

Local Election's Outputs after Federalism in Nepal

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Abstract:- Political representation is believed to be a tool to enhance the competency of Indigenous women. It is also acknowledged as a factor for the socio-political empowerment and advancement of the communities they represent. However, it is always fascinating to explore what political representation meant to them, why and how they could come to represent, and how consequential and substantial their representation was. This paper interprets the construction from the narratives that come through one to one interviews with Indigenous women in Kakani Rural Municipality [Hill region] as well as Madhavnarayan Municipality, Rautahat [Terai region]. The opportunities and challenges of their political representation at the local level. After gathering the narratives, the data is discussed to reach the conclusion that political representation can be a gateway to enhance the leadership potential of Indigenous women. The research reveals that political representation is taken as a crucial tool for enhancement of their competency and it can support the empowerment of the community one represents, though there are some issues to be addressed with due time and efforts. Lack of prior experience not only constrained their political mobility and advancement but also, in situations, their male colleagues and the ward chairman intimidated them due to their politically inexperienced background. For some others, their own community too was not excited with their election process or their roles at the local government. Higher levels of political socialization and leadership training would be more goal-oriented.

Keyword:- Political Representation, Political Socialization, Leadership, Empowerment.

I. INTRODUCTION

As the male domination in Nepali politics, the stake of women in local political leadership has increased substantially. Leadership is frequently viewed as a foundation for boosting participation and representation of indigenous women. The question is, whether the elevated number of women in politics significantly impacts policies for the interest, preferences of the women representatives, women in general and the community they represent. A few areas are of general interest while studying women's political representation in Nepal, which importantly include but are not necessarily limited to: representation and structural change and community development at the local and national levels; political representation and empowerment of indigenous women, and the quota system and Indigenous representation. 50 percent of the seats designated for women at the municipal wards are reserved

for women; the nation had its first local elections in two decades, electing 35,041 local members at 753 different levels.

It was shown that female candidates' lack of access to funding, exacerbated by patriarchal views among political stakeholders, had a negative impact on their political participation (Cantrell, Magnus, & Bhatt, 2020). Women elected leaders, unlike their male counterparts, are forced to choose between their major identity as a homemaker/caregiver and their primary identity as a political leader. Their direct involvement in politics is not so effective. The strongly ingrained patriarchal societal norms determine gendered expectations and roles. As this, in Nepal women have similarly, More specifically, the kind of political leadership opportunities the indigenous women got or accepted generated more curiosity. Additionally, the process by which they came to represent or they got selected to represent, the difficulties they encountered when they had no prior experience with representation or those who had never served in the government was part of the research interest. The experiences on political representation, welcoming of their leadership in the community, and their sources of inspiration were of research attention.

In the aforementioned scenario, this research had three specific questions to answer: what political representation did the indigenous women receive, how the objective behind the representation was addressed and why was their representation significant.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Literature review examined the participation of indigenous women in local elections in Kakani Municipality following the implementation of federalism. The transition to federalism in Nepal brought about significant changes in the governance structure and increased opportunities for marginalized groups, including indigenous women, to participate in decision-making processes at the local level. This study aimed to explore the challenges and barriers faced by locally elected women and its implication to their leadership capacity, some theories were taken into consideration in the entire research work assuming that these theories would substitute the most reasonable ground for women elected to local level to be studied. This review combined existing literature to understand the challenges, opportunities, and strategies related to the participation of indigenous women in local elections in Kakani Rural Municipality.

However, they were inspired by the leadership of other political representatives including the ward chair, the mayor and the deputy mayor. However, they felt that they had gained some leadership quality and had access to the local political network. It marginally benefited the individual and the community they represented. But still there were people who were not in politics, and faced many challenges in their day-to-day lives.

III. METHODS AND MATERIAL

This research is a qualitative analysis based on the perspectives received on interview based topical stories from the indigenous women people’s representative (IWPR) from Kakani Rural Municipality (KRM) of Province 3 in Nepal. The narratives of the 20IWPRin the village were gathered through informal conversations in Nepali and Tamang languages as and when required for an in-depth understanding of the respondents with due ethical consideration and privacy to their names, party affiliation and contextual interpretations. On collection, the stories from all the 20 respondents, the data have been transcribed into English language and broadly prepared for both the narrative analysis to develop the core narratives and thematic analysis to comparatively develop the core theme of the subject. Further, the Constitution of Nepal and the Local Governance Act 2017 provide the theoretical foundation in advancing the discourse on the rationale of women and Indigenous women representation in Nepal. Sociological perspectives have been applied to comprehend gender based discrimination in the private and public domain, caste hierarchy stereotypes and the political hegemony within the Nepali social structure.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As stated in the methodology section above, for a thematic analysis and to comparatively develop the core theme of the subject, this result and discussion section includes the following subsections.

