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**Women in Local Government
from 2006 to 2011:**
A Comparative Analysis of
Representation of Women
and Nominations for Women

Chulani Kodikara

INTERNATIONAL
CENTRE FOR
ETHNIC STUDIES



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Abstract

1. Introduction

This study of the 2006 and 2008-2011 local authorities elections held in Sri Lanka, compares the number of women elected to local authorities following the 2006 elections with figures from the 2008, 2009 and 2011 elections disaggregated by district, party and ethnicity across all 25 districts of the country. Secondly, it compares the number of nominations given to women at the 2006 and 2011 elections by the four major political parties –United Peoples Freedom Alliance (UPFA), United National Party (UNP), Janathe Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), and the Illankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi (ITAK) —disaggregated by ethnicity, in the districts of Badulla, Galle, Kurunegala, Moneragala and Trincomalee. This study aims to unmask and disaggregate national averages and statistics with a view to identifying and analysing patterns and trends in representation of and nominations for women at local government in Sri Lanka. In the absence of official sex disaggregated data on nominations, the study fills a critical gap while emphasizing the need to review the official election data-gathering framework from a gender perspective. The study was conducted as part of the Changing Minds: Nominations and Votes for Women Programme implemented by the Women and Media Collective and the International Centre for Ethnic Studies in collaboration with five other women's organisations.

Acronyms Contents Abbreviations

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Proportional Representation Electoral System

PR System

Provisional Results

PS

St. Lucia Muslim Congress

SLMC

Tanzanian National Alliance

TNA

Tanzanian Nationalist Party

TNP

United People's Freedom Alliance

UPFA

United National Party

UNP

Urban Councils

UC

United Nations

UN

Women and Media Collective

WMC

Acronyms and Abbreviations

Eelam People's Democratic Party	EPDP
International Centre for Ethnic Studies	ICES
Illankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi	ITAK
Janathā Vimukthi Peramuṇa	JVP
Municipal Councils	MC
Proportional Representation Electoral System	PR System
Pradeshiya Sabhas	PS
Sri Lanka Muslim Congress	SLMC
Tamil National Alliance	TNA
Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal	TMVP
United People's Freedom Alliance	UPFA
United National Party	UNP
Urban Councils	UC
United Nations	UN
Women and Media Collective	WMC

Women in Local Government from 2006-2011

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women's very low level of representation appear to be negligible at the level of local government. In particular, nominations for women by the major parties have remained low because of patron-client relationships that run from the national to the local and the high level of corruption to get into local government. Although the figures for nomination of women in local government show an upward trend, research indicates that this is mainly due to independent groups and smaller political parties, which proliferated following the introduction of the proportional representation system filling their lists with women while the nomination of women by the major political parties has actually declined and has remained more or less stagnant over the years (Kushlan 2006).

It is against this backdrop that the Women and Media Collective (WMC) and the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES) initiated *Changing Minds: Nominations and Votes for Women*—a programme to increase the percentage of nominations for women by the major political parties at the 2011 local government elections. The programme implemented from January

ICES Working Papers:

1. Kodikara, Chulani 2012 'Only Until the Rice is Cooked?: The Domestic Violence Act, Familial Ideology and Cultural Narratives in Sri Lanka, ICES Working Paper 1, May 2012.
2. Chaaminda, Sumith 2012 'Fishing in Turbulent Waters', ICES Working Paper 2, September 2012.

Women in Local Government from 2006 to 2011:

A Comparative Analysis of Representation of Women and Nominations for Women

1. Introduction

It is often easier for women to participate in local than at the national level, because eligibility criteria for the local level are less stringent, and local government is the closest to the women's sphere of life, and easier to combine with rearing children. It can be the first level that women can break into and as such it may serve as a springboard to national politics, by developing capacities and gaining experiences.

Likewise local politics can be more interesting to women as they are well acquainted with their community, being the major users of space and services in the local community (water, electricity, waste disposal, health clinics, and other social services). They also participate actively in organisations in their neighbourhood, and it's easier to involve these organisations in formal political decision making at the local level.

