

## AN ASSESSMENT OF WOMEN LOCAL CHIEF EXECUTIVES IN THE PHILIPPINES

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### *Abstract*

*The study assessed the political participation of local chief executives in 1995-1998 in terms of (1) factors contributing to political winability, (2) awareness of women's issues and concerns, (3) constraints on women politicians and how to overcome these constraints, and (4) the relationship between the awareness by the women local chief executives of women's issues and their responses to these issues through programs.*

### **Introduction**

The participation of women in politics as elected officials smacked of tokenism in the early years after the granting of the franchise to them in 1936. So few made it. The situation changed somewhat as more and more women vied and won elective positions in government. The feminist hope of equalizing the distribution of elective positions in government among the sexes reached an all time high when Corazon C. Aquino was catapulted to the highest position in government, the Presidency, by the People Power Revolution of 1986. Her coming to power at a time when change in government found a wide and widening articulation gave so much hope to seekers of women's empowerment through

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the formation of a women's vote and the launching of women candidates in the various elections. But while she made more visible the emergence of woman from the covert area of politics (defined by Tapales in 1984 as participation in policy-making levels in the bureaucracy and by Reyes in 1995 as participation in the activities of advocacy groups) to the overt political domain, nevertheless she could not erase this bothersome question: If she were not the widow of Benigno Aquino, the well publicized martyr of President Ferdinand Marcos' martial law regime, would she have become the President of the Republic of the Philippines?

A similar question could be asked of another widow, Magnolia Welborn Antonino. Could she have been elected senator in the 1960s if it were not for the fact that she was made by her husband's political backers to take his position in the race after he died while deep in the campaign trail?

The tradition of a widow taking up her husband's cause(s) was trailblazed by the likes of Gabriela Silang, who in the 18th century took over the reins of the Ilocos region revolt against Spain after the capture and execution of its leader, Diego Silang, her husband. While her entry into the public world of men, as well as that of President Aquino and Senator Antonino, seem to project a gender-fair Filipino culture, this may not be the case.

Studies have been made that touch on the cultural milieu of women and how this impacts on their entry in electoral politics. Among these is that of University of Hawaii political science professor Belinda Aquino (1994) which discusses, among others, the effects of Spanish and American colonization on the Filipina. She credits the Filipina's retrieval of her pre-conquista bravura which got buried by her acculturation as a subject of Catholic and patriarchal Spain to her new acculturation as a citizen of a country envisioned by its new

colonial master as “America’s show window of democracy in the Far East.” Mass education that promoted liberal democracy was introduced. Women who managed to avail of it were able to have careers outside the home. They even got into professions that used to be men’s private preserve. They were in the natural and social sciences, law, medicine, engineering, accountancy and the like. But significantly enough, few ventured into the realm of electoral politics. These were those who received the blessings of the men in their lives—husband, father, or affinal relative.

A study of psychiatrist Lourdes V. Lapuz (1977) provides plausible answers to women’s minimal participation in electoral politics as candidates for the various elective government positions. The Filipino woman, she avers, knows the Philippine cultural script very well. Lapuz’ description of this script finds a rejoinder in the study of Clark D. Nehar (1980). In the interviews he conducted in Cebu with women local leaders, he found out that while they were very active in social development projects and considered positions in government as instruments of social development, they nevertheless would vie for such positions only if they would not place themselves at a higher social status than that of their respective husbands.

Another study, that of University of the Philippines based political science professor Carmencita Aguilar on women members of the national legislature, focuses our attention on the economic and social standing of women. Those who managed to enter electoral politics as successful candidates belie the egalitarian promise of a liberal democracy:

The women politicians in local governments come from families considered prominent and well-to-do in the locality where they were elected to office. Most of these families are considered the elites of the community (Aguilar in Tapales 1992:27).

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Most women career politicians . . . enter politics upon the encouragement of male relatives or friends who have access to politics or are in politics themselves . . . . Some women politicians were assured of mass support through their relatives in politics who have access to well-organized political machines and party support (*Ibid.*: 29).

While Aguilar's study shows (1992) that not all women politicians came from elite families and many of them had been recognized as community leaders before entering politics, very few women actually entered electoral politics. The participation of women in the Philippine legislature remained at 10% (HDN 1997). At the local level, the same disproportionate ratio of women elected officials vis-a-vis their male counterparts formed part of the reality.

