

Political Participation of Community-Based Women Leaders and How it Impacts on Local Politics and Governance

Case Study:

Community Organizing among Women in Select Barangays in Western Mindanao under BBGC-Initiated Interventions

I. Introduction:

Sometime in 1999, community organizing among women was started auspiciously in select barangays in the provinces of Basilan, Zamboanga Sibugay, and Zamboanga City. It was during this time that a new NGO was formed called the Alternative Center for Organizational Reforms and Development (ACORD) which have community organizing as one of its main programs. ACORD's establishment was made possible with the support of Kaisahan, Inc., a Manila-based NGO involved in agrarian reform and democratic participation in governance which saw the need to help set up local-based NGOs under its area-specific development assistance (ASDA) program. Kaisahan then was giving trainings on agrarian reform among farmer-beneficiaries as well as local governance seminars in plantation cooperatives.¹

The strong emphasis on women organizing was mainly due to the active presence of women grassroots leaders and organizers in ACORD. These women leaders headed urban poor groups, community-based cooperatives, and trade unions. Likewise, an active interface with women local government officials was initiated successfully especially at the barangay and city level in Zamboanga City. The entry of Batman in early 2000 likewise facilitated the conduct of several Barangay Development Planning through Participatory Resource Appraisal

¹ Kaisahan was active in Western Mindanao from 1996-2000 providing seminars, training and workshops. It is one of the organizers of the Barangay-Bayan Governance Consortium (BBGC) and sits in the Project Management Committee of BBGC.

(BDP-PRA) trainings. This was conducted in at least 10 barangays in Zamboanga City, four barangays in R.T. Lim, Zamboanga Sibugay and six barangays in Isabela province.

In Zamboanga City, ACORD was able to intervene in the Gender and Development (GAD) budget through the office of 1st City Councilor Maria Isabel “Bing” Climaco. The councilor likewise partnered with ACORD in facilitating trainings of the GAD council which allocates and implements the GAD budget.

Believing that more than half of the women population in the focused barangays can be organized, ACORD embarked on this objective. Aside from the BDP-PRA where women actively participated, another entry point for organizing was mainstreaming GAD and political education. MAKALAYA (*Manggagawang Kababaihan Mithi ay Paglaya*), a national women’s labor group, also partnered with ACORD in giving Gender Sensitivity Trainings to the community based women leaders, the Basic Orientation on Women Workers, and political education.

There was significant result in organizing as ACORD was able to reactivate a number of women organizations and founded three community-based women associations namely: *TUWA* (Tumahubong Women’s Association) in Basilan, *Voses de Las Mujeres* and *Fuensa De las Mujeres* in Zamboanga City. ACORD likewise helped women leaders get elected in the leadership of multisectoral federations and in managing small economic enterprises like a bakery in Isabela, Basilan and livelihood cooperative in Campo Islam, Zamboanga City. In the 2001 elections, the local women’s groups were visible and led the campaign for women candidates whom they believe will carry their agenda and voices in the local legislative body or sanggunian. Moreover, other successful examples of effective women’s participation were made in local advocacy for women’s issues -- implementation of GAD budget, stop to trafficking of women and minors, women rights’ awareness campaign and capability building in partnership with the city government.

ACORD Inc.

In October 1999, a group of community organizers, trade union leaders, youth and individuals from the academe organized an adhoc group with the suggested name of “**ESPERANZA**”, a Chavacano translation for the word hope. The group initiated a series of discussion on the local situation and possible responses they could undertake. Three NGO personalities from Manila under the Barangay-Bayan Governance Consortium came to help facilitate the establishment of what is now called the Alternative Center for Organizational Reforms and Development (ACORD). In November 3, 1999, the center was formally registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Vision

ACORD envisions a region where people are empowered to design their own future along a just, equitable, gender-fair, environment-friendly, self-sustaining communities where religious and political tolerance are inculcated into the culture and politics of its people.

Mission

- To provide a venue where people’s organization can be strengthened by developing their capabilities through the process of community organizing, skills formation and values development.
- To assist in establishing a network of peace advocates among POs, community development activists, women, and youth.
- To develop the true spirit and practice of cooperativism and enhance local capabilities for effective and efficient management of community-based enterprises.
- To develop programs on gender and concern for women’s welfare.
- To develop programs on democratic participation in local governance and political education among basic sectors.