Evertzen (2001: 8)

Local government is where women would logically find it easiest to contest elections as compared to provincial and national elections. However, paradoxically in Sri Lanka, local government is where women's representation has been the lowest. Since the establishment of the current system of local government comprising Municipal Councils, Urban Councils and Pradeshiya Sabhas in 1987, representation has been between 1.7% and 2.01%. All of the obstacles and barriers that limit women's entry into other levels of government appear to be magnified at the level of local government. In particular, nominations for women by the major parties have remained low because of patron-client relationships that run from the national to the local and the high level of competition to get into local government. Although the figures for nominations of women in local government show an upward trend, research indicates that this is mainly due to independent groups and smaller political parties, which proliferated following the introduction of the proportional representation system filling their lists with women while the nomination of women by the major political parties that actually win elections have remained more or less stagnant over the years (Kodikara 2009).

It is against this backdrop that the Women and Media Collective (WMC) and the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES) initiated –*Changing Minds: Nominations and Votes for Women*— a programme to increase the percentage of nominations for women by the major political parties at the 2011 local government elections. The programme implemented from January

2010 to June 2012 in partnership with five women's organisations¹ sought to increase the number of women nominees to at least 20% in 50 party lists (including the two largest political parties and smaller parties representing the minority Tamil and Muslim communities in Sri Lanka) in the 5 selected districts of Badulla, Galle, Kurunegala, Moneragala and Trincomalee. In parallel, this programme sought to enhance the possibilities of success of the women who obtained nominations by profiling and highlighting their leadership at the local level, raising awareness within communities about the negative implications of the very low representation of women in local authorities, and highlighting the value of increasing representation. The local initiatives undertaken by the five partner organisations in this regard were strengthened with advocacy amongst political party leaders at the national level.

Prior to 2011, local government elections were last held in 2006. This baseline study was conducted to serve as a reference point or benchmark to enable a comparison between the 2006 and 2011 statistics and also as a tool to measure the impact of the *Changing Minds* programme in the selected districts. In addition, this study aims to unmask and disaggregate national averages and statistics on representation and nominations with a view to identifying and analysing patterns and trends in representation and nomination of women in local government elections in Sri Lanka. The findings from this survey will inform a qualitative study of the *Changing Minds* programme as well as advocacy and public action seeking to enhance the number of women in local government in the country.

The focus of this study is twofold. Firstly, it compares the number of women elected to local authorities following the 2006 local government elections with figures from the 2008, 2009 and 2011 local government elections disaggregated by district, party and ethnicity across all 25 districts of the country; (referred to henceforth as representation statistics).² Secondly, it compares the number of nominations given to women at the 2006 and 2011 local government elections by the four major political parties –United Peoples Freedom Alliance, United National Party, Janathe Vimukthi Peramuna, and the Illankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi (ITAK) (Tamil National Alliance - TNA) — disaggregated by ethnicity, in the districts of Badulla, Galle, Kurunegala, Moneragala and Trincomalee; (referred to henceforth as nomination statistics).

Therefore, this study paints an island-wide picture of women's representation in local government, while focusing in greater detail on women's representation in the 5 selected districts. The detailed analysis of nomination statistics in part 3 of the report is however limited to the 5 selected districts where the *Changing Minds* programme was implemented. The data concerning nominations had to be compiled from original nomination papers filed by political parties with the Department of

¹ The five partner organisations were: Women's Development Centre (Badulla), Sarvodaya / Diriyata Saviyak (Galle), Women's Resource Centre (Kurunegala), Uva Wellassa Farmer Women's Organisation (Moneragala) and Viluthu, (Trincomalee).

Elections and it was beyond the scope of this project to undertake a scrutiny of all nomination papers filed across the country.

