less important and voluntary. The survey data, thus, show that the broader dimensions of the roles and responsibilities are overlooked by women members in the rural areas. Frankl (2004) also evidenced similar findings that most of her respondents' first priority was building roads and bridges and second priority was distributing VGD and VGF cards. However, urban women representatives highlighted construction and repair of roads and culverts as their priority. They further prioritized development in the slum areas and women's welfare. Mukhopaddhay (2005) also evidenced

---

[31] The field was first visited during January-May 2012 shortly after the election of the Union Parishad (UP). The respondents especially the first-timers in the UP were of limited experience at the time of this interview. Considering limitation of this survey, the researcher revisited the field 1 year later to get a sense and view of the elected women representatives with adequate experience in the LGIs.

[32] VGD (vulnerable group development) and VGF (vulnerable group feeding) programs are government's food assistance programs for the extreme poor particularly elderly households, distress women such as widow, divorced and abandoned, disabled and handicapped people. Local government institutions are in charge to identify and select those vulnerable extreme poor and to distribute VGD and VGF cards. Monthly food assistance including main staple e.g., rice, wheat and flour are distributed to these card holders at the local government offices under the supervision of the local government representatives. These programs are run round the year but the number of cards and beneficiaries increases during economic shocks e.g., flood, cyclone, drought, price spiral/inflation and religious festivals.

urban women representatives in Bangladesh tend to work for women's welfare and slum area development.

The rural women member's limited knowledge of local government and the narrower focus could have contributed to their abstaining from the wider responsibilities of the local government institutions as well as their empowerment. As Gaventa and Cornwall (2001) argued, better knowledge possesses greater influence in power relations and determines the balance and boundaries in challenging power inequalities among agents. Accordingly, "knowledge, as much as any resource, determines definitions of what is conceived as important, as possible, for and by whom" (Gaventa and Cornwall 2001: 72). Thus, the lack of knowledge of the rural women representatives in this study would limit their ability and participation in the decision-making process in the LGIs. The story of Mrs T illustrates this:

Mrs T: It's relief, it's food distribution, what else?

Mrs T from Valukgachi Union Parishad, emphasized distributing relief, VGD and VGF cards among the poor people as her main job in the local government. To her, she only knows about relief and she has hardly any interest beyond relief. She mentioned that there might be other jobs at local government but she was not familiar with those. She said that most of her voters were from the river-basin and were vulnerable to flood and crop loss. The aged, widows, divorcees and disabled persons were the worst victims. During the election campaign she promised her voters enough and transparent relief distribution and she believed that they do not expect anything else from her. So, she considered herself happy if could do her best distributing relief.

However, during a follow-up interview one year later, it was evidenced that the rural respondents were emphasizing more on bringing women in general into

mainstream development initiatives and to empower women at every sphere of life. The women members opined that when they first came into the LGIs they did not know much about its functions but later they got capacity building training from NGOs and government offices. This training taught them about the functions of the LGIs, the role of elected women representatives, the number of standing committees in the LGIs and women members' roles in those, the scope and strategy of conducting *shalish*[33] and so on. Thus, the issues of improved health care, immunization, family planning, tree plantation, water and sewerage, education and school truancy, natural disasters, prevention of child marriage and dowry are now mentioned by the women representatives as local government responsibilities. Following Sen (1999) and Nussbaum's (2011, 2000, 1999) capability approach, the data, therefore, indicate that women representatives' improved knowledge through training about the functioning of the LGIs is a considerable step to accomplish their role and capability and making a difference in the lives of women. Following Kabeer (1999), this indicates that the improved selection of jobs means that women representatives of the LGIs are now having informational and functional resources necessary to participate in the decision-making agency to foster certain achievements of their choice. To Sen (1999), identification of valuable functioning is the building block, but capability is the accomplishment of a particular set of functions by choice. Training, accordingly, helps broaden women representatives' selection of roles and functions in the LGIs. It helped in the expansion of choice for women members, to exercise active

---

[33] *Shalish* is the informal jurisdiction to solve petty disputes by the local leaders. In Bangladesh the law permits the elected representatives of local government to conduct *Shalish* and to settle conflicts and issues among people.

citizenship and to the endeavour of empowerment at the grass-roots government institutions.

5.3 Participation in the Standing Committees

The Local Government Ordinance (1993 and 2001) specifies various Standing Committees through which local government activities are executed and implemented. These standing committees play critical roles in formulating policies and implementing development activities of the local government institutions. According to the Ordinance, these standing committees should include the male members, female members and the chairman. The Ordinance further clarifies that at least one-third of the committees should be headed by the women members and each elected member will be member of at least 3 committees. Thus, these standing committees are important platforms for the empowerment of women in the local government system. In the rural institutions (Union Parishads), the ordinance specifies standing committees for the following issues: Finance and establishment of funding opportunities; Education and mass education; Health, family planning and epidemic control; Social welfare and community centre; Women, children's welfare, sports and culture; Agriculture and agro-related development; Fisheries and livestock; Cottage industry and co-operatives; Tree plantation and conservation of environment; Union public works and maintenance; Audit and accounts; Law and order; and Rural water supply and sanitation.

On the other hand, the standing committees in the urban local government institutions are: Education, Health and family planning, Social welfare and community centre, Finance and establishment, Audit and accounts, Urban

planning and development, Water and electricity supply, and Public works building and construction.

With the obligatory provision of women's representation, it is expected that the women members would be able to establish their position in the local government institutions as a result of participating in these standing committees. However, the study finds that about 78% of the women members in the rural areas claimed that they were assigned to those committees like women and children's welfare, family planning, mass education and tree plantation where the budget and resource allocation are very low. The previous studies (e.g., Nazneen and Tasneem 2010, Panday 2008 and ADB 2004) also mentioned that in local government institutions in Bangladesh gender and social development issues were considered as 'miscellaneous' or under 'women and helpless people' and are not considered mainstream agendas. In this study it is, thus, found that most of the women representatives were excluded from strategic committees like finance, establishment and audit, but were included in other committees to comply with the target figure of the ordinance. The respondents further claimed that though they were included in the standing committees, often the chairmen delegated major responsibilities to the male members and women members were not provided with sufficient information. The women members felt that they were discriminated against and were not given the opportunity to work in these standing committees. Thus, the research finds that although the provision of the standing committees in the local government ordinance provided rural women members an opportunity to work for their locality and to exercise strategic needs, it was not fully realized due to non-cooperation from the male representatives.

When I interviewed the male representatives they, however, denied the allegations made by the women. Male members mentioned that women representatives received their due and that they did participate in standing committees. One Chairman from a rural local body (Union Parishad) argued,

> The majority of the elected representatives are male. There are 3 women and 9 men representatives. So when I form any committee, male dominance comes automatically. I cannot overlook the structure of the local government to include more women in the standing committees.

On the other hand, because of different structures and procedures urban women members had an even lower level of opportunities and participation in the standing committees. Urban local government bodies have several permanent wings to carry out necessary development works, e.g., engineering department, water supply department, and electricity department[34]. These departments formulate and execute action plans for the urban local government. About 88% of urban women representatives further mentioned that the elected Mayor, who is typically a male, supervises all those departments with the help of the male councillors. There were some standing committees in the urban LGIs but most of the women representatives (79%) mentioned that they were not involved in the important committees and seldom could contribute to the policy formulation or implementation through these committees.

Thus, to the women members of this study, such formation of standing committees with a complete male majority does not help women's voices to be

---

[34] See chapter 3 for detail discussion on the functioning and mechanism of urban local government.

heard and to command their strategic needs in the LGIs. According to institutional theory, institutions comprise rules, norms and standard procedures to shape political outcomes and behaviour (March and Olsen 1984, 1993, 1995, Putnam 1993, Peters 1999, Krook 2003). The survey data presented here shows a clear evidence of institutional weakness in the endeavour towards women's empowerment in LGIs in Bangladesh. The number game challenges the institutional efficacy of 'mainstreaming gender' (Moser 2000, 2010, Moser and Moser 2005) at the local government bodies and to expand women representatives' choice and 'capability' (Nussbaum 1999, 2011) in being the change and achieving policy and political changes. It is apparent that the formation of standing committees in the survey area was gender-blind in Kabeer's (1994) term which failed to challenge the existing gender division of labour and discrimination against women, and thus, calls for affirmative action and gender-specific policy reform.

It can also be seen that the challenges of gender mainstreaming in the survey area reflect issues similar to those in other developing countries context. In Indonesia, for example, despite the presidential instruction on gender manstreaming in 2000, women's strategic needs still remain a challenge (Idrus 2012). Government agencies in Indonesia are often found to recruit women in development activities as a short cut to demonstrate gender mainstreaming without proper gender analysis. As Idrus (2012) opined, government programs are supposed to be gender neutral, but economic activities such as agriculture in Indonesia, exhibits clear division of labour with men working mostly in field preparation and planting, whereas women tend to process agricultural products. The government initiative to train farmers in land preparation and planting

effectively benefited men. To Idrus (2012), this kind of policy got through because, *first*, the women picked by the bureaucrats are from elite class with no knowledge about the division of labour in agriculture, and *second*, even if they speak they are ignored because the majority are men who think know better the need of men as well as of women. The failure occurs as the realstakeholders are not consulted and their voices not heard, emphasizing the strategic needs of women. The non-inclusion of elected woen representatives in the key standing committees of the LGIs in my survey area equally reflects that the stakeholders of many development initiatives would remain in dark hindering women's citizenship and strategic needs.

5.4 Attendance in the Local Government Meetings

Meetings of the local government institutions are important in formulating, monitoring and implementing its policies and actions. There are two types of meetings held in the local government institutions: general meetings typically once in a month; and special meetings whenever necessary. The active empowerment of women requires women members to attend these meetings regularly and raise their voices. These meetings also provide women members the necessary opportunity to raise local development agendas. As can be seen in Table 5.2, this study found that most of the women members (83% rural and 100% urban) do attend regularly, although about 17% of the rural respondents mentioned that they were irregular in attending meetings due to communication problems, maintaining families and short notices of meetings. Most of the respondents also mentioned that they were not informed about the special meetings very often, and the chairmen/mayors contact only the male

representatives for such. The studies by Rahman and Zaman (2004) and Aktar (2009) mentioned that in some instances women members were even not counted by the chairmen/mayors. One rural male chairman of Aktar (2009) mentioned that he had 9 members—essentially pointing to the male members only. It was only when the interviewer reminded him about the women members that he recognized that it was not 9 but 12 members in the Union Parishad.

Table 5.2. Do you participate in LGI meetings and functions regularly?

| | LGIs | | Total |
	Rural	Urban	
No	5(16.7%)	-	5 (8.3%)
Yes	25 (83.3%)	30 (100.0%)	55 (91.7%)
Total	30 (100.0%)	30 (100.0%)	60 (100.0%)

The proceedings of the local government institution, however, are such that a meeting can have a quorum without any women representatives' presence. Most of the women representatives pointed that the chairmen/mayors and the male members,, therefore, do not inform them about meetings in time. As Meer and Mukhopaddhay (2004) mentioned,

> Since the council could function without women representatives, officials and male representatives did not inform women of meetings. When women's votes were needed the chair and general members approached to them with blank piece of paper and solicited their signatures to resolutions they did not bother to discuss. When women representatives queried this practice they were victimised. Women representatives were often intimidated into silence by male representatives at committee meetings, and they were not taken seriously by male officials in the council office.

During interview the male members and chairmen/mayors, however, tried to make cases, e.g., women members are engaged with domestic chores, cannot come to an emergency for special meetings, and also leave meetings before it gets too late in the day, especially avoiding the hours after sunset. The male representatives were, thus, seen to have strong belief of public-private divide. During focus group discussions some women members also accepted the burden of domestic work, child rearing and mobility restriction at night but they claimed that these were not causing any problem for them attending meetings. They explained that they have helping hands at home, e.g., mother-in-law, sister, sister-in-law and maid servants to tackle the burden of household work. They claimed that they contested elections with the ambition to play certain roles out of their homes. Farnkl (2004: 57) also mentioned that the introduction of direct election "has increased the legitimacy of the elected women as well as their own inspirations to do something... and they had no intention to sit quietly in the meetings in the UP".

It is evident that participation at local government meetings is important for the women representatives to raise their voice and to achieve what Kabeer (1994) and Moser (1989, 2010) termed as strategic gender interest, such as challenging gendered division of labour, eliminating inequality in domestic work including child rearing, access to reproductive health and elimination of inequality in legal rights. As Moser (2010: 79) argued, mainstreaming gender requires "gender empowerment through women's participation in the decision-making processes such that women's voices are heard and they have the power to put issues on the agenda". Following Kabeer (1999), it is the platform that could

render women representatives' necessary agency to champion certain achievement of their choice. However, the data shows that the presence of strong patriarchal attitudes and the private-public divide hinder gender mainstreaming in the local government institutions in the present study.

5.5 Expressing Opinions

Expressing opinions in the meetings without any pressure is essential towards women empowerment. The survey data, however, show that as much as 70% of both rural and urban respondents could not express their opinions freely in local government meetings, a clear manifestation of the long way before women can achieve and exercise their strategic needs. The women members of this study stated that their presence in the meetings were not welcomed by the male members and their opinions were seldom heard. Women representatives claimed that the working environment in the local government institutions is unfriendly and the male members do not take them cordially. They argued that the male members have a general tendency to superimpose their opinions over women's opinions regardless of the merit of the reasoning. Strong patriarchal values prevailing in male members' minds result into superiority complex obstructing the capacity to pay attention to women's voices. One rural woman, thus, explained,

> The male members are not open-minded. They do not take us with equal weight and dignity. They make deliberate chaos in the meetings so that we cannot talk. Whenever we speak in the meeting they start side-talks, smoke, whisper to the next person and laugh at us. They do not want to listen to us and do not want to agree with our arguments.

Another urban women member also explained,

The male members are of patriarchal attitude. They do not want to accept that women can have good thoughts over theirs. Even if they find themselves in false position and women's superior thoughts, they never accept it. They are stereotype who consider listening to women as unmanly.

The study by Panday (2008) also evidenced male members' non-cooperation and dominating attitude over women representatives. A woman respondent of his study stated,

There is always the tendency to keep us away from everything. They do not have faith in us. They believe if we participate in the activities that were previously carried out by them their supremacy in the society would be reduced.

It appears that little has been changed since the study by the WFP (1999) which documented the patriarchal attitude of the male local council members in Bangladesh. Accordingly, male members appeared to oppose women members even though the latter might have had better ideas (WFP 1999).

In my study, women members further mentioned that they were verbally attacked, abused and insulted by male members in the meetings if they disagree with the opinion of their male counterparts. The story of Mrs AK is indicative here.

Mrs AK: It's harassment, not empowerment

Mrs AK is from Arani Municipality. She said that the Mayor and the male councillors get angry if the women councillors' opinions go against them. She mentioned that she was in confrontation with the Mayor over distribution of

---

development projects at the Municipality among councillors. These projects provide important opportunities for the representatives to contribute to the development of their locality. Mrs AK intended to get involved in the committee that distributes agricultural input, e.g., high yielding rice varieties, fertilizers, and pesticides among farmers but the Mayor was opposing. One of her male colleagues was supporting her and argued against the Mayor. In fact this male councillor was an active liberal politician supportive to women's greater voice. The Mayor and other male councillors did not take this coalition between those male and female councillors easily. They spread a rumour that she and the said male councillor were involved in some extra-marital relationship. She was so embarrassed and ashamed both in her family and constituency. Her family was unhappy about her conflict with the Mayor and the rumour. The family members pressured and warned her not to make any further confrontation. Her old political rivals also took the opportunity to tarnish her image in the community. Being frustrated she is now irregularly attending meetings and if present, feels pressured to express her opinions freely. She said that if there were proper institutional instruction about the distribution of these development projects, she would not face these troubles.

The story of Mrs AK recalls the inadequacy of the institutional arrangements for women representatives for the life choices they are thrust into and to make. It is obvious that the inadequacy in institutional arrangements results in systematic disadvantage in gender-power relations for women in the LGIs. It is argued in theories of power that institutional practices could reproduce and recreate systematic inequalities in power based on sex, race and class (Krook 2003, Harding 1995, Giddens 1994, Foucault 1989). Accordingly, an institution characterised by institutional inequality, such as unequal representation of women, is flawed in that the structure does not let the inequality to be corrected, but such an unequal representation of women and the overwhelming majority of the men would reproduce the inequality further. It, hence, recalls the necessity for women's 'strategic needs' (Moser 1989, 1993, 2010) in order to overcome

prevailing inequality and imbalance in the gender-power relations, and to eliminate male domination and harassment against women in this patriarchal society. Moser (2010), therefore, argued for institutionalisation of gender as the transformative force to achieve women's strategic gender interest. Accordingly, it is the "institutionalisation of gender concerns within the organisation itself, with gender equality in staffing and other organisational procedures to ensure a transformative process for the organisation in terms of attitudes and culture" (Moser 2010: 79).

In this study I also asked women respondents if male representatives show enough attention when they were able to express their opinions. Most of the respondents mentioned that the chairmen/mayors and the male members do not put attention to them and do not accept their opinion. However, they mentioned that the fellow women members take their opinion with importance but they are the minority in the local government institutions, unable to form the necessary critical mass to influence decision-making process. To Moser (1989, 1993) and Kabeer (1994) such an institutional arrangement appeared to be gender-blind, in that it does not challenge existing gender-norms and eventually ends up with systematic marginalisation of women, e.g., their unheard voice, unequal participation and under representation in the local government bodies. The unheard voice of women and their neglected opinions at the local government body eventually mean that the local government body had failed to offer enough space to utilize what Kabeer (1999), Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (2000, 2007, 2011) called women's capability, choice and agency in order to mainstream gender and empower women at the grassroots.

5.6 Protest When Necessary

Since women members are facing unfriendly working environments in the LGIs, the study asked them whether they were able to protest in the event of any disagreement with the chairman/mayor and colleagues. The ability to protest when necessary gives women representatives the opportunity to raise their voice against any injustice and build women's strategic needs emphasized by Moser (2010, 1993,1989) and Kabeer (2001, 1994). The data show that about 88% of the urban and 70% of the rural women representatives mentioned that they argued when they disagreed with the male counterparts. The respondents who did not protest mentioned that they were in the minority in the local government, so there was no meaning of protesting. They further opined that the male representatives did not like to see them challenging male representative views, and so they were intimidated by the male representatives whenever they raised protests. This compromising and submissive tendency of the women representatives appears not of helping but rendering a hinderance in women's strategic needs in the LGIs. A deeper investigation also shows that these women respondents had good personal and family relations with the male representatives and they worked closely with the Mayors/Chairmen. It is observed that the differences in protests come mainly from the difference in education and political background: the educated and politically active women representatives were seen to be more vocal in both rural and urban local government institutions. The story of Mrs. RK is worthwhile here to mention.

> **Mrs RK: raise your head high**
>
> Mrs. RK was elected from Rajshahi City Corporation. She is a university graduate. She opined that the mayor and men councillors get crazy

particularly when women representatives claim money and their due share in development projects. They do not want to share development projects and resources with the women members but she used to challenge them. In one meeting a male councillor became so angry over project distribution that he stood up from his seat, and shouted and threatened to slap her. He was so furious. But she did not let it go unchallenged. She stood up and asked the Mayor to listen to her point. She brought the City Corporation manual and the Local Government Ordinance and showed them the rules and regulations about the functioning of LGIs and the procedures of meeting. She read from the manual that everyone in the LGIs was subject to follow the rules of action and that LGIs should ensure a congenial atmosphere such that everyone can participate in the decision-making process without fear and favour. She challenged them to show any legal authority that gave male councillors/mayors any jurisdiction to rule a municipality without women members' participation. In terms of representation, she also argued that she is representing 3 wards, whereas a male councillor represents 1 ward. With all the fierce exchange of words she asked the Mayor to take necessary action against that councillor for his misbehaviour, otherwise she threatened to go to higher authority. Eventually the Mayor and other councillors forced him to say sorry to her.

The majority of the women representatives further opined that by expressing disagreement they often managed to put pressure on male representatives to consider their arguments. As one rural woman member mentioned,

Mrs JK: your voice is your strength

Mrs JK was an UP member eleced from Charghat. Her constituency was prone to natural distaster like flood and strom every year. In 2010 a storm hit in her area leaving hundreds of houses damaged. The villagers were under the sky without any food and shelter for days. The district office allocated some food, warm clothes and medicines for each of the affected villages. But most of the affected people from her locality complained her that they did not get such assistance. When she talked to the Chairman, he replied that the Union Parishad got this amount of dry food, that amount of cloths, etc., and he

allocated these equally to all 9 Wards. She was so angry. She asked him that this was his over use of power—that he cannot and he must not distribute the food and other assistances to any Wards that were not affected. She argued that there were only 3 Wards affected and that this emergency relief allocated by the district office must have to go only to those areas. The chairman lost his temper, he started shouting on her, and the same were the male members. But she kept protesting that these were not reliefs for the poor coming round the year, but was emergency reliefs to rescue only who were affected. At one stage 4 other members (1 woman and 3 men) from the storm hit Wards joined her and support her points. Eventually the chairman agreed to distribute all emergency reliefs within the affected areas.

The implication of raising one's voice is that it challenges traditional gender-power relations. As Gaventa and Barrett (2010) argued, raising one's voice is important in strengthening one's sense of dignity and respect and overcoming the social stigma that prevents faces from public spaces to come into view.

Another urban woman member of my survey also mentioned the importance of protest in the event of any injustice in resource allocation. She mentioned that,

> The drainage system had collapsed in some of the residences in my area. I advised affected people to apply to the municipality. The Mayor assured them for quick action. But nothing happened. I talked to the Mayor, the chief engineer of the municipality and the chairman of the relevant standing committee. But all went in vein, there was no allocation. I was tired of talking to them and with their false commitment each time. They did not listen to me rather they accused me for creating unnecessary demand. At one stage I argued local people to go for a demonstration in front of the municipality. I argued them not to pay any municipality tax until the drainage problem is

solved. The mayor became so furious on me but we continued our protest. Eventually the protest saw the victory.

These experiences, therefore, show that although women representatives were not the majority in the LGIs, their logical arguments and courageous voices could lead to desirable outcomes in the local government institutions, to raise agency and foster their strategic needs. Following Kabeer (1999), the stories above indicate that protest in the event of any injustices helped women representatives to get their voices heard, enhanced agency in the decision-making process, and came up with meaningful achievement.

Despite those individual successes, most of the women members mentioned that despite protest, they often fail to convince the male representatives. They opined that the male representatives are so stubborn and they ignore women's points using their majority numbers. The story of Mrs NN is worthwhile to mention here.

Mrs NN: number rules

Mrs NN is from Rajshahi City Corporation. She is a university-graduate, active in party politics and striving to establish her position in the city corporation. She narrates that women were marginalised in the decision-making process of the local government. She said that in one meeting she asked for transparency in the finances and accounts of the municipality. But the Mayor and the male councillors downplayed her point; rather they opined that women should focus only on women and children related issues. She opined that these male colleagues are guided by patriarchal gender norms and cannot accept them with equal footing being women. While she was pushing her arguments, the male colleagues accused her that she was the only one spoiling the other ladies of the corporation. They also accused her of not obeying the decision of the majority and warned that they would punish her

---

for such undemocratic behaviour. Finding little support from others and facing such stiff opposition from the so called majority, she had to accept their decision. Mrs NN, thus, mentioned that it is because they are not the majority and they do not have critical numbers, the men do not listen to them. But she argued that if they do not protest, do not raise their voice they will never listen, and so she will continue fighting and protesting.

The story of Mrs NN shows that the provision of direct election and the reservation of seats were merely served to increase the female numbers on board, but failed to render necessary critical mass to establish their voice, agency and strategic needs in the LGIs. The male representatives in this survey cleverly exploited the advantage of their majority, ignoring that equity and justice are the essence of democracy. The inefficacy of the institutional set-up rendering women a necessary critical mass calls for bringing gender-specific policy reform in Kabeer's (1994) and Moser's (1989, 2010) term in order to mainstream gender and foster women's strategic needs at the local level politics. This is imperative, considering the theory of institution which states that political outcomes are essentially the products of institutional settings, norms and practices (Krook 2003, Peters 1999, Putnam 1993). Accordingly, the empowerment achievements of the women representatives are no different from the proportionate number, scope and opportunity offered by the Local Government Ordinance 1997.

It is important to note that the legal structure of the LGIs in Bangladesh is such that the Union Parishad/Municipality appears to be a Chairman/Mayor-dominated institution. The power of the Union Parishad/Municipality is vested in the chairman/mayor who leads it with the members/councillors of his choice. Aminuzzaman (2003), therefore, called LGIs as centralized power structures. While I talked to my key informants , they also expressed similar thoughts that

apart from the Chairman/Mayor, the Union Parishad/Municipality offers very little opportunity for the members/councillors. An NGO leader mentioned that "the chairman is managing government offices to run the Union Parishad and works with the members he likes and hardly shares with other members". Siddiqui (2002) further pointed out that the Union Parishad charter only defines the roles and responsibilities of the chairman and not of the members. Such a loophole in the institutional settings allows the chairman to exclude women representatives in the functioning of the LGIs. This study, thus, shows that the LGIs in Bangladesh suffer certain institutional weaknesses that create systematic disadvantages to empowering women at the grass-roots of politics. Findings of this study, therefore, calls for necessary amendment in the 1997 Act in order to ensure a critical mass for women in the LGIs as well as to specify women representatives' roles and responsibilities.