Program and services:

Community Organizing for Reforms and Empowerment (CORE)

Basically its flagship program, it focuses on building primary people's organizations at the barangay-bayan level among women, youth, Moro, farmers, rural workers and fisherfolks. To scale up its organizing, a municipal or provincial level network of primary POs are organized along sectoral issues and along municipal-level enterprises.

Democratic Participation in Governance

One of the regular programs undertaken by ACORD which is designed to capacitate barangay officials to effectively and efficiently manage the barangay, promote participatory governance and develop working local special bodies with strong PO-NGO participation as mandated under the 1991 Local Government Code. Among the trainings under this program are the Basic Orientation on Barangay Governance (BOBG), Direct Action for Local Governance Seminar (DIALOGS), and Community Organizing for Democratic Participation in Governance (CO-DPG). Kaisahan and the Institute of Politics and Governance (IPG), two Manila-based NGOs, helped ACORD develop its capacity in giving trainings on local governance and the BDP-PRA technology.

Barangay Development Planning through Participatory Resource Appraisal (BDP-PRA)

BDP-PRA was adopted by ACORD from the Barangay-Bayan Governance Consortium and was initially carried out in the data gathering and profiling of barangays and communities where it has organizing work. Later, this became a full-blown program under the Bread for the World project which involved 10 barangays in Zamboanga City, four barangays in Basilan and another four barangays in Ipil, Zamboanga Sibugay. The BDP-PRA provides an opportunity for people in the barangay to be active participants in the formulation of their own local development plan and the allocation of funds for priority projects identified through the BDP-PRA..

Capability, Advocacy, Training for Women (CATWomen)

ACORD's specialized program for women and gender concerns is focused on organizing community-based women's groups and local foras or networks. ACORD assumes the role as a coordinative body and center for these women's groups or networks and facilitates gender sensitivity training for women, and assists women's cooperatives in basic cooperative fiscal and financial management. With focus on the enhancement of capabilities of women along governance and entrepreneurship, the program operationalizes active participation of women in gender and development. Its strategy is to organize at the grassroots and develop strong partnership with progressive or reform-oriented local government units. Such partnership can be institutionalized through the creation of a GAD council and by maximizing the allocated support under the GAD budget and through sharing of resources of different stakeholders.

Political, Economic, and Cultural Education (PEACE)

This program was designed to promote religious tolerance among the Christian, Muslim and indigenous peoples in Western Mindanao. ACORD under this program sponsors Muslim-Christian dialogues, regular discussion groups, and international solidarity work. At the height of the Balikatan war exercises (between Philippine and US troops), ACORD assisted an international peace mission in 2001 that visited Basilan province to look into reports of human rights violation in the guise of anti-terrorism.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study was in the selected areas in Western Mindanao. These areas were chosen mainly because of the strong community organizing work that ACORD had initiated especially among community-based women's groups. In Zamboanga City, four barangays were selected (Cabatangan, Tumaga, Limpapa and Lapaz), two barangays in the Municipality of R.T Lim in Zamboanga Sibugay

province (the Barangay Katipunan and Surabaya), and another three barangays in Basilan province namely barangay Cabunbata, Isabela and one barangay each in the Municipalities of Lamitan (Maloong San Jose) and Sumisip (Tumajubong).. The research was undertaken with several limitations on hand like the short timetable of the research, design and translation of questionnaires into the different dialects (Chavacano and Visayan), availability of the respondents, and the distance to cover the three areas. These limitations affect the preparation of the study.

OBJECTIVES

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To be able to know the impact of ACORD and Batman's intervention on increasing women's participation and awareness in politics and democratic local governance in selected barangays in Zamboanga City, Zamboanga Sibugay Province and Basilan Province.
- To review the barangay development plans conducted through the BDP-PRA process and those without the BDP-PRA and whether these BDPs give significant emphasis to women.
- Determine the Strategies and Approaches to mainstream Gender and Development in Local Governance.