In the 1995 elections, figures of the Commission on Elections showed that eight out of 75 provincial governors were women, four out of 68 city mayors, and 125 out of 1,536 municipal mayors. Total women local chief executives totalled 137 only (See Table A). Figures for 1998 show similar trends but are difficult to segregate by area at the moment.

**Table A**  
**Male and Female Local Chief Executives,**  
**Comparison of 1992 and 1995 Elected Officials**

Level of LGU	1992						1995					
	Male		Female		Total		Male		Female		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Province	70	93.33	5	6.67	75	100	67	88.0	8	12.0	75	100
City	65	97.01	2	2.99	67	100	64	94.1	4	5.9	68	100
Municipality	1,425	92.77	111	7.23	1,536	100	1,411	91.86	125	8.14	1,536	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,560</b>	<b>92.97</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>7.03</b>	<b>1,678</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,541</b>	<b>91.78</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>8.22</b>	<b>1,679</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: COMELEC

## **Objective of the Study**

The objective of this study is to assess the political participation of women as local chief executives in 1995-1998. The assessment focused on the following: (1) factors contributing to political winability, specifically the role of family background; (2) awareness of women's issues and concerns; (3) constraints on women politicians and how to overcome these constraints; and (4) relationship between the awareness by the women local chief executives of women's issues, and their responses to these issues through programs.

The study is limited to local chief executives because, unlike the members of the local legislatures, their respective offices grant them the capacity not only to provide policy direction but also to see their policies through.

## **Methodology**

Questionnaires were sent to all 137 local chief executives in office by January 1998. The survey instrument contained questions on the respondents' socio-economic background, political experience, awareness of constraints against women politicians, and suggestions on how to overcome these constraints as well as how to encourage more women to run for public office.

Follow-up interviews and observations were conducted in March 1998 with selected respondents. Selection was based (1) on known outstanding abilities of the women, (2) availability of documentation about their projects or themselves, and (3) relative proximity to existing project areas of the Local Government Center.

Due to yet incomplete Commission on Election (COMELEC) reports when the study was being conducted, we had to rely on newspaper accounts.

The *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (PDI) reports that of the 94 key elective positions in Mindanao only 11 were held by

women. Of the 11, two are women city mayors and five are women governors. One of the new women city mayors served as a representative in the House of Congress for three consecutive terms; another mayor took the reins of the city from her husband who held it for three terms. All five women governors come from elite families (August 6, 1998).

An earlier account of the same newspaper gives the information that four of Mindanao's 23 governors, nine of its 49 representatives and one of its 16 mayors are women (one governor took over only in January 1998 after she won an election protest). The report further claims that "except for a few, most of the women leaders are wives or daughters of politicians" (March 7, 1998). Compared with COMELEC statistics, this shows that all women governors by March 1998 were from Mindanao and only one is not—the governor of one Central Luzon province who also comes from a political family.

These statistics call for an inquiry on why more women in Mindanao and the Visayas than those in Luzon entered local electoral politics. Interesting though the inquiry could be the study could not pursue it due to its set objectives.

It must be noted that in the course of the study some aspects of the research were de-emphasized (such as administration party affiliation) and others given more emphasis (like career paths) because initial findings of the survey pointed to the importance of career path more than party membership, since party switching is generally practiced by politicians in national as well as local levels.

The first set of questionnaires was mailed to all women local chief executives in January 1998. Each questionnaire was sent with a self-addressed stamped envelope. Some were followed up personally and by telephone. Of the total 137

women executives, 80 (58.4%) returned the questionnaires by fax or by mail. Responses kept coming until April 1998.

**Profile of Respondents**

Among the 80 respondents, eight were governors, four were city mayors, and 68 were municipal mayors. The respondent governors represented 10% of the total respondents, the city mayors four or 5%, and the municipal mayors comprised 85% (Table 1).

**Table 1**  
**Respondents by Position**

Position	Frequency	Percentage to total respondents	Actual No. of women LCEs in office	Percentage of respondents to total
Governor	8	10.0	8	100.0
City mayor	4	5.0	4	100.0
Municipal mayor	68	85.0	125	54.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>58.4</b>

The responses, although comprising only 58.4% of questionnaire recipients show a good representation among the higher level chief executives. All the governors and the city mayors sent in their replies, showing 100% returns. The proportion is less for the municipal mayors of which only 68 replied out of 125 (54.4%). A few mayors we encountered at seminars, when followed up, said they never received the questionnaires sent by mail. In one rural town, when a researcher followed up one request, the researcher found that our questionnaire was neatly filed, but apparently was never given to the mayor.