5.7 Involvement in Development Projects

Local government bodies undertake various development projects every year to serve the locality. These projects are executed and implemented under the leadership of the elected members/councillors. However, a specific member is responsible to implement a specific project. Getting the proper share of these development projects is not only important for serving the community but also important to overcome the public-private divide and for the strategic needs of the elected women representatives in the local government system. However, there is no specific guideline over the distribution of projects in the local government ordinance. The chairman/mayor is officially responsible for the development project which gives him/her authority to allocate specific projects to specific

members/councillors. In terms of financing development projects, rural local governments (UP) are highly dependent on central government funding. Typically the UP chairman submits project proposals at the Upazilla level. The UP members cannot submit any proposal but can request the chairman to submit a specific proposal to the Upazilla. Once the Upazilla approves it, the UP chairman is responsible to execute the designated project with the help of the members of his choice (Mukhopadhyay 2005, Aminuzzaman 2003). Since the chairman represents the UP at the Upazilla, the women members remain unaware about the project outcomes. This also means that the chairman has power over women members (Mukhopdhyay 2005, Frankl 2004). Furthermore, the UP has no provision for budget formulation and declaration. The women members, therefore, could not get sufficient information about development projects and resource allocation (Aminuzzaman 2003). In terms of resource mobilisation, the urban LGIs are able to collect taxes and non-tax revenues to cover up a significant share of their expenditures. However, since the rural areas are poor, rural LGIs could hardly collect any revenues and, therefore, remain entirely dependent on national government funding (Frankl 2004, Nazneen and Tasneem 2010).

Table 5.3. Do you get equal share of the development projects/works?

	LGIs		Total
	Rural	**Urban**	
No	22 (73.3%)	24 (80.0%)	46 (76.7%)
Yes	8 (26.7%)	6 (20.0%)	14 (23.3%)
Total	30 (100.0%)	30 (100.0%)	60 (100.0%)

The interview data show that in both rural and urban regions, most of the women representatives mentioned not having a proper share in the distribution of projects (Table 5.3). About 73% of the rural women members and 80% of the urban women councillors claimed that male members/councillors were getting a bigger share of the development projects compared to that of the women.

However, 27% of rural women members and 20% of urban women councillors claim that they have an equal share of the development projects with that of the men. These women members were found to be closely attached with the chairmen/mayor personally and/or politically. This helped them to get a fairer share of the projects. However, these women members mentioned that even such equal numbers of projects were not enough for them to cover the thrice larger constituencies for which they are responsible. One urban woman councillor explained the tragedy of equality as follows:

> The male member's constituency is smaller (1 Ward) in comparison to ours (comprising 3 Wards). Thus, to serve our locality and to fulfil our election pledges we should get development projects 3 times the size given to the male representatives. But in practice we are not getting more than equal number of projects, and equal number of projects means we are actually getting only one-third of the development works per Ward compared to the male members.

The reservation of the women's quota seats, accordingly, institutionalises discrimination and undercuts women's strategic needs. That is, the very process that is supposed to empower women instead provides a means to disempower women's agency and voice at the local government institutions. Goetz (2004) termed this type of institution as strongly patriarchal, providing little or no space for women's voices. Following Kabeer (2011, 1994), and Moser and Moser

(2003) it can be argued that the quota seats of this kind which does not offer enough space to challenge existing gendered division of labour is gender-blind and needs certain gender-specific reforms in order to augment women's capacity and agency in the decision-making process.

However, the respondents were also interviewed about the list of the development projects they were involved in. The women representatives mentioned were to be involved in the development projects covering food and relief distribution; agricultural input distribution; road maintenance projects; bridge and culvert building; water supply and sanitation; disaster management; and school, market, mosque and temple development. Though they were involved in all those development projects, they were not getting a proportionate share of responsibilities within these development projects compared to the male representatives. A rural woman representative, thus, gave the opinion that,

> If the male members get 3 kilometres of road we get only 1 kilometre, if we get 3 tube-wells they take 10, when we get 1 tonne of food for relief distribution they get 3-4 tonnes.

The discrimination in project distribution in the LGIs is so severe that women members felt helpless and under severe stress in fulfilling their election pledges to their voters and to family members as well. One of my rural respondents was literally crying while talking about discrimination in project distribution:

> I live in a remote village that has only a muddy road to the local bazaar. The villagers elected me with the promise that I will make new a road. I have requested our chairman many times but failed to get any project. All the road development and maintenance projects are allocated every year

to some male members who are his close allies. During rainy season it becomes terrible as the only road we have goes under water. Children cannot go the school, trading becomes difficult and even doctors do not want to visit a patient at home due to this. It is three years now that I am in office and I could not make it. Voters are already turning their face from me and I am afraid they will not vote for me next election.

Another rural woman also mentioned her helplessness:

My husband and my family spent a huge amount of resources during my election campaign. My supporters, relatives and neighbours all spent their valuable time and effort to make my way to the Union Council expecting some development work to be implemented. They expected that I would bring them fortune by bringing some development projects. All the expectations are in vain now, all their money has been spent as I could not bring any single project, not a single penny *Apa*[35], not a single penny[36].

This story, however, reminds us that apart from women's empowerment, self-interest remains a key motivation for the women representatives of this study to secure development projects. Considering that during elections many of the women representatives were financed by their husbands and family members, it indicates the women members' intention to repay them through access to development projects.

The unjust project distribution was also mentioned by Frankl (2004). Her respondent mentioned in tears that,

---

[35] Apa is a Bengali word meaning sister.

[36] The development projects help women representatives in terms of achieving: dignity and prestige in the society; political authority; and financial benefits from supervising projects.

All family members put a lot of money into the election campaign with the conviction that they would all benefit from her new role. But as she could not do anything for her family, who had been supportive before, became angry and disappointed in her. She had become a burden to her family.

The allocation of development projects, like this, instead of becoming an empowering instrument for women representatives becomes a further source of helplessness and disempowerment in this survey. It is evident from this study that the existing institutional arrangement failed to address the systematic disadvantage that women face in exercising power essential for gender mainstreaming in the local government institutions. It, therefore, calls for institutional reforms advancing women's strategic interests and needs in the functioning of local government, enabling their meaningful exercise of citizenship (Cornwall and Coelho 2009, Kabeer 1994).

However, when I interviewed the male members and chairmen/mayors, they denied any sort of discrimination. They argued that because women members' constituencies are 3 times bigger, male members are, therefore, very closely attached and familiar with their voters' problems and local needs. Conversely, women members do not know much about the problems of their localities as their constituencies are bigger and communication and ties with the voters are weak. Implementation and distribution of projects through male members, as a result, are preferred. The male members further claimed that they (3 male members) are there for 3 wards of a woman member's constituency, and when they are working in the area the job is done for her and she can better enjoy time at home without bothering projects. There is, hence, a clear condescension from the male members about the role and authority of the women members in the

LGIs. Following Miller (1999) and Moser (2010) such obvious consignment of structural barriers and the influence of visible power impaired the attainment of gender mainstreaming at the local government institutions.

The rural women representatives further mentioned that there are some additional development projects occasionally assigned by government agencies out of the regular ones. They claimed that in most cases involving these sorts of development projects, the chairmen and male members allocate them among themselves, keeping women members in the dark. I asked a male chairman who argued,

> There is no hard and fast rule that we have to include women members in every single committee. The Union Parishad manual does not say who will come in which committee. When some additional development projects come, we need to sit urgently and form committee to meet project requirements. So we finalise these projects at our convenience.

The women members said that the quorum of the Union Parishad meeting is attained without the need for women members' presence (there are 10 male and 3 women members and the quorum needs presence of 7 in the Union Parishad meeting), which often leads to deliberate exclusion of women members in these important meetings allocating projects.

The discrimination in project distribution, however, is more evidenced in the urban areas, especially in the City Corporation. The City Corporation representatives claimed the discrimination as paramount. A councillor from the City Corporation mentioned that,

In terms of development works we can at best get projects with Taka 200,000, whereas the male councillors get Taka 10 Million easily. For household-waste management in the locality each of the male councillors get 2-3 Trucks/Vans with drivers, but the women councillors get none. Each of the male councillors has 20-25 labourers who work for them regularly but none for the women councillors. All the big projects like building dam, new roads, bridges and market construction are implemented through tender system that eventually go to the male councillors. No such big projects are given to the women councillors, even most of the time we are excluded from the meetings when such big projects are distributed. The male councillors have permanent office with staffs but the women councillors have to manage temporary offices, typically in their own residence with temporary staffs.

The dominance of visible male power and the limitations of the top-down approach are, thus, obvious in the urban areas too, even though here women representatives are more educated, conscious, outspoken and very often engaged in direct political parties. According to the social relation approach (Kabeer 1994), the institutional setbacks evidenced in this study result in systematic marginalization of women instead of attaining the stated objective of their empowerment. An important finding of my study is that the greater scope of the urban local governments (e.g., City Corporation) in terms of development projects also fails to eliminate discrimination against women. Thus, contrary to conventional wisdom, my study finds that the discrimination against women in the urban local bodies is as stronger as in the resource poor rural local government institutions.

It is also evidenced that political involvement of the women representatives in the urban areas has also led to bias and discrimination. For example, 4 out of 10 women councillors of the only City Corporation of this study

mentioned that they did not belong to the same party as that of the Mayor's, and so they were getting very few development projects. However, they mentioned that they did not stop but continued to fight for their rights. On the other hand, the six women councillors of this City Corporation from the ruling party accepted that they received a number of development projects and, hence, appeared less critical of their male colleagues. Strong party politics in the urban areas, thus, has led to political polarization in which women's empowerment depended on their party affiliation.

The deprivation and injustice to the women representatives compared to male representatives are likely to lead women members to come together, being organized and protest in line with the arguments of perceived injustice (Runciman 1966) and relative deprivation (Schaefer 2008). To Schaefer (2008), relative deprivation among a group of people arises from the discrepancy between legitimate expectation and present actualities for the group in question, what I found in this study. To Runciman (1966), strong relative deprivation causes deprived people to go for protest and movements to redress their grievance—an issue I have briefly discussed in Section 5.6 and will discuss further in Section 5.10.

5.8 Development of Women's Life Chances

Although implicit forms of discrimination exist, women representatives mentioned that these development projects gave them an opportunity to work for the development of the masses, and specifically for women to help them improve their life choices in society. Women members in the rural areas claimed that they have particular emphasis in projects relating to women's life and well-being. Most

of them were, therefore, found to be engaged in employment generating activities for women, distribution of relief cards for widows, food for work programmes, and stipends for girl students. A rural woman representative mentioned,

In my area there were many widows and husband-abandoned women who live miserable life. I allocated them old-age allowances and distress women allowances from Union Council. Previously, there was huge anomaly in the distribution of these allowances. The male members distributed those allowances taking bribes and depriving the distressed people who could not afford to do so. Many deprived women came to me seeking remedies. I talked to the chairman and raised the issue in the meeting. There was hotted debate but I never gave up. Finally, I got my share in these projects giving me opportunity to work for the distress poor women. I also ensured stipends for female students, and food for education programme in schools of my area.

Rural woman making buttons from coconut shell after receiving training from LGIs

Another rural woman member from Puthiya mentioned that,

I saw that dowry was a serious problem in my area. The problem results in suicides by many young women even 4-5 years after their marriage. I started encouraging women to engage in income-generating activities and become a bread-earner of their family so that the pressure for payment of dowry from the women's family reduces. I brought an Agricultural Extension Officer to my village in order to train women how to grow papaya, cucumber, tomato or maize in their small backyard and make money selling in the local market. They got training on poultry-raising and cow fattening. I also brought NGO activists who offered micro-credit in those income generating activities. Many women in my area are now self-reliant and happy in family life.

Women members distributing chickens among distressed women after training on poultry-raising

Another woman representative from the Municipality emphasized the need for skill-based training for educated but unemployed women for their

emancipation from deprivation and injustices. She established a cooperative to organize women and reap the benefits from the market. She mentioned,

> The women of younger ages in my area are educated but mostly unemployed as the rural economic structure does not offer any suitable job for them. I talked to the some NGOs, a NGO Federation, and other government offices to offer some training for educated young women. They offered training on sewing machine, tailoring dress, embroidery and running a boutique shop. With the help of those NGOs and government offices, a cooperative is formed with 35 women members. The cooperative set up a boutique shop that makes and designs dresses for sale in the town. It also purchased some weaving machines so that the women could knit woollen sweaters. All those cooperative members are active entrepreneur and they earn good money and reputation for their families.

Women members were, consequently, found to work in promoting employment and income generating activities necessary to raise what Moser (1989, 1993) called, women's basic needs and life choices. These are essential to fostering women's capability and empowerment. As the social relations approach (Kabeer 1994) asserts, institutions are not independent, rather they are interdependent in practice, and that an intervention in one institution is likely to have impact in other institutions. Gaventa and Barrett (2010) further argued that active and effective citizenship to deliver development outcomes do not emerge automatically but other intermediary measures to accelerate such process are often necessary. Accordingly, enforcing fair distribution of public transfers (e.g., welfare allowances), and promoting employment and income generating activities for rural women are conducive not only to access more income in their possession but also to access greater authority and say in other areas of life. The argument of

the capability approach (Sen 1999, Nussbaum 1999, 2010) is also imperative here, stating that subjective well-being achieved by the individual is to be evaluated by her functioning, i.e., being and doing. Training for the rural women and their access to certain income generating activities, in this study, indicates women's increased capability not enjoyed by these marginalised poor people before.

Woman member (in the middle) distributing sewing machines to unemployed young housewives

When I talked to the general people, including men, they mentioned that women representatives helped them in getting tube-wells for drinking water, sanitation, mosquito nets, vegetable seeds, agricultural loans, and employment opportunities during the off-season. They mentioned that women members could not come up with big development projects due to funding limitations, but they

were helpful securing those small but important services from LGIs. One of the villagers, a male, 55, in Charghat mentioned,

> I have no hesitation to accept that the woman member we have is very helpful. She has distributed items like tube-well, sanitary latrine or agricultural inputs to the families who badly need help. I think, being the caregiver of her family the woman member understands the needs of the poor families.

Basu (2003) also evidenced that women-led local government institutions in rural India put greater importance on the establishment of tube-wells, sanitary latrines, playgrounds, non-polluting stoves, and road building. The local residents of another study by Topalova (2003) mentioned that women *Panchayat* members were better in delivering drinking water supplies compared to that of men-led *Panchayats*. The empirical findings of her study also reported that male *panchayat* members sought bribes more often whereas it is less likely for women members. Women members are, therefore, seen to help the distressed poor people in achieving a life that they considered worthwhile in terms of the expansion of their life choices, which further calls for gender mainstreaming in the development discourse (Sen 1999, Nussbaum 2000). A fair share of the development projects, however, could offer women representatives a greater opportunity to work for the welfare of the community in both rural and urban areas.

I also interviewed women representatives about women voters' demands and expectations, but surprisingly they are divided into two extreme poles. The rural women representatives mentioned that women of their areas come to them mostly about gender sensitive issues. A respondent mentioned,

> Almost every day I hear from women who come to share their miseries like being beaten up by their husbands, snatched money, threats of divorce/second marriage and of husbands obstructing visiting parents. I hear them sincerely, advise them and often talk to their husbands when necessary.

The women generally of the villages further mentioned that they do not go to the chairmen or male members but come to the women members with such domestic issues, considering women members responsible for protecting their interests and capable of understanding their pain. A rural woman, 26, thus mentioned,

> I cannot talk to a male member or chairman going to the Union Council office or local bazaar to meet them. Women in our society are not seen to visit the union council or bazaar. I cannot also explain them how my husband behaves and, in fact, we do not usually talk to outside males. But woman member is our sister and she should know our problems. We feel free talking to her and we voted her to listen to our problems.

It is, therefore, apparent that the provision of reserved seats for women has opened certain spaces for rural women to come and share their problems pertinent to their life choices. It gives them the necessary sociocultural, economic and organizational spaces (Deshmukh-Ranadive 2005, Malhotra and Schuler 2005) important to combat injustices and deprivation, to foster quality of life and to attain certain human rights, what Nussbaum (2000, 2010) called, the fundamental entitlement to enhance women's capabilities and empowerment.

T raining and material distribution to women for making shopping bags

The urban women representatives focused both on specifically funded development projects as well as social issues. They were found to focus on issues like education, roads, culverts, sewerage, and land development. They explained that they were elected to improve the quality of life and the standard of living of their voters, and to achieve such goals they need to focus on direct development initiatives. One woman councillor of Rajshahi City Corporation, thus, mentioned,

> Improved sanitation, water supply and sewerage are my first priority as these are important in living a sound and safe life. I also encourage women to get necessary skill-improving training and employment, as income generating through paid work can increase welfare of a family.

A respondent from Rajshahi City Corporation mentioned that creating employment for the unemployed youth and overcoming the public-private divide

was her main motto in order to bring qualitative change in the life of women. She mentioned,

> I saw that unemployed families were poor and vulnerable. Everyday people were coming to me to get a job for their son, daughter, brother, sister, son in law and so on. At the beginning I tried to manage one or two jobs for them. I used to request the Mayor, other councillors, known businessmen, government and non-government officials for such jobs. But the unemployed job-seekers are in every home and I felt hopeless searching for jobs for them. I thought to help them becoming self-employed. I thought this and that, talked here and there and finally settled to help them engage in the production of silk-worms. Rajshahi Silk is world famous and the silk industries are just other side of the town. I went to the Silk Foundation and arranged a 3-days training program for 20 young people. They returned and started planting silk-trees and cultivating silk-worms. It was a huge success and I sent 100 more young women in five different groups to take similar training sessions. All are now enjoying their work and all are financially solvent, enjoying a life they dream to live for.

There were evidences that urban women representatives in the survey area were involved in employment generating activities, distribution of water and sanitation, education and adult literacy, training programs targeting unemployed youths, distribution of grants and loans for self-employment, and building platforms for collective development. They emphasized more on enhancing people's capacity to live the quality of life, something that Nussbaum (1999) and Sen (1999) termed 'worth being and doing' (. As Sen (1999: 192) mentioned,

> Working outside the home and earning an independent income tends
> to have a clear impact on enhancing the social standing of a woman in
> the household and the society. Her contribution to the property of the
> family is then more visible, and she also has more voice, because of
> being less dependent on others. Further, outside employment often has

useful educational effects in terms of exposure to the world outside the household,, thus, making her agency more effective.

Urban woman representatives are also emphasizing mobilizing collective effort using common platforms to bring necessary social change. One representative from Puthiya Municipality, in this respect, mentioned that,

> I ran a literacy campaign for the adults. The working adults who were illiterate come to these literacy schools at night. These night schools were platform of my development agendas. I ran programmes like tree plantation, cleaning neighbourhood, vaccination and family planning through these night schools. I involve all those adults to execute those programmes in their locality.

These suggest the importance of a bottom-up approach through participation and social inclusion, which uses the forces of people at the grass-roots in delivering meaningful development (Chambers 1983, 1997, Friedmann 1992, Narayan et al 2000a, 2000b).

However, the urban women voters also come to the women representatives with various family and social problems. Mrs HK from Katakhali Municipality, hence, mentioned that,

> Women face various problems at their homes and seek remedies from us. One woman of my area was a victim of acid throwing by her husband who was involved in adultery. She was burnt severely and her parents rushed to me seeking help. I helped by taking her to the hospital and to file a criminal case. Her husband was causing pressure but I supported her in that bad patch. I made sure that the police took the necessary action to deal with this heinous act.

Thus, the vulnerability of women is mentioned by urban women representatives as well. The respondents mentioned that most of the domestic violence is related to dowry, polygamy and unemployment. Considering knowledge as power (Gaventa and Cornwall 2001), the respondents, therefore, took to awareness campaigns and collective action against dowry, polygamy, acid throwing, and sexual harassment, known locally as 'Eve teasing.' Another urban woman representative mentioned that,

> Eve-teasing was rampant in my area, especially for the school girls. It was so frustrating at the beginning that the educated youths from wealthier families were the main culprits harassing those school girls. Some girls were even forced to marry those culprits in local arbitration, and some girls had to stop going school. I sat with the Mayor, other councillors, the police officers, local leaders and guardians. We warned all young hooligans that no single act of Eve-teasing is going unpunished from now on. We brought a couple of culprits under police custody who did not listen to us and continued harassing our girls. Now there is no more Eve-teasing, girls are going to schools and the guardians are relaxed.

Findings of this study, thus, indicate that women's strategic needs and mainstreaming gender requires enforcing basic human rights through systematic institutional intervention. Ensuring basic human rights helps to challenge and to erase the age old public-private divide and to enhance women's freedom, capability and choice (Kabeer 1999). In this study, there is evidence that women representatives were doing things, mobilising other women and making certain choices that enabled them to secure social position, recognition and empowerment. There were also changes in terms of employment and income generating activities for women in general, protests against domestic violence, dowry, fatwa and acid throwing. However, despite such positive changes, the

available data indicates that gender mainstreaming is still a very long term goal, and that institutionalising gender through gender-specific policies could help in this respect.

5.9 Men's Perception: In the Line of Fire

To understand women representatives' roles and leadership the male representatives of the local government bodies were also interviewed. The perception of male representatives about the role-performance of the elected women representatives is, however, negative. Most of the male representatives opined that women are incapable of shouldering challenging jobs of the local government body. They argued that women, especially rural women are uneducated and ignorant about the functioning of the LGIs. The male members further argued that women members are dependent on their husbands and cannot take independent decisions. They further complained that women members serve as proxies of their husbands, who often use their wives' offices for their own political ambition. While I talked to the women members they, however, refused to accept the male members' opinions. Women members accepted that they are open to taking help from their family members for performing roles in the LGIs or for going out at night. But they claimed that they are not serving their husbands' interests. Empirical researches in this respect also have mixed findings. While Mukhopadhyay and Meer (2004) found evidence of tokenism, Islam (2001) and John (2003) (cited from Mukhopadhyay 2005) on the other hand, found that kinship political involvements have positive effects on capacity building and empowerment of women representatives through social capital and patronage networks.

The male representatives also opined that women members do not come to meetings in time and do not take part in the decision-making process. As one rural member (male) mentioned,

> Women members are irregular in attending meetings. They come to the meeting occasionally and in case of urgent meetings they never show-up. Sometimes their husbands come to the office on behalf of them. They are busy rearing children and managing the kitchen. They are uneducated and incapable of understanding the complex working condition at LGIs.

In this study I met only one rural woman member whose husband was accompanying her to the Union Council office. Indeed, he was even sitting beside his wife while I was taking her interview. However, all other women members across rural and urban areas were coming to the offices on their own and unaccompanied. Majority of the male members, furthermore, claimed that they have to perform most of the roles and responsibilities of the local government institutions, and the inclusion of women members in the LGIs has only added some numbers without any meaningful contribution from them. An urban member stated that by the reservation of seats for women,

> We get numbers and they get salaries and other admissible benefits. At the same time the government gets some slogans; NGOs get agendas and the voters get no more than frustration as they soon find that these women are good for nothing.

It was, thus, apparent that the male representatives' attitude towards women representatives' efficacy and ability was quite low, had a clear go for public-private divide which rendered lower results in turn. As Eagly et al (1995:

140) suggest, "gender role expectations spill-over into leadership roles... and produce important consequences for the effectiveness of leaders". Following Eagly et al (1995), it is apparent that in this male-oriented setting, where the women-men ratio is 1:3, women's leadership opportunity is limited and the lower expectation of the men further aggravates it.

The male respondents also argued that women members are burdened with their dual-role: they had to maintain their household chores as well as their responsibilities in the LGIs. They are jack of all trades, master of none. They also opined that women members rely heavily on their husbands during election campaigns and in financing election expenditures. As one rural male member opined,

> Women members do not represent their voters. Their husbands campaigned for them and the voters vote women members by their husbands' names. How can they represent and serve their voters when they do not know their voters?

Thus, the male members considered women members as political proxies on behalf of their husbands, what Nanivadekar (2003) called as patriarchal participation. To Nanivadekar, the quota seats for women in India were introduced as a top-down strategy without demand from the bottom. Consequently, election in these reserved seats provides no motivated and interested women candidates. This leaves a vacuum rather than creating space for women.

However, when I talked to the women representatives of this study they refused to accept it. Women representatives mentioned that often they take help from their family members to execute certain development projects. But most of

them claimed that the decisions about projects were their own and not imposed by the family members. They, therefore, refused to accept that they were acting as proxies for their husbands. When I went to observe the development projects headed by the women representatives, I found that women representatives were fully aware and informed about the projects, e.g., objective of the project, allocation of resources, and its execution process and timeframe. It was evident that women members had substantial knowledge of what was going on in those development projects, though in many instances they employed their husbands and family members to execute such projects. Patriarchal ties, public-private divide and family funding during election might have influenced women representatives to let their husbands and families oversee the development projects on their behalf.

The key informants in this study also mentioned that women members' husbands often manage development projects on their behalf, which is not helpful for achieving complete independence and empowerment for them. These key informants, however, accepted that in a conservative social setting family support is important to boost the necessary confidence and comfort for the women representatives to accomplish any challenging tasks. As the social relations approach (Kabeer 1994) ascribes, marginalised women are excluded from tangible resources and so they rely on other types of resources like social relationships. Accordingly, these women rely on their families, friends and networks to manage their workload and accomplish their tasks. However, Kabeer (1994) also states that the poor women acquire resources through such social networks working through patronage and dependency, and often they have to trade autonomy in return for security.

The male representatives, therefore, appeared to be gender stereotyped (Ridgeway et al 1994). Accordingly, the male members with strong patriarchal attitudes consider the leadership role as a high-status position while women, being inferior in the male-dominated setting, were unwanted in such positions (Ridgeway et al 1994). However, it is clear from my data that women members have had strong confrontations with the male members. Women members often put the blame on the male representatives for unfair treatment in the distribution of development projects and in the decision-making process. Some women members were found equally successful in performing their roles in LGIs while some were struggling. It can be mentioned, however, that women representatives in the rural areas are less educated in general compared to those in the urban areas. Considering knowledge as power (Gaventa and Cornwall 2001), this might play a role in the leadership differences and capabilities across rural and urban women members.