Methodology

This research project interviewed 73 respondents in selected barangays in Zamboanga City and the provinces of Zamboanga Sibugay and Basilan. There were a total of 46 respondents in Zamboanga City, 10 respondents in Sibugay province and 17 respondents in Basilan. The respondents came from various groups like local government officials, people's organizations, sangguniang

kabataan officials, and informal women leaders in the community. The researcher likewise conducted a focused group discussion with some of the respondents in the different barangay in Zamboanga City as well as Zamboanga Sibugay and Basilan Province.

Majority of the respondents are homemakers and have no income from economic activities. They comprise 47 or 64% of total respondents. Other respondents are barangay and municipal/city officials which accounts for 18 or 25% of total respondents. The rest are NGO workers and trade union leaders (8 respondents or 11%). The data also showed that majority of the respondents are married. Most of them are not economically employed and are engaged in seasonal and off-farm employment. Some women respondents were elected because of their involvement with Church organizations.

II. Information on the Focused Areas for the Research

Zamboanga City has total population of 642,403 distributed in 30 urban barangays and 68 rural barangays. The population is divided into 321,290 male and 321,113 female residents. An old city, Zamboanga was an outpost of the Spanish colonizers that attempted to subjugate the sultanate of Sulu and its Muslim populace. The city speaks Chavacano, a variant of the Spanish language. However, the city has a Muslim population of around 18% of the total population. Presently, settlers from the Visayan region dominate the population accounting for some 68% of its total population.

The municipality of Roseller T. Lim in Zamboanga Sibugay is bounded on the north by Barangay Mabini, on the east by Barangay Ali-Alsree, on the south by Barangay Katipunan and on the West by Barangay Mabini and San Jose. The two focused barangays for the research has a total land area of 60 hectares. Barangay Katipunan has a total population of 2,072 with 1,051 males and 1,021 females. There are a total of 268 houses with 285 families. Barangay Surabaya on the other hand has a total population of 1,459 with 714 male and 745 females. There are 372 houses and 410 families living in the barangay

In Basilan, the study covered three barangays. Barangay Malo-ong San Jose is one of the barangay of the Municipality of Lamitan, Basilan Province. Barangay Malo-ong is about eight kilometers away from Lamitan proper. It has a total land area of 950 hectares and a population of 1,135 residents. Barangay Tumahubong in Sumisip has a total land area of 1,500 hectares. The entire barangay is mountainous and mostly covered by rubber trees. Most of the 6,423 inhabitants of the barangay belong to the Tumajubong Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Development Cooperative, Inc. (TARBIDCI) which was awarded the 1,200-hectare plantation under the government's land reform program sometime in 1989. The rubber plantation formerly belonged to Sime Darby, a multinational company. Around 70% of the population are Yakans, a Muslim ethno-linguistic group of Basilan. Barangay Cabunbata is an agricultural land located in the south district of Isabela City, Province of Basilan. It covers three sitios, Cabunbata Proper, Block Number 35 and Pangaraan. It has a total land area of 1,098 hectares. About $\frac{3}{4}$ of the land area is owned by the United Workers Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Multi-Purpose Cooperative (UWARBMPC), planted with rubber, coffee, black pepper, and palm oil. It is about five kilometers away from the city proper. Barangay Cabunbata has a total of 289 households with a total population of 1,664. Of this number, there are 882 male and 782 females. 30% of the residents are Muslim and 70% are Christians.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES OF AREA AND RESPONDENTS

Table 1-*Total population per sex of Selected Barangay In Zamboanga City, Basilan and Zamboanga Sibugay Province*

Barangay	Total Population	Male	%	Female	%
Zamboanga City					
Cabatangan	3,443	1,683	48.88	1,760	51.12

Tumaga	23,636	11,648	49.28	11,988	50.72
Lapaz	3,897	2,108	54.09	1,789	45.90
Limpapa	4,143	2,076	50.10	2,067	49.89
Zamboanga Sibugay					
Katipunan	2,072	1,051	50.72	1,021	49.27
Surabay	1,459	714	48.93	745	51.06
Basilan					
Cabunbata	1,664	882	53.0	782	47.0
Maloong	1,135	452	39.8	683	60.2
Tumahubong	6,423	3,112	48.5	3,311	51.5

(Table 1-1 shows that there is a small difference in the percentage of male and female in selected areas of Zamboanga City and Sibugay Province in terms of population.