➤ *The Research Site and the Social Compassion of the Respondents*

Kakani is a rural municipality (Gaunpalika) and former village development committee in Nuwakot District in Bagmati Province of central Nepal. It is formed by combining six village development committees, Okharpauwa, Chautha, Kakani, Madanpur, Chaturale and Thansing from the past. At the time of the 2011 Nepal census, the Kakani rural municipality administered a population of 36,982 living in 7431 individual households. Location, Latitude 27° N and Longitude 82° E with altitude above 2000 meter. Kakani is situated on North West of Kathmandu, about 15-45 KMs from the city. Kakani is linked with Kathmandu city by Pasang Lamu Highway.

At the time of the 2011 Nepal census, Nuwakot District had a population of 277,471. Of these, 54.6% spoke Nepali, 39.9% Tamang, 2.0% Newari and 0.9% Lepcha as their first language.

38.2% of the population in the district spoke Nepali as their second language. Nuwakot, being a hilly area with few levelled grounds, most areas are still undeveloped.

In the last few years, huge changes can be seen. The city areas are provided with schools, colleges, hospitals and the road infrastructure is also developed. Two hydro power stations are currently in operation. People are dependent on agriculture, teaching, foreign economy, livestock farming, business, hotels, Agro Tourism, Eco Tourism and Khadya Bank etc.

Table 1 Community Wise Representation of the Respondents

Community	Percentage of the Respondents
Tamang	29
Newar	24
Gurung	17
Magar	5
Rai	3
Bishwokarma	7
Pariyar	8
Balami	7
Total	100

The social composition of the 20 research respondents in this research revealed that there were 8 different communities from among hill and flat indigenous who could represent in the wards from the municipal elections of 2017. Likewise, the elected indigenous women representatives were also divided into different age categories. The following graph describes their age composition.

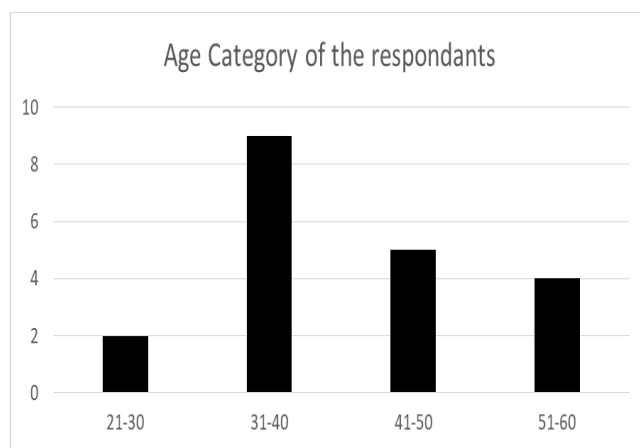


Fig 1 Age Composition of the Respondents

The age category of the respondents was 21-60 years where, eight of the 20 respondents were between the ages of 31-40, and five were between the ages 41-50. These two categories were found having higher degrees of motivation behind their political representation. However, four of them all between the ages 51-60, also expressed their thoughts that their entry into politics was more of a chance due to

their time off from family responsibilities. However, the participant in the age category 21-30 years, with her enthusiasm, expressed that she was happy that the local party leaders identified her as a potential future leader as she was expecting to join and continue political leadership.

Mohtey (2020) stated that caste discrimination, gender inequality, cultural barriers and poverty have largely deprived Indigenous women from receiving education in Nepal (Level of education was an important aspect related to the respondents' level of confidence in their political participation and communication skills which was highly realized during the research interviews with them.