5.10 Women's Observation: United We Stand Divided We Fall

It is evident that the women representatives face a difficult situation in the local government institutions due to a lack of education and experience, the strong patriarchal and stereotypical attitudes of the male representatives, their minority in the local government body, and the lack of institutional safeguards. The most difficult one is the negative attitude of their male colleagues. Thus, one young urban woman member mentioned,

> They [males] ignored us at the very beginning. They didn't pay
> attention to us. They never care what we think about, especially when

it comes to distribution of development projects, funds and resources. If we speak out, they laughed at us. Then we [women members] started to share our ideas, started to raise voice together, and began to fight back in one voice. Once they understood that we are united, formed a coalition and are not leaving any of their attack unanswered they calmed down.

Another rural woman member emphasized collective effort for empowering women. She mentioned that,

I wanted to head the committee of tube-well installation. But the chairman and the male members opposed me. Other two women members supported me but the men's club refused to accept. During rainy season the area of my constituency goes under flood leaving no water to drink for many households. The people were coming to me demanding sufficient tube-well from Union Council. I talked to the three men members whose constituencies are overlapping with mine. They realized now the implication of my demand and supported me to be the chairman of the tube-well committee. Eventually the chairman had to accept me in that position and in the first year I distributed 20 tube-wells in my area from which 1000 people would get safe drinking water.

Collective action, as argued by (Kabeer 2011), was also emphasized by the women respondents for fairer distribution of resources and to the well-being of the mass people. They mentioned that when people come together it improves transparency and accountability of the local government institutions. As one rural woman representative stated from her experience,

During Eid in 2011 there was some foreign relief including some warm clothing, e.g., sweater, quilt for distribution. But the chairman didn't let us know and tried to distribute it through nepotism and cronyism. It was winter

and many poor people were suffering from cold, because they lacked shelter and clothing, but they didn't get any sweaters or quilts. The local people rushed to my house seeking relief. I told them that the chairman had been distributing relief without informing me and asked them if they want to go to him. I lead them to chairman's office. We exchanged fierce argument with the chairman and his gang but the local people were adamant that they wanted a fairer distribution of relief. Eventually the chairman had to bow down and the distress people got their due share.

Women representatives also emphasized coordination and cooperation among all government agencies to improve the well-being of the people and to ensure the elected women representatives' due role. They explained that though each government office has different socio-economic objectives, collective action often becomes inevitable. One urban women respondent explained,

> One woman in my area took permanent birth control method following advice from a female staff member of the health department. Some local fundamentalists gathered together and issued a decree that controlling birth is a challenge to Allah. They called it anti-Islamic and vowed to punish the birth-control client along with the health staff. They ordered her family to leave the village within 72 hours and decided to burn their house after that. At the same time they ordered exclusion of the health staff's family from all social activities including the mosque and from local markets. Hearing this horrific event I talked to these victims directly. I advised them to come to the Municipality and talk to the Mayor. Later we, all 12 councillors and the Mayor went to talk to the villagers. We also called the higher authority of the health department and the police stations. Eventually, the fundamentalists were forced to withdraw their decree and embargo upon those two families.

The discussion, thus, showed that the woman representative's perception of injustice contributed to triggering collective action to redress the relative deprivation of women compared to men (Runciman 1966). It was further clear

that fostering collective action helped to challenge the visible power of the society, and was essential to empower the marginalised and oppressed, as suggested by Miller (1999) and Meer and Sever (2004). It also tells us that woman representatives need to stand united and chalk out their own strategies to play an effective role in the local government institutions and to achieve a life of their choice that they value worth being and doing (Nussbaum 2011, 2000, Kabeer 1999). The critical mass for women is crucial to overcome the age old stereotypical attitude of the male and to work in a male-dominated setting. It also recalls the necessity to bring appropriate gender-specific institutional arrangements helpful to ensure women's basic human rights, freedom and choice.

5.11 Building Capacity: Empowerment of the Disempowered

Women empowerment in the local government system in a developing country like Bangladesh is a challenging task, especially in the rural areas where most of the women representatives are housewives and little educated (Table 4.1, 4.2). Empowerment of these disempowered sections of the society requires capacity building at the forefront in order to make them prepared to challenge traditional gender-power relations and patriarchal prejudices. As Dahlerup and Freidenvall (2005) argued, the women's quota could bring tokenism and proxy candidature, and only massive capacity-building and support from women's organizations could eliminate such a possibility. To Murthy (2001), transformative capacity building is an essential component to the process of women empowerment.

In this study all the women representatives spoke of the usefulness of training. They mentioned that since they did not have prior political experience,

training would be helpful for them in performing their roles in the LGIs. However, when I asked whether all of them had received training, all the rural women representatives mentioned that they had received some training programmes offered by the government and non-government agencies. The urban respondents, however, mentioned that there were no provisions for training for them, though they strongly felt such necessity. The rural representatives mentioned that the training program covered important areas: roles and responsibilities of members and UP ordinance, women's and human rights, how to conduct *shalish,* how to talk in the meeting and argue when disagreeing, and resource and office management. These rural women members stated that training was very useful for them to understand the functioning of the UP and their roles. They opined that training helped to raise confidence, negotiation skills and motivation for work. It also helped to defy the traditional gender norms and patriarchal barriers that were putting limits to their mobility and participation in outdoor activities. As one woman member mentioned,

> I had no idea about how the UP functioned before training. I used to sit down passively in the meeting. I couldn't ask any question and had no option other than agreeing with whatever the male representatives were doing. After training I found myself a different woman. It opened my eyes providing useful ideas about the UP. It seemed that I was reborn! Now I can talk at the meetings, can counter any opinion and raise any issue that I believe worth telling.

Another rural woman mentioned that training helped to establish their rights in the UP. She explained,

> Before training all the standing committees were headed by male members. The chairman and male members didn't propose our names to lead these committees. During training we learned that there was a specific rule from the government that 3 women members should head 3 standing committees. So after training I raised this issue in the meeting and the male representatives were forced to accept us in those positions.

Training also enabled women members to think beyond their own empowerment, but rather the empowerment of the wider community of women, the stated objective of the 1997 Act. As Mrs T. from Puthiya mentioned,

> During training we learnt that women empowerment requires elimination of all injustices against women in society. It was mentioned that violence against women including dowry, divorce, polygamy, physical assault by husbands are the worst form of injustice. Before training I was not sure what to do when a victim of domestic violence came to me. Now I call for shalish in the event of violence against women (narir biruddhe sohingshota) and rush to police station and take legal steps if necessary.

It is, therefore, apparent that training boosted rural women representatives' capability to accomplish, what Nussbaum (2011, 1999) and Kabeer (1994) called, women's basic needs and strategic gender interests. It also enabled the flourishing of knowledge among women representatives that was essential in redressing traditional gender-power relations, to Gaventa and Cornwall's (2001) term.

Furthermore, it was noticed that the government and non-government organizations also arranged awareness raising training programme for the rural male representatives. According to the government and non-government officials,

training for women representatives is necessary but not sufficient. As one NGO worker explained,

> Training for women representatives would enhance their capacity to work. But women empowerment requires congenial situation such that women's enhanced capacity can be used. Extensive training for male representatives about gender-power relations, women's basic and fundamental human rights are necessary to change their behaviour.

Since women representatives from the urban areas were not offered any training, I asked government and NGO officials about it. They gave the opinion that rural women representatives were mostly illiterate and, therefore, required training to build their capacity. In contrast, they stressed that most of the urban women representatives were educated (in this study 80% of the urban women representatives have secondary school degrees) and, therefore, training was not offered for them. The opinion of the urban women representatives was, however, the opposite. They argued that at least half of them were housewives having no prior idea of local government politics. A training or seminar programme about the functioning of the LGIs and the rules and responsibilities of women representatives would be very useful for them, they opined.

5.12 Conclusion: Creating Space and Opportunity for Empowering Women

The introduction of reserved seats in the local government institutions in Bangladesh provided an opportunity to bring marginalised women into mainstream politics. However, the field data of this study reveals that there were some structural constraints that put serious impediments to the effective

participation of women in the functioning of local government institutions across rural and urban areas in Bangladesh. The institutional ambiguity producing overlapping constituencies for each woman representative; the strong patriarchal attitude of the male representatives towards women; the absence of specific roles and responsibilities for women representatives; and the literacy drawbacks and lack of knowledge about the workings of the LGIs among women representatives were important concerns. The institutional loophole of the reservation of women's seats overlapping with 3 male members is the most critical hurdle to attain women's empowerment in the LGIs in Bangladesh. Findings of this study, therefore, calls for institutional re-arrangement and to re-constitute women member's constituency equivalent to the size of that of a male member and without overlapping to ensure a level playing field for women. The study findings also show that women's empowerment requires friendly working environments that can be developed through advocacy and awareness-raising training programmes for the male representatives focusing on women's fundamental human rights consistent with the GAD approach (discussed in detail in Section 2.5). Finally, women representatives can be given extensive training on capacity building and the rules and regulations of the LGIs.

CHAPTER SIX

DIRECT ELECTION IN RESERVED SEATS: EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN REPRESENTATIVES AND WOMEN IN THE COMMUNITY

I was the one who was elected. But I was not allowed to go out, [I was] never [allowed] to speak. I have learned to speak, to use the microphone. Now the mike has come into my hand, it will remain with me all my life—nobody can take it away.

—Murawarunissa.[37]

6.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the implication of direct election in reserved seats in enhancing women's agency, capability and empowerment at various levels. The survey data of this study show that women representatives' participation in the decision making process, access to resources and involvement in the local development programmes enhanced self-esteem, fostered economic freedom, improved their position within the family and helped build socio-political networks in the community.

Empowerment of women is emphasized by scholars (e.g., Sen 1999, Nussbaum 1999, 2000) not as an end, but as a means to an end, namely to achieve other socio-economic objectives, such as the elimination of poverty, ill health, ignorance and injustice. As Sen (1999: 14-15) argued in explaining the capability approach:

---

[37] Woman Member in reserved seat, Panchayat Raj, India, cited in Mukhopadhyay (2004: 37).

Development has to be more concerned with enhancing the lives we lead and the freedoms we enjoy. Expanding the freedoms we have reason to value not only makes our lives richer and more unfettered, but also allows us to be fuller social persons, exercising our own volitions and interacting with—and influencing—the world in which we live.

Accordingly, development needs to expand the lives we lead and the freedom we enjoy. This is important from the background that in Bangladesh women are considered as workers in the kitchen and bearers of domestic burdens. They are excluded from outside activities due to the power of patriarchy and the strong cultural beliefs that support the private-public divide. This chapter, in this context, explores the implication of direct elections in enhancing women's empowerment within the family and in the community as a whole.

6.2 Economic Dimension of Empowerment: 'I Am the Co-Breadwinner of the Family Now, Why Should I Keep My Head Down'

There are three issues to consider in operationalising the economic empowerment of women, namely, the agency in the decision to work, access to and control over resources, and certain household decisions made by women (Kabeer 2012a, Malhotra and Schuler 2005, Kantor 2003, Kishor 2000, Sathar and Kazi 2000). Women's marginalization and disempowerment are linked to their insignificant financial and economic contribution to the family (Kabeer

2012b, Anderson and Eswaran 2009, Hossain and Tisdell 2005). As Sen (1999: 8) argued:

> Economic unfreedom, in the form of extreme poverty, can make a person a helpless prey in the violation of other kinds of freedom…….Economic unfreedom can breed social unfreedom, just as social or political unfreedom can also foster economic unfreedom.

It is, therefore, expected that the financial and non-financial benefits women members receive and the power and position they assume in the local government institutions would enhance their position within the family enabling them to overcome the public-private divide and to exercise strategic needs raising voice in the decision making settings.

The elected women members receive an honorarium for serving at the local government institutions in Bangladesh. The honorarium includes monthly remuneration and other benefits.[38] The respondents of this study were asked if they spent the honorarium according to their own decisions. This is the issue to understand women representatives' capability to make decisions over income and is indicative of power dynamics in the household. About 50% of my rural respondents said the money was spent by themselves in consultation with their husbands, 37% asserted that they could to spend money by themselves while the rest, namely 13% stated that their husbands made the decisions about spending

---

[38] The rural women members receive a monthly honorarium of 1500 Taka (AUD 1= 69 Taka). The urban women members receive a large sum of allowances including monthly honorarium: 15000 Taka, rental allowances for office: 5000 Taka; and entertainment allowances: 2000 Taka. The minimum wage in the country at present is 3000 Taka per month.

the money. Note that the monthly honorarium of these rural women member was a significant earning for them, considering that about 37% of them had no income and a further 57% had income less than 2000 Taka per month (Table 4.5). The respondents said that their remuneration from the LGIs, though insufficient, was a good contribution to their families.

In the urban areas, about 70% of the respondents claimed to spend money according to their own decisions and the rest, 30%, mentioned sharing that decision with their husbands. No urban respondents mentioned that the husband took all money from them or that husbands made spending decisions. This is not surprising considering that the urban respondents came from relatively well-off families compared to the rural respondents of this study (Tables 4.5 and 4.7). Urban respondents were also better educated and employed. Their families were not dependent on the money coming from the LGIs for their subsistence as was the case for some rural respondents. The urban women representatives were, therefore, seen to have more control over the remuneration and allowances they receive from the LGIs. Findings of the study, thus, show women representatives' control over remuneration and their say on its spending in both rural and urban areas.

Most of the respondents from both the rural and urban local government institutions (87% rural and 93% urban) of this study mentioned that their financial contribution and position in the LGIs helped to enhance their position in the family. One elected urban women member, therefore, mentioned,

> I had very little income before. Now I have regular income from LGIs
> with which I pay my children's school fees, buy some clothes, utensils

and medicine for the family which is a good help for my family. The attitude of my husband has also changed as a result. Now I see he seeks my advice and consent before doing something, especially if it requires financing. Often my relatives and in-laws come to me for help and I help them. Obviously my position has improved within the family because of my financial contribution.

The remuneration earned in the LGIs helped women representatives to achieve certain capabilities to overcome public-private divide and strategic gender needs (Moser 2010, 2000, Kabeer 2003, 1994). It helped women members to establish their say not only on their living and being a life of their choice but also of others. This is consistent with Sen's (1999: 191) argument that women's well-being is strongly influenced by:

> women's ability to earn an independent income, to find employment outside the home, to have ownership rights and to have literacy and be educated participants in decisions inside and outside the family.

Financial solvency of the elected women representatives was also important to boost self-esteem and confidence. A rural woman member mentioned that,

> The remuneration, though very low, is important for me. Now I do not beg to my husband for the rickshaw fare or buying milk, fruits and books for my children. I can buy these things by my own. I feel my head is high now.

It indicates that the honorarium of the women members helped them to overcome the age-old dependency on men in this patriarchal social setting. Such confidence and self-esteem and the feeling of being active agents are fundamental to women's citizenship and empowerment (Nussbaum 2011, 2007, Gaventa and

Barrett 2010, Malhotra and Schuler 2005, Kabeer 1994, 1999, Sen 1999). As Malhotra and Schuler (2005: 73) argued, empowerment requires "self-efficacy and the significance given to the individual woman's realization that she can be an agent of change of her own life". Kabeer also (1994) noted that, "empowerment should be considered as an aspect of perceiving oneself as an active agent capable of making decisions".

Some respondents also mentioned that their position in the family especially in the household decision-making has enhanced through their financial contribution. As one rural woman member mentioned,

> My son was unemployed. I saved my remuneration for six months and asked him to establish poultry in the backyard of our home. He started with 50 chickens and now has 200. He is earning good money now and is no longer a burden to us. My husband is also happy that I have managed our son in productive employment.

Another urban woman member of my study also added that her position as a bread-winner is valued in the family. She mentioned,

> If I have money everybody cares about me including my husband, children, in-laws and siblings. If I do not have anything I am no better than a beggar. Now I know that I am the co-breadwinner of this family, so why should I keep my head down anymore?

The respondents also mentioned that the financial benefit they receive from the LGIs also helped them establish their honour and dignity in the broader society helping them to exercise strategic needs and to overcome the public-private divide. As one rural member argued,

> Sometimes villagers come to seek financial help, e.g., to help pay for children's education, in helping a daughter's marriage or simply to buy food during economic hardship. I could not help them before, having no independent income, but now I have some money in my hand and very often I help them. As a result they respect me now more than before.

It is, therefore, evident that women representatives' control over their honorarium, income and savings helped them to establish their agency, and it has been changing gender-power relations in society in the survey area. To Deshmukh-Ranadive (2005), this indicates women representatives' access to and expansion of economic and social spaces necessary for their empowerment. Women members are no longer dependent on their husbands' incomes for subsistence but are in position to contribute effectively in the financial needs of the family. It also helped them to establish their say on the welfare of their children, and in the investment and employment decisions of the household. Accordingly,

> every person has an allotment of spaces—physical, economic, sociocultural and political—at a given moment in time……the expansion and contraction of spaces may influence the relative positions and movement of household members in the domestic hierarchy (Deshmukh-Ranadive 2005: 109).

In Price (1992) and Rowlands's (1997) view, economic independence also leads to social and political empowerment for the elected women representatives through enhanced position and recognition in society. It allowed women members to extend a helping hand to others and, in consequence, establish a

position of stronger respect in the society. As Sen (1999) argued in the capability approach,

> We generally have excellent reasons for wanting more income or wealth. This is not because income and wealth are desirable for their own sake, but because, typically, they are admirable general-purpose means for having more freedom to lead the kind of lives we have reason to value.

Findings of the study, thus, reflect that economic resources availed by the women representatives at LGIs enabled them to exercise agency and lead to certain achievements within the household as well as in the community, which certainly manifest their economic empowerment (Kabeer 2012a, 1999, Alsop and Heinsohn 2005, Jejeebhoy 2000).

6.3 Psychological Dimension of Empowerment: 'I Got Access to Many Places that I Could Not Even Imagine Before'

The psychological or cognitive dimension of empowerment refers to the women representatives' self-confidence, enhanced self-esteem, sense of perceived control, beliefs about authority and internalization of goals. Moser (1993) argued that while economic empowerment enables women with access to resources necessary to attain certain ends, the cognitive and psychological empowerment offers them necessary confidence and courage to pursue such endeavours. This study, in this context, explores the women representatives' authority, self-esteem and confidence after being elected.

The respondents were interviewed whether representation in the local government institutions had enhanced their authority and mobility to meet local people. Most of my respondents (83% rural and 90% urban) said that they could go out of the home to meet local people when needed. They mentioned that their families understand that in order to serve local government institutions they may need to go outside more often. As one rural respondent mentioned,

> Now I am not confined at home. I go to the Union Parishad, the district and sub-district offices to attend meetings, organize and attend rallies and seminars. I had never seen the Upazilla Nirbahi Officer and Deputy Commissioner before, but now I attend meetings with them, talk to them and even have lunch with them. Now I got a new life and my world is not limited only to the four-walls of the kitchen anymore.

Woman member giving speech in a workshop on service delivery by LGIs

Another rural woman member confidently stated that,

> I go to many places now which were beyond imagination before. I attend and give speeches, even over the microphone, in many occasions, such as observing international human rights day and international women's day. I have never been to any public gatherings such as at local markets, national day or victory day celebrations before, but now I go to these places very often. I also buy kitchen items while returning from the Union Parishad when I have time.

This clearly shows the enhanced capability of the women representatives' speaking publicly, an indication of women's personal development and social recognition. As Kabeer (2012a) argued, women's self-perception as well as the view and recognition of society are a good indicator of their empowerment. A rural woman further states that performing roles in the LGIs also enabled her to access the broader social life that was unthinkable before. She stated,

> After one year of my term in the Union Parishad, the local primary school elected me as a member of the managing committee. A local club working to stop child marriages and dowry approached me to join them as honorary member. I could not believe this before. I could not imagine sitting beside them. I see that winning the election offered me access to many places and enhanced my mobility that I could not even imagine previously.

The urban women representatives are typically considered to enjoy greater personal freedom and mobility in this country. During interviews even the urban respondents of this study mentioned that their authority and access to certain offices, position and acceptance have significantly improved as elected representatives. The only elected woman Mayor of a municipality of the survey area, Mrs NB, mentioned,

Performing roles in the LGIs has enhanced my mobility tremendously. In my life I never thought to go to the Ministry or the Secretariat. But being the Mayor, I have to go to Dhaka very often to have meetings with the Minister and the Secretary. Even I visited Australia, Japan, Sweden and Denmark to attend seminars and workshops. This was beyond my thoughts before I took the office.

The key informants of this study also mentioned about this increasing mobility of the elected women representatives. A university teacher mentioned,

When I visited my home-village during university vacation I witnessed a surprising change now. I see women representatives walking down the road, going to Union Parishad, attending meetings, shalish and seminars which was not common in earlier days.

Women members in a rally on International Human Rights Day

Findings of this study, therefore, show that participation in the LGI's functions boosted women representatives' self-confidence and esteem necessary

to meet fundamental and strategic gender needs. It shows that performing roles in the LGIs provided them the opportunity to enjoy certain personal freedoms and to establish greater social networks,   which further expedites and strengthens their psychological, social and political empowerment (Malhotra and Schuler 2005, Sen 1999, Kabeer 1994, Friedmann 1992). This increased self-esteem of the elected women representatives constitutes an instrumental capability,   capability of being and doing what people actually consider worth doing (Nussbaum 2011, 1999, Robeyns 2005, Sen 1999).

The respondents were also asked if they were able to go outside at night and if they needed any permission from their husbands for such. This is because any women going out of home at night is often termed a bad girl and anti-social, tarnishing one's image and position in this patriarchal society. Girls going out of home at night often become the topic of the tea-table gossip in Bangladesh, and Rajshahi is no exception to this. Fundamentalists and sexual offenders often target them as soft targets (Kabeer 2011, Rahman, Hoque and Makinoda 2011). In this study, most of the urban (97%) and a majority of the rural respondents (72%) mentioned that their husbands did not object to them going outside at nights when needed. However, they mentioned that their families were concerned for their security and, therefore, they needed to take someone with them when going outside at night. Frankl (2004) also found in her study that rural women representatives could go outside freely without permission from their husbands. It, thus, indicates women members' increasing recognition within the family and their enhanced mobility,   a sign of mainstreaming gender and empowerment of the elected women representatives (Moser 2010, 1989, Moser and Moser 2005,

Deshmukh-Ranadive 2005). It also shows the necessity for enhanced security and law and order for women in the country.

The urban respondents further mentioned that they were having a full-time salaried secretary to assist in their work in the urban LGIs. Since the secretary accompanies the woman councillor, the issue of insecurity for the urban women representatives was not as pronounced. Furthermore, the urban representatives were also from better socio-economic and educational backgrounds for which they could enjoy greater personal freedom compared to the rural representatives.

The respondents were also asked if the local people can come to them anytime with their problems. Most of the respondents (97% rural and 90% urban) mentioned that the people were allowed to come to meet them whenever they needed to. As mentioned earlier, the urban members had offices adjacent to their homes, but the rural members did not have such offices. Urban women members, therefore, mentioned that people can come to their offices to meet them any time. On the other hand, the majority of the rural women members mentioned that the families usually did not complain if the local people came to them at night. One rural women member summarized the situation as,

> I need to keep close contact with my voters, and during my election campaign I promised to work for my constituency and to solve any issues people suffer. It is, therefore, essential to keep my door open for the people whom I serve. My family understand it and do not complain.

Women members further stressed that after being elected, their mobility going out of home both day and night had increased significantly. They also stated that they did not feel insecurity as a serious problem as they were now well-

known to most of the local people. To them, the young men who may have harassed them now respect them as elected representatives. The fundamentalists also do not say anything directly considering the fact that they hold public office and any fatwa or anything against the women members might be taken by the legal authority very seriously. The respondents also mentioned that they can now speak publicly, which was not possible before their election, a clear indication of strategic needs and overriding public-private divide by the women representatives. This relational improvement and social acceptance are important in enhancing the citizenship and empowerment of women (Gaventa and Barrett 2010, Cornwall and Coelho 2009, Sen 1999, Rowlands 1997, Friedmann 1992). As Sen (1999) argued, self-esteem and personhood are instrumental in the achievement of equality and well-being for women. Robeyns (2001: 4) argues that positive and real freedoms represent empowerment in the capability approach in which empowerment is one's "capability, the power that she has to be the person she wants to be and to have the kind of life she wants to lead". The enhanced mobility also indicates access to greater socio-economic space and efficacy for women representatives, essential for empowerment (Deshmukh-Ranadive 2005, Malhotra and Schuler 2005). The women members, therefore, said that they enjoyed much more freedom and mobility going out of home and meeting people as an elected representative compared to their ordinary life before election. The provision of direct election in the reserved seats was, therefore, found to contribute to women's enhanced personal development, raising strategic needs and empowerment in society.

6.4 Social Dimension of Empowerment: 'Look, Every Day People Come to See Me and Many of Them are Men'

The social dimension of empowerment refers to women representatives' relations and interactions with others in society (Kabeer 2011). It measures women representatives' acceptance, involvement and authority that enable them to live a dignified life with increasing self-esteem and recognition. Being respected and treated with dignity are essential for enhancing women's capability and to pursue their own goals and interests in order to lead a life of their choice (Nussbaum 2000, 2005, 2007, Robeyns 2005, Sen 1999). The women representatives were, therefore, asked if their position and acceptance had increased in society as an elected representative. The respondents, both across rural and urban local government institutions, mentioned that in majority of the cases society accepted them gladly. About 73.3% of the rural women members mentioned that they were honoured and received cordially by society while the rest (26.7%) mentioned that society is too conservative to accept them (Table 6.1).

Table 6.1. How the general people take you performing your roles in LGIs?

	LGIs		Total
	Rural	**Urban**	
Accept gladly	22(73.33%)	30(100%)	52(86.7%)
Accept conservatively	8(26.67%)	-	8(13.33%)
Do not accept	-	-	-
Total	30(100.0%)	30(100.0%)	60(100.0%)

The rural respondents mentioned that the latter group of people are often guided by religious stigma who believe that women's participation in politics and public office would bring unwanted chaos in the society. Women members are unwanted and unwelcomed to this group of people. However, the women members mentioned that they do not bother this as majority of the people recognize and accept their contribution to society. As one urban representative argued,

> There are always people having second thoughts. If I give a care to them all I cannot work. I know that majority of the people of my area are taking it (women representative) cordially. Of course there are some religious extremists who cannot accept us, but they are only few and if I am honest performing my role they cannot obstruct me.