Table 2- Age of Respondent

Age of Respondents	Frequency	%
16-20	11	15.1
21-25	9	12.3
26-30	10	13.6
31-35	7	9.6
36-40	13	17.8
41-45	11	15.1

46-50	3	4.1
51-55	1	9.6
56-60	1	1.4
61 and above	1	1.4
TOTAL	73	100%

Table I-2 shows the age range of respondents. Most of the respondents are those who belong to 36-40 year old age bracket comprising 13 or 17.8 % of total respondents. Then 11 respondents or 15.1% belong to the 16-20 years old bracket; 11 respondents are also 41-45 years old or 15.1%; some 10 respondents or 13.6% belong to 26-30 years old; 9 respondents or 12.3% are within ages 21-25 years old; and seven respondents belong to ages 31-35 or 9.6% of total respondents.

Table 3- Membership in Women’s Organization per Barangay

Area	Number of Women PO Members	Percentage of women organized as to total population
Zamboanga City		
Cabatangan	826	46.9
Tumaga	7,992	66.7
Lapaz	420	23.4
Limpapa	649	31.3
Zamboanga Sibugay		
Katipunan	357	34.9

Surabay	239	32.0
Basilan		
Cabunbata	586	75.0
Maloong	242	35.4
Tumahubong	2,482	75.0
TOTAL	13,783	

Table 3 shows the total number of organized women in selected barangays for the interview. In four barangays in Zamboanga City, there are 9,887 women belonging to organized groups. In Zamboanga Sibugay, 596 women belong to organizations out of a total population of 1766. In Basilan there are 3,312 women who are organized. In two barangays of Cabunbata and Tumahubong, the high percentage of women who are organized belong to the agrarian reform cooperatives where they take active part in the leadership structures. These women are also involved in socio-economic activities like a bakery, mat-weaving, and other livelihood projects that they engage.

Table 4- Women's Organizations Established

Area	Present Women's Organization	Total	BBGC Partner	%of batman Partner
Zamboanga City				
Cabatangan	CELWA Mothers Club Makalaya	3	2	11.8
Tumaga	HUKUSAKA Makalaya MOWW	5	3	17.6

	Mercedarian SMWO			
Lapaz	Makalaya R.I.C Rose Garden Women Organization KFI Women Organization	3	1	5.9
Limpapa	Voses de Las Mujeres Mothers Club	2	1	5.9
Zamboanga Sibugay Katipunan	BNS BHW Makalaya	3	1	5.9
Surabay				
	BNS BHW Makalaya	3	1	5.9
Basilan				
Cabunbata	Kahayagan MOWW Makalaya KFI Kalahi	5	3	17.6
Maloong	MSYO Makalaya CCF women Organization	3	2	11.8

Tumahubong	TUWA MOWW Makalaya	3	3	17.6
TOTAL	<i>* those organizations in bold letters are members of BBGC</i>	30	17	100.0

Table 4 shows the existing women's organizations in the selected areas of Zamboanga City, Zamboanga Sibugay and Basilan and their affiliation with the BBGC. In Zamboanga City there are 41.2 % of women organizations who are partners of BBGC. In Cabunbata, Isabela, Basilan, 47.0% of women's organizations are partners of BBGC through ACORD and the local agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs) cooperative. In Zamboanga Sibugay province, majority of the women there are members of Makalaya. Out of 30 women organizations identified in the target areas of study, 17 women organizations are partners of BBGC.