In Sri Lanka, fairly comprehensive sex-disaggregated data in relation to education and health is collected as a matter of routine but there is limited or no sex-disaggregated data in relation to many other areas. In relation to representation of women in local government, the Ministry of Local Government and Provincial Councils compiles statistics on the number of women elected to local authorities but this information is not disaggregated by party, ethnicity or even by district. The accuracy of this data is also questionable as the sex of elected members is determined by their name even though there are many unisex names, particularly in the Sinhala language. Data on nominations for women in local government elections are in fact not compiled at all leave alone disaggregation by party, ethnicity or district. This study therefore seeks to fill this critical gap in data while underlining the need to urgently review the official election data-gathering framework from a gender perspective.

This study notes that the need to collect statistics disaggregated by sex which was first highlighted by the First World Conference on Women in 1975, is now well accepted in development as much as in feminist circles, both to identify the gender dimensions of various social phenomena and problems faced by women and also to formulate appropriate responses to address these concerns and problems. The United Nations (UN) has consistently called for more disaggregated data in all areas of development. According to the UN, the dearth of information on women's activities across all sectors has led to a lack of understanding of the 'different worlds' that women and men live in — be it with respect to education, work, health, personal security or even leisure time. The result has been 'policy that has been ill-formed, strategy [that is] unfounded and practice unquestioned' (United Nations, 1995: xvii).

In fact, the task of collecting such nominations statistics disaggregated by sex is rendered difficult by the fact that nomination papers currently do not have a column to indicate the sex of the candidate. The sex of the candidate is also not indicated in the nominations information published in the Gazette of the government of Sri Lanka, election statistics compiled by the Department of Elections or information available on their website. For the purpose of this study, information regarding the sex of candidates was ascertained from their National Identity Card (NIC) numbers, which are coded for sex, included in the nomination papers filed with the Department of Elections in the districts of Badulla, Galle, Kurunegala, Moneragala, and Trincomalee. As candidates are not differentiated by sex, it also becomes extremely difficult to determine the sex of elected members as noted above.

The task of gathering data for this study was further complicated by the fact that these elections have not been held at one and the same time but on a staggered basis. The 2006 local government elections studied here refers to elections to 288 local authorities held on 30th March 2006 and 20th

May 2006 out of a total of 330 local bodies. Elections to 42 local councils in the North and East were not held on grounds of security in 2006 even though elections were initially called³.

With the defeat of the LTTE in the East in 2007 and in the North in 2009, elections were held to 9 local authorities in Batticaloa in 2008, and to the Jaffna MC and Vavuniya UC in 2009, but not to 31 other local authorities in the North. The term of 288 local authorities elected in 2006 ended in 2010, but was extended by one year and elections called in 2011⁴. In 2011, the government also called elections to 31 local authorities in the North and East where elections had not been held in 2006, 2008 or 2009 and to five new local authorities added since 2006⁵. Subsequently elections to two local authorities in Mullaitivu District were postponed due to alleged delays in the resettlement of internally displaced persons, continuing demining activities and a pending court judgement.

The 2011 local government elections therefore refer to the election of 322 authorities out of a total of 335 local authorities in Sri Lanka. These elections were also held on a staggered basis on 17th March 2011, 23rd July 2011 and 8th October 2011. Thus throughout this document the current period is shown as spanning 2008-2011 because local authorities are currently functioning with members elected in 2008, 2009 and in 2011 respectively (see Table 1).

Table 1: No of Local Councils According to Date of Elections

Date of Election	MC	UC	PS	Total
10 th March 2008	1	0	8	9
8 th Sept 2009	1	1	0	2
17 th March 2011	3	30	201	234
23 rd July 2011	1	9	55	65
8 th October 2011	17	1	5	23
Elections not held	0	0	2	2
Total	23	41	271	335

³ These 42 councils comprise 33 of the 34 local authorities in the Northern districts with the exception of Puthukudiyarippu Pradeshiya Sabha (PS) in Mullaitivu which got elected uncontested, and 9 of the 12 local authorities in Batticaloa, Monitoring Report, LG Elections, 30th March and 20th May 2006, PAFFREL.