Another woman member from rural area also argued that how well they perform their role is important to establish acceptance. She mentioned,

> I do not think that acceptance in society, specifically, in the male domain is so easy. They have a superiority complex and a patriarchal attitude against accepting women in any top positions. But over time I have overcome it and get their support and acceptance through my work. Look, everyday people come to see me and many of them are men. They come to seek help, getting VGD cards, tube-wells for drinking water, and children's school fees. I try to help, to sort out their problems and they come to me because they have their faith and belief in me.

These clearly indicate women representatives' perceived authority, confidence and efficacy overcoming the age old public-private divide—an

indicator of personal and social empowerment. As Diener and Biswas-Diener (2005: 125-126) mentioned, "empowerment consists of both actual ability to control one's environment (external empowerment) and the feeling that one can do so (internal empowerment)". When I interviewed some general villagers, they also echoed similar arguments. As one villager, a male aged 53, mentioned,

> Reaching a woman representative is easier than a male representative. Mrs NJ, our woman member, is accessible most of the time at home. I can share my problems privately with her at her home which is not possible with the chairman or male members. Because to meet the male representatives you usually have to go to the Union Parishad or tea stalls and you cannot talk to them there as they are always surrounded by others.

These clearly show that performing roles in the local government bodies helped the elected women representatives in the survey area to bring certain changes in the structure and attitude of the society. Their position at the local government institutions also enabled them to expand their 'economic, political and sociocultural spaces' (Deshmukh-Ranadive 2005, Robeyns 2005) in the society. It helped women representatives to earn credence and position by overcoming patriarchal attitudes, an evidence of changes of the deeper structure of the society necessary for women's strategic needs and gender mainstreaming. The changes in society's attitude towards women are reflected in the psychological and cognitive empowerment of women (Narayan 2005). Friedmann (1992) and Rowlands (1997) further argued, women's personal empowerment and self-esteem are closely related with social and collective empowerment. The enhanced role of the elected women representatives and their overall recognition

in society resulted in women's social empowerment in addition to their economic and personal empowerment.

Women respondents further mentioned that though they were cordially accepted by society, local people are often concerned of the particular role of women representatives as their constituencies overlap with that of the male representatives elected in the general seats. This shows, on one hand, the systematic disadvantages women face in the LGIs, while on other shows that people want to see women members having active roles—another good indication of social support overthrowing the conservative prejudices essential for gender mainstreaming in this patriarchal society. Women members claimed that such enthusiasm and expectation of society also induced them to work hard and to fight for their due share in the development projects in the LGIs and, thus, helped to attain fundamental human rights and strategic gender needs.

The elected women representatives of this study further mentioned that their roles and performance had greatly improved their place and importance in society. They explained that now people consider them important in many aspects: people invite them to help in solving family disputes, show respect to them, pay attention when the women members talk, ask for legal advices, and address them respectfully as 'Member Shaheb.'[39] One rural respondent, for example, shared her experience of attending a *shalish*[40]*,*

---

[39] Shaheb is a Bengali word. 'Member shaheb' literally means Honourable Member.

[40] *Shalish* is a Bengali word. It refers to the arrangement of informal settlement of petty disputes to avoid costly legal procedures in solving disputes among villagers.

> Two families of my area were engaged in a year long legal battle over land ownership. Each of the families lodged cases against the other in court. Both the families were devastated financially and morally appearing in court and police stations now and then. The well-wishers of the two families approached me to mediate and solve the problem. I met the two families, listened to their points and finally with the help of my neighbours and others I was able to solve the dispute in a locally arranged shalish.

This example shows that direct election in the reserved seats for women has certainly contributed to enhance the role of the elected women in society and their capability of living a life they have reason to value,   manifested through increased recognition 'being respected and treated with dignity' (Robeyns 2005, Nussbaum 2003, Sen 1999). It also shows that direct election in the reserved seats had offered the women who have been elected a certain scope to earn and exercise citizenship not enjoyed by them before (Kabeer 2012b, Cornwall and Coelho 2009). Another woman member of this study mentioned her leadership in ensuring transparency in school management. She stated that,

> I heard about corruption and nepotism in distributing food for children in one primary school in my area. The guardians of the school children came to me to stop such corruption. In the next food distribution day I went to the school. The guardians showed me evidence of corruption of the school committee in distributing food. They were distributing fewer amounts of food per children as well as of inferior quality. I asked them not to do that and threatened to take legal action. Finally we were able to force them to ensure fair distribution of food in the school.

Women member attending Shalish (local arbitration)

Women representatives were, in this way, found to be involved in citizen's engagement in ensuring transparency and accountability in development intervention. Women members also narrated their experiences in solving disputes between husbands and wives, halting child marriage, dowry and injustice against women in the name of fatwa. In one incidence the woman representative challenged the mullahs over a fatwa and saved a victim family in her area. As she mentioned,

> **Mrs RB: let there be light**
>
> In my area one family was punished by the local mullahs. The victim family came to me. I heard that there were some quarrels between the husband and the wife of this poor family. At one stage of the quarrel, the man threatened to divorce her and uttered talak (I divorce you). The man, however, did not mean to divorce her and so continued their conjugal life. A week later, the mullahs came and announced that their

talak has been accomplished with the man's word. They stated that the couple have no longer any marital relationship and so their living was extra-marital not allowed in Islam. They whipped the wife for such an extra-marital affair, dragged her out of the house and sent her to her parents. They also fined the husband and warned him that in case of failure to pay the fines in 3 days, they would burn his house and drive him out of the village. The victim's family came to me. I talked to the police and to the government officials. I also talked to our chairman and we arranged a meeting soon. The mullahs were adamant to execute their fatwa. But we emphasized that verbal talak with an unconscious mind, such as in anger, is not granted in law. So there was no talak and no extra-marital issues at all. The mullahs did not listen and finally we took them to the court. Later they understood their false-position and came to me to settle the issue. We sat again and the family was allowed to stay in the village as they were.

The case study shows that women members had the opportunity, though limited in many occasions, to bring some changes in the society by establishing their agency, strategic needs and authority beyond local government institutions, an achievement that the 1997 Local Government Ordinance was aiming at. The above mentioned story of Mrs RB, however, shows that the opportunities and experiences at LGIs have enabled women's 'legal, political and social empowerment' (Narayan 2005, Young 1993, Rowlands 1997, Price 1992) in this patriarchal society.

Women members of this survey also mentioned that before election most of them were confined to domestic work. However, after winning election the scenario has changed. As one women member said,

My world was centred on kitchen and my life was centred on cooking and washing. But after election my mobility out of home, social

> network and political connection brought the real world to my doorstep. Now I attend meetings with the government official, with the MP and attend *shalish* very often. I no longer have time and so I am no longer burdened by household chores. My family understands that my business outside the house is important. So they come forward to share the household work for me. My husband hired a maid to help this sort out.

This finding is an indication of how representation in local government helped to overcome the century old public-private divide, patriarchal barriers and to attain women's basic and strategic needs in society. As Robeyns (2005) argued, access to and possession of material benefits gives women opportunity to enjoy leisure activities, an indicator of enhanced capability of women to live a dignified life of their choice. It also demonstrates the women representatives' enhanced efficacy, confidence and feeling of being active agents capable of bringing changes to their lives as well as of others (Narayan 2005, Diener and Biswas-Diener 2005). Frankl (2004) also mentioned similar findings of enhanced social position of elected women members of the Union Parishads in Bangladesh. All these clearly demonstrate women members' enhanced acceptance, position and empowerment in society as a consequence of the direct election in reserved seats.

6.5 Political Dimension of Empowerment: 'I Dream to Be A Member of Parliament One Day'

Political empowerment of women is instrumental that directly or indirectly contributes to the overall freedom people have to enjoy to live the way they consider worth doing (Brody 2009, Sun 2004, Krook 2003, Sen 1999). It is

important in this perspective to explore the extent to which women are participating in governance and politics after the introduction of direct elections in the quota seats in LGIs.

As I discussed in Section 5.4, most of the women members of this study reported attending LGI meetings regularly. The meetings are the platforms for raising agendas to local development and to achieve fundamental and strategic gender interests (Moser 2010, 1989, Kabeer 1994). It gives the women representatives the opportunity to exercise necessary agency and to accomplish certain achievements of their choice (Kabeer 1999). The survey data show that despite the presence of strong patriarchal attitudes of the male representatives, women representatives in this study were enthusiastic to attend LGIs meetings regularly. Women representatives mentioned that they had a keen interest in participating in the decision-making in the local government institutions. They further mentioned that they protested if they were denied their rights by the male representatives, a sign of their enhanced political participation and empowerment.

However, as we saw in Section 5.5, the majority of the women respondents also mentioned that they faced pressure in expressing opinions at the LGIs meetings. They opined that the male members were not respectful to them and they do not pay attention to women representatives' words. They mentioned that the male members did not take their opinions in meetings cordially, rather they forced their opinions over the women. One urban woman member, Mrs AK, mentioned that she faced stiff opposition from her male colleagues while fighting for a fairer share of development projects. She mentioned that the male

representatives even tried to tarnish her personal character in society, but she continued fighting for her due roles. Mrs AK, thus, mentioned that,

> If you care for the women voters, they will vote for you. They will support you if they know your strength. The women voters vote you expecting that you will fight for their cause—for justice. So keep fighting, show your spirit and establish your position in the LGIs.

The experience of Mrs AK clearly shows women representatives' personal, cognitive and political empowerment at the LGIs. As Sen (1999) argued, empowerment is the enhanced capability of women to become an active agent rather than patiently accepting the power of others in the decision-making process. It refers to agency, namely,   being the actor in the process of making choices and achieving valued outcomes from sets of alternatives. As discussed in Section 5.6, most of the women representatives mentioned protesting in case of disagreement with the male representatives. They mentioned that standing their ground is important to make their voice heard. A deeper investigation further revealed that the educated and politically active women representatives were more vibrant in protesting against injustice. This is not surprising considering that raising a voice in these male dominant LGIs requires women members to possess sufficient knowledge and convincing arguments. To Gaventa and Cornwall (2006, 2001), knowledge and information are important for building confidence and power to speak out. In contrast, silence is the product of insufficient knowledge by the agents.

Women members were further asked if they were participating in national politics after being elected. It was evidenced that all the urban elected

women members and about 43% of the rural women members of this study took part in national politics. The urban respondents in particular mentioned that they were involved with political parties and they received party backingduring election. They mentioned that the party endorsement was critical in their election decision and victory.[41] On the other hand, it was evidenced that participation in politics by the rural women members of this survey was much lower. They mentioned that neither their election decision nor the victory was particularly influenced by party support; instead they expressed the opinion that personal traits and family position were instrumental.

In terms of position in the party leadership, most of the rural respondents mentioned that they were not involved in any committee or office-bearing position of the party. In contrast, I observed that the urban women representatives were ambitious and vibrant in party politics. They claimed to have office-holding positions in their parties including the position of President/Secretary of the local units of their parties. A majority of them were dreaming further than that. Some of them mentioned that they dream to be a member of parliament (MP) of the country one day. The direct election in reserved seats in the LGIs had, thus, enabled women's psychological development and to widen their choice

---

[41] Note that in Bangladesh the election in the local government institutions are non-party by law. Political parties cannot officially nominate and endorse any candidate. Candidates, specially the urban candidates, rather approach the party offices to seek informal support for their candidature. It is very common that party officials appear in the election rally of particular candidates to show their support. However, because of the unofficial endorsement, multiple candidates are seen to get support from the party factions in the same constituency. The winner of the election, whoever is, has been seen to be welcomed by the party after election as their nominated candidate.

necessary to exercise 'citizenship rights and empowerment' (Kabeer 2012a, Gaventa and Barrett 2010, Cornwall and Coelho 2009).

The women members were also interviewed about their participation and involvement in the national election. About 87% of the rural women members and all of the urban members (100%) of this study mentioned that the candidates in the national elections come to them to seek their support. They come to them not only for their vote but also with the request to campaign for them. They mentioned that candidates often plead for their help to mobilise local people, especially to mobilise women voters. The respondents mentioned that often they lend support and worked for their candidate of choice. The survey data, therefore, show that most of the women members (77% rural and 90% urban) claimed that their positions in the local government institutions had enhanced the importance of their support and campaign in the national elections. They argued that it is because as an elected representative they are valued in society and their opinion on and campaigns for certain candidates in the election became significant. Women members further mentioned that before being elected in the LGIs hardly any candidate came to them seeking support. Now after being elected candidates of the national election were coming for their support and the local people, especially neighbours, well-wishers and the party workers also valued their opinion to vote for certain candidates.

The discussion above shows that the provisions for direct election have helped women members to secure positions in political office and party politics, though the evidence is more vibrant in case of urban respondents compared to that of the rural ones. I found that the candidates in the national elections come to seek

support from the elected women members and the local people were also weighing in the suggestions of the women members regarding national elections. All these document the significant contribution of the women representatives in national politicsFindings of the survey clearly show that the introduction of direct election has been visibly successful in enhancing the 'political space' (Moser 2010, Narayan 2005, Deshmukh-Ranadive 2005) of the elected women members and their improved political importance and participation. The study findings, thus, confirm Friedmann (1992), Price (1992) and Rowlands's (1997) argument that personal and social empowerment enable women to achieve greater political empowerment in the form of participation in national politics and processes that affect structural changes essential to garner fundamental and structural gender interest for women.

6.6 Empowerment of Women in the Wider Community: 'Election is a Symbol that We Can Do. Yes, Women Can Do What Men Do'

The introduction of direct election in the quota seats for women was based on the hypothesis that women's representation and participation would bring positive changes to society in general. It was assumed that women's position in political office would enhance their contribution to society, would strengthen their voice against any injustice, can exercise agency and capacity to choose life choices and be valued in general. As Alsop and Heinsohn (2005: 6) argued, empowerment means, "possessing the capacity to make effective choices; that is, to translate one's choices into desired actions and outcomes". Such capacity is,

however, determined by agency and opportunity structures. Agency in such refers to "an actor's ability to envisage options and make a choice", while opportunity refers to "the formal and informal contexts within which actors operate" (Alsop and Heinsohn 2005: 6).

In this context, women representatives were asked whether the introduction of direct elections in the quota seats have any implication in the expansion of capacity and life choices for women in the wider community. The analysis of data indicates that about 93.3% of rural and urban members claimed that the quota seats had helped to enhance the general public awareness of the role of women in politics as being essential for women's empowerment in the society. My research data (although not necessarily statistically relevant but provides indicative weightings from the qualitative research) show that with the introduction of direct election in the reserved seats, women are now more inclined to go to the voting centre and cast votes, are more conscious in choosing candidates and more aware about their demands and expectations. It is important to mention that in my conversations with local people, especially women, it appears that many women, including the landless, marginal farmers and the illiterate now desire to contest in the elections and to assume political office. This positive enthusiasm is attributed by the local NGO leaders, community members, women activists, teachers and journalists as the result of the introduction of direct elections in reserved seats. If empowerment begins with women's political awareness, dreams and aspirations to extend their life choices, then the introduction of direct election has surely opened the window for the women in

general to think about politics and political participation. As one landless village woman stated:

> I have a dream. I want to contest in the Union Parishad election next time. I want to represent the landless and the share croppers of this village who are neglected. In the past we have seen candidates to promise many things during elections but later they forget. There is no real change, no real improvement in the life of the peasant, the fishermen and the landless poor. We the impoverished people are the majority in the society but we get least from Union Parishad. I believe that if I get elected I can truly represent our cause in the LGIs.

It, thus, illustrates that the introduction of direct elections has contributed to the personal development of many general women   as well as to the 'value of their life choices' and the changes they think necessary to accomplish such choices (Kabeer 2011, Nusbbaum 2011, 2000, Alsop and Heinsohn 2005, Malhotra and Schuler 2005). It shows, at least in my survey area, a significant improvement in the personal development of women who were typically confined with domestic chores, and would not even dare to talk to people beyond their immediate and extended families. It can be noted that such positive enthusiasm for direct elections in reserved seats has also led the country's women leaders, academics and NGO activists to demand direct elections in the reserved seats for women in the national parliament of the country. Such a push is seen to get increasing popularity across media, the masses and in opinion polls.[42] The

---

[42] In Bangladesh there is 50 reserved seats for women in the national parliament (in addition to 300 general seats) but there is no direct election in those seats. The reserved seats are allocated to the political parties according the percentage of votes received in the general election. The parties then nominate their women candidates in the reserved seats.

introduction of direct election in the reserved seats in the LGIs, therefore, has not only contributed women's personal empowerment but also rendered a platform to bring structural changes in the politics of the country and a support to the 'circular flow of personal, social and political empowerment' (Moser 2010, 1989, Malhotra and Schuler 2005, Deshmukh-Ranadive 2005, Price 1992, Friedmann 1992).

The elected women members of my study also claimed that they attempted to mobilise other women to join political parties formally. They mentioned that political awareness and participation of the women are important to promote women's development. The women representatives, however, mentioned that the women in general are still confused to join in formal party politics/political organizations. This is not surprising considering that the politics in Bangladesh is now controlled by money and muscle for which majority of the citizens, both men and women, are afraid to take part in direct party politics.[43]

The survey data also reveal that the women representatives were contributing to create awareness apart from politics among women in general. The women representatives mentioned that they mobilized women for various awareness raising programs including family planning, dowry, child marriage, etc. The NGO activists I talked to also reported such role of elected women representatives. An NGO worker, thus, mentioned,

---

Women having closer ally with the party chief and high-commands are getting nomination in the reserved seats leaving very limited space for the mass-people in the reserved seats.

[43] Westergaard (1998) observed that the hostility of voting, rigging and buying votes by "black money" have left the women, the marginal poor and the minority away from politics and contesting election.

The programmes such as training on family planning, immunization, filtering water during flood, primary treatment of diarrhoea, disaster preparedness, women and human rights, dowry, acid throwing and fatwa got tremendous support from elected women representatives. Earlier we also had arranged similar trainings and awareness programmes, but women's participation was low. But now when we offer such trainings and workshops, we usually seek cooperation from women members. The women representatives use their own channel to mobilise villagers, both men and women, to come and join these programmes. Surely this helped changing the quality of life to many villagers and without the support from the women representatives such events might not be so successful.

A government official working on maternity and child health also informed me that the women representatives inspired villagers to come to the maternity clinic and to have safer deliveries attended by professional midwives. She added,

Improving maternal health care is a challenge to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates which is alarming in Bangladesh. The rural women as well as the women from the urban slums who are mostly illiterate were very hard to bring under the pre-natal and post-natal health care because of ignorance and prejudice. These women believed that the maternity clinics are mostly staffed with men and they cannot go to them for child delivery or medical check-up from Purdah perspective. The villagers also believed that there is no practice of saying Azaan[44] in the maternal clinics and in such child delivery in these clinics are not Islamic—though all these beliefs were wrong considering that women are treated by women staffs only and there were adequate religious measures for all faiths. We approached the women members to help us eliminating all these misconceptions and support our programme for the promotion of maternal and child health. They worked with us, attended campaign for safer and planned

---

[44] In Bangladesh the Muslims used to say Azaan (call for prayer) when a son is born as part of Islamic tradition. However, there is no such provision for a girl child.

maternity and eventually our programme is a huge success. Without women representatives' help the success in reducing maternal mortality rate, safer child delivery, improved child weight at birth and immunization would not be as successful as it is now.

This story resembles findings of Cornwall and Shankland (2008) in what they mentioned that citizen's active participation improves health delivery in rural Brazil. The women representatives of my study further opined that these trainings and campaigns were essential to informational flow, raising awareness and eliminating misconceptions pertinent to the lives of the local people, especially the women and the children.

Women members distributing kits for maternal care and child delivery

As one urban woman reporesentative, Mrs NB, argued,

> Maternal mortality rates were high in Rajshahi and many children died every year because of diarrhoea and other contagious diseases despite that many NGOs there offer training and information on how to

prevent those avoidable deaths. Many children were also not immunized and we need to ensure that all children are immunized in time and all mothers get necessary health service.

The opinion of Mrs NB clearly illustrates women representatives' contributions to the development of human capital and quality of life—essential for the enhanced and sustained position of women and gender mainstreaming in the society (Kabeer 2011, 1994, Moser 2010, 2003, Nussbaum 2011, 2005).

Women respondents of this study (93% rural and 97% urban) also claimed that the introduction of direct election in the reserved seats has contributed to enhancing women's position within community, even in the men's domain. Women who were earlier considered good for nothing are now in a respectable position to the men. This is also supported by the general women across rural and urban areas, the NGO activists, academics and journalists in Rajshahi. As one rural woman, 36, from Puthiya explained,

> The member *apa* (sister) has changed my life. My husband was a gambler. He was losing money every day and used to pressurize me for money. If I failed to meet his demand he used to torture physically. I was helpless and could not do anything as no one helped me to sort this out. After election, I went to member *apa* and begged her help. She is woman and she understood my pain. She came to my house and talked to my husband. She warned him that torturing wife is a punishable crime. She emphasized that she is representing all women of the village and that if he continues any further offences she would take legal step. However, he did not change his attitude and continued beating me for money. The member *apa* then brought police one day and arrested him. Now he has changed because he knows that I have places to go and people to talk and seek remedies.

This rural woman also mentioned that her husband now consults with her before making any household decision. He seeks her consent which was not seen earlier. This indicates that the introduction of direct election has contributed to overcoming the culture of silence in this patriarchal society. It helped to raise the voice of the marginalized women, at least for some, like this lady, against oppression and the denial of life choices. It also led the men's community, again for some at least, to perceive that women have a right to live a dignified life, have equal human rights, have reasonable life choices and preferences that have to be valued and honoured. This is certainly a manifestation of the structural and deeper changes in society and of the achievement of strategic life choices for women (Kabeer 2012a, 2003, 1994, Moser 2010, 2000, 1989).

In this survey, almost all urban and rural women members also argued that after the introduction of elections in the quota seats, the importance for women's education, employment and income has increased in society. One NGO activist explained this phenomenon as the significant long term benefit of direct election. She argued that it is because of this we want direct election in the reserved seats in the national parliament. She emphasized that,

> Election is a symbol that woman can do. It is a signal and a call to the girls, yes, you can do what the boys can do. When women members are performing in the local government others started dreaming—a dream that ranges from being a school teacher to be a bus driver, from Union Parishad member to become a parliament member, from government employee to even head the government. It awakes the women up who were in deep hibernation for long due to strong patriarchy. It did not challenge patriarchy and did not attempt to undermine men directly, but it subtly hit and uprooted the age old myth that women are inferior to

men. Instead it offers opportunity, scope and evidence that like men women are equally capable of shouldering any responsible task.

In my field study sites there is, thus, a structural change, a change in the 'societal attitude towards women's life, rights and choices' (Kabeer 2003, 1994, Kantor 2003, Jejeebhoy 2000, Sen 1999). My respondents further echoed that after the introduction of direct elections there has been a change in the perception of people about the future of their girl children, and specifically about their education, employment and marriage. They claimed that the incidence of under-aged marriage has reduced considerably in the survey area as people have begun valuing their children's education. Girls, even from the landless families, are dreaming to complete at least secondary school and to get paid employment. Many girls are now seen to come to the position of primary and secondary school teachers, and in government and non-government employment. The women members also mentioned that they tried to create productive employment and income generating activities for women in their constituencies. They claimed to arrange training for women, including poultry, sewing, nursery, etc., and also arranged microcredit for the poor. One urban women member, therefore, narrated,

> I strongly believe that money matters. If women can earn income, no one can suppress them. I, therefore, emphasized on creating employment and training for women including embroidery, boutique, beauty parlour, bakery and nursery. I also mobilised NGOs to offer microcredit facilities in my area to finance women's projects. All these helped many women to establish their own business and also create employment for others.

A general woman from a municipality mentioned the contribution of a women councillor to change in her life. She stated,

> My husband divorced me as my parents could not meet his dowry demand. I was in deep sea with my two children. My parents were poor and they could not manage their own expenses forget about mine. I went to our woman councillor who sent me to training on embroidery and boutique. After training the woman councillor lent me 5000 Taka[45] to start a business. I started initially in a small room in my neighbour's house. Now I have 3 girls to help me and we moved to a bigger shop in the local market. Now I am no longer a financial burden to my family. I manage my own expenses, repaid my loans and bear my children's school expenditures. I also train other women many of whom have become self-reliant and are running businesses.

During my field visit I further witnessed that the development projects (such as road maintenance, food-for-work programmes and tree plantation) headed by women representatives were mostly employed and supervised by women workers. One woman representative argued that the employment of women workers enabled them to earn independent incomes and become self-dependent, which further increases their agency and empowerment in household decision-making.

Most of the women representatives also claimed that they put their best efforts to combat any injustices against women in their areas, though not always successful. They mentioned their initiatives resisting dowry, acid throwing, child marriage, polygamy and fatwa against women. One general woman narrated that a woman representative was a great help to stopping child marriage of her daughter. She narrated,

> I was in big trouble when my husband fixed my 14 year old daughter's marriage. I did not want her to leave school and marry at that age

---

[45] 1 US$ = 75 Taka at the time of data collection.

neither did she. My daughter was meritorious and used to secure top places in school exams. She used to dream a lot of her study and her future. But my husband was not listening to us and insisted repeatedly to go for the marriage. Finding no help from anyone, I talked to the woman councillor, and with her help finally I managed to stop that marriage and save my daughter's life.