Table 5- Women participation in the 2002 barangay election

Area	Year 2002 Barangay Elections	
	Candidates	Elected
Zamboanga City		
Cabatangan	2 women candidate	*1 Brgy. Chairwomen *1 Brgy. Kagawad
Tumaga	9 women candidates	*1 Brgy. Kagawad
Lapaz	4 women candidates	*1 Brgy. Kagawad *5 SK Kagawad
Limpapa	2 women	-0-
Zamboanga Sibugay		

Katipunan	116 women candidates	4 Brgy. Kagawad SK Chairwoman 5 SK Kagawad
Surabay	64 Women candidates	3 Brgy. Kagawad 4 SK Kagawad
Basilan		
Cabunbata	10 women candidates	1 Brgy. Kagawad 1 SK Chairwomen 1 SK Kagawad
Maloong San Jose	4 women candidates	1 SK Chairwomen 1 SK Kagawad
Tumahubong	3 women candidates	3 Brgy. Kagawad
TOTAL	214	33

Out of 214 women candidates in the 2002 Barangay election in the target barangays, only about 33 or 16% managed to get elected as barangay officials. Of the 33, there are 5 who were elected as Punong Barangay/SK chairwoman. The rest are elected as kagawad or barangay local legislative officials. In Zamboanga City, out of the 17 women candidates who ran for the barangay and SK elective posts, four were elected as barangay officials and 5 Sangguniang kabataang officials women in barangay Lapaz. In Zamboanga Sibugay, there were 180 women candidates and only 16 were elected as barangay kagawad and SK officials. In barangay Surabaya there are three barangay officials and four SK Officials while in barangay Katipunan, four were

elected as barangay kagawad and five SK kagawad. In Basilan, 8 out of 17 women who participated in the last barangay elections were elected.

All of the 214 women candidates were assisted by ACORD and the BBGC through their attendance in campaign management training, BOBG workshops, and leadership formation programs. However, based on the interviews, not all the women candidates were fully supported by all women’s organizations in their respective barangays.

Mainstreaming Gender and Development in Local Governance

Table 6 -Definition of gender in governance

Definition of Gender in Governance according to the respondents	Frequency	%
To promote democratic, collective and active participation of women in Governance	32	43.8
- Promote educational advancement and development of women	3	4.2
-Identifying problems, issues and concern on Gender and Development (GAD)	14	19.2
- Encourage women to participate to make barangays run better	14	19.2
-Conducting barangay planning with women participation	5	6.8

-Fight for women's rights	2	2.7
-No idea	3	4.2
TOTAL	73	100

Each of the respondents were given questionnaires or asked what would be their definition of gender in governance. The above table indicates the respondents' definition of women in Gender in Governance. 32 respondents or 43.8 % defined it as one that promotes the democratic and active participation of women in governance. Two groups of 14 each defined it as a program identifying the problems/needs on gender and development and a program of encouraging more women to participate so running the barangay gets better. The rest of the definition says it is about conducting barangay development planning with women participation (5 or 6.8%), and three respondents said they have no idea.

Table 7- Activities and Strategies of ACORD/BBGC Partners in Training

Training and Activities (1999-present)	# of educational Training / activity	%	Strategies
Basic women awareness seminar (ACORD-Makalaya)	14	10.8	-Consolidation of existing groups
-Sports Development	2	1.6	-Organizing primary POs

-Electoral Campaign Management (ACORD-IPG)	6	4.6	-Participatory process -Advocacy -Follow-up meetings -Visitation -Workshop -Brainstorming -Spotting Potential Leaders -Core group building -General assembly
-Women in politics and Governance (ACORD-IPG)	9	3.1	
- Gender and Development (ACORD)	12	9.3	
Income Generating Activity	2	1.5	
Health care program for women	1	0.8	
Gender Sensitivity Training (ACORD)	19	14.7	
Sexual Harassment	4	3.1	
Leadership Skills Training (ACORD)	26	20.2	
Women right (ACORD)	13	10.1	
-Entrepreneurial Skills training	6	4.6	
BOWW (MAKALAYA-ACORD)	2	1.5	

BWAS (MAKALAYA-ACORD)	2	1.5
Local workshops and consultations (ACORD)	9	7
Recollection	1	0.8
Livelihood	1	0.8
TOTAL	129	100

Table 7 shows the kind of training interventions and activities that ACORD/BBGC implemented in which women's organizations in the target barangays participated. Likewise, the table also showed what the organizational strategies it employed was focused on community organizing efforts among existing and potential women's organizations. Some of these were training, workshops, community mobilization and support service delivery to enhance active women's participation in gender in governance. Leadership skills training ranked as one intervention that was frequently used with a rate of 26 activities or 20.2 % of the total activities (129), The next major training activity to promote governance is the gender sensitivity training which accounts for 19 sessions or 14.7%, followed by basic women awareness Seminar with 14 or 10.8%, women rights with the frequency of 13 or 10.1 percent, and Gender and Development (GAD) budget at 12 or 9.3%. BBGC's women in politics seminar and the electoral campaign management training were used only in the 2002 barangay elections. Aside from the activities cited in the table above, women's organizations were also invited and attended government-sponsored activities on orientation on the 1991 Local Government Code, barangay justice, and barangay organizational development.