Responses were received from all regions in the country. As can be seen in Table 2, we received 100% responses from

the few women local chief executives in Regions XI and XII (Eastern and Central Mindanao). Eighty percent (80%) of the women LCEs in Region II gave their responses. Region VI (Western Visayas) respondents comprised 72.2% of the total women local chief executives, while Region V (Bicol) respondents comprised 66.6% of the total. In Region III (Central Luzon) 57.1% of the women LCEs replied; 50.0% responded in Region IX (Western Mindanao) and the Cordillera Administrative Region. The lowest response rate came from Region I, with only 33.3% (See Table 2).

**Table 2**  
**Respondents by Region**

Region	F (1)	Percentage to total (2)	Actual No. of women LCEs in the region (3)	Percentage of respondents to total by region (1/3)
CAR	2	2.5	4	50.0
I	4	5.0	12	33.3
II	8	10.0	10	80.1
III	4	5.0	7	57.1
IV	11	13.8	21	52.3
V	4	5.0	6	66.6
VI	13	16.2	18	72.2
VII	8	10.0	17	47.0
VIII	11	13.8	19	57.8
IX	2	2.5	4	50.0
X	4	5.0	7	57.1
XI	6	7.5	6	100.0
XII	1	1.2	1	100.0
CARAGA	2	2.5	5	40.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>58.4</b>

Table 3 shows their distribution by age. Two are very young, belonging to the 21-30 age bracket. One of them was a 27-year old governor of her province. Four belonged to the

31-40 age group (5.0%); 18 (22.5%) belonged to the 41-50 age bracket, while 16 (20.0%) were over 61 years old. Half of the respondents (40 or 50.0%) belonged to the 51-60 age group (Table 3).

**Table 3**  
**Age of Respondents**

Age Bracket	Frequency	%
21-30	2	2.5
31-40	4	5.0
41-50	18	22.5
51-60	40	50.0
61 and above	16	20.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>

A majority of the respondents were married (59 or 73.8%), 13 were widowed, two were separated or divorced, while six were single (Table 4). Many of them had five or more children (29 or 36.2%); 28 had 3-4 (35.0%). Only two among the married women had no children (2.5%) (Table 5).

**Table 4**  
**Civil Status of Respondents**

Civil Status	Frequency	%
Single	6	7.5
Married	59	73.8
Separated/Divorced	2	2.5
Widow	13	16.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 5**  
**Respondents by Number of Children**

No. of Children	Frequency	%
0	2	2.5
1-2	15	18.8
3-4	28	35.0
5 and over	29	36.2
Not applicable (single)	6	7.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Many of the respondents had several children. This did not pose a problem. After all when they assumed their current posts their children were no longer very dependent on them. Furthermore, more than half of them were past the child-bearing age.

### **Career Path**

Their local elective post is not the first job for all the respondents, as they had held jobs outside the home before holding their current posts. Twenty-one of the respondents (26.6%) served as provincial or municipal legislators or *Sanggunian* members before becoming mayor or governor, while two (2.5%) served as *barangay* officials. Seventeen practiced their professions as lawyers or doctors, some for as long as 30 years before running for public office. In fact, one governor had a thriving practice as a medical doctor before being enticed to go into politics. Eleven (13.8%) were school teachers and six (7.5%) were school administrators. Seven (8.8%) were businesswomen while two were NGO leaders (Table 6). As the table further shows, most of the women LCEs had long work experience—some as long as 30 years before assuming their current posts.