⁴ The normal term of a local authority is 4 years but the law allows the Central Government to extend this by one year.

⁵ The five new local authorities are: 1) Dambulla MC (Matale District), 2) Akkaraipattu MC (Ampara District), 3) Narammala PS (Kurunegala District), 4) Lunugala PS (Badulla District), 5) Irrakkamam PS (Ampara District). It should also be noted that two Urban Councils (Bandarawela UC and Hambantota UC) and one Pradeshiya Sabha (Kaduvela PS) were promoted to MCs, and one Pradeshiya Sabha (Eravur PS) was promoted to a UC between 2006 and 2011.

2. Representation of Women: 2006 and 2008/2009/2011 Local Government Elections

The local government system in Sri Lanka is a three-tier system comprising Municipal Councils (MC), Urban Councils (UC) and Pradeshiya Sabhas (PS). Local government bodies are mainly tasked with the provisioning of various public goods and services required by rural, urban and metropolitan populations.

Currently there are 335 local authorities in Sri Lanka; 23 Municipal Councils, 41 Urban Councils and 271 Pradeshiya Sabhas. The size of each differs according to the geographical area it serves and the population in the area. The population of a local authority area ranges from around 30,000 to 250,000 people (Slater 1997:256). The composition of each local council thus varies from as many as 53 members in the Colombo Municipal Council, the single largest local body in the country, to small Pradeshiya Sabhas comprising no more than 5 members. Currently, there are over 4000 elected members across all local authorities in Sri Lanka.

Role and Function of local government authorities

While local government has a long history in Sri Lanka, going back to pre colonial times, the present structure derives its powers and functions from three pieces of legislation: The Urban Councils Ordinance of 1939, The Municipal Councils Ordinance of 1947, and The Pradeshiya Sabha Act No. 15 of 1987. Under these Acts, local authorities have been granted a wide range of functions including the construction and maintenance of roads, drains, culverts and bridges, public building, markets and fairs, waste disposal, water supply, setting up libraries, etc. Although, there is provision, at least in the Pradeshiya Sabha Act for initiating development activities, local authorities have not played a key role with regard to broader development planning and projects due to lack of capacities and adequate funds. Around two-thirds to three fourths of their revenues generally go towards meeting administrative costs and other recurrent expenditures, leaving them dependent on grants from the Central Government for development activities. As a result, it is rare to find local authorities exercising significant power over capital-intensive projects even in areas within their purview. Another reason that local government bodies have been restricted in their scope to the provision of a few services and facilities, and from undertaking significant economic upliftment programmes within their jurisdictions may be due to a tendency within Central Government to implement its policies and programmes through its administrative apparatus rather than elected local bodies (ICES n.d., Slater 1997).

Areas Under the Purview of Local Government

Fire protection	Primary Health care	Refuse collection and disposal
Preschools	Health protection	Cemeteries and crematoria
Kindergarten and Nursery	Housing and Town planning	Slaughterhouses
Family welfare services	Roads	Museums and Libraries
Welfare Homes	Water and Sanitation	Parks and open spaces

As Richard Slater points out local government reforms which took place in Sri Lanka in 1991 recognised, in principle, the need for effective accountability between elected representatives and voters, establishing mechanisms such as People's Committees (Slater 1997) and granting people the right to observe meetings of local government bodies.⁶ Slater also identifies the lowering of the age threshold for local councilors 'to overcome the traditional age /elite bias' of elected members and the implementation of the youth quota as other mechanisms to improve accountability and access to governance.⁷ There are however, serious concerns with respect to women's representation in local authorities.

Representation of Women in Local Authorities 2006 and 2008 -2011

Currently, women comprise 2.01% of all elected members across all three types of local bodies. This marks a marginal increase over a twenty-year period, from 1991 to 2011.