The (Hukpong Kusog sa Kababaihan) HUKUSAKA in Barangay Tumaga in Zamboanga city received the most number of training and seminars conducted with 14.3 % of the total or around 18 seminars/training. This women organization also availed of a livelihood project in the form of a sewing machine given by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) which was facilitated by ACORD. This group was actively involved in the activity in the barangay and also in the public. In Basilan, barangay Cabunbata received the most number of trainings with 7 or 25.0 % of the total trainings conducted. KAHAYAGAN, the women's organization in barangay Cabunbata, also availed of a cooperative bake shop loaned out by a local NGO, the Kasangyahan Foundation, Inc (KFI). In barangay Katipunan and Surabaya in Zamboanga Sibugay, both got only two trainings each which made them the least which received such capability-building programs from ACORD/BBGC.

It is significant to note that several men have been actively supporting ACORD and the local women POs in engaging in gender and development trainings. In Zamboanga City, Mr. Nonoy Mondejar is actively involved in the advocacy work on gender issues and concern which the women's organizations lobby with the city government's GAD budget. In Basilan, Mr. Ben Cantay who is the cooperative plantation manager in barangay Cabunbata, gives lectures for the gender sensitivity and basic women awareness seminars. According to the respondents, it is good to include men in any activities and advocacy work that challenge gender role. Through their involvement, men will know and understand the gender issues and its manifestations in the workplace, at home, local governments, and among POs. Because men are starting to engage in some activities related to gender and governance issues in the target communities, the women organizations see this as a significant achievement in their interventions. One major highlight, according to the respondents, was the increasing number of males participating in activities marking International Women's Day celebration especially during the parade.

BDP-PRA (Barangay Development Process through Participatory Resource Appraisal)

BDP-PRA was introduced to ACORD by the BBGC sometime in early 2000. As a sub-grantee under the Bread for the World project of IPG-BBGC, ACORD proposed to cover at least 10 barangays in Zamboanga City and another 4 barangays in Basilan and six barangays in Zamboanga Sibugay, particularly in RT Lim municipality. ACORD's idea of the BDP-PRA was that it is a form of community organizing where there is active interface between the barangay government and the basic sectors such as women, youth, peasant, workers, and senior citizens. The offices involved in the barangay are the punong barangay, barangay council, barangay secretary, treasurer, and other barangay volunteers (barangay health workers, barangay nutrition scholars, day care workers, tanods, lupons).

Initially, ACORD had a hard time covering the barangays as there was lack of social preparation and some barangay officials see the project only as a way of accessing funds from donor agencies. However, because of its community organizing work especially among women, the BDP-PRA became an instant hit among the barangay officials and local POs. By helping each other to come up with their comprehensive barangay development plan using a highly participatory process, a synergy was created in the local communities. The process of BDP-PRA based on ACORD's learning from its exposure is that it is a good mobilizing instrument especially among women household members who are actively participating in the process. Through this approach people could fully express their own experience and needs in their community. ACORD's BDP-PRA is usually conducted over a period of 13 days --- four days of in-house training, six days practicum and three days consolidation and validation. What is important for the training is that such technology is transferred to the local communities composed of POs and the barangay government. Through this process, people

in the community and the barangay officials know how to collect data and they become analytical in terms of doing their plans. In such a way people become empowered and they know already how to prioritize their needs in the barangay.

III. Analysis of the Impact of Batman on Improving Women's Awareness, Participation in Local Governance

A. Awareness of women in the overall development in the community.

Of the total number of respondents, 73.9 % believe that women are also directly responsible in the development of the community. They believe that women should be actively attending the different activities in the barangay (planning, administration, beautification, infrastructure, health and sanitation, etc.). Through the active involvement of women, they can now easily express their demands and needs as community members. However, a significant number of women respondents still believe that women should only play a secondary role in the overall development of the community. They believe that their husbands or the males in the community should play a bigger role (some women respondents say they still consult first their husband before participating in different activities in the community). The reason usually cited is the time they have is mainly spent at home doing chores and caring for the children and family.