Table 2 Educational Status of the Respondents

Educational Qualification	Percentage of the Respondents
Non formal education /Read and write only	20
Primary	38
Secondary	30
Intermediate	10
Bachelor	2
Total	100

Eight (38%) of the 20 respondents had completed primary level schooling up to grade five, compared to three (20%) of the respondents who had no formal education but could write their names. Five (30%) had completed secondary level. Three (10%) of the respondents had studied up to grade 12 education and one (2%) of the respondents had completed their grade bachelors education.

➤ *Socio-Political Leadership*

All the respondents were new in political leadership. Acquiring political leadership skills was a gradual process for all of them. It took a considerable period of time for them to understand what was going on politically. But, they articulated that the circumstances provided them with a radically distinct experience and learning opportunity. For example, the Covid-19 situation posed a big challenge for all of them. More or less they agreed with the viewpoint expressed by a young respondent, who said:

I had limited knowledge of politics and political leadership. The lockdown due to Covid 19 presented a challenge for us. Many of our planned projects were periodically halted.

However, political participation was viewed as an avenue for women empowerment. Responding to a follow-up query, seventeen of them admitted that they had no prior knowledge about politics. They formerly thought of themselves as mean people. They used to toil away all day outside their homes to make a living and would return home in the evening with little idea of what had transpired throughout the day. Thus, they were delighted to express that politics taught them a lot. They realised that politics brought about lots of changes. In particular, they achieved the ability and skill to speak. A 40- year- old research

respondent was more confident while she was telling her following tale:

How and when could one speak like this before? I am speaking to you directly in person right now. How could it be so before! Furthermore, it used to be exceedingly challenging to converse with any male. Now that everything is becoming obvious.

➤ *Empowerment through Socio-Political Mobilization*

The respondents from the Tamang indigenous community demonstrated their Nepali language proficiency while explaining the components of their socio-political mobilisation. A 34 years old respondent spoke easily in Nepali language during an interview with her:

My native tongue is Tamang language. I was unable to communicate in Nepali. But over the last five years, I have learnt Nepali so well that I can easily speak to anyone now. My family has supported me to participate in local election so I became one of the member of executive member of Kakani Rural Municipality.

Similarly, a 55-year-old respondent from the Gurung community who spoke Nepali confidently revealed that she had been actively participating in local politics for more than 20 years and became an active member since she joined a political party in 2001. Mrs. Gurung was very excited and eager to share her thoughts and ideas:

My party and the electorates trusted in my work and I got elected locally. I have very good support from my family and the people of my community. This is always crucial for every woman who aspires to enter politics.

More fascinatingly, a 40- year- old respondent, born as a Rai and married to a hill indigenous, perceived that political participation and leadership is something that enables women for social work. Thus, the local women should get wider opportunities to get involved in politics.

• *She was Found Appealing while she Commented:*

We have to give a chance to the new ones, right? If only we keep getting the opportunity, what and when will the others discover? Other ladies also need to advance. I would not have known or spoken before I was elected as a ward member. I learnt by joining politics. Now we have to give others a chance.

➤ *Challenges and Opportunities for the Women Representatives in Service Delivery*

Things were not easy for the women representatives in general and there were numerous difficulties while working. Particularly the economically unsound and marginalised communities anticipated increased assistance from the local representatives. Those wards where a large number of impoverished hills area required extra assistance from the local government during the Covid 19 pandemic, landslide and other disaster events during rainy season. Then the women reps had the greater responsibility of paying frequent visits to those families afflicted. Every time there

was a landslide, they had to walk to provide the victims with response, relief and basic supplies. And the hardest hit part in relief distribution was handled by them. A respondent from among those who had to work hard during the most recent landslide scenario in Kakani-5, Dadagaun remarked fluently:

The two ladies among us took the details on the required relief. The men didn't work to reach the doors of the people as hard as we ladies. The men didn't exert as much effort as we women to reach the doors of the people. The men generally performed their important work in the office and at the municipality.

However, in 50 percent of eight wards, all 8 elected members were reported to be working as a team maintaining equal concerns about matters within their jurisdiction. 30 percent of the respondents were found highly satisfied with their working relationship with the respective ward chairpersons, among the colleagues and the office employees.

➤ *Community Impacts*

Women's representation from the indigenous community did have several positive impacts. On a question, regarding what changes were experienced in the previous five years, a 41-year-old respondent replied,

I had the opportunity to be close to the people. Both the landslide and the Corona virus were occasionally terrifying. But if not for it without that, we might not be attempting to contact the population. The children of Nir Maya Tamang attend boarding schools these days. In the past, they used to dabble with nasty words on the road, but not anymore.