Table 2:⁸ Women's Representation in Local Government from 1966 as a % of Total Membership

	Municipal Councils	Urban Councils	Pradeshiya Sabhas	Total
1966	1.1	*1.9	**	
1970	2.9	*1.4	**	
1979	2.8	2.3	**	
1982	1.3	1.7	**	
1991	2.9	2.5	1.6	1.7

⁶ Sec 11 read together with sec 184 of The Pradeshiya Sabha Act No.15 of 1987 and regulations passed by the Minister in 1988.

⁷ A study of the composition of elected members in 52 local authorities conducted by the UPU of the Ministry of Home Affairs and Provincial Councils did find that around one-third of elected members were below 35 years of age and that almost 14% of Chairmen were also from this same age category (Slater 1997:257).

⁸ Local government elections are normally meant to be held every four years. However, the election cycle has been disrupted due to various factors including the war, changes to the local government system, etc. This table therefore reflects an uneven periodicity.

1997	3.4	2.6	1.7	1.9
2006 ⁹	3.0	3.4	1.6	1.8
2008-2011 ¹⁰	2.63	2.47	1.88	2.0

Source: Kearney (1981:742), Leiten (2000: 122) and Ministry of Women's Empowerment and UNDP (2008:14). 2008 – 2011 statistics compiled by ICES.

* Statistics under Urban Councils in 1966 and 1970 include Urban and Town Councils which existed at that time.

** Elections not held.

This national average however masks significant variations in representation at the district and at individual local authorities as well as in terms of party affiliations and the ethnic composition of women councilors.

Representation of women by district 2006 to 2008-2011

Following the 2006 elections, the district of Colombo had the highest representation of women (5.17%) followed by 4.2% women in Trincomalee. In the other districts, the representation of women ranged between 0.5% in Kurunegala to 2.95% in Anuradhpura. There was only one woman elected from all councils in the districts of Moneragala, Polonnaruwa, and Matale respectively while not a single woman was elected to any local authority in the entire district of Hambantota.

Following the 2008-2011 elections, women's representation is highest in Mullaitivu, where 5.55% of elected members are women. This is followed by Colombo (5.08%), Jaffna (4.46%), Trincomalee (3.38%), Gampaha (3.10%) and Batticaloa (3.12%). Only one woman was elected across all local bodies in the districts of Matale, Hambantota, Polonnaruwa, Kegalle and Vavuniya respectively, while there was not a single woman elected in the districts of Killinochchi, Mannar and Moneragala.

Table 3: Representation of Women by District

District	2006			2008/2009/2011		
	Total no of councilors	No. of Women	% of women	Total no of councilors	No. of Women	% of women
Colombo	290	15	5.17%	295	15	5.08%
Gampaha	354	5	1.41%	354	11	3.10%
Kalutara	235	6	2.55%	235	4	1.70%
Kandy	331	6	1.81%	338	6	1.77%
Matale	137	1	0.72%	156	1	0.64%
Nuwara Eliya	140	2	1.42%	140	2	1.42%
Galle	244	2	0.81%	244	2	0.81%

⁹ In 2006, elections were not held in all local councils in the North, with the exception of Puthukudiyaruppu PS which was elected uncontested. Elections were also not held in 9 out of 12 local authorities in the district of Batticaloa in the East.

¹⁰ Throughout this document the current period is shown as spanning 2008-2011 because local authorities are functioning with members elected in 2008 (9 local authorities in Batticaloa), 2009 (one local authority each in Jaffna and Vavuniya respectively) and 2011 (322 local authorities).