Some of the respondents revealed that through the BBGC intervention their perception on local governance changed after the training. They were now willing to participate in the seminars so they would be highly aware on how the barangay works especially on programs related to service delivery. Moreover, some women participants in ACORD/BBGC's trainings said they were later asked by the community to share their opinion and give ideas on local governance. Almost all of the respondents preferred to engage in direct community work rather than involving their selves in the formal structure. It was found out that women in the community have successfully negotiated and done

claim-making work through their women's organization for some livelihood support, vocational training courses, specialized skills training (e.g. dressmaking, mat-weaving), and even were made resource persons in trainings conducted by some national line agencies in their barangays.

Awareness of women in the Local Development Process

The interviews conducted revealed that 94.5% of the respondents were not aware of their barangay development plans before the ACORD/BBGC trainings started. They said that they only depended on a community development plan prepared by the city or the municipality for their barangays. In Zamboanga City, 60.3% of the respondents stated that they were not aware at the start of the process of local development planning. Moreover, these women groups used to sound off their needs and concerns only through irregular meetings called by the local governments, in lobby work for sectoral issues, and the usual rallies and mobilizations where they discuss gender and development issues.

Regarding BBGC's interventions, it showed some positive results as the respondents stated that the training became very useful and applicable in the barangay. It likewise brought some observable changes in the community especially making the barangay officials more highly accountable. Furthermore, BBGC's intervention made more women aware on their status and enhances their community participation. However, they need more motivation in order to expand further their insights and community involvement. On the other hand, through the continuous advocacy of women issues, some women in Basilan province particularly in Barangay Cabunbata became more attentive in any community activities.

Some women groups were able to pass resolutions with the barangay for support of livelihood and day care projects (Tumahubong, Sumisip and Cabunbata, Isabela). In the barangays where the BDP-PRA was completed, the people's organizations in the area put high importance to what is laid in the plan. *"Kinahanglan sundon ni Kapitan kay morag mao naman 'toy nasabutan"* (the

barangay captain should follow the plan as this is an agreement of sorts), one respondent justified their insistence on the BDP-PRA to be implemented.

Awareness in Political Representation

The research showed that a significant number of women community leaders vied for elective posts during the 2002 elections. While only around 15% managed to get elected, those who were elected were highly considered as credible community leaders with a long history of community service. Some of the factors that led these women leaders to seek position include the confidence they get from the trainings on gender and governance. However, a major factor which the women considered made women candidates disadvantageous is still the perception that the women's role is mainly confined to the house.

While electoral participation was a highly observable case of increased awareness on the important role of women in politics and governance, such is only true in the public sphere. The perceptions especially at the family level are that it will have negative effects on their role in the family. Some respondents believe that there is a tendency that the husband might misunderstand the involvement of their spouse in the public and blame her on all domestic problems.

Some of those who vied for elective seats did so on the prodding of their families. What was also revealing is that having an elective seat was a way out of unemployment. Barangay officials now enjoy some perks and a monthly honorarium that in very remote barangays can spell a difference. As one candidate aptly puts it, "*maayo na lang ni pambugas*" (this is a better way for having rice).

When asked why it is important for women to be represented in local decision-making, the respondents said that there should be a balance representation in government (50-50). They said that the male officials know nothing about women's issues and if they discuss about it, only trivialize women's concerns.

Awareness on the Gender and Development (GAD) Budget

As regards to the 5% GAD budget, majority of the respondents noted that they knew about it but have done nothing significant to intervene except in the case of Zamboanga City. The issue raised on the GAD budget was that it was not properly appropriated mainly because of the lack of advocacy among women's groups and NGOs. Likewise, even some women municipal and barangay officials acknowledge that they have other priorities about appropriating the Internal Revenue Allotment. Generally, the community especially in rural areas has no knowledge about the 5% GAD budget.