One more similar response from a next respondent was, *I could work enough while I was in the ward. I initiated and to conduct training for women in tailoring and doll-making. We also worked on making roads and drains, installing electric lights, and that was what the inhabitants of each ward required.*

In an additional question on the prospects for their representation in future, nearly every respondent including the elected indigenous women representatives of 2017 and 2022 municipal election expressed great confidence. A 40-year-old respondent stated.

We now understand politics. We know what needs to be done and how to execute it. Therefore, we will be re-elected. However, eight of the twenties representatives in the study area were aware that there could be a stiff rivalry and competition for getting a candidacy in the indigenous category too. Earlier, the parties had to struggle finding a candidate in the indigenous woman category and they had to request someone to become a candidate representing their party. By that time, in some wards, up to four candidates from the same party had started demanding to become candidates in the same category. And in response to a follow-up question, two of the respondents expressed their limitations while they said,

Everything is subject to the party member's decision. Additionally, elections also cost money and we did not make any money for the upcoming elections.

➤ *About Madhav Narayan Municipality*

• *Brief Introduction*

As the globalization the information technology is increasing day by day and the municipality publish its daily updates and there are many more local recommendations as well as developments activities meetings are conducting. This area is slightly in development. It will be managed with the help of the local bodies as well as the public.

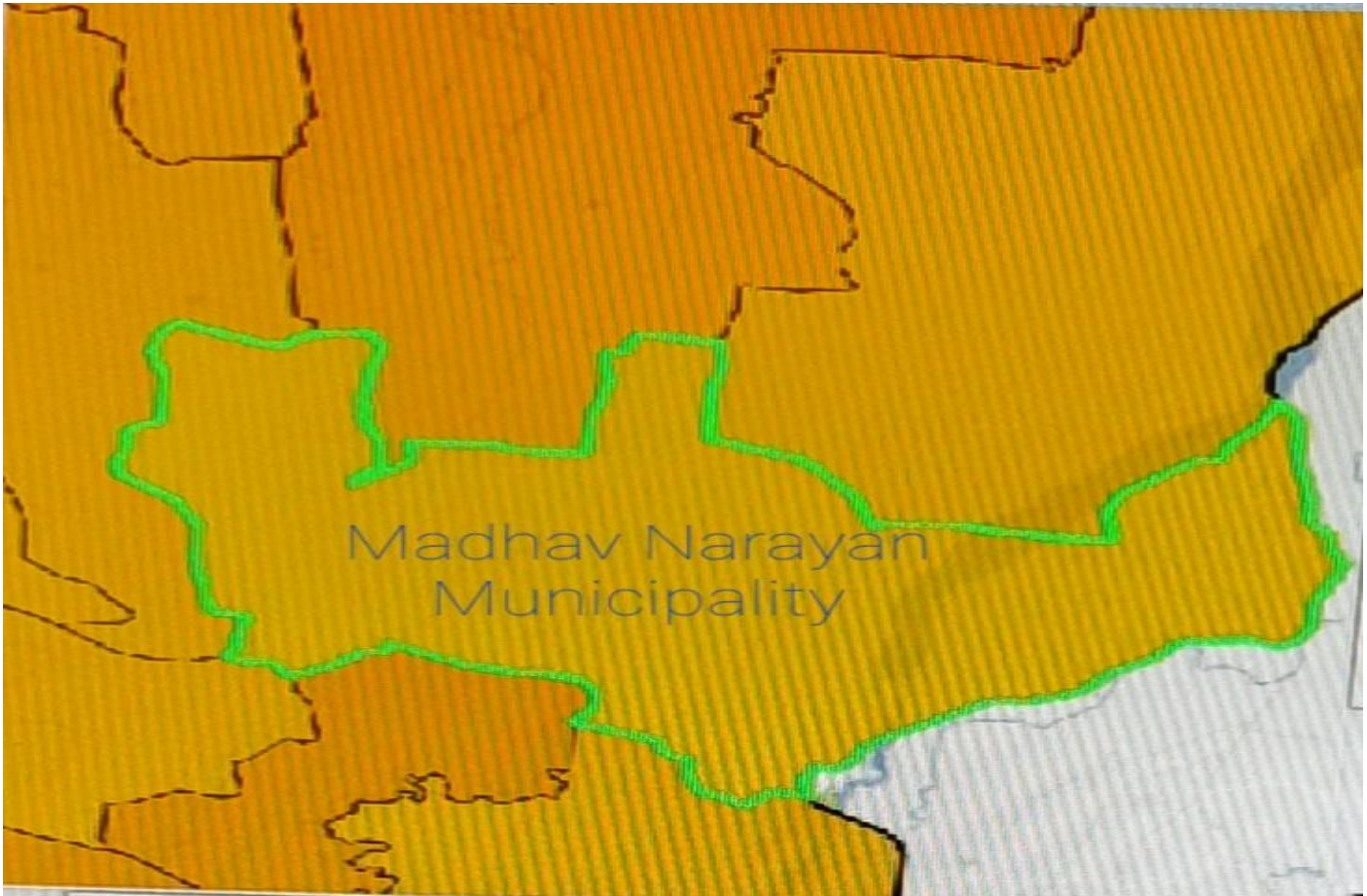
Its establishment date is 2074.05.02, total wards are 9 and area is 48.53 sp.km. And total population is 35,694 and pre villages are: 1.Dipahi 2. Khesrahiya, 3. Sakhuawa, 4. Bisunpurwa Manpur, 5. Mithuawa, 6. Madhopur, 7. Pipara Rajwada, 8.Pipara Rajwada, 9. Gadho. Bhagwanpur.