Matara	200	3	1.50%	200	3	1.5%
Hambantota	138	0	0.00%	141	1	0.70%
Kurunegala	338	2	0.59%	340	3	0.88%
Puttalam	161	3	1.86%	161	3	1.86%
Anuradhapura	203	6	2.95%	203	4	1.97%
Polonnaruwa	91	1	1.09%	91	1	1.09%
Rathnapura	229	4	1.74%	229	4	1.74%
Kegalla	195	3	1.53%	195	1	0.51%
Badulla	216	6	2.77%	215	5	2.32%
Moneragala	104	1	0.96%	104	0	0.00%
Batticaloa	27	0	0.0%	128	4	3.12%
Ampara	192	3	1.56%	201	4	1.99%
Trincomalee	118	5	4.23%	118	4	3.38%
Jaffna	-	-	-	224	10	4.46%
Kilinochchi	-	-	-	38	0	0.00%
Mannar	-	-	-	46	0	0.00%
Vavuniya	-	-	-	52	1	1.92%
Mullaitivu	9	0	0.00%	18	1	5.55%
Total	3943	74	1.87%	4466	90	2.01%

Source: Compiled by the International Center for Ethnic Studies, May 2012

With reference to the five districts that were the focus of the *Changing Minds* programme, there is a slight increase in representation of women in Kurunegala from 0.59% to 0.88%. In Galle, representation remained stable, while Badulla and Trincomalee marked a slight decrease in women's representation. In Moneragala representation dropped to zero.

Table 4: Women's Representation in the Selected Districts

District	2006			2011		
	Total No. of counselors	No of Women	% of Women	Total No. of counselors	No of Women	% of Women
Badulla	216	6	2.7%	215	5	2.32%
Galle	244	2	0.81%	244	2	0.81%
Kurunegala	338	2	0.59%	340	3	0.88%
Moneragala	104	1	0.96%	104	0	0.00%
Trincomalee	118	5	4.2%	118	4	3.38%
	1020	16	1.56%	1021	14	1.37%

Representation at individual council level

When these statistics are disaggregated by individual local authorities, there are many local authorities (close to 80%) without a single woman, while there are few exceptional councils with more than 10% of women.

Within the five districts that were the focus of this study, the Trincomalee Urban Council had the highest representation of women with 16.6% of its members being women following the 2006 elections.

Table 5: Representation in some Local Authorities 2006

Local Council	District	Total No. of counselors	No of Women	% of Women
Trinco UC	Trincomalee	12	2	16.6%
Uva Paranagama PS	Badulla	19	3	15.7%
Verugal PS	Trincomalee	7	1	14.2%
Niyagama PS	Galle	9	1	11.1%
Udubaddawa PS	Kurunegala	10	1	10.0%
Galgamuwa PS	Kurunegala	18	1	5.5%
Welimada PS	Badulla	21	1	4.7%
But many local authorities do not have a single woman.				

In 2011, Verugal Pradeshiya Sabha had the highest representation with 28.4% of its members being women.

Table 6: Representation in some Local Authorities: 2008-2011 Elections

Local Council	District	Total No. of counselors	No of Women	% of Women
Verugal PS	Trincomalee	7	2	28.4%
Uva Paranagama PS	Badulla	19	3	15.7%
Seruwila PS	Trincomalee	9	1	11.1%
Ambalangoda MC	Galle	12	1	8.3%
Galgamuwa PS	Kurunegala	18	1	5.5%
Welimada PS	Badulla	21	1	4.7%
But many local authorities do not have a single woman.				

Party – wise representation of women

Following the 2006 elections 62.16% of the 74 women elected to local councils were from the United Peoples Freedom Alliance (UPFA) in a context where the UPFA secured a landslide victory¹¹. Sixteen point two percent (16.21%) of all elected women were from the UNP, 9.45% from the JVP, and 4.05% from ITAK respectively. Moreover, 8.10% of the elected women, were from independent groups.¹²

It should however be noted that 5 of the 6 independent candidates who were elected to local councils were from independent groups which were endorsed by the UNP¹³ (following the rejection of their lists) and therefore cannot strictly be considered to have won on their independent

¹¹ *Local government elections in Sri Lanka heighten political instability*, By K. Ratnayake, 30 March 2006.
<http://www.wsws.org/articles/2006/mar2006/sril-m30.shtml>.