It is, therefore, evident that the introduction of direct election has certain implications for the attainment of productive employment for women, earn income, establish their identity, and mainstreaming gender in society. It helped them to achieve their fundamental and strategic gender needs, enhanced their capacity and say on their life choices and to earn a better position and recognition in society (Kabeer 2011, 1994, Alsop and Heinsohn 2005, Moser 1989, 2000). The study findings, thus, show that the introduction of direct election has contributed to create adequate 'economic, political and sociocultural spaces' for women (Deshmukh-Ranadive 2005, Malhotra and Schuler 2005) necessary to exploit their capacity and agency and enabling to lead a life of their choice and not by chance (Nussbaum 2011, 2000, Sen 1999).

6.7 Conclusion

The discussion above shows that the introduction of direct election in the quota seats for women have significant implications for enhancing women's agency, capability and empowerment across rural and urban LGIs. Direct elections have led to an increase in economic freedom, social recognition as well as political awareness and participation of women representatives as well as of women in general in both rural and urban areas. The elected women

representatives argued that the financial and non-financial resources availed from the LGIs enabled them to enhance their role and agency in the decision-making process within and out of the family yielding a life that they found worth living. Most of the elected women members, even the urban respondents with higher socio-economic backgrounds, reported that without the gender quota, they would not contest in the general seats against male candidates. This indicates the importance of quota seats in promoting women's political empowerment through participation in the local government system. The provision of direct election in the quota seats also contributed to the greater importance of society in women's education, employment and income. Women were valued and respected by the community as a whole which can be considered as the expansion of women's capacity to live a dignified life. As Koggel (2005: 169) argued, "these abilities are aspects of agency in that women are doing things and making choices that then give them voice, social standing, independence, and empowerment". There is also evidence that the reservation of quota seats and direct election have led to an increase in women's awareness and protests against any oppression and injustice towards women including fatwa, dowry and acid throwing. The introduction of direct election in the reserved seats, thus, shows noticeable contributions towards attaining women's personal, economic, political and social empowerment in Bangladesh across rural and urban settings.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION: RESOURCE, AGENCY AND ACHIEVEMENT HOLDING PUBLIC OFFICES

[d]evelopment is the expansion of people's freedoms to live long, healthy and creative lives; to advance other goals they have reason to value; and to engage actively in shaping development equitably and sustainably on a shared planet.

—Human Development Report, UNDP (2010: 2).

7.1 Conclusion

The endeavour of empowering womenfolk in Bangladesh is perceived to be a new paradigm as a result of the enactment of the Local Government Ordinance 1997 which introduced direct elections for reserved seats for women across rural and urban local government institutions. In this context, I have explored the challenges, opportunities and the extent of women empowerment in the LGIs in Bangladesh. This is based on extensive field surveys in January-May 2011 and July-August 2012 in the northern district of Rajshahi, Bangladesh. The study made several distinctive sets of observations. **First**, it explored the challenges women candidates faced in contesting local government elections. **Second**, it investigated the roles and responsibilities and empowerment of the elected women representatives in the local government institutions. **Third**, it examined the effect of the 1997 Act in enhancing women's empowerment in the wider community. **Finally**, considering wide variations in socio-economic conditions, this study scrutinized the challenges, role performances, and empowerment of women across rural and urban local government institutions in Rajshahi. It is important to note that in this study I have surveyed only 1 particular district (of 64) including 1

divisional headquarter (of 7) of the country and the findings in this study may not necessarily represent a general picture elsewhere.

7.2 Agency and Achievements

In the first sets of remarks, this thesis explores the opportunities and achievements in empowering women. There were marked signs of women's agency and empowerment. *Firstly*, the enhanced voice and agency of women were evident from the decision to contest elections. Most of the women representatives across rural and urban LGIs were contesting elections by choice. They mentioned that these decisions were mostly taken jointly by themselves along with their husbands and family members. Some women representatives, especially in the urban areas, reported being the primary decision makers on whether to contest and convince their families to support their candidatures. The study did not find that any of the respondents were ignorant about their election decision, nor were they pushed by their families against their will. Contrary to the previous studies (e.g., Panday 2008a, Mukhopaddhay and Meer 2004, Nanivadekar 2003), my research found that women members had enhanced agency in the decision making process within their families. Considering expansion of choice as the core of active 'citizenship and empowerment' (Gaventa and Barrett 2010, Kabeer 1999), women representatives' participation in the election decision certainly reflects the very first indication of women's agency and empowerment in this survey.

Secondly, this study also documented increasing mobility of the women candidates during election campaigns, and this continued after their election

victories. For example, during the elections, candidates were campaigning day and night door to door which was not a common activity for most of them prior to the elections. Women representatives, without objections from their families, were also meeting local people, which Kabeer (2011, 1994) termed a rare event especially in the rural Bangladesh. The decision to contest elections, thus, enabled women representatives' enhanced mobility and personal freedom overcoming the age old patriarchal barrier. This is particularly important for the rural women representatives who were in weaker socio-economic positions, as discussed in Chapter 4, compared to their urban colleagues. After being elected, women representatives were also visiting government offices, police stations, and other public places typically considered as male domains in this conservative social structure. Even the urban women representatives enjoying better education and professional status were not used to visiting these places before they were elected because of the strong private-public divide. Women respondents mentioned that they now often sit in meetings with the District Commissioner, the Police Superintendent, Members of Parliament and even with the Minister and Secretary which they considered unthinkable before. Some of them also mentioned having meetings with officials from donor organizations and visiting foreign countries for training/seminar attendance. All these enabled women representatives to broaden their socio-political networks necessary for their enhanced personal freedom, empowerment and strategic gender needs.

Thirdly, another important contribution of the introduction of direct elections I observed is women representatives' increased voice and agency in the public policy making. In the LGIs, which are still male majority institutions in

Bangladesh, women are fighting for their lawful rights against their male counterparts. It was found, in both the rural and urban LGIs, that women members were categorically claiming to represent 3 Wards compared to 1 Ward for male members and, therefore, demanding due respect of their voice. Women representatives were seen to claim and combat for the legitimacy of their say and representation which demonstrates psychological development, e.g., enhanced self-efficacy and confidence, of the women representatives across rural and urban LGIs. Some of them also mentioned exploiting social and family network as well as administrative support to establish their voice in the decision-making process. To Chowdhury (2002: 55), direct elections in the LGIs in Bangladesh "has brought about a qualitative change in their role perception. On the whole they have claimed a space within the local bodies and have raised spirited calls to have their terms of reference and spheres of activity defined". Women representatives' increased voice in this case certainly demonstrates their agency in quest to empowerment. As Sen (1999) argued, empowerment refers to individuals being active agents rather than being patients. Findings of this study, thus, show that reservation of quota seats is not necessarily mimicking 'tokenism' (Mukhopadhyay and Meer 2004, Panday 2008a) or 'patriarchal participation' (Nanivadekar 2003), rather, might be useful in enhancing women's agency in the decision making process.

Fourthly, the provision of direct election has contributed to bringing structural and attitudinal changes within households in my survey area. As evidenced in Chapter 4, most of the rural and almost half of the urban women representatives were unemployed and confined to their kitchen bearer roles before

election. However, most of my respondents, both rural and urban, mentioned that the scenario changed after winning election. They were no longer the sole bearers of their kitchens. Instead, their family members were sharing such responsibilities. Furthermore, the financial and non-financial benefits received by the women representatives from the LGIs, though very minimal, helped to increase their economic contribution and to help their husbands, sons, in-laws and relatives with resources. Some of them help their families buying shops, rickshaws, water pumps and financing family businesses. Considering the weaker socio-economic profile of the women representatives, especially of the rural respondents, this enabled them to enhance their position and say within the family. The resources availed from the LGIs, thus, helped women representatives in increasing 'agency' and attain certain 'achievements' in Kabeer's (1999) term.

Fifthly, the achievements of the women representatives were also clear from their contribution to enhance women's life chances in the wider community. While I talked to the women in the wider community they opined that they have at least got a place to share their issues and problems in women representatives. They argued that women representatives can better understand the common miseries they suffer like problems of dowry, rape, acid throwing, husband's polygamy, physical torture by husband, husband's intimidation to divorce or second marriage and so on. Some of them also mentioned receiving financial and non-financial support from women representatives to become economically self-reliant. They mentioned receiving training such as in poultry raising, cow fattening, high yielding crops, boutique and embroidery, health hygienic practices, NGO membership and access to microcredit with the help of the women

representatives. In many incidences they described those as life changing to some extent, which broadened their life choices, agency and capability of living a valued life. This study, therefore, documented the enhanced economic and personal empowerment of women in the wider community one of the very basic objectives of the 1997 Act.

Sixthly, women representatives were also found challenging the deeper structure of the patriarchal society. They were contributing actively raising awareness and combating fatwa, child marriage, polygamy, hilla marriage and eve teasing . The study finds incidences when they protested and took necessary legal measures against such social malpractices. Though challenging the age old tyranny of fatwa was not easy, women representatives were found to exploit their positional influences and socio-political networks to combat fatwa in several instances. Attainment of such 'strategic gender needs' (Moser 1993), is important for the advancement and empowerment of women in a developing country like Bangladesh.

Finally, the introduction of direct election in the reserved seats was also important to legitimate acceptance of women's position in the society. The women representatives were treated with dignity in society after election. Even in the men's domain women were treated respectfully. Men often call them Apa (Madam) and used to offer chairs in meetings. Women representatives were regularly invited to participate in the Shalish (local arbitration) which used to be taboo in this patriarchal society. They not only attended shalish but their opinions were also valued in the decision making. Women members were elected in the management of the local schools, madrashas (religious schools) and similar

bodies. All these demonstrate that women representatives have begun to earn respect, position, socio-political legitimacy and a public mandate at the community level. This finding is consistent with previous studies (e.g., Frankl 2004, Khan and Mohsin 2008, Hassan et al 2009, Nazneen and Tasneem 2010) but in contrast with the findings of Panday (2008a). The improved and legitimate social position of women and their acceptance in the society were silently breaching the private-public divide and help mainstreaming gender which was a fundamental objective of the introduction of direct election in the reserved seats in Bangladesh.

The findings of this study further documented that women representatives were also valued in the political programs and national elections. Candidates in the national elections come to seek their support and to accompany them in campaigning. Being familiar with election campaigns and local people's needs they were instrumental in facilitating national election campaigns. Some elected women representatives were also involved in party politics and occupied office bearing positions. Some women members even have bigger political dreams like standing for the position of chairman/mayor in the LGIs and as members of Parliament. Thus, the spark of women's empowerment emerged through the 1997 Act has lit up bigger and wider political platforms for women representatives.

7.3 Challenges and Caveats

However, the study documents certain challenges and caveats for the empowerment of women through the 1997 Act. ***First***, the structure of the LGIs does not offer enough space for women representatives. Women representatives were not included in the core committees of the LGIs and did not receive funding that matches the size of the wards they represent. The reserved seats for women were only one-fourth of the total in the LGIs and consequently they were a minority in the decision-making process. In a men-majority situation their voices were hardly heard by the male representatives. Women representatives, both in the rural and urban LGIs, were arguing that though they raise legitimate and lawful issues they hardly succeed in becoming part of the decision making process.

Second, there were also flaws in the electoral procedure of the local government institutions in Bangladesh. The constituency of the women representatives is not distinctively separate but an electorate that overlaps with 3 general seats for which typically 3 male members are elected. Consequently, for any development project a woman representative always faces three counterparts with whom to share and bargain. Eventually the situation becomes 1 against 3 and she loses. Absence of clear demarcation of constituency, thus, posits a serious threat to the empowerment initiative of women in the local government institutions in Bangladesh.

Third, the weaker socio-economic profile of the elected women representatives put another challenge in women's empowerment, especially in meeting election expenditures and pay back. Most of the elected women

representatives, especially from the rural areas, had very little or no income of their own and relied on their husbands and family members to bear election expenditures. In such a situation, the danger of becoming complicit in bribes remained a threat for women who were beholden and or indebted to their husbands, in consequence, continuing part of the patriarchal system. It was found, in some instances, that women representatives appeared to be the proxy of their husbands and the husbands were dictating development projects on their behalf. Women representatives in such circumstances were at risk of losing control over projects and may have to compromise with the stated project objectives for the personal benefit of their husbands and families. Unless the authority strictly regulates election expenditures, and educated and employed women are encouraged to contest elections this may continue to be a threat for women's effective participation and empowerment.

Fourth, there are loopholes in the 1997 Act identifying roles and responsibilities of the elected representatives. The Union Parishad, the Municipality and the City Corporation are Chairman/Mayor dominated institutions. There is a list of duties for the LGIs but it does not specify roles for women representatives. This loophole offers scope for discrimination against women in a context where they are a minority. Because of this legal loophole even the urban women representatives commanding better education, employment and socio-political connection have been equally discriminated like the rural women representatives in terms of project distribution. Identification of women representatives' roles and responsibilities is, thus, essential in order to ensure effective participation of women in the decision-making process.

Fifth, the working environment in the local government institutions was not friendly for women's participation. Male representatives did not pay attention to women representatives' voice. They were very reluctant to accept women representatives' points in the decision making process. Women representatives were even subject to personal attacks in the event they challenged male representatives. Similar findings were also mentioned in other studies (e.g., Nazneen and Tasneem 2010, Khan and Mohsin 2008, Panday 2008) in which women's participation and empowerment in the LGIs remained challenging due to the non-cooperative behaviour and patriarchal attitude of the male representatives.

Sixth, the Union Parishad (rural LGIs) is a weaker institution in terms of authority, scope and resource mobilisation (Aminuzzaman 2003, Thorlind 2003, Frankl 2004, Khan and Mohsin 2008). It does not have the independence to formulate policies and development plans. Instead, it is entirely dependent on the national government's budget allocation and dictation. Urban LGIs (Municipality and City Corporation) are relatively bigger in area, population and budget. However, the majority of the development projects of the urban LGIs are still designed and funded by the national government. The national government, consequently, have strong influence and control over LGIs in Bangladesh. Women's empowerment and achievement remains in doubt if they merely represent weak form of government.

Overall, this dissertation found that women representatives are enjoying greater personal freedom, mobility and increased voices both within their homes and beyond which is particularly important for the rural women representatives

with weaker socio-economic positions. The financial and non-financial benefits also helped women representatives achieve economic empowerment in terms of control over assets, spending by choice and helping others. The achievements are also noticeable in terms of social recognition and involvement in national politics. Women representatives are able to help in economic, social and family issues to wider community, especially for women. They are combating against traditional patriarchal issues like fatwa, dowry and polygamy. However, there remains several hurdles, including lack of clear demarcation of constituency, women's minority representation in the LGIs, and non-cooperative attitude of the male representatives. Considering women's empowerment a long walk, the 1997 Act, thus, appears as an instrumental step in that path. At least the numbers are there in the decision-making body and women's presence are visible in this male dominant society.

7.4 Rural-Urban Variations

It is important to note that the socio-economic backgrounds of the elected women representatives are quite different across rural and urban social settings. The contectual study uncovers the challenges, opportunities and achievements in women's empowerment across rural and urban local government institutions and come up with some important observations. *First*, the study finds evidences that the urban women representatives enjoy considerably higher socio-economic status compared to their rural counterparts. However, despite such variations in income, employment and education, rural women members do not face greater restrictions within the family while contesting elections and performing roles in the LGIs. The

study finds that the rural women have necessary support from their families, especially from their husbands, as is the case with that of the urban respondents.

Second, urban women representatives have higher personal incomes, and political and organizational experiences. Despite that their dependency on their husbands for election expenditure and campaign has been as much as that of the rural women. Election expenditures in the urban areas have been much higher than in rural areas and urban women representatives, though they had higher incomes, had to rely on their husbands for such. Urban respondents have been also dependent on their families in campaigning from door to door, especially at night, due to social norms and security concerns similar to the rural women representatives.

Third, urban representatives face similar hurdles as that of their rural counterparts in performing the tasks of the LGIs, including working with overlapping and larger constituencies, unspecified roles in the 1997 Act, and male representatives' non-cooperative attitudes. Facing such legal and structural loopholes, urban women representatives' achievements, agency and empowerment remained as equally unfulfilled as with their rural counterparts despite their higher level of education, awareness, political engagement and ambition.

7.5 Policy Implications

Findings of this study suggest important policy implications for women's meaningful participation and empowerment in the LGIs. ***First,*** the 1997 Act should be amended in order to have clear demarcation of women representatives' constituency without overlapping with others. At present, one woman member

represents a constituency that is also the constituency of 3 other male members. A clear delimitation of women's constituencies without overlapping would enable them to perform their due roles without sharing with and combatting against male counterparts. Such an initiative would also enable them to have fair and friendly relationships with their male colleagues necessary for their workplace recognition and empowerment across rural and urban LGIs.

Second, the reservation of seats through the 1997 Act brought certain numbers on the table but it did not offer a critical threshold to impact the decision-making process. Women representatives comprise only one-fourth of the total members in the LGIs. The male representatives can fill the quorum without women members in the LGI meetings and consequently women representatives have been unable to put effective pressure in the decision making process. Instead, they have had to accept the decisions of their male counterparts through simple majority rule. The policy makers, therefore, should increase the numbers of the reserved seats in order to facilitate women's effective representation in the LGIs in Bangladesh.

Third, the 1997 Act only lists roles and responsibilities of the LGIs. It does not specify roles for women representatives, which leaves scope for discrimination in both rural and urban LGIs. Appropriate policy measures, therefore, should be taken to ensure women's roles, responsibilities and empowerment. Provisions should be made such that women members head at least one-third of the standing committees and development projects along with their proportionate inclusion in other committees.

Fourth, there have been instances in which women representatives were not treated respectfully by male representatives. Male representatives were stereotypical and patriarchal in their attitudes and were not ready to accept women's agency and authority in the decision-making process. Unless their attitude towards women's participation and representation changes, it appears difficult to establish women's agency in the LGIs in Bangladesh. To combat this, government and non-government organisations should offer awareness raising training and workshops for male representatives regarding women's rights, their entitlement as human beings, and being elected people's representatives.

Fifth, in the existing system women representatives are not entitled to represent the Union Parishad/Municipality in the hierarchy of the local government system in Bangladesh, e.g., Upazilla Council. The Chairman/Mayor is represented in these bodies. However, these higher local government bodies are the platform to submit and to get approval for development projects. Being excluded from representation in these bodies, women representatives remain unaware about development projects approved for their LGIs. The 1997 Act, in such circumstances, should be modified to ensure women members' representation in these higher bodies to promote their agency and participation in the decision-making process.

Sixth, both the rural and urban LGIs in Bangladesh are highly influenced and regulated by the national government. LGIs are particularly dependent on the national government in terms of financing. This is not conducive for the growth of local government and the development of grassroots governance. Appropriate policies, therefore, should be taken to strengthen local government institutions in

Bangladesh. Policies should be designed to help LGIs generate and contribute a larger share of the budget necessary for sustainability and independence.

Seventh, most of the women representatives are newcomers and unfamiliar with the roles and functions of the LGIs. In such circumstances, government and non-government organizations should provide extensive training programs for women representatives about how the LGIs function. Training should also focus on strategies in working and dealing with male colleagues in the LGIs. At present, only the rural women representatives receive such training. There is no such training for urban women representatives despite the high demand from urban women representatives for such.

7.6 Future Research

In sum, this dissertation explores the effects of introducing direct election processes so that women can stand to be elected to reserved seats at the local level. This was introduced through the Local Government Ordinance (1997) across both rural and urban LGIs in Bangladesh. The study is essentially qualitative in nature. Future researchers may opt to survey a larger sample so that quantitative interpretations can be made as a result of collecting data that has statistical relevance. Another avenue of future research could be a comparative study exploring the roles, responsibilities and challenges of empowerment of the nominated women representatives (before the 1997 Act) with that of the directly elected women representatives through the 1997 Act.

REFERENCES

Abukhalil, A. (1994), Women and electoral politics in Arab states, in *Electoral Systems in Comparative Perspectives: Their Impact on Women and Minorities*, edited by W. Rule and J. Zimmerman, pp. 127-137, Greenwood Press, London.

ADB (2004), *Gender and Governance Issues in Local Government: Regional Report of Technical Assistance in Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan*, South Asia Regional Department, Asian Development Bank, Manila.

Agarwal, B. (1994), *A Field of One's Own: Gender and Land Rights in South Asia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Aguilar-Francis, R. (2012), *Promoting the Right to Life, Liberty and Security through Grassroots Youth Empowerment*, University of Gothenburg.

Ahmed, S. G. (1997), Local government system in Bangladesh: Empowerment, participation and development, in *Round Table on Local Government Reform, Dhaka*, Parliamentary System Council, TSC, University of Dhaka.

Ahmed, K. U. (2005), Women and politics in Bangladesh, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh (Humanities)*, *50*, 1-21.

Ahmed, T. (2010), The case of local government, in *The Daily Star, February 23*, Dhaka.

Aktar, S. (2006a), Women *Empowerment in the Local Government System in Bangladesh: A Study of the Elected Women Members of Some Selected Union Parishads*, Rajshahi University.

Aktar, S. (2006b), Women empowerment, participation and leadership in the local government system of Bangladesh: A study of the elected women members of Union Parishads (in Bengali), *Journal of Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre*, *8*(3), 32-48.

Aktar, s. (2009), problems and potentials of women empowerment in the local government system in Bangladesh, *Social Science Journal*, *15*, 42-59.

Alam, B. A. (1984), Women's participation in the local government in Bangladesh, *The Journal of Local Government*, *13*(2), 45-51.

Alamgir, M. K. (1991), *Land Reform in Bangladesh*, Centre for Social Studies, Dhaka.

Alba, A. (2000), Forward, in *Theoretical Perspectives in Gender and Development*, edited by J. L. Parpart, M. Connelly, Patricia and V. Eudine, International Development Research Center, Ottawa.

Ali, A. (2003), *Women's Participation in Local Government*, Miazee Publications, Dhaka.

Alsop, R., and N. Heinsohn (2005), Measuring empowerment in practice: Structuring analysis and framing indicators, in *Policy Research Working Paper 3510*, The World Bank, Washington, D.C.

Aminuzzaman, S. M. (2003), Strengthening the UP: Problems and prospects, in *Workshop on Local Government and Reforms: Issues and Prospects*, Bangladesh Public Administration Traning Centre, Dhaka.

Anderson, S., and M. Eswaran (2009), What determines female autonomy? Evidence from Bangladesh, *Journal of Development Economics*, *90*, 179-191.

Aner, E., and E. Bjarnegard (2001), *Unveiling Women: Factors Influencing Female Political Activism in Bangladesh*, Department of Government, University of Uppsala.

Ayeen-O-Shalish Kendra (ASK). (2011), Fatowabaji berei choleche (in *Bengali*), in *Daily Prothom Alo, February 21, 2011*, Dhaka.

Babbie, E. (2007), *The Practice of Social Research*, Wordsworth Publishing Company, London.

Bacchi, C. (2004), Policy and discourse: Challenging the construction of affirmative action as preferential treatment, *Journal of European Public Policy*, *11*(1), 128-146.

Baden, S., and H. Reeves (2000), Gender and development: Concepts and definitions, *Institute of Development Studies*, *55*: 1-38.

Ballington, J., and R. Matland (2004), Political parties and special measures: Enhancing women's participation in electoral processes, UN Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women Expert Group Meeting, New York.

Bandarage, A. (1984), Women in development: Liberalism, Marxism and Marxist feminism, *Development and Change*, *15*(4), 495-515.

Banerjee, L. H., and P. Oquist (2000), Overview, *Women's Political Participation and Good Governance: 21st Century Challenges*, UNDP, New York.

Basu, A. (2003), Gender and governance: Concept and context, in *Essays on Gender and Governance*, edited by M. Nussbaum, et al, pp. 20-58, Human Development Research Centre, UNDP, New Delhi.

Basu, K. (2006), Gender and say: A model of household behaviour with endogenously determined balance of power, *The Economic Journal*, *116(April)*, 558-580.

Basu, A. M., and K. Basu (1991), Women's economic roles and child survival: the case of India, *Health Transition Review*, *1*(1), 83-103.

Bates, L., S. Schuler, F. Islam, and K. Islam (2004), Socioeconomic factors and processes associated with domestic violence in rural Bangladesh, *International Family Planning Perspectives*, *30*(4, Gender-based violence and reproductive health), 190-199.

Batliwala, S. (1994), The meaning of women's empowerment: New concepts from action, in *Population Policies Reconsidered: Health, Empowerment, and Rights*, edited by G. Sen, A. Germain and L. C. Chen, pp. 127-138, Harvard University Press, Cambridge.

BBS (2010), *Statistical Year Book*, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Dhaka.

Beijing Platform for Action (1995), *Fourth World Conference on Women*, United Nations Development Programme.

Bennett, L. (2002), Using empowerment and social inclusion for pro-poor growth: a theory of social change, *Working Draft of Background Paper for Social Development Strategy Paper,* Washington, DC: World Bank.

Berman, H. J. (1983), *Law and Revolution: The Impact of the Protestant Reformations on the Western Legal Tradition*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge.

Blair, H. (2000), Participation and accountability at the periphery: Democratic local governance at the periphery, *World Development*, *28*(1), 21-39.

Blumberg, R. L. (1984), A general theory of gender stratification, *Sociological Theory*, *2*(23), 101.

Boserup, E. (1970), *Woman's Role in Economic Development*, George Allen and Unwin, New York.

Bourdieu, P. (1977), *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

BPSC (2013), Public Service Overview, Bangladesh Public Service Commission, http://www.bpsc.gov.bd, Dhaka.

Brody, A. (2009), *Gender and Governance: Overview Report*, BRIDGE, Institute of Development Studies, Sussex.

Brubaker, R. (1992), *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Butler, J. (1990), *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Routledge, London.

CAPWIP (2000), Women in Legislative Chambers: Asia-Pacific Region, Centre for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics, URL: http://www.capwip.org/participation/womenchambers.html.

Carr, M., M. Chan, and R. Jhabrala (1996), *Speaking Out: Women's Empowerment in South Asia*, Intermediate Technology Publications, London.

Caul, M. (1999), Women's representation in parliament: The role of political parties, *Party Politics*, *5*(1), 79-98.

CEDAW (1979), *Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women*, United Nations Development Programme.