But lately in Basilan area, Hon. Gracia B. Rosales, a barangay kagawad in barangay Cabunbata, allocated a 5% GAD Budget in the barangay council. This was a first GAD barangay budget ordinance that was made in all the barangays in Isabela, Basilan. On the other hand, the city of Zamboanga allocated their GAD budget, through the initiative of some women city councilors and with the support of the mayor, Ma. Clara Lobregat. Most of the GAD budget went into projects for beautification, livelihood, health, and sanitation programs in the different barangays.

Through the seminars, trainings, and other activities conducted by ACORD/BBGC and Makalaya, many women organizations in the target barangays know the strategic importance of engaging the GAD budget and in democratic participation in governance. Most of the women respondents said that they now feel empowered as shown by their outspokenness over their rights and concerns as women in the community. Through that, they feel that they can express freely and comfortably their problems to the others and in the community.

Impact of Participation in the Family and in the Public

84.7 % of women respondents answered that they attained their confidence to involve in decision-making process starting in their family. As they said that sharing an opinion and collective decision-making is one thing important that binds the family. They opined that both couple should have equal decision

on whatever plans for the whole family such as the needs of their children, education, health and etc. 15.9% of the respondents said that they are depending on the decisions of their parents and husband in regards to family decision-making. As a leader in the barangay and elected women, 25% of the respondents stated that they involved themselves in the decision making process in the family as well as in the community.

75 % of women said they lack participation in the public sphere because they are busy with their respective families or work and doing other things. Some women were not allowed by their husband to join in any public works because they were task to be at home and taking care of their siblings. Some also, lack confidence in participating; they still had anxiety to have gatherings to others because they used to be at home as homemakers.

IV. CONCLUSION:

The study revealed that there are several factors that help and hinder women's political participation in politics and governance. While training is considered an important factor, it is not a significant instrument. Training, especially, the use of participatory tools like the BDP-PRA, can effectively facilitate the entry of more women in governance. But training alone cannot help mobilize the women to take an active role in governance. ACORD's experience showed that there should be a high degree of community organizing among women at the barangay level. A major helping factor in organizing women for political participation is the presence of already established organized groups like the ARB cooperatives in Basilan and the urban poor groups in Zamboanga City. Having women leaders elected to local posts give a tremendous boost to the struggle of women for equality, recognition and visibility in the political arena. Their presence can also be considered as gains that can be used as capital for pursuing a change agenda in local governments through the enactment of ordinances in support of women issues, effective lobbying for political and social

protection, and negotiating for development programs favorable to women and children.

Education and training is considered important in empowering the women in local communities to express their needs and concern in society. Nowadays, there is an increase of women representation in government because of their increasing awareness about the 1991 Local Government Code as well as the increased presence of multisectoral organizations. The participation of women in local politics and governance in Western Mindanao greatly increased also because of the shrinkage of government services. In many barangays, basic government services have not reached many households. In such instance, majority of those directly affected by lack of health services, primary education, peace and order, etc. are the women. Thus, the respondents view this situation as a 'helping' factor to organize women.

A major hindering factor for effective political participation of women in Western Mindanao is culture. In all the barangays, religious beliefs put women as 'secondary' actors in local development. Women who are active in community affairs mostly are members of church-based organizations or those influenced by traditional Catholic teachings. Likewise, in Muslim communities, the males still dominate how politics is pursued through the elders and the ulamas.

RECOMMENDATION

For the BBGC in partnership with ACORD, what transpired was that it was able to start and integrate its women in governance program in the community organizing process of the local NGO and communities. However, the intervention is generally limited to awareness-raising, technology transfer and campaign. The following are some of the recommendations that this study is proposing:

- Follow up activity for the awareness on women's empowerment through an enhanced leadership training seminar for women community leaders and barangay-municipal elected women officials.
- Assist women's groups to effectively lobby for a women's gender in governance agenda and the inclusion of women's issues and demand in the

policy formulation, allocation of resources, and local decision-making in local government units.

- Possible national advocacy for a law that would include in the curriculum in schools at the high school and college level modules on gender and development Issues.
- Help organize and promote a local women's network that would push for a grassroots-based organizing for women's participation in local politics and governance.