¹² There was one woman who was elected to Eheliyagoda PS from the United Socialist Party (USP), who never took up her seat.

¹³ The UNP endorsed Independent Group No.3 from Colombo which contested under the symbol of the 'Spectacles' and Independent Group No. 2 from Seethawaka PS which contested under the symbol of the 'Ship'.

credentials. In fact, Independent Group No. 3 contested the Colombo Municipal Council elections as a proxy party for the UNP following the rejection of the UNP list by the Elections Commissioner, and then refused to honour the pre-electoral agreement to give up their seats to UNP candidates. This is significant because if the agreement was adhered to, the 4 women from Independent Group no. 3 would have lost their seats to UNP candidates who may not have been women.

This just left Sajeewani Nissansala Peiris who contested the Moratuwa Municipal Council as a lone woman candidate to have won these elections from an Independent Group. Her victory as an independent candidate is a remarkable one given the difficulties of winning as independents under the proportional representation (PR) system and in the current political climate in Sri Lanka.

Table 7: Party-wise representation of women in local authorities

Political Party Affiliation	2006		2008-2011	
	Total no of elected women from each political Party	As a % of total no of elected women	Total no of elected women from each political Party	As a % of total no of elected women
UPFA	46	62.2%	50	55.6%
UNP	12	16.2%	22	24.5%
JVP	7	9.4%	1	1.1%
ITAK	3	4.1%	8	8.9%
TMVP	0	0.0%	3	3.3%
SLMC	0	0.0%	2	2.2%
ATNA	0	0.0%	1	1.1%
CWC	0	0.0%	1	1.1%
National Workers Congress	0	0.0%	1	1.1%
Democratic People's Front	0	0.0%	1	1.1%
Independent Groups	6	8.1%	0	0.0%
	74	100.00	90	100.0

Following the 2008-2011 elections the overwhelming majority of women elected (55.55%) remained from the UPFA on account of UPFA's enduring popularity and winning streak. The UNP women represented 24.44% and ITAK women represented 8.88% of all women elected members. The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC), perhaps for the first time in its history returned not one but two women to local government bodies. Although a number of women contested as independent candidates, not a single woman from an independent group won at the 2008-2011 elections.

In comparison with 2006, following the 2008-2011 elections, the percentage of women elected from the UNP and also ITAK has increased while the percentage of women elected from the UPFA has

decreased. The most dramatic loss of the percentage of women was however recorded by the JVP whose share of women came down from 9.45% to 1.11%.

It is not possible to determine to what extent women increased or decreased their share of seats as compared to the men in their parties because a breakdown of the total number of seats by party was not available at the time of this study.

Ethnic representation

It should also be noted that the overwhelming majority of women represented in local authorities are from the Sinhala community. From the 74 women elected to local government following the 2006 elections, 65 (87.8%) were from the Sinhala community, 8 (10.8%) from the Tamil community and only 1 (1.3%) woman elected was from the Muslim community.

Table 8: Elected Women by Ethnicity 2006

Political Party	Total no of elected women from each political Party	Sinhala	As a % of total of women	Tamil	As a %	Muslim	
UpFA	46	45	97.8%	1	2.2%	0	0.0%
UNP	12	11	91.6%	0	0.0%	1	8.4%
JVP	7	7	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
ITAK	3	0	0.0%	3	100.0%	0	0.0%
Independent Groups	6	2	33.3%	4	67.3%	0	0.0%
	74	65	87.8%	8	10.8%	1	1.3%

It should be noted that of the 8 Tamil women elected, 4 were from Independent Group No. 3 (see above) which contested the Colombo Municipal Council elections as a proxy party for the UNP. The only Tamil woman who was elected from the UPFA was from the Ambagamuwa Pradeshiya Sabha in the Nuwara Eliya District.