Chafetz, J. (1984), *Sex and Advantage: A Comparative Macrostructural Theory of Sex Stratification*, Rowman and Allanheld, Totowa, New Jersey.

Chambers, R. (1983), *Rural Development: Putting the Last First*, Longman Scientific and Technical, New York.

Chambers, R. (1997), *Whose Reality Counts?: Putting the First Last*, Intermediate Technology Publications Ltd (ITP).

Chen, M. (1992), Conceptual model for women's empowerment, *International Centre for Research on Women*.

Chowdhury, N. (1985), Women in politics in Bangladesh, in *Situation of Women in Bangladesh*, edited by Q. K. Ahmed, et al, Ministry of Social Welfare and Women's Affairs, Dhaka.

Chowdhury, N. (1994a), Gender issues and politics in a patriarchy, in *Women and Politics Worldwide*, edited by B. J. Nelson and N. Chowdhury, Yale University Press, New Haven.

Chowdhury, N. (1994b), Women in politics, *Empowerment, Women for Women*, *1*, 7-60.

Chowdhury, N. (1994c), Women's participation in politics: Marginalization and related issues, in *Women and Politics*, edited by N. Chowdhury, et al, University Press Limited, Dhaka.

Chowdhury, D. (1995), Women's participation in the formal structure and decision making bodies in Bangladesh, in *Empowerment of Women: Nairobi to Beijing (1985-1995)*, edited by R. Jahan, pp. 1-28, Women For Women, Dhaka.

Chowdhury, N. (2002), Bangladesh's experience – dependence and marginality in politics, in *The Implementation of Quotas: Asian Experience,* Quota Workshops Report Series, International IDEA, Stockholm.

Chowdhury, F. (2008), *Women in Politics in Bangladesh*, Ministry of Social Welfare and Women's Affairs, Dhaka.

Chowdhury, F. D. (2009), Problems of women's participation in Bangladesh politics, *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International*

Affairs, *98*(404), 555-567.

Clough-Riquelme, J. (2007), *Gender, Citizenship, and Local Democracy in Paraguay: A Comparative Analysis of Social Power and Political Participation in the Central Region*, State University of New York, New York.

Coleman, J. S. (1988), Social capital in the creation of human capital, *American Journal of Sociology*, *94(supplement)*, 95-120.

Comision Economica (1995), *Programa de Acción Regional para las Mujeres de América Latina y el Caribe,1995-2001*, PNUD, Santiago.

Cornwall, A., and A. Shankland (2008), Engaging citizens: Lessons from building Brazil's national health system, *Social Science and Medicine*, *66*, 2173-2184.

Cornwall, A., and V. S. Coelho (2009), *Spaces for Change? The Politics of Participation in New Democratic Arenas*, Zed Books, Lodon.

Cornwall, A., and J. Gaventa (2009), From users and choosers to makers and shapers: Repositioning participation in social policy, *IDS Bulletin*.

Da Matta, R. (1987), The quest for citizenship in a relational universe, in *State and Society in Brazil: Continuity and Change*, edited by J. D. Wirth, E. Nunes and T. E. Bogenschild, pp. 307-335.

Dahlerup, D. (1998), Using quotas to increase women's political representation, in *Women in Parliaments: Beyond Numbers*, edited by A. Karam, pp. 91-106, International IDEA, Stockholm.

Dahlerup, D. (2002), Quotas—a jump to equality? The need for international comparisons of the use of electoral quotas to obtain equal political citizenship for women, in *The Implementation of Quotas: Asian Experiences*, Quota Workshops Report Series. International IDEA, Jakarta, Indonesia.

Dahlerup, D. (2006), *Women, Quotas and Politics*, Routledge, Oxon.

Dahlerup, D., and L. Freidenvall (2005), Quotas as a fast track to equal representation for women, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, *7*(1),

26-48.

D'Amico, F. (1995), Women national leaders, in *Women in World Politics: An Introduction*, edited by F. D'Amico and P. Beckman, pp. 15-30, Bergin & Garvey, London.

D'Amico, F., and P. R. Beckman (1995), Introduction, in *Women in World Politics: An Introduction*, edited by F. D'Amico and P. R. Beckman, pp. 1-14, Bergin & Garvey, London.

Darcy, R., S. Welch, and J. Clark (1987), *Women, Elections, and Representation*, Longman, New York.

Das, H. (2005), The rationale of increasing the number of women's reserved seats in the parliament and holding direct election, in *Movement Profiles of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad Report 1996-2002*, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, Dhaka.

De Beauvoir, S. (1949), *The Second Sex*, Trans & Ed. HM Parshley, Paris, London.

Democracy Watch (2002), *Assessing Training Programmes for the Female Members of the UP*, Democracy Watch, Dhaka.

Denzin, N. K., and Y. S. Lincoln (2000), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Sage Publications, California.

Deshmukh-Ranadive, J. (2005), Gender, power, and empowerment: An analysis of household and family dynamics, in *Measuring Empowerment: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives*, edited by D. Narayan, pp. 103-122, The World Bank, Washington, D.C.

Diener, E., and R. Biswas-Diener (2005), Psychological empowerment and subjective well-being, in *Measuring Empowerment: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives*, edited by D. Narayan, pp. 125-140, The World Bank, Washington, D.C.

DiMaggio, P. J., and W. W. Powell (1983), The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields, *American Sociological Review*, 147-160.

Dixon, R. B. (1978), *Rural Women at Work: Strategies for Development in South Asia*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.

Douglas, M. (1982), *In the Active Voice*, Routledge & Kegan Paul London.

Dowell, S., and L. Hurcombe (1981), *Disposed Daughters of Eve: Faith and Feminism*, SCM Press, London.

Dreze, J., and A. Sen (1999), *India: Economic Development and Social Opportunity*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

Dyson, T., and M. Moore (1983), On kinship structure, female autonomy, and demographic behavior in India, *Population and Development Review*, *9*(1), 35-60.

Eagly, e. a. (1995), Gender and effectiveness of leaders: A Meta analysis, *Psychological Bulletin*, *117*, 125-145.

Economist, T. (2008), Quota for women?, in *The Economist, 8 July*, New York.

Eisenstadt, S. N., and L. Roniger (1980), Patron-client relations as a model of structuring social exchange, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, *22*(1), 42-77.

Ellick, A. (2012), Small video star, in *The New York Times, 9 October 2012,* http://www.nytimes.com/video/2012/10/09/world/asia/100000001835296/class-dismissed.html, New York.

Eschle, C. (2001), *Global Democracy, Social Movements, and Feminism*, Westview Press Inc.

Eulau, H. (1962), Recollections, in *The Legislative System: Explorations in Legislative Behavior*, edited by J. C. Wahlke, et-al, pp. 121-140, John Wiley and Sons, New York.

European Network of Experts (1997), *Women in Decision-Making*, European Network of Experts, European Commission on Anti-Discrimination, Luxembourg.

Evertzen, A. (2001), *Gender and Local Governance*, Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV), The Hague.

Falguni, A. (1995), *Women's Political Empowerment: Bangladesh Perspective*, Unnayan Padokkhep, Step Towards Development, Dhaka.

Family Violence Professional Education Taskforce (1991), *Family Violence: Everybody's Business, Somebody'sLlife*, Family Violence Professional Education Taskforce, The Federation Press, Sydney.

Festinger, L. (1957), *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA.

Firoj, J. (2007), *Women in Bangladesh Parliament*, AH Development Publishing House, Dhaka.

Flora, C. B., and N. B. Lynn (1974), Women and political socialization: Considers of the impact of motherhood, in *Women in Politics*, edited by J. S. Jaquette, pp. 37-53, John Wiley & Sons, New York.

Flyvbjerg, B. (1998), *Rationality and Power: Democracy in Practice*, The University of Chicago.

Foucault, M. (1984), The regard for truth, *Art and Text*, *16*, 31.

Foucault, M. (1989), *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Routledge, London.

Frankl, E. (2004), *Quota as Empowerment: The Use of Reserved Seats in Union Parishad as an Instrument for Women's Political Empowerment in Bangladesh*, Department of Political Science, Stockholm University, Stockholm.

Friedmann, J. (1992), *Empowerment: The Politics of Alternative Development*, Blackwell.

Fulton, F. (2008), *Women's Participation in Decentralised Government: Panchayat Raj Institutions in Rural Rajasthan*, India, Saint Mary's University.

Gage, A. J. (1995), Women's socioeconomic position and contraceptive behavior in Togo, *Studies in Family Planning*, 264-277.

Garner, J. W. (1985), *Introduction to Political Science*, Pearl Publishers, Delhi.

Gaventa, J. (2002), Towards participatory local governance: Six propositions for

discussion, *Currents*, *28*(August), 29-35.

Gaventa, J., and C. Valderrama (1999), Participation, citizenship and local governance, in *Strengthening Participation in Local Governance, IDS, Sussex*, IDS, Sussex, Institute of Development Studies.

Gaventa, J., and A. Cornwall (2001), Power and Knowledge, *The Sage Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*, 70.

Gaventa, J., and A. Cornwall (2006), Challenging the boundaries of the possible: Participation, knowledge and power, *IDS Bulletin*, *37*(6), 122-128.

Gaventa, J., and G. Barrett (2010), *So What Difference Does It Make? Mapping the Outcomes of Citizen Engagement*, Institute of Development Studies, Sussex.

Getz, V. (2005), *Gateways and Gatekeepers: Empowerment Through Reservation: The Experience of Elected Women Representatives in Kerala, India Panchayats*, Washington State University.

Giddens, A. (1994), *Beyond the Left and Right*, Stanford University Press, Stanford.

Glaeser, E., D. Laibson, and B. Sacerdote (2002), An economic approach to social capital, *The Economic Journal*, *112*(483), F437-458.

GoB (2008), *Constitution of Bangladesh*, Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of Bangladesh, Dhaka.

Goetz, A. M. (1995), The politics of integrating gender to state development process: trends, opportunities and constraints in Bangladesh, Chile, Jamaica, Mali, Morocco and Uganda, in *Occasional Paper*, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), Geneva.

Goetz, A. M. (2004), *Decentralization and Gender Equality, Striving for Gender Equality in an Unequal World*, United Nations Development Programme, Washington.

Goetz, A. M. (2009), Gender and administration, *IDS Bulletin*, *23*(4), 6-17.

Goswami, A. K. (1999), Empowerment of women in Bangladesh, *Women for*

Women, *5*, 45-74.

Gray, M., M. C. Kittilson, and W. Sandholtz (2006), Women and globalization: A study of 180 countries, 1975-2000, *International Organization*, *60*, 293-333.

Greenberg, M., M. Della, N. Branca, and O. Julia (1997), *Angola's Reconstruction and Its Political Institutions and Processes*, USAID WIDTECH, Washington, D.C.

Grey, S. (2002), Does size matter? Critical mass and New Zealand's women MPs, *Parliamentary Affairs*, *55*(1), 19-29.

Grugel, J., and N. Piper (2007), *Critical Perspectives on Global Governance: Rights and Regulation in Governing Regimes*, Routledge, London.

Guerin, B. (1986), Mere presence effects in humans: A review, *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *22*, 38-77.

Guhathakurta, M., and S. Begum (1995), Women's participation in the formal structure and decision making bodies in Bangladesh, in *Empowerment of Women: Nairobi to Beijing (1985-1995)*, edited by R. Jahan, pp. 29-45, Women For Women, Dhaka.

Gurumurthy, A. (1998), *Women's Rights and Status: Questions of Analysis and Measurement*, UNDP Monograph Series No. 7, http://www.undp.org/gender/resources/mono7.html, Washington.

Halder, N. (2002), *Effective Representation of Women Legislators in Parliaments: A Case Study of New Zealand in Theoretical and Global Perspectives*, Canterbury University, New Zealand.

Halder, N. (2004), Female representation in parliament: A case study from Bangladesh, *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*, *6*, 27-63.

Hall, C. M. (1992), *Women and Empowerment: Strategies for Increasing Autonomy*, Hemisphere Publishing Corporation, London.

Hall, P. A., and R. C. R. Taylor (2006), Political science and the three new institutionalisms, *Political Studies*, *44*(5), 936-957.

Hamid, S. (1996), *Why Women Count: Essays on Women in Development in Bangladesh*, University Press Limited, Dhaka.

Haque, M. S. (2000), Female representation in parliament: A case study from Bangladesh, *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*, *6*(1), 59-87.

Haque, M. S. (2003), Citizen participation in governance through representation: Issue of gender in East Asia, *International Journal of Public Administration*, *26*(5), 569-590.

Harding, S. (1995), Can feminist thoughts make economics more objective, *Feminist Economics*, *1*(1), 7-32.

Haynes, J. (1996), *Third World Politics: A Concise Introduction*, Blackwell, Oxford.

HDR (1990), *Human Development Report*, United Nations Development Programme, New York.

HDR (2010), *Human Development Report: The Real Wealth of Nations, Pathways to Human Development,* United Nations Development Programme, New York.

Henn, M., M. Weinstein, and D. Wring (2002), A generation apart? Youth and political participation in Britain, *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, *4*(2), 167-192.

Holmstrom, N. (1997), Do women have a distinct nature?, in *Key Concepts in Critical Theory: Gender*, edited by C. C. Gould, pp. 56-65, Humanities Press, New Jersey.

Hossain, M. I., and C. A. Tisdell (2005), Closing the gender gap in Bangladesh: Inequality in education, employment and earnings, *International Journal of Social Economics*, *32*(5), 429-435.

Hossen, M. I. (2004), Women empowerment in the household level and initiatives of the NGOs: An analysis (in Bengali), *Empowerment*, *6*, 1-20.

Huda, K., S. Rahman, and C. Guirguis (2008), Social capital and what it represents: the experience of the ultra-poor in Bangladesh, *Journal of Power*, *1*(3), 295-315.

Hughes, M. M. (2007), Windows of political opportunity: Institutional instability and gender inequality in the world's national legislatures, *International Journal of Sociology*, *37*(4), 26-51.

Hughes, M. M. (2008), *Politics at the Intersection: A Cross-National Analysis of Minority Women's Legislative Representation*, Ohio State University.

Huq, S. (2010), Negotiating Islam: Conservatism, splintered authority and empowerment in urban Bangladesh, *IDS Bulletin*, *41*(2), 97-106.

Huq, J., S. Khaleda, and A. Hamida (1997), *Beijing Process and Follow-Up: Bangladesh Perspective*, Women For Women, Dhaka.

Huque, A. S., and M. Y. Akhter (1987), The ubiquity of Islam: Religion and society in Bangladesh, *Pacific Affairs*, *60*(2), 200-225.

Hussain, S., and N. Siddiqi (2002), Women's political rights: Bangladesh perspective, in *State of Human Rights in Bangladesh: Women's Perspective*, edited by K. Salahuddin, pp. 111-130, Women For Women, Dhaka.

IDEA (2013), *Quota Project: Global Database of Quotas for Women*, http://www.quotaproject.org/aboutQuotas.cfm, cite visited 17 January 2013.

Idrus, N. (2012), Reality or rhetoric? *Inside Indonesia,* 109: July-September, http://www.insideindonesia.org/?option=com_content&view=articl

Inglehart, R., and P. Norris (2003), *Rising Tide: Gender Equality and Cultural Change*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Inter-American Development Bank (2010), *Operational Policy on Gender Equality in Development*, Inter-American Development Bank, Washington.

Islam, M. (2000), Political empowerment in Bangladesh in world perspective: An analysis, *Rajshahi University Studies, Part-C, 8*, 95-119.

Islam, F. (2001), *State of Women in Urban Local Government, Bangladesh*, UNESCAP and Jahangirnagar University.

Islam, M. (2003), Women in power and decision making, in *Role of NGO in Effective Implementation of PFA and CEDAW in Bangladesh*, edited by S. Khan, NGO Coalition on Beijing Plus Five, Dhaka.

James, C., and F. T. Trail (1995), Empowerment of rural women in India through literacy education, *Journal of Agricultural and Extension Education*, *2*(2), 18-27.

Janssens, W. (2010), Women's empowerment and the creation of social capital in Indian villages, *World Development*, *38*(7), 974-988.

Jaquette, J. S. (1997), Women in power: From tokenism to critical mass, *Foreign Policy*, 23-37.

Jayal, N. G. (2006), Engendering local democracy: The impact of quotas for women in Indian panchayats, *Democratization*, *13*(1), 13-35.

Jejeebhoy, S. J. (2000), Women's autonomy in rural India: Its dimensions, determinants, and the influence of context, in *Women's Empowerment and Demographic Processes: Moving Beyond Cairo*, edited by H. Presser and G. Sen, Oxford University Press, New York.

Jejeebhoy, S. J., and Z. A. Sathar (2001), Women's autonomy in India and Pakistan: The influence of religion and region, *Population and Development Review*, *27*(4), 687-712.

Jennings, L. B., D. M. Parra-Medina, D. K. Hilfinger-Messias, R. N. McLoughlin, and M. A. Kerry (2006), Toward a critical social theory of youth empowerment, *Journal of Community Practice*, *14*(1-2), 31-55.

Jones, K. B. (1988), Towards the revision of politics, in *The Political Interests of Gender: Developing Theory and Research with a Feminist Face*, edited by K. B. Jones and A. G. Jonasdottir, pp. 11-32, Sage Publications, London.

Kabeer, N. (1994), *Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought*, Verso Books.

Kabeer, N. (1998), 'Money can't buy me love'? Re-evaluating gender, credit and empowerment in rural Bangladesh, *Discussion Paper,* Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex.

Kabeer, N. (1999), *The Conditions and Consequences of Choice: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment*, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, Geneva.

Kabeer, N. (2001), Conflicts over credit: re-evaluating the empowerment potential of loans to women in rural Bangladesh, *World Development*, *29*(1), 63-84.

Kabeer, N. (2001), Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment, in *Discussing Women's Empowerment-Theory and Practice, SIDA Studies No.3*, Novum Grafiska, Stockholm.

Kabeer, N. (2002), Resources, agency, achievements: Reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment, *Development and Change*, *30*(3), 435-464.

Kabeer, N. (2003), *Gender Mainstreaming in Poverty Eradication and the Millennium Development Goals: A Handbook for Policy-Makers and Other Stakeholders*, Commonwealth Secretarial.

Kabeer, N. (2005), Gender equality and women's empowerment: A critical analysis of the third Millennium Development Goal, *Gender and Development*, *13*(1), 13-24.

Kabeer, N. (2011), Between affiliation and autonomy: Navigating pathways of women's empowerment and gender justice in rural Bangladesh, *Development and Change*, *42*(2), 499-528.

Kabeer, N. (2012a), *Women's Economic Empowerment and Inclusive Growth: Labour Markets and Enterprise Development*, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

Kabeer, N. (2012b), Empowerment, citizenship and gender justice: A contribution to locally grounded theories of change in women's lives, *Ethics and Social Welfare*, *6*(3), 216-232.

Kabeer, N., and R. Subrahmanian (1996), Institutions, relations and outcomes: Framework and tools for gender-aware planning, *IDS Discussion Paper 357*, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton.

Kabir, A. H. M. (2002), Outlawing unauthorized fatwa through judicial activism, *Interventions*, *4*(2), 224-227.

Kaiser, P. (2001), *Strategic Predictors of Women's Parliamentary Participation: A Comparative Study of Twenty-Three Democracies*, PhD thesis, University

of California, Los Angeles.

Kaku, S. (2001), Family, gender and organization in East Asia, in *Asian Development Center Seminar Series*, Lieden University, Netherlands.

Kandiyoti, D. (1988), Bargaining with patriarchy, *Gender and Society*, 2(3), 274-290.

Kantor, P. (2003), Women's empowerment through home based work: Evidence from India, *Development and Change*, 34(3), 425-445.

Karl, M. (1995), *Women and Empowerment, Participation and Decision Making*, Zed Books, London.

Kenworthy, L., and M. Malami (1999), Gender inequality in political representation: A worldwide comparative analysis, *Social Forces*, 78(1), 235-268.

Khan, M. H. (1998), Patron-client networks and the economic effects of corruption in Asia, *European Journal of Development Research*, 10(1), 15-39.

Khan, F. (2005), Gender violence and development discourse in Bangladesh, *International Social Science Journal, 57*(184): 219-30.

Khan, Z. R., and A. Mohsin (2008), Women's empowerment through local governance: Emerging issues and debates, in *Pathways of Women's Empowerment: RPC Mid Term Review Conference*, Cairo.

Khan, Z., M. Rahman, and M. Huq (1995), Women and politics: The empowerment issues, in *Workshop Report, Empowerment: Voice of Grassroot in Bangladesh*, Women For Women, Dhaka.

Kirkpatrick, J. J. (1974), *Political Woman*, Basic Books Inc., New York.

Kirkpatrick, J. J. (1995), In their own words, in *Women in World Politics: An Introduction*, edited by F. D'Amico and P. R. Beckman, pp. 105-118, Bergin & Garvey, London.

Kishor, S. (2000), Empowerment of women in Egypt and links to the survival and health of their infants, in *Women's Empowerment and Demographic*

Processes: Moving Beyond Cairo, edited by H. Presser and G. Sen, Oxford University Press, New York.

Kishwar, M. (1996), Out of the zenana dabba: Strategies for enhancing women's political representation, *Manushi*, *96*((September-October)), 21-30.

Kishwar, M. (1996), Women's marginal role in politics, *Manushi*, *97*(November-December), 9-21.

Knight, J. (1992), *Institutions and Social Conflict*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Koggel, C. (2005), Globalization and women's paid work: Expanding freedom? in *Amartya Sen's Work and Ideas: A Gender Perspective*, edited by B. Agarwal, J. Humphries and I. Robeyns, pp. 165-85, London & New York.

Kothari, C. R. (2005), *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques*, Vishwa Prakashan, New Delhi.

Krook, M. L. (2003), Get the balance right! Global and transnational campaigns to promote gender-balanced decision-making, paper presented at *International Studies Association Annual Convention*.

Krook, M. L. (2004), Gender quotas as a global phenomenon: Actors and strategies in quota adoption, *European Political Science*, *3*(3), 59-65.

Krook, M. L. (2005), *Politicizing Representation: Campaigns for Candidate Gender Quotas Worldwide*, Columbia University, New York.

Krook, M. L. (2006), Reforming representation: The diffusion of candidate gender quotas worldwide, *Politics & Gender*, *2*(3), 303-327.

Krook, M. L. (2007), Candidate gender quotas: A framework for analysis, *European Journal of Political Research*, *46*(3), 367-394.

Krook, M. L. (2009), *Quotas for Women in Politics: Gender and Candidate Selection Reform Worldwide*, Oxford University Press, New York, London.

Kunovich, S., and P. Paxton (2005), Pathways to power: The role of political parties in women's national political representation, *American Journal of Sociology*, *111*(2), 505-552.

Lerner, G. (1987), *The Creation of Patriarchy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Lindberg, S. (2004), Women's empowerment and democratization: The Effects of electoral systems, participation and experiences in Africa, *Studies in Comparative International Development*, *39*(1), 28-53.

Lister, R. (1997), *Citizenship: Feminist Perspective*, McMillan, London.

Lister, R. (1998), Citizen in action: Citizenship and community development in a Southern Ireland context, *Community Development Journal*, *33*(3), 226-235.

Lister, R. (2012), Citizenship and gender, in *The Willey Blackwell Companion to Political Sociology*, edited by E. Amenta, K. Nash and A. Scott, pp. 372-382, London.

Loewenberg, G., and S. C. Patterson (1979), *Comparing Legislatures*, Little Brown, Boston.

Lovenduski, J., and P. Norris (1993), *Gender and Party Politics*, Sage Publications, Newbury Park, CA.

Lovenduski, J., and P. Norris (1995), *Political Recruitment: Gender, Race and Class in the British Parliament*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

MacLean, M. (2003), Developing a research agenda on the gender dimensions of decentralisation, in *Background Paper for the IDRC 2003 Gender Unit Research Competition*, IDRC.

Magnusson, W. (1996), *The Search for Political Space*, University of Toronto Press, Canada. , Toronto.

Mahmud, S., N. Shah, and S. Becker (2012), Measurement of women's empowerment in rural Bangladesh, *World Development, 40*(3): 610-19.

Mahoney, J. (2000), Path dependence in historical sociology, *Theory and Society*, *29*(4), 507-548.

Mahtab, N. (2000), Women in politics: Bangladesh perspective, in *National Seminar on Women in Politics*, British Council, Dhaka.

Mahtab, N. (2007), *Women in Bangladesh: From Inequality to Empowerment*, AH Development Publishing House, Dhaka.

Malhotra, A., and S. Schuler (2005), Women's empowerment as a variable in international development, in *Measuring Empowerment: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives*, edited by D. Narayan, pp. 71-88, The World Bank, Washington, D.C.

Malhotra, A., S. Schuler, and C. Boender (2002), Measuring women's empowerment as a variable in international development, *Background Paper, World Bank Workshop on Poverty and Gender*, Washington, DC.

March, J. G., and J. P. Olsen (1984), The new institutionalism: Organizational factors in political life, *The American Political Science Review*, 734-749.

March, J. G., and J. P. Olsen (1989), *Rediscovering Institutions: The organizational Basis of Politics*, Simon and Schuster, New York.

March, J. G., and J. P. Olsen (1993), *Institutional Perspectives on Governance*, Bergen: Lossenter. Notat 93/15.

March, J. G., and J. P. Olsen (1995), *Democratic Governance*, Free Press, New York.

March, C., I. Smyth, and M. Mukhopadhyay (2000), *A Guide to Gender-Analysis Frameworks*, Oxfam, London.

Marshall, T. H. (1950), *Citizenship and Social Class*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Marshall, J. (2009), *Substantive Representation of Women and Its Consequences: The Passage of a Gender-Based-Violence Law in Rwanda*, MA Thesis, Duquesne University.

Marshall, T. H. (1965), *Class, Citizenship and Social Development: Essays by T.H. Marshall*, Doubleday & Co., Inc., Garden City, New York.