**Table 6**  
**Positions/Occupations Held by Respondents Before the Current Office**

Position(s) Held Before	Frequency	%	No. of Years
1. Teacher	11	13.8	5-29
2. School Administrator	6	7.5	2-20
3. Legislator (prov'l, municipal)	21	26.2	3-9
4. Businesswomen	7	8.8	14-30
5. NGO Leader	2	2.5	4-15
6. Local Chief Executives	2	2.5	3-9
7. Nat'l Government Administrator	8	10.0	2-32
8. Private Practitioner (doctor, nurse, midwife, lawyer, banker, etc.)	17	21.2	1-30
9. Barangay Official	2	2.5	3-5
10. Others (housewife, law student, administrative asst.)	3	3.7	
11. No answer	1	1.3	
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Eight of the respondents were former vice-mayors while one was a former vice governor, serving as local *sanggunian* chair and apprentice local chief executive before assuming the mayoralty or governorship post. Nine served as members of the *sangguniang panlalawigan* while two served as members of *sangguniang bayan*. Two were former *barangay* chairs. These show that many respondents had previous local government experience, and did not enter politics for the first time to run as mayor or governor.

Others worked in various capacities in government. Several came from the Department of Education; some served as teacher, school principal, district supervisor, or assistant office chief. Other respondents served in different government agencies such as the Central Bank, COMELEC, or The Labor Department.

Many of the women who ran for mayor or governor for the first time, were not total strangers to governance: they had experience in administrative or political posts, and were

far from being babes in the woods. One exception is the youngest governor in the group who worked briefly as a private nurse before plunging headlong into the governorship. Her credential as daughter of a powerful congressman who had been in government service for a long time was enough to make her win the top provincial post. Like a few of the other women chief executives, her parents were both in politics at the time of her election: Her father was a congressman and her mother, a mayor.

### Entry into politics

Many of the respondents entered politics after the collapse of the Marcos regime: 22 (27.5%) ran for office in 1992 while 10 (12.5%) ran in 1988; nine (11.2%) entered politics in 1986 (Table 7). Nine entered only during the 1995 elections, and are relatively new in politics, but as the preceding table shows, they had worked in other capacities before.

**Table 7**  
**Year of Entry into Politics**

Year of Entry in Politics	Frequency	%
1957*	1	1.25
1960	1	1.25
1963	1	1.25
1967	1	1.25
1972	1	1.25
1976	4	5.0
1980	6	7.5
1982	1	1.25
1986	9	11.2
1987	4	5.0
1988	10	12.5
1989	7	8.8
1992	22	27.5
1995	9	11.2
No answer	3	3.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\*School Politics only.

The women entered politics in various ways. Except for seven who said they ran on their own, the rest entered through several means. Forty-one said they were drafted by the party; 34 acknowledged that they came from political families; 30 had husbands who came from political families. As many as 33 acknowledged the prominence of their families in the local area (which included both social and political prominence); 39 said they were drafted by friends and relatives. Only 27 said they were drafted by their respective socio-civic organizations (Table 8).

**Table 8**  
**How Respondents Entered Politics**

<b>Manner of Entering Politics (Multiple Response)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
I came from a political family	34
My husband comes from a political family	30
Our family is prominent in the area	33
I was encouraged by friends and relatives	39
I was drafted by my socio-civic organization	27
I was drafted by the party	41
I ran on my own	7
Others:	9
1. desire to share with the community her nursing skills	1
2. her husband said "yes" first to friends and relatives	2
3. she ran on her own after the death of her husband, a mayor	1
4. appointed as OIC in 1986	2
5. people's support/endorsed by the masses	1
6. was drafted by the indigenous people	1
7. was appointed by DILG secretary	1

Of those who elaborated on their response to "others" as means for joining politics, two said they ran after the death of their respective husband or father who were mayors; two were appointed as OIC mayor in 1986. This brings to mind what was earlier mentioned: In the Philippines, the notion

that women are appendages of men serves as passport to their entry in electoral politics. As earlier mentioned, Corazon Aquino became president because she was perceived as someone who would continue her slain husband's political agenda.

The above data show that indeed family background is a factor that shortens the political trek to a public office. For many women however, the trek is arduous and long. Except for the two cases already mentioned, the women LCEs had to start from scratch: they first served in local government as councilors or the government in administrative positions before running as mayor or governor. Consequently, while they faced more odds than the widows of politicians, they were in a way better off for they were provided more observation posts with which to assess the political situation and the community's needs.

### **Contributions to the Community**

The respondents were also asked to list three programs which they consider to be their most important contributions to the community. Infrastructure led the list (mentioned 19 times by the respondents). This is to be expected. Elected officials know that their respective constituents consider the construction of edifices, roads, bridges and the like as major achievements. It was followed by health and nutrition (17 times), the environment, peace and order, and justice (10 times).