- ✓ The castes are Yadav, Sah, Thakur, Pandit, Hajara, Mahara, etc are in majority.
- ✓ Madhav Narayan Municipality: It lies in Madhesh Province, Rautahat District.
 - 40,894 Populations [2021] – Census
 - 48.53 km² Area
 - 842.7/km² Population Density [2021]
 - 1.5% Annual Population Change [2011 → 2021]

➤ *Madhav Narayan: Municipality, Nepal*



Fig 2 Madhav Narayan: Municipality, Nepal



Map 1 Madhav Narayan Municipality

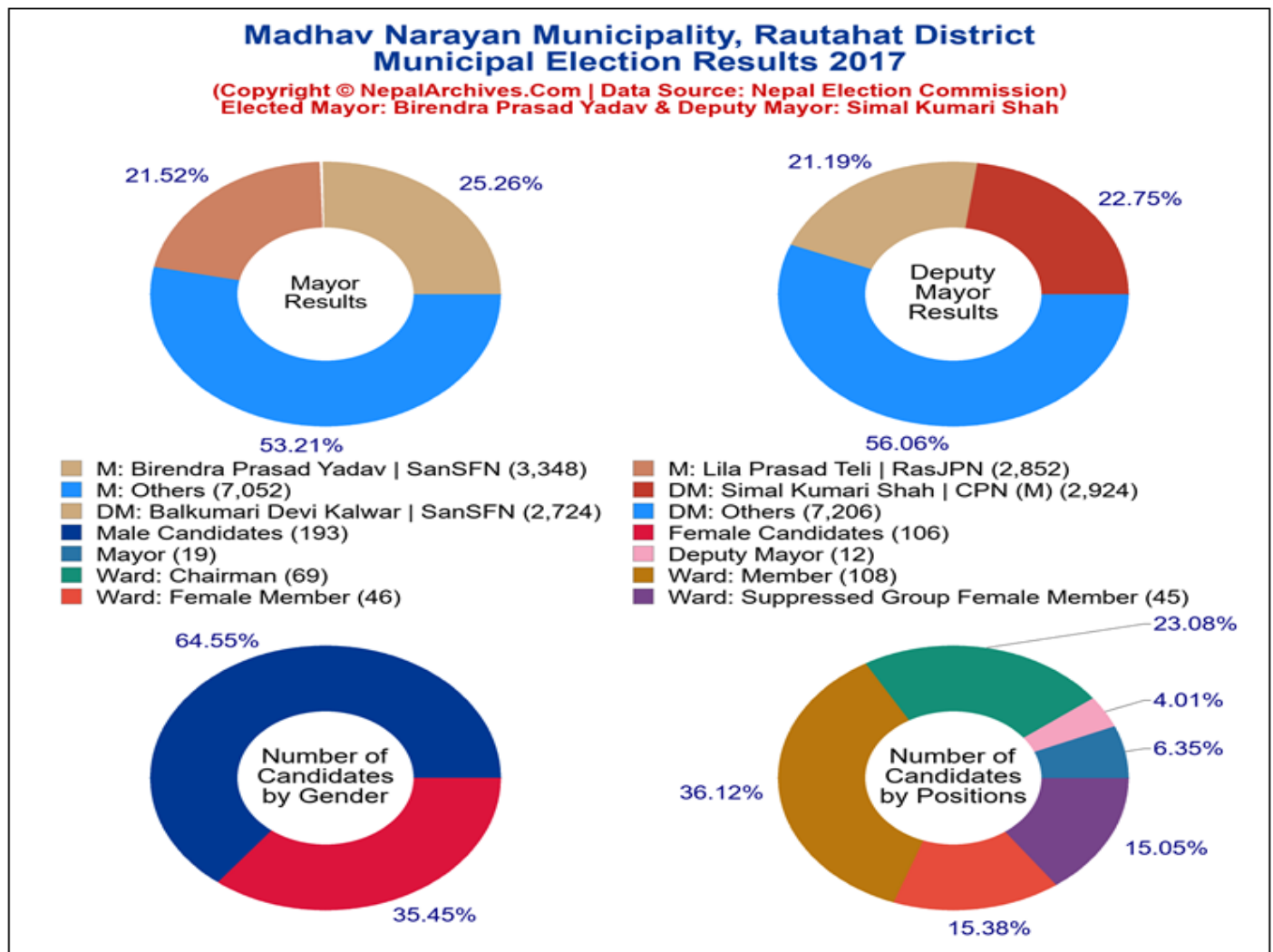


Fig 2 Municipal Election Results 2017 Pie chart of Madhav Narayan Municipality, Rautahat District is based data obtained from Nepal Election Commission.

The chart contains brief information about name, affiliated political party and total votes obtained by the winner, first runner-up and all other candidates combined for key municipal positions as well as number of candidates based on gender and positions.

The Chart is free to reuse or redistribute for governmental, research, educational or other non-profit purpose.(Creator/Analyst: Milan Karki | Copyright: NepalArchives.Com | Data Source: Nepal Election Commission)

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➤ Ideological Biasness

Though there are so many ideologies are regarded in the society found in the society but the researcher has examined the research under the category of feminism

perspectives but no hindrance demarcation were laden and it has not gone with any kind of biasness.

V. ANALYSIS

Federalism has been seen as the answer to solving regional inequality and reducing economic, social, and religious discrimination; the country has transformed into a federal structure as a result. Nepal has been a federal democratic republican state since 28 May 2008 (15th Jetha, 2065 BS).The benefits of federalism are that it can encourage political participation, give states an incentive to engage in policy innovation, and accommodate diverse viewpoints across the country. The advantage of the local government is that it works closer to the people who make it convenient for them to approach the authorities or the local government to solve their problems quickly and at minimum cost. It can be very effective in protecting the local interests of the people.

VI. CONCLUSION

This paper concludes that political representation enables to enhance the aptitude of indigenous women at the local level and can support, to some extent, their empowerment and growth of the community they represent. However there are certain elements that govern their substantive and meaningful representation. In most contexts their representation was simply to attain the constitutional and legal requirements and it was not an ordinary course of events. The kind of political leadership opportunity the indigenous women got or accepted was largely motivated by tokenism. For some others their representation was purely symbolic. However, there were people who were not in politics, and faced many challenges in their day-to-day lives. They were socially discarded, the majority of whom were ignorant of politics and political representation, thus were lacking previous experience of representation. They had never experienced any political representation or served the government.

However, they were inspired by the leadership of other political representatives including the ward chair, the mayor and the deputy mayor. Additionally, their representation was not likely to have significantly measurable socioeconomic impact on them and their community. The community response they achieved was typical. However, they felt that they had gained some leadership quality and had access to the local political network. It marginally benefited the individual and the community they represented. Prior to becoming political leaders, they were not political rivals and were elected by the ordinary citizens. However, during the five years of their representation, they had grown more certain that, provided a second opportunity or chance, they would be able to lead their community.

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