Mason, K. (1984), *The Status of Women: A Review of Its Relationships to Fertility and Mortality*, Rockefeller Foundation, New York.

Mason, K. O. (1998), Wives' economic decision-making power in the family in five Asian countries, in *The Changing Family in Comparative Perspective: Asia and the United States*, edited by K. O. Mason, East-West Center, Honolulu.

Mason, K. O., and H. L. Smith (2000), Husbands' versus wives' fertility goals and use of contraception: The influence of gender context in five Asian countries, *Demography*, *37*(3), 299-311.

Matland, R. E. (1993), Institutional variables affecting female representation in national legislatures: The case of Norway, *Journal of Politics*, *55*(3), 737-755.

Matland, R. (1998), Women's representation in national legislatures: Developed and developing countries, *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, *23*(1), 109-125.

Matland, R. E., and M. M. Taylor (1997), Electoral system effects on women's representation theoretical arguments and evidence from Costa Rica, *Comparative Political Studies*, *30*(2), 186-210.

Matland, R., and K. Montgomery (2003), *Women's Access to Political Power in Post-Communist Europe*, Oxford University Press, USA.

Mayoux, L. (2000), *Poverty Elimination and the Empowerment of Women*, Target Strategy, London.

McAllister, I., and D. T. Studlar (2002), Electoral systems and women's representation: a long-term perspective, *Representation*, *39*(1), 3-14.

McDonagh, E. (2002), Political citizenship and democratization: The gender paradox, *American Political Science Review*, *96*(3), 535-552.

McEwan, C. (2005), New spaces of citizenship? Rethinking gendered participation and empowerment in South Africa, *Political Geography*, *24*(8), 969-991.

Meer, S., C. Sever, and M. Mukhopadhyay (2004), *Gender and Citizenship*, BRIDGE, London.

Meer, S., and C. Sever (2004), *Gender and Citizenship*, BRIDGE, http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/reports/Citizenship-report-w2.doc.

Miki, C. (1999), Women's representation in parliament: The role of political parties, *Party Politics*, *5*(1), 79-98.

Miki, C. (2001), Political parties and the adoption of candidate gender quotas: A

cross-national analysis, *Journal of Politics*, *63*(4), 1214-1229.

Mill, J. S. (1861), *On liberty and considerations on representative government*, Everyman, London.

Miller, V. (1999), *Education for Women's Empowerment*, Women-Power List Archive.

Miragliotta, N., and W. Errington (2008), Occupational profile of ALP, LP and National MHRs 1949-2007: From divergence to convergence, in *Australian Political Studies Association Conference*, Brisbane.

Mishra-Panda, S. (2008), Engendering governance institutions: An introduction, in *Engendering Governance Institutions: State, Market and Civil Society*, edited by S. Mishra-Panda, Sage Publishers, London.

Moin, J. (2004), *Women Empowerment in Local Government System of Bangladesh*, Rajshahi University, Rajshahi.

Moller, H. (1968), Youth as a force in the modern world, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, *10*(3), 237-260.

Molyneux, M. (1985), Mobilization without emancipation? Women's interests, the state, and revolution in Nicaragua, *Feminist Studies*, 227-254.

Moore, G., and G. Shackman (1996), Gender and authority: A cross-national study, *Social Science Quarterly*, *77*(2), 273-288.

Moser, C. O. (1989), Gender planning in the third world: Meeting practical and strategic gender needs, *World Development*, *17*(11), 1799-1825.

Moser, C. (1993), *Gender Planning in Development: Theory, Practice and Training*, Routledge, London.

Moser, C. (2000), *Violence in Colombia: Building Sustainable Peace and Social Capital*, World Bank.

Moser, C. (2010), Safety, gender mainstreaming and gender-based programmes, in *Women in the City: On Violence and Rights*, edited by A. Falu, pp. 77-95, Women and Habitat Network of Latin America, Chile.

Moser, C., and A. Moser (2003), Gender-based violence: A serious development

constraint, *Background Paper*, Gender Unit, World Bank, Washington DC.

Moser, C., and A. Moser (2005), Gender mainstreaming since Beijing: A review of success and limitations in international institutions, *Gender and Development*, *13*(2), 11-22.

Mouffe, C. (1992), Feminism, citizenship and radical democratic politics, in *Feminists Theorise the Political*, edited by J. W. Scott, Routledge, London, New York.

Mukhopadhyay, M. (2003), Creating citizens who demand just governance: Gender and development in the twenty-first century, *Gender and Development*, *11*(3).

Mukhopadhyay, M. (2005), *Decentralisation and Gender Equity in South Asia: An Issues Paper*, The International Development Research Centre, Canada.

Mukhopadhyay, M., and S. Meer (2004), *Creating Voice and Carving Space: Redefining Governance from a Gender Perspective*, Royal Tropical Institute (KIT), The Netherlands.

Murshid, T. M. (2004), *Women, Islam and the State in Bangladesh: Subordination and Resistance*, www.medmedia.org/bangla/documenti/le_link4_dirittiReligiosi.html.

Murthy, R. (2001), Lessons in capacity building for women's empowerment, in *Building Women's Capacities*, edited by R. Murthy, Sage Publications, London.

Nanivadekar, M. (2003), Women's quota in urban local government: A cross-national comparison, in *International Seminar*, Centre for Social Sciences, French Embassy, New Delhi.

Narayan, D. (Ed.) (2002), *Empowerment and Poverty Reduction*, World Bank, Washington.

Narayan, D. (2005), *Measuring Empowerment: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives*, The World Bank, Washington, D.C.

Narayan, D., R. Chambers, M. Shah, and P. Petesch (2000a), *Voices of the Poor: Crying Out for Change*, World Bank, Oxford University Press, New York.

Narayan, D., R. Patel, K. Schafft, A. Rademacher, and S. Koch-Schulte (2000b), *Voices of the Poor: Can Anyone Hear Us?* World Bank, New York, Oxford University Press.

Nath, J. (1981), Beliefs and customs observed by Muslim rural women during their life cycle, in *The Endless Day*, edited by T. S. Epstein and R. A. Watts, pp. 13-28, Pergamon, Oxford.

Naved, R., and L. Persson (2005), Factors associated with spousal physical violence against women in Bangladesh, *Studies in Family Planning*, *36*(4), 289-300.

Naz, F. (2006), *Pathways to Women's Empowerment in Bangladesh*, AH Development Publishing House, Dhaka.

Nazneen, S., and S. Tasneem (2010), A silver lining: Women in reserved seats in local government in Bangladesh, *IDS Bulletin*, *41*(5), 35-42.

Niven, D. (2010), Party elites and women candidates: The shape of bias, in *Gender Power, Leadership and Governance: A Reader*, edited by M. L. Krook and S. Child, pp. 151-158, Oxford University Press, New York.

Norrander, B., and C. Wilcox (2005), Change and continuity in the geography of women state legislators, in *Women and Elective Office: Past, Present and Future*, edited by S. Thomas and C. Wilcox, pp. 176-196, Oxford University Press, 2nd edition, Oxford.

Norris, P. (1985), Women's legislative participation in western Europe, *West European Politics*, *8*, 90-101.

Norris, P. (1997), Conclusion: Comparing passages to power, in *Passages to Power: Legislative Recruitment in Advanced Democracies*, edited by P. Norris, pp. 209-231, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Norris, P., and R. Inglehart (2001), Cultural obstacles to equal representation, *Journal of Democracy*, *12*(3), 126-140.

Norris, P., and R. Inglehart (2004), *Cultural Barriers to Women's Leadership: A Worldwide Comparison*, Harvard University Press, Massachussets.

North, D. C. (1990), *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic*

Performance, Cambridge university press, Cambridge.

Nussbaum, M. (1999), *Sex and Social Justice*, Oxford University Press, New York.

Nussbaum, M. (1999), Women and equality: The capabilities approach, *International Labour Review*, *138*(3), 227-245.

Nussbaum, M. (2000), *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Nussbaum, M. (2003), Capabilities as fundamental entitlements: Sen and social justice, *Feminist Economics*, *9*(2-3), 33-59.

Nussbaum, M. (2005), Capabilities as fundamental entitlements: Sen and social justice, in *Amartya Sen's Work and Ideas*, edited by B. Agarwal, J. Humphries and I. Robeyns, pp. 35-62, Routledge, London and New York.

Nussbaum, M. (2007), Human rights and human capabilities, *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, *20*, 20-24.

Nussbaum, M. (2011), *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*, Chicago University Press, Chicago.

Okin, S. M. (1991), Gender, the public and the private, in *Political Theory Today*, edited by D. Held, pp. 67-90, Polity Press, Cambridge.

O'Neill, B. (2007), Indifferent or just different? The political and civic engagement of young people in Canada, *Canadian Policy Research Network, June*.

Ostrom, E. (1990), *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Panday, P. (2008a), *Women's Political Participation in Bangladesh: Institutional Reforms and Actors*, City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong.

Panday, P. (2008b), Representation without participation: Quotas for women in Bangladesh, *International Political Science Review*, *29*(4), 489-512.

Panday, P. (2011), Local government system in Bangladesh: How far is it decentralised? *Lex Localis-Journal of Local Self-Government*, *9*(3), 205-

230.

Parpart, J. L., M. Connelly, Patricia, and E. Barriteau (2000), *Theoretical Perspectives on Gender and Development*, International Development Research, Ottawa.

Parveen, S., and I. Leonhouser (2004), Empowerment of rural women in Bangladesh: A threshold level analysis, in *Rural Poverty Reduction Through Research for Development and Transformation,* Deutscher Tropentag, Berlin.

Paskeviciute, A. (2001), Party system fragmentation and women's parliamentary representation in western democracy, in *European Consortium for Political Research General Conference*, University of Kent, Canterbury, UK, September 6-8.

Patterson, S. C. (1995), Legislative institutions and institutionalism in the United States, *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, *1*(4), 10-29.

Patterson, S. C., and G. W. Copeland (1994), Parliaments in the twenty-first century, in *Parliaments in the Modern World: Changing Institutions*, edited by S. C. Patterson and G. W. Copeland, pp. 1-11, The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor.

Paxton, P. (1997), Women in national legislatures: A cross-national analysis, *Social Science Research*, *26*(4), 442-464.

Paxton, P., and S. Kunovich (2003), Women's political representation: The importance of ideology, *Social Forces*, *82*(1), 87-113.

Paxton, P., M. M. Hughes, and J. L. Green (2006), The international women's movement and women's political representation, 1893–2003, *American Sociological Review*, *71*(6), 898-920.

Paxton, P., S. Kunovich, and M. Hughes (2007), Gender in politics, *Annual Review of Sociology*, *33*, 263 – 284.

Paxton, P., M. Painter, and M. Hughes (2008), *Year of the Woman, Decade of the Man: Trajectories of Growth in Women's Statehouse Representation*, Unpublished Manuscript, The Ohio State University.

Pearson, R., and C. Jackson (1998), Introduction: Interrogating development, in *Feminist Visions of Development: Gender Analysis and Policy.* , edited by C. Jackson and R. Pearson, Routledge, London.

Pearson, R., A. Whitehead, and K. Young (1984), Introduction: the continuing subordination of women in the development process, in *Of Marriage and the Market: Women's Subordination Internationally and Its Lessons*, edited by K. Young, C. Wolkowitz and R. McCullagh, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.

Peters, B. G. (1999), *Institutional Theory in Political Science*, Printer, London, New York.

Phillips, A. (1991), *Engendering Democracy*, University Park: Penn State University Press.

Phillips, A. (1995), *The Politics of Presence*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

Phillips, A. (1998), *Feminism and Politics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford

Porter, M., and E. R. Judd (1999), *Feminists Doing Development: A Practical Critique*, Zed Books, New York.

Prebisch, R. (1950), *The Economic Development of Latin America and Its Principal Problems*, United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs, New York.

Price, J. (1992), *Women's Development: Welfare Project or Political Empowerment?* Amsterdam Conference Mimeo.

Pringle, R., and S. Watson (1996), Feminist theory and the state: Needs, rights, and interests, in *Gender, Politics and Citizenship in the 1990s*, edited by B. Sullivan and G. Whitehouse, pp. 64-78, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney.

Putnam, R. (1976), *The Comparative Study of Political Elites*, Prentice-Hall Inc, New Jersey.

Putnam, R. (1993), *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey.

Qadir, R. S. (2004), Participation of women at the local level politics: Problems and prospects, in *Women and Politics*, edited by N. Chowdhury, Women for Women, Dhaka.

Quddus, M. A., S. A. Begum, S. Zahid, and T. Biswas (2001), *Participation of Women in Local Government Institution*, Bangladesh Academy of Rural Development, Comilla.

Rahman, M., and M. K. Roy (2004), Participation of women in rural local government: A socio-economic analysis, in *Bangladesh in the 21st Century: The Political Economy Perspective*, the XV biennial conference, Bangladesh Economic Association, Dhaka.

Rahman, M., and N. Zaman (2004), Politics and local self government in Bangladesh: The historical perspective, *Social Science Journal*, *9*, 31-49.

Rahman, L., and V. Rao (2005), The determinants of gender equity in India: Examining Dyson and Moore's thesis with new data, *Population and Development Review*, *30*(2), 239-268.

Rahman, M., M. A. Haque, and S. Makinoda (2011), Intimate partner violence against women: Is women empowerment a reducing factor? A study from a national Bangladeshi sample, *Journal of Family Violence*, *26*, 411-420.

Rai, S. M. (2002), *Gender and the Political Economy of Development: From Nationalism to Globalization*, Polity Press Cambridge.

Rai, S., and G. Waylen (2008), Introduction: Feminist perspectives on analysis and transforming global governance, in *Global Governance: Feminist Perspectives*, edited by S. Rai and G. Waylen.

Rashiduzzaman, M. (1997), The dichotomy of Islam and development: NGOs, women's development and fatwa in Bangladesh, *Contemporary South Asia*, *6*(3), 239-246.

Ravallion, M., and S. Chen (2003), Measuring pro-poor growth, *Economics Letters*, *78*(1), 93-99.

Reddock, R. (2000), Why Gender? Why Development?, in *Theoretical Perspectives in Gender and Development*, edited by J. L. Parpart, M.

Connelly, Patricia and V. Eudine, International Development Research Center, Ottawa.

Reynolds, A. (1999), Women in the legislatures and executives of the world: Knocking at the highest glasss ceiling, *World Politics*, *51*(4), 547-572.

Riaz, A. (2005), *Traditional Institutions as Tools of Political Islam in Bangladesh*, Sage Publishers, London.

Ridgeway, C., C. Johnson, and D. Diekema (1994), External status, legitimacy, and compliance in male and female groups, *Social Forces*, *72*, 1051-1077.

Roberts, M. (2001), *Non-Governmental Organizations and Rural Development in Uganda*, Bergen University.

Robeyns, I. (2001), Sen's capability approach and feminist concerns, paper presented at the conference, *Justice and Poverty: Examining Sen's Capability Approach*, Cambridge, June 5-7.

Robeyns, I. (2005), Sen's capability approach and gender inequality: Selecting relevant capabilities, in *Amartya Sen's Work and Ideas: A Gender Perspective*, edited by B. Agarwal, J. Humphries and I. Robeyns, pp. 63-94, London & New York.

Rondinelli, D., and G. S. Cheema (1983), *Decentralization and Development: Policy Implementation in Developing Countries*, Sage Publications, New Delhi.

Rosaldo, M. (1974), Women, culture and society: A theoretical overview, in *Woman, Culture and Society*, edited by M. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere, Stanford University Press, Stanford.

Roskin, M., R. l. Cord, J. Medeiros, and W. Jones (2007), *Political Science: An Introduction*, Pearson Prentice Hall, New York.

Ross, C., and J. Mirowsky (1984), Socially-desirable response and acquiescence in a cross-cultural survey of mental health, *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour*, *25*(2), 189-197.

Rowlands, J. (1995), Empowerment examined, *Development in Practice*, *5*(2), 101-107.

Rowlands, J. (1997), *Questioning Empowerment: Working with Women in Hondurans*, Oxfam, UK.

Rozario, S. (2006), The new burqa in Bangladesh: Empowerment or violation of women's rights? *Women's Studies International Forum*, *29*, 368-380.

Rule, W. (1987), Electoral systems, contextual factors and women's opportunity for election to parliament in twenty-three democracies, *Political Research Quarterly*, *40*(3), 477-498.

Rule, W., and J. F. Zimmerman (1994), *Electoral Systems in Comparative Perspective: Their Impact on Women and Minorities*, Greenwood Publishing Group, Westport, CT.

Runciman, W. G. (1966), *Relative Deprivation and Social Justice: A Study of Attitudes to Social Inequality in Twentieth-century England*, University of California Press.

Salahuddin, K. (1995), Women's political participation in Bangladesh, in *Women in Politics and Bureaucracy*, edited by J. Huq, Women For Women, Dhaka.

Sapiro, V. (1983), *The Political Integration of Women: Roles, Socialization, and Politics*, University of Illinois Press Urbana, IL.

Sathar, Z. A., and S. Kazi (2000), Women's autonomy in the context of rural Pakistan, *The Pakistan Development Review*, 89-110.

Sawer, M., M. Tremblay, and L. Trimble (2006), *Representing Women in Parliament: A Comparative Study*, Routledge, Oxon.

Schaefer, R. T. (2008), *Racial and Ethnic Groups*, 11 ed., Pearson Education.

Schuler, S., and E. Rottach (2010), Women's empowerment across generations in Bangladesh, *Journal of Development Studies*, *46*(3), 379-396.

Scott, W. R. (1995), *Institutions and Organizations: Toward a Theoretical Synthesis*, Sage Publications, London, Thousand Oaks.

Sen, A. (1987), *Gender and Cooperative Conflicts*, World Institute for Development Economics Research Helsinki.

Sen, A. K. (1999), *Development As Freedom*, Oxford University Press, New

York, London.

Shamim, I., and R. Kumari (2002), *Gender and Local Governance: A New Discourse in Development*, South Asian Network of Economic Research Institute, Islamabad.

Shvedova, N. (2010), Obstacles to women's participation in parliament, in *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, edited by A. Karam, International IDEA, Stockholm.

Siddiqi, N. (1995), Problems of people's participation at the grass-root: Decentralized local government in perspective, *Journal of Administration and Diplomacy*, *3*(1), 17-41.

Siddiqui, T. (2002), Effective participation of women and strengthening of local government in Bangladesh, in *National Seminar on Good Governance and Local Government: Changes and Challenges*, Odhikar, Odhikar, Dhaka.

Siddiqui, K. (2005), *Local Government in Bangladesh*, University Press Limited, Dhaka.

Siim, B. (2000), *Gender and Citizenship*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Singer, H. (1949), *Post-War Price Relations in Trade Between Under-Developed and Industrialized Countries*, United Nations, New York.

Sinha, K. (2003), Citizenship degraded: Indian women in a modern state and a pre-modern society, *Gender and Development*, *11*(3), 19-26.

Solheim, B. O. (2000), *On Top of the World: Women's Political Leadership in Scandinavia and Beyond*, Greenwood Press, London.

Stacey, M., and M. Price (1981), *Women, Power and Politics*, Tavistock Publications, London.

Stephen, F. (2001), Empowering women in gram panchayats through training, in *Building Women's Capacities: Interventions in Gender Transformation*, edited by R. K. Murthy, Sage Publications, London.

Studlar, D. T., and I. McAllister (2002), Does a critical mass exist? A comparative

analysis of women's legislative representation since 1950, *European Journal of Political Research*, *41*(2), 233-253.

Sun, T. (2004), Gender representation in politics and public administration: Taiwan and Asian countries, in *18th Conference of International Association of Historians of Asia (IAHA)*, Academic Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan.

Tambiah, Y. (2003), The impact of gender inequality on governance, in *Essays on Gender and Governance*, edited by M. Nussbaum, A. Basu, Y. Tambiah and N. G. Jayal, UNDP, New York.

Tamerius, K. L. (2010), Sex, gender, and leadership in the representation of women, in *Women, Gender, and Politics: A Reader*, edited by M. L. Krook and S. Child, pp. 93-112, Oxford University Press, New York.

The Daily Star (2009), Election results, in *The Daily Star, January 1*, Dhaka.

Thelen, K. (1999), Historical institutionalism in comparative politics, *Annual Review of Political Science*, *2*(1), 369-404.

Thomas, S. (1997), Why gender matters? The perceptions of women office holders, *Women and Politics*, *17*(1), 27-53.

Thorlind, R. (2003), *Decentralization and Democracy: Exploring Social Capital and Politicization in the Bengal Region*, Pathak Shamabesh Book, Dhaka.

Topalova, P. (2003), Are women changing governance in India? The impact of female leadership on household satisfaction, *Quality of Public Goods and Governance*, Mimeo, MIT, Boston.

Tremblay, M. (2007), Democracy, representation and women: A comparative analysis, *Democratization*, *14*(4), 533-553.

Tripp, A. M., and A. Kang (2008), The global impact of quotas: on the fast track to increased female legislative representation, *Comparative Political Studies*, *41*, 338-361.

Turner, B. S. (1997), Citizenship studies: A general theory, *Citizenship Studies*, *1*(1), 5-18.

Tzannatos, Z. (1999), Women and labor market changes in the global economy:

Growth helps, inequalities hurt and public policy matters, *World Development*, *27*(3), 551-569.

UN (2001), *Guidelines on Women's Empowerment for the UN Resident Coordinator System*, Secretariat of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on the Implementation of ICPD Program of Action, United Nations, New York.

UN (2005), *Gender Equality: Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women*, Earthscan, London.

UNDAW (1995), Platform for action, *The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace*, United Nations, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/, Beijing, China.

UNDAW (2007), *Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women*, http://www.peacewomen.org/resources/Reconstruction/From_Recovery_Transition.pdf.

Underwood, J. D. M. (2003), Student attitudes towards socially acceptable and unacceptable group working practices, *British Journal of Psychology*, *94*, 319-337.

UNDP (1997), *A Global Research Framework of the Decentralised Governance Programme*, United Nations, New York.

UNDP (2002), *Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World, Human Development Report*, UNDP, New York.

UNDP (2011), *Human Development Report 2011, Sustainability and Equity: A Better Future for All*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.

UNICEF (2001), The women's equality and empowerment framework, *Gender Partnerships and Participation,* www. unicef. org/programme/gpp/policy/empower.html.

UNIFEM (2002), Leadership in Decision Making, http://www.unifem.undp.org/gov_led.htm, New York, accessed on 30/04/2012.

UNIFEM (2008), *Who Answers to Women? Gender and Accountability*, UNIFEM, New York.

United Nations (1992), *Women in Politics and Decision Making in the Late Twentieth Century*, Nijhoff Publishers, Dordrecht, Netherlands.

United Nations (1996), *The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action: Fourth World Conference on Women*, United Nations, New York.

Unnayan Padokkhep (2003), *Steps: Gender Equality, Human Rights and Governance*, Step Towards Development, Dhaka.

Usu, N. (2010), Affirmative action in Indonesia: The gender quota system in the 2004 and 2009 elections, *Asia Online, Flinders Asia Centre Occasional Paper*, *1*, 1-23.

Vickers, J. (1997), Towards a feminist understanding of representation, in *In the Presence of Women*, edited by J. Arscott and L. Trimble, pp. 20-46, Harcourt Brace, Canada.

Vijayalakhmi, V. (2002), *Gender, Accountability and Political Representation in Local Government*, India: Institute for Social and Political Studies.

Villaluz, S. E. (2000), Women around the fact sheet, *A Quarterly Fact Sheet of the Center for Legislative Development*, *1*(4).

Viswanathan, N., L. Duggan, L. Nisonoff, and N. Wieqersma (1997), *The Women, Gender and Development Reader*, Zed Books, London.

Voet, R. (1998), *Feminism and Citizenship*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Wade, R. (1984), The system of administrative and political corruption: Canal irrigation in South India, *Journal of Development Studies*, *18*(3).

Waylen, G. (2008), Gendering governance, in *Politics, Gender and Concepts: Theory and Methodology*, edited by G. Goetz and A. Mazur, Cambridge University Press, Cmbridge.

Weingast, B. R. (2002), Rational choice institutionalism, in *Political Science: The State of the Discipline*, edited by I. Katznelson and H. V. Milner, pp. 660-

692, W.W. Norton and the American Political Science Association, New York and Washington.

Westergaard, K. (1998), Decentralisation, NGOs and democratization in Bangladesh, in *Democratization in the Third World: Concrete Cases in Comparative and Theoretical Perspective*, edited by L. Rudebeck and V. Rojas, Macmillan Press Ltd, London.

WFP (1999), *Elected Women Members of Union Parishad: A Socio-Economic Study*, World Food Programme, Geneva.

White, S. (2010), Domains of contestation: Women's empowerment and Islam in Bangladesh, *Women's Studies International Forum*, *33*, 334-344.

World Bank (1999), *Bangladesh: From Counting the Poor to Making the Poor Count*, World Bank Country Study, Washington, D.C.

World Bank (2001a), *Engendering Development: Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

World Bank (2001b), *World Development Report 2001: Attacking Poverty*, Oxford University Press, New York.

World Bank (2008), *Whispers to Voices: Gender and Social Transformation in Bangladesh*, South Asia Sustainable Development Department, The World Bank.

World Bank (2012), *World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development*, World Bank, Washington.

Yin, K. R. (1994), *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Sage Publications, London.

Young, K. (1993), *Planning Development with Women: Making a World of Difference*, Macmillan Press Ltd, New York, London.

Yukl, G. (1981), *Leadership in Organizations*, Simon & Schuster Trade, London, New York.

Yuval-Davis, N. (1991), The citizenship debate: Women, ethnic processes and the state, *Feminist Review* (39), 58-68.

Zaman, N. (2007), Politics and local self government in Bangladesh: The historical perspective, *Social Science Journal*, *13*, 21-39.