Among these, only health and nutrition are stereotyped as women-oriented projects. Two other women-stereotyped projects are literacy/education (mentioned only five times), and welfare (mentioned eight times).

In health and nutrition, the respondents cited several innovative projects: establishment of a mini-hospital out of local funds, putting up an LGU-initiated medicare in the form

**Table 9**  
**Three Most Important Programs of Respondents**

Three Most Important Programs	Frequency
1. Literacy/Education	5
2. Livelihood	9
3. Infrastructure (water, roads, bridges, power, comm.)	19
4. Health and Nutrition	17
5. Welfare/Day-care, etc.	8
6. Environment	10
7. People's participation	5
8. Women	1
9. Economic Enterprises	6
10. Peace and Order, Justice	10
11. Agriculture	7
12. Housing and Resettlement	5
13. Moral recovery	3
14. Skills training	2
15. Delivery of basic services	5
16. Cityhood	1
17. Socio-economic/Development projects	9
18. Higher income of the LGU	3
19. Tourism development	1
20. Human Resource Development	1
21. Leadership by example	1

of health and retirement pension, assistance to indigents, re-education of people to include health in their budgets, outstanding implementation of nutrition program, provision of dental/medical missions to different barangays, fund allocation for the purchase of medicines and dental items, and population management. Welfare projects mentioned were provision of day care and service centers in all barangays, and programs on child care and protection.

What comes out from these data is that women LCEs are not gender-tracked into women-oriented projects. They respond to infrastructure needs of their community like water supply, power, roads and bridges, as well as livelihood programs, economic enterprise, peace and order, agriculture, housing and resettlement. These are gleaned from their an-

swers to the question of why they thought these were their three most important projects.

They said that these projects respond to felt needs for more efficient delivery of basic services (mentioned by 35), improvement in the quality of life (21), sustainable human development (15), and poverty alleviation (14) Table 10).

**Table 10**  
**Why Respondents Considered Projects Cited as Most Important**

Reasons	Frequency
1. Basic needs/Service delivery	35
2. Employment	8
3. Protect the area/Encourage investment	4
4. Increase local income	4
5. Alleviate poverty	14
6. Improve quality of life	21
7. Sustainable development/progress	15
8. Protect life, property, peace	7
9. Change in the people's attitude	2

### Job Satisfaction

Most of the women respondents were happy in their jobs. When asked if they would run for office again if they were given the chance, 74 (92.5%) categorically answered yes, while five (6.3%) answered no, and 1 (1.3%) gave no response while one was non-committal (Table 11).

**Table 11**  
**Will Respondents Run Again?**

	Frequency	%
YES	74	92.4
NO	5	6.3
No Answer	1	1.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>

In view of their pleasant experiences would they recommend that women run for political office? Most of the re-

spondents (78 or 97.5%) answered yes, while one or 1.25% answered no and another one or 1.25% had no response (Table 12).

**Table 12**  
**Would you recommend to other women to run for public office?**

	Frequency	%
YES	78	97.5
NO	1	1.25
No Answer	1	1.25
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The respondents also said that women have good qualities that will make them good mayors (29), that women power is needed in government (16), and that women are good managers (11). According to the respondents, the good qualities of women are their diligence and dedication to their work, as well as their service-orientation, perseverance, honesty, passion for detail, patience, and adherence to moral values. Above all, women are generally considered to be more afraid to commit crimes and engage in corrupt practices. (Table 13).

**Table 13**  
**Qualities of Women that should Encourage Them to Run for Public Office**

Reasons	Frequency	%
1. Good qualities of women	29	36.2
2. As capable as men	9	11.25
3. Women power needed in government	16	20.0
4. Women are qualified to lead	5	6.25
5. Good managers	11	13.38
6. No Answer	10	12.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The proposition that women should be encouraged to run for local public office was met with approval by the respondents. Thirty-two (32) respondents opined that this could be done through role modelling (good women leaders should be made known so they could be emulated), and advocacy (find ways of making women run for office). One very positive way of motivating women to go into politics is by involving them in government-initiated or implemented programs (cited by 19). If women are exposed to programs for the local populace, they may be interested in being part of the decision-making process for such programs. Women power is needed in government, they said, because gender balance is part of nation-building. Although not all the respondents are gender conscious, they nevertheless were agreeable to the proposition that women in political posts should push for pro-women policies.

**Table 14**  
**How can we encourage more women to run for local office?**

	Frequency
1. Fund assistance	3
2. Training/Seminars	6
3. Role Modeling	32
4. Advocacy	19
5. Recognition of works	4
6. Sharing of experiences	5
7. Involvement in programs	19
8. Provision of incentives	1

### **Women as Local Politicians**

The results of this survey of 80 local chief executives in office from 1995 to 1998 show that a majority of the respondents come from elite families, which reaffirm conclusions of earlier studies on women's political participation.

Nonetheless, while family background is an important consideration in getting women elected into local office, this is not the only qualification for public office. Except for one case, all the women surveyed have served the community in administrative posts in government or in professions which touch base with the community. In a sense, they are not completely ignorant of the problems faced by the community and act to meet those problems.

They are also aware of constraints against women in politics. From their own experiences, however, the women local chief executives surveyed think that women should run for local elected positions and in fact should be assisted and encouraged to run for public office.

It must be said that projects initiated by the women respondents are not necessarily aimed at meeting women's concerns as much as those of the community. This is very similar to findings of our earlier studies on women in the bureaucracy (Tapales 1984, 1992) which saw no correlation between gender and women-directed projects, since projects initiated by women were more influenced by the public posts held by the women bureaucrats than by their gender.

To find out more about projects initiated by the women local chief executives and their management styles, we conducted case studies on selected women from our survey. We interviewed four women municipal mayors, one city mayor, and one governor, and observed their projects. All the six chief executives came from political families. The governor replaced her own husband. The city mayor also replaced her husband, who comes from a long line of mayors of the city. One municipal mayor was appointed to the post of provincial board which her husband vacated upon his death. She later ran for mayor in a municipality where her husband, father-in-law, and other ancestors had served as mayor. Two

other mayors come from political families. The only non-traditional politician is a mayor who ran for the post after serving as councilor.

Four of the six respondents had received awards from their localities; two received *Galing Pook* (good local unit) award for innovative projects; one received a Republic Heritage award while another won an international UNESCO prize. Still another received a citation for outstanding health activities.

The six women espoused health and livelihood projects. One promoted projects by involving the community down to the smallest geographic level. People participation was instrumental in the successful projects in finance, peace and order, environmental protection, agriculture, education, youth welfare, and sports.

All the women have been active in women's organizations, be they professional, religious, or socio-civic, although not in overt political advocacy groups. Through these networks they have been able to promote their projects.

The women local chief executives studied have done well in the task they have defined for themselves. As one politician husband advised his wife, "Family prominence will get you elected but your reelection will depend on your own merit." Incidentally, all the women studied had been reelected once or twice.

### **Complementing Family Name with Accomplishments**

This survey of 80 women local chief executives and case study of six outstanding among them, provided insights on what makes a woman win an election and what she does when she gets elected.

This study validated earlier findings that one's family name is an important factor in winning elections at the local level in the Philippines. Like the legislators studied by Aguilar

(Aguilar in Tapales 1992), the local chief executives generally come from political families (either by birth or by affinity). A family name provides the needed recognition, an existing track record that one can claim as part of one's own, and funds to run for office. However, the women studied did not really come in without political exposure. Some of them have held other political positions before, as councilors or *barangay* officials. Most of them had careers of their own, some serving the government in other capacities, such as school teachers or employees of government agencies. Many have also been active in organizations.

What is most significant is that Filipino women local chief executives, aware of their families' prominence, have strived to be worthy of their family's name. Being exposed to politics at an early age have made them aware of the many problems brought to their predecessor's attention by the people. When it was their turn to be in office, they already had the capacity to respond to similar problems. This is not to say, nonetheless, that they do not have their own program priorities. In the interviews, the women reflected their own agenda.

The women local chief executives studied bring with them their experiences as mothers, and this is often reflected in the welfare projects they fund. But they are not gender-tracked into such projects; they also espouse infrastructures and economic development projects when they perceive them as the needs of the community.

Because they are happy in the thought that they are able to contribute to the community's well-being through their work, the women local officials want to see other women contribute to their communities in the same way. They wish to encourage other women by their own example.

Indeed, many of them have given good examples to other women. Through their focused efforts for the welfare of their community, they have been able to get outsiders to notice their local government units and themselves. Some of them have received, in fact, awards for their community projects, making their constituents, and, yes, their families, proud.

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