APPENDIX

A1). INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ELECTED WOMEN MEMBERS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

A) **Background of the Elected Women Members**

1. Name of the Respondent:

2. Name of the Union:

   Ward No: Thana: District:

3. Age: 25-29   30-34   35-39   40-44   45-49   50+

4. Education Qualification: Primary (v)   Secondary (vi-x)   SSC

   HSC   Graduate   Post Graduate

5. Marital Status: Married   Unmarried   Widow   Divorced

6. Occupation: Monthly Income:

7. Name of Husband:

   Age: 25-29   30-34   35-39   40-44   45-49

   Education Qualification: Primary (v)   Secondary (vi-x)   SSC   HSC

   Graduate   Post Graduate

   Occupation: Monthly Income:

8. Father's Name (if unmarried) :   Age: Occupation: Monthly

   Income

   Education Qualification: Primary (v)   Secondary (vi-x)   SSC   HSC

   Graduate   Post Graduate

9. Number of Children:

10. Do You have any Property?   Yes   No

If Yes, amount of Homestead Land:

Amount of cultivated/productive land: Other:

B) Involvement in local government politics and election process

11. Are you a first time member of a Local Government Institution (LGI)?

Yes   No

12. How long have you actively participated in LGI?

What year did you begin?

13. Were you involved in politics before participating in LGI?   Yes   No

If yes, from when and in what way?

14. Why did you become involved in politics?

 a)   Family heritage   b) Husband's interest   c) Own choice

d) Political party/NGO 's interest   e) other (specify)

15. How did you first join in local government politics?

a) Family heritage   b) Husband's interest   c) Own choice

d) Political party/NGO 's interest   e) other (specify)

16. Was it your own decision to participate in LGI elections?   Yes   No

If no, who inspired you most to compete in election?

17. Had any of your family members ever participated in local or national level

elections?   Yes   No

If yes, have you received any support from him/her?   Yes   No

If yes, how?

18. Did you face any family resistance while taking part in election?   Yes/No

If yes, what type of resistance did you face and from whom?

a) Restriction in going out and meeting people,   b)   No   cooperation   in election campaign   c) Financial restriction   d) Supporting your opponents e) other (specify)

19. Did you participate in your election campaign by yourself?   Yes   No

    If yes, in which way and how much time did you spend for this purpose?

20. Could you campaign during both day and night?   Yes   No

21. Could you canvass your voters door to door?   Yes   No

    If you could not, who worked in this way on your behalf?   a)   husband b) parents c) in laws   d) friends   e) party workers   f)NGO members   g) others (specify)

22. Did your family members participate in your election campaign?   Yes /No

    If yes, who participated and how?

23. Did you make any promises in your election campaign?

    If yes, what are the promises you made?   i)   ii)

    iii)   iv)

24. Who financed your election expenditure?   a) husband   b)   parents c) in laws d) friends   e) own source   f)   party   workers/NGO members   g) others (specify)

25. Did you get any training about election campaign and management?

    If yes, from which organization?

    How did it help you in election?

26. Did you face any problems in contesting the election?

    If yes, what type of problems did you face?

27. Who helped you to overcome these problems?

28. What general level of support did you get from males during your election campaign?

i) very good   ii) good   iii) moderate   iv) poor

29. What general level of support did you get from females during your election campaign?

i) very good   ii) good   iii) moderate   iv) Poor

30. What factor do you think helped most in winning the election?

i)   Your competence   ii) family influence   iii) support from the women iv) support from the chairman   v) party support   vi) others

31. If you are, or when you were, a first time candidate, do you think that lack of experience created any problems?

32. If you are not a first time candidate, how did your previous experience help you?

C) Role and performance of women members in local government institutions

33. Overall, how do you feel about your duties as an elected member?

34. Do you have any problems managing your responsibilities at home and in the local government?   Yes   No

If yes, what type of problems are you confronted with?

35. How do you find your working environment?

a) Friendly and equal working environment   b)   Hierarchic   working environment   c) Women are neglected

36. Since becoming elected member of the LGIs, what responsibilities have you performed

a.   b.   c.   d.

39. In your role as a local representative, to what extent do you feel you understand the functions of local government?

a) Not at all   b) Very little   c) Moderate   d) Substantial/sufficient

40. How much do you know about the roles and duties of women members?

a) Not at all   b) Very little   c) Moderate   d) Substantial/sufficient

41. Do you participate in the meetings and other activities regularly?

Yes   No

If not, why?   i)   ii)   iii)   iv)

42. Can you express your opinion freely in the meetings?   Yes   No

If not, why not?   i)   ii)   iii)   iv)

43. Do you feel you influence the decision making process of the institution?

Yes   No

If yes, to what extent you can influence the decisions

a) Greater influence b) Moderate influence c) Little influence d) Not at all

Please give an example of how you have influenced decisions?

44. Does the chairman value and respect your opinion?   i) yes, almost all the time   ii) oftentimes   iii) occasionally   iv) Not at all

45. Do the male members value and respect your opinion? i) yes, almost all the time   ii) oftentimes   iii) occasionally   iv) Not at all

46. How do the other women members value your opinion?   i) yes, almost all the time   ii) oftentimes   iii) occasionally   iv) Not at all

47. Do the women members usually share consensus on important issues?

i) yes, almost all the time   ii) oftentimes, iii) occasionally, iv) Not at all

If not, what are the causes of their disagreement?

48. Do the male members support the women members often and easily? i) yes, almost all the time ii) oftentimes iii) occasionally iv) Not at all

If not, what are the causes of their disagreement?

49. Do you feel embarrassed by any offensive/aggressive/personal comments by your male counterparts?

i) yes, almost all the time ii) oftentimes iii) occasionally iv) Not at all

50. Do you attend the special meetings? Yes No

If not, why not?

51. Do you oppose male members' decisions, if you disagree with any decision?

If not, why not?

If yes, to what extent is your disagreement seriously considered?

a) Considered always b) considered sometimes c) considered never

52. Do you receive all the government notices relating to the institution?

Yes No

If not, mention the causes—

53. Do you sign the regulation book after the meeting? Yes No

54. Have you participated in any training or workshop programme regarding women and local government? Yes No

If yes, give the information in detail—

55. Do you think this kind of programme can help you to perform your duties?

D) Involvement in Committees and Development Activities

55. Are you a member of any standing committee of the LGI? Yes No

If yes, how many?

Mention the name and responsibility –

56. Are you a chairperson of any standing committee of the institution?

Yes   No

If yes, how many?

57. Was it easy to gain that position?   Yes   No

58. If no, how can you establish your right to that position, or similar positions?

59. How many development projects are implemented in your locality?

60. How many projects do you monitor?

61. Do you get equal share when projects[46] are distributed? Yes   No

Mention, in which proportion do you get?

62. Do you think members elected from general seats[47] get more projects than you?   Yes   No

If yes, in what proportion do they get projects ?

63. Are you involved in any local-government socio-economic development projects (eg   Food Assistance, clean water, infrastructure construction, trafficking of women and children, etc)   Yes   No

64. What kind of role do you play regarding women and development through this project?

65. Have you been able to fulfil your election promises to the voter?

Yes   No

66. If you could not, why not?

---

[46] Union Councils are given infrastructure and other development projects by the government to implement locally. Each project is supposed to be headed by a member of the union council

[47] A general seat is open for both men and women to contest.

67. What benefits have you achieved for women by your role and performance?

       a.   b.   c.   d.

E) Social Issues You Encounter At Local Government Politics

68. Do you feel any societal problem performing your responsibilities?

   Yes   No

    If yes, what type of problems do you face?

69. How do the elderly people of the community accept you as a member of the

   local parliament?

   a) Accept gladly   b) accept conservatively   c) Do not accept

   If they do not accept, how do they take it?

70. How do the young generations accept you?

   a) Accept gladly   b) accept conservatively   c) Do not accept

   If they do not accept you, how do they react?

71. To you, what level of education is important in local level politics?

72. Do you read a newspaper every day?   Yes   No

73. Do you watch television every day?   Yes   No

74. Do you have internet access?   Yes   No

75. Do you think access to information is important in political participation?

         Yes   No

76. Are you member of any Non Government Organisations?   Yes No

77. Do you think NGO membership could help political awareness and

   participation for the women representatives?   Yes   No

78. Do you think women's political participation is important for social justice?

   Yes   No

F) Political Issues

79. Do you take part in national election campaigns?   Yes   No

80. Which party do you support?   i) AL   ii) BNP   iii) JP   iv) Other

81. Which party does your husband/father support?

   i) AL   ii) BNP   iii) JP   iv) Other

82. If different, do you feel any pressure for your support?

83. Do candidates in parliament election/upazilla election seek your support?

   Yes   No

84. Do you think your membership in the UP has increased your importance to the

   candidates?   Yes   No

85. Do you think your position at UP has boosted your acceptance in society?

   Yes   No

86. Do ordinary people follow and support your political campaign?

   Yes   No

87. Do you motivate other women to take part in politics?   Yes   No

88. If yes, do they respond to your call?   Yes   No

89. Do you think you may ever to contest the general seats?

   Yes   No

   If yes, why? If not, why not?

G) Reservation of Seats to Affect Greater Womenfolk

90. Do you think that the reservation of seats in the local government has

   enhanced women's greater political awareness?   Yes   No

91. Do you feel that quota seats are important to ensure women's political

   participation?

92. Do you think that you would contest in general seats if there were no quota seats?

93. Do you think women's position in the society has been enhanced with the reservation of seats in local government?

94. Do you think that women are now showing greater resistance against dowry, domestic violence and husband's polygamy after the reservation of quota seats?

95. Do you think that the incidence of dowry, domestic violence and husband's polygamy has been reduced after the reservation of quota seats in local government?

96. Do you think that women are now showing greater resistance against fatwa after the reservation of quota seats?

97. Do you think that the incidence of fatwa has been reduced after the reservation of quota seats in local government?

98. Do you think that women are now showing greater resistance against rape and eve teasing after the reservation of quota seats?

99. Do you think that the incidence of rape and eve teasing has been reduced after the reservation of quota seats in local government?

100. Do you think economic independence is necessary for the women for their meaningful political participation?

101. Do you think that women are now showing greater interest to engage them in paid work and earn economic independence after the reservation of quota seats?

102. Do you think that women's education and employment are now valued by all of the society after the reservation of quota seats in local government?

103. Do you think that women's political opinion and awareness are now valued by all of the society after the reservation of quota seats in local government?

H) Experience, Suggestions and Recommendations

104. What are your suggestions to strengthen local government institutions?

i)   ii)   iii)   iv)

105. To ensure equal participation of women members in the local government institutions, what do you suggest?

i)   ii)   iii)   iv)

106. To promote women's involvement in local/national politics what do you suggest?

i)   ii)   iii)   iv)

107. To tackle social problems like fundamentalism and patriarchy what do you suggest?

i)   ii)   iii)   iv)

108. To improve women's overall position in the family what do you suggest?

i)   ii)   iii)   iv)

109. To improve women's role, participation and position in the society what do you suggest?

i)   ii)   iii)   iv)

A2). INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LGI CHAIRMAN/MAYOR AND MALE MEMBERS

1. Name of the Respondent:

2. Name of the Union/Pouroshova/City Corporation

   Ward No: Thana: District:

3. Age: 25-29   30-34   35-39   40-44   45-49   50+

4. Education Qualification: Primary (v)   Secondary (vi-x)   SSC   HSC
   Graduate   Post Graduate

5. Marital status: Married   Unmarried   Widower   Divorced

6. Occupation:

7. What do you know about the Local Government Act 1997? Can you mention
   its implication in short?

8. Do you think the 1997 Act has opened a real avenue for women
   empowerment at the local level politics?

9. What about women's attendance in UP meetings

   i) Attend regularly ii) moderately iii) poorly   iv) not attending at all

   If not regularly, what are the reasons for that?

10. What about the role of the women in the decision making discussion/process

    i) Actively take part   ii) moderately   iii) poorly iv) not taking part at
        all

11. To your experience, how do the women perform their duties they are
    assigned?

    i) Poor   ii) Moderate   iii) Good   iv) very good

a) If their performances are poor/moderate, what are the causes in your experience?

b) What do you suggest to overcome those problems?

12. Do you think women participation in politics is important for social development?   Yes   No

If Yes, Do you advocate for further women participation?   Yes   No

If Yes,

a) to ensure equal participation of women members at the local government institution, what do you suggest?

    i)   ii)   iii)

b) To promote women's involvement in local/national politics what do you suggest?

    i)   ii)   iii)

C) To tackle social problems like fundamentalism and patriarchy what are your suggestions?

    i)   ii)   iii)

d) To improve women's overall position in the family what do you suggest?

    i)   ii)   iii)

e) To improve women's role, participation and position in the society what do you suggest?

    i)   ii)   iii)

f) To your experience, what are the major impediments in women empowerment?

    i)   ii)   iii)

13. Do you think women's position in UP enhances their position in the society?

14. Do you think women's participation in politics will create any tension in the family?

15. Do you think women's participation in politics will create any tension in the functioning of the LGI?   Yes   No

If yes, what are the likely problems may arise?

16. Do you think strengthening local government institution is good for democracy and development?

If yes, what are your suggestions to strengthen local government institutions?

If not, why not?

17. Do you think that the reservation of seats in the local government has enhanced women's greater political awareness?   Yes   No

18. Do you feel that quota seats are important to ensure women's political participation?

19. Do you think women's position in the society has been enhanced with the reservation of seats in local government?

20. Do you think that women are now showing greater resistance against dowry, domestic violence and husband's polygamy after the reservation of quota seats?

21. Do you think that the incidence of dowry, domestic violence and husband's polygamy has been reduced after the reservation of quota seats in local government?

22. Do you think that women are now showing greater resistance against fatwa after the reservation of quota seats?

23. Do you think that the incidence of fatwa has been reduced after the reservation of quota seats in local government?

24. Do you think that women are now showing greater resistance against rape and eve teasing after the reservation of quota seats?

25. Do you think that the incidence of rape and eve teasing has been reduced after the reservation of quota seats in local government?

26. Do you think that women are now showing greater interest to engage them in paid work and earn economic independence after the reservation of quota seats?

27. Do you think that women's education and employment are now valued by all of the society after the reservation of quota seats in local government?

A3). INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE FOR WOMEN COMMUNITY LEADERS, NGO WORKERS, JOURNALISTS, ACADEMICS AND POLITICAL ACTIVISTS

1. Name of the Respondent:

2. Name of the Organization:

3. Age:

4. Education Qualification:

5. Marital Status:

6. Occupation:

7. What do you know about the Local Government Act 1997? Can you briefly describe its implications?

8. To ensure equal participation of women members in the local government institution, what do you suggest?

    i)   ii)   iii)   iv)

9. To promote women's involvement in local/national politics what do you suggest?

    i)   ii)   iii)   iv)

10. To tackle social problems like fundamentalism and patriarchy what are your suggestions?

    i)   ii)   iii)   iv)

11. To improve women's overall position in the family what do you suggest?

    i)   ii)   iii)   iv)

12. To improve women's roles, participation and position in society what do you suggest?

i)   ii)   iii)   iv)

13. In your experience, what are the major impediments to women's empowerment?

i)   ii)   iii)   iv)

14. Do you think women's participation in politics will create any tension in the family?

15. Do you think women's participation in politics will create any tension in the functioning of the LGI?   Yes   No

If yes, what are the likely problems may arise?

16. What are your suggestions to strengthen local government institutions?

i)   ii)   iii)   iv)

17. Does your organization look for further women's empowerment?

18. Does your organization campaign/train women for mobilization and empowerment?

19. To you/your organization, what are the major impediments in women empowerment?

i)   ii)   iii)   iv)

20. Do you think further strengthening of local government institutions is good for democracy and development?

If yes, what are your suggestions to strengthen those institutions?

If not, why not?

21. Do you know of any local government policies which empower women and are of benefit to socio-economic development, which are the result of increased women's representation in the LGIs?

22. Do you think the women members of the LGIs are achieving good results for socio-economic development? Why or why not?

23. What do you think are the important issues for women members of the LGIs to raise in the parliament?

24. Do you think that the reservation of seats in the local government has enhanced women's greater political awareness?   Yes   No

25. Do you feel that quota seats are important to ensure women's political participation?

26. Do you think women's position in the society has been enhanced with the reservation of seats in local government?

27. Do you think that women are now showing greater resistance against dowry, domestic violence and husband's polygamy after the reservation of quota seats?

28. Do you think that the incidence of dowry, domestic violence and husband's polygamy has been reduced after the reservation of quota seats in local government?

29. Do you think that women are now showing greater resistance against fatwa after the reservation of quota seats?

30. Do you think that the incidence of fatwa has been reduced after the reservation of quota seats in local government?

31. Do you think that women are now showing greater resistance against rape and eve teasing after the reservation of quota seats?

32. Do you think that the incidence of rape and eve teasing has been reduced after the reservation of quota seats in local government?

33. Do you think that women are now showing greater interest to engage them in paid work and earn economic independence after the reservation of quota seats?

34. Do you think that women's education and employment are now valued by all of the society after the reservation of quota seats in local government?

A4). LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

FLINDERS UNIVERSITY
ADELAIDE • AUSTRALIA

GPO Box 2100
Adelaide 5001 Australia

Telephone: (+61 8) 8201 2248
Fax: (+61 8) 8201 5111

Email: liz.morrell@flinders.edu.au

Dr Elizabeth Morrell
Flinders Asia Centre
School of International Studies
Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences

Dear Sir/Madam

This letter is to introduce Ms Shajeda Aktar who is a PhD student in the Flinders Asia Centre at Flinders University. She will produce her student card, which carries a photograph, as proof of identity. She is undertaking research leading to the production of a thesis or other publications on the subject of "Empowering Women through Direct Election in Reserved Seats: A Comparative Study of Urban and Rural Local Government Institutions in Bangladesh".

She would be most grateful if you would volunteer to assist in this project, by completing a questionnaire with a follow-up interview at a later date, if further information is required. The questionnaire should take no more than thirty minutes, and the interview up to 45 minutes. You may also be invited to take part in a focus group discussion of 45-60 minutes. Be assured that any information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and none of the participants will be individually identifiable in the resulting thesis, report or other publications. You are, of course, entirely free to discontinue your participation at any time or to decline to answer particular questions.

Since Ms Aktar intends to make written notes of the interview, she will seek your consent, on the attached form, to do that, and to use the notes in preparing the thesis, report or other publications, on condition that your name or identity is not revealed.

Any enquiries you may have concerning this project should be directed to me at the address given above or by telephone on +61 8 8201 2248 by fax on +61 8 8201 5111or by email (liz.morrell@flinders.edu.au).

Thank you for your attention and assistance.

Yours sincerely

Dr Elizabeth Morrell,
Director, Flinders Asia Centre.

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project Number 5025). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au..

A5). PARTICIPATION INFORMATION SHEET

This research is conducted by the researcher as her PhD project at the School of International Studies, Flinders University, Australia. The outline of the research is explained below:

a)   **The research project:** Equality in gender representation has emerged worldwide as a basic dimension of democratic governance. But in Bangladesh women's representation has never gone beyond 10 percent in parliament and their representation at the local level is worse. With this background, the *Local Government Second Amendment Act, 1997* was enacted, reserving one-third of seats for women and introducing universal adult franchise in those reserved seats. This opens the door for Bangladeshi women to actively take part in politics for the first time in the nation's history. However, women's empowerment still faces many challenges, and these are different in rural and urban areas. In this context, my study will investigate the impact of introducing direct elections across rural and urban local government institutions of Bangladesh.

b)   **Participant's role:** As a participant of this research, you will share your experiences, ideas and thoughts about the challenges of women empowerment in local government institutions. You will be interviewed with a structured questionnaire and your answers will assist the research by conveying your knowledge, ideas and experiences.

c)   **Participation:** Participation is voluntary. You can withdraw from participation in the research project anytime. You can also decline to answer any particular question or questions.

d) Privacy and confidentiality: Your privacy will be strictly maintained. No personal information will be disclosed. Your experiences and ideas will be published in the research in a way which will not reveal your personal identity.

e) Expected benefit to the community: This research aims to explore the challenges of women's empowerment in local government institutions in Bangladesh. It will explore the success and weakness of the 1997 Act and the provision of direct elections to bring women into the mainstream political arena of the country. The empirical findings of the research will help in future policy design by government and other policy makers.

Contact details of the researcher:

Shajeda Aktar
PhD candidate
Faculty of Social & Behavioural Sciences
Flinders University, Australia.
Mobile: 0061 469790406
E-mail: akta0003@flinders.edu.au

A6). LIST OF TOPICS FOR INTERVIEW (for participants)

During interview, you will be asked to about the issues listed below:

1. Personal and family data, education levels, employment.

2. Wider involvement in politics and community.

3. Involvement of other family members in politics.

4. Motivation for standing for local government election.

5. Challenges faced in the election process.

6. Experience with local government responsibilities and policy making.

7. Role in any achievements in socio-economic development, especially those of direct benefit to women.

8. Recommendations for women's further empowerment in local government institutions.

A7). CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH
(By Questionnaire/ Interview)

I..being over the age of 18 years hereby consent to participate as requested in the questionnaire/interview for the research project on "Empowering Women through Direct Election in the Reserved Seats in the Local Government Institutions".

1. I have read the information provided.
2. Details of procedures and any risks have been explained to my satisfaction.
3. I am aware that I should retain a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form for future reference.
4. I understand that:
   - I may not directly benefit from taking part in this research.
   - I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and am free to decline to answer particular questions.
   - While the information gained in this study will be published as explained, I will not be identified, and individual information will remain confidential.
5. I agree/do not agree to the transcript being made available to other researchers who are not members of this research team, but who are judged by the research team to be doing related research, on condition that my identity is not revealed.
6. I have had the opportunity to discuss taking part in this research with a family member or friend.

Participant's signature…………………………..**Date**…………………...

I certify that I have explained the study to the volunteer and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

Researcher's name…………………….…………………….................

Researcher's signature…………………………..**Date**……………….
NB: Two signed copies should be obtained. The copy retained by the researcher may then be used for authorisation of Items 7 and 8, as appropriate.

7. I, the participant whose signature appears below, have read a transcript of my participation and agree to its use by the researcher as explained.

Participant's signature……………………………**Date**………………...

8. I, the participant whose signature appears below, have read the researcher's report and agree to the publication of my information as reported.
Participant's signature……………………………**Date....**………………

A8). CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH
(For Focus Group)

I .... being over the age of 18 years hereby consent to participate as requested in the focus group for the research project on "Empowering Women through Direct Election in the Reserved Seats in the Local Government Institutions".

3. I have read the information provided.
4. Details of procedures and any risks have been explained to my satisfaction.
3. I am aware that I should retain a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form for future reference.
4. I understand that:

- I may not directly benefit from taking part in this research.
- I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and am free to decline to answer particular questions.
- While the information gained in this study will be published as explained, I will not be identified, and individual information will remain confidential.

5. I agree/do not agree to the transcript being made available to other researchers who are not members of this research team, but who are judged by the research team to be doing related research, on condition that my identity is not revealed.
6. I have had the opportunity to discuss taking part in this research with a family member or friend.

Participant's signature…………………………**Date**…………………...

I certify that I have explained the study to the volunteer and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

Researcher's name……………………………………….................

Researcher's signature………………………..**Date**……………….
NB: Two signed copies should be obtained. The copy retained by the researcher may then be used for authorisation of Items 7 and 8, as appropriate.

7. I, the participant whose signature appears below, have read a transcript of my participation and agree to its use by the researcher as explained.

Participant's signature…………………………**Date**…………………...

8. I, the participant whose signature appears below, have read the researcher's report and agree to the publication of my information as reported.

Participant's signature…………………………**Date**…………………...

A9). ETHICS APPROVAL

Flinders University and Southern Adelaide Health Service
SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOURAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Research Services Office, Union Building, Flinders University
GPO Box 2100, ADELAIDE SA 5001
Phone: (08) 8201 3116; Email: human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au

FINAL APPROVAL NOTICE

Principal Researcher: Shajeda Aktar

Email: akta0003@flinders.edu.au

Address: Flinders Asia Centre

Project Title: Empowering Women Through Direct Election in Reserved Seats: A Comparative Study of Urban and Rural Local Government Institutions in Bangladesh

Project No: 5025   **Final Approval Date:**   12 November 2010

Approval Expiry Date: 30 June 2013

The above proposed project has been **approved** on the basis of the information contained in the application, its attachments and the information subsequently provided. If you have any outstanding permission letters (item D8), that may have been previously requested, please ensure that they are forwarded to the Committee as soon as possible. Additionally, for projects where approval has also been sought from another Human Research Ethics Committee (item G1), please be reminded that a copy of the ethics approval notice will need to be sent to the Committee on receipt.

In accordance with the undertaking you provided in your application for ethics approval for the project, please inform the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee, giving reasons, if the research project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

You are also required to report anything which might warrant review of ethical approval of the protocol. Such matters include:

- serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants;

- proposed changes in the protocol (modifications);

- any changes to the research team; and

- unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

To modify/amend a previously approved project please either mail or email a completed copy of the Modification Request Form to the Executive Officer, which is available for download from http://www.flinders.edu.au/research/info-for-researchers/ethics/committees/social-and-behavioural-research-ethics-committee/notification-of-committee-decision.cfm.

Please ensure that any new or amended participant documents are attached to the modification request. In order to comply with monitoring requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (March 2007)* an annual progress and/or final report must be submitted. A copy of the pro forma is available from http://www.flinders.edu.au/research/info-for-researchers/ethics/committees/social-behavioural.cfm.

Your first report is due on **12 November 2011** or on completion of the project, whichever is the earliest. Please retain this notice for reference when completing annual progress or final *reports.* If an extension of time is required, please email a request for an extension of time, to a date you specify, to human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au before the expiry date.

Andrea Mather (formerly Jacobs)
Executive Officer
Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee
16 November 2010

c.c Dr Elizabeth Morrell, liz.morrell@flinders.edu.au
A/Prof Janet McIntyre-Mills, janet.mcintyre@flinders.edu.au