In the 2008-2011 elections, the ethnic breakdown of the women elected to local government is as follows: 68 (75.55%) Sinhalese, 19 (21.22%) Tamil and 3 (3.33%) are Muslim women.

Table 9: Elected Women by Ethnicity 2008 - 2011

	Total no of elected women from each political Party	Sinhala	As a % of total of women	Tamil	As a %	Muslim	
UPFA	50	46	92.0%	4	8.0%	0	0.0%
UNP	22	19	86.4%	1	4.5%	2	9.1%
ITAK	8	0	0.0%	8	100.0%	0	0.0%
TMVP	3	0	0.0%	3	100.0%	0	0.0%
SLMC	2	1	50.0%	0	0.0%	1	50.0%
JVP	1	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
ATNA	1	0	0.0%	1	100.0%	0	0.0%
CWC	1	0	0.0%	1	100.0%	0	0.0%
National Workers Congress	1	0	0.0%	1	100.0%	0	0.0%
Democratic People's Front	1	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	90	68	75.5%	19	21.2%	3	3.3%

Representation of Tamil women has more than doubled following the 2008 -2011 elections. This is mainly due to elections being held to many local authorities in the North and East after a hiatus of many years. The number of Muslim women also increased from one to three.

Youth Quota

While it was not possible to ascertain how many of the women elected obtained nominations under the youth quota for all districts, in the five districts that were studied in-depth for this survey, a fair percentage of elected women did come in through the youth quota. In 2006, 25% of elected women had secured nomination under the youth quota.

Table 10: Women elected from the youth quota in the Selected Five Districts 2006

District	Total No. of counselors	No of Women	Women elected from youth quota	% of Women
Badulla	216	6	2	33.3%
Moneragala	104	1	0	0.0%
Kurunegala	338	2	0	0.0%
Trincomalee	118	5	1	20.0%
Galle	244	2	1	50.0%
Total	1020	16	4	25.0%

In the 2008-2011 elections, 28.6% of elected women came in through the youth quota.

Table 11: Women elected from the youth quota in the Selected Five Districts 2011

District	Total No. of counselors	No of Women	Women elected from youth quota	% of Women
Badulla	215	5	1	20.0%
Galle	244	2	0	0.0%
Kurunegala	340	3	1	33.3%
Moneragala	104	0	0	0.0%
Trincomalee	118	4	2	50.0%
Total	1021	14	4	28.6%

3. Nominations for Women

Given that the goal of the *Changing Minds* Programme was to increase nominations for women in the five districts of Badulla, Galle, Kurunegala, Moneragala and Trincomalee this study sought to ascertain the number of nominations given to women by the four parties in 2006. While De Silva provides information on nominations for elections held in 1987 and 1991 (see Table 12), official nominations statistics for local government elections held since 1991 was not available for this study.

Table 12: No. of candidates at Local Government elections of 1987 and 1991

	Municipal Councils			Urban Councils			Pradeshiya Sabhas		
	Total	Nominations for women	% of Nominations for women	Total	Nominations for women	% of Nominations for women	Total	Nominations for women	% of Nominations for women
1987	641	22	3.4	984	31	3.1	7198	133	1.8
1991	1152	44	3.8	1453	40	2.7	13,385	325	2.4

Source: Elections Department cited by De Silva (1995: 233).

However according to web-based reports more than 4000 women did get nominations at the 2006 local government elections from a total of 25,523 nominations given by 21 political parties and 275 Independent Groups.¹⁴ Official or unofficial nominations statistics at the 2008 - 2011 were not available at the time of conducting this study. If the 2006 statistics as reported in the media are accurate, clearly there is a dramatic increase in nominations for women from 2.5% in 1991 to 18.5% in 2006.

¹⁴ Local Government Elections 2006, <http://community.sinhalajukebox.org/article.php?story=20060330094003521&mode=print>, and Daily News, 8 March 2008, <http://www.dailynews.lk/2008/03/08/fea05.asp>

Table 13: Nominations for women at local government elections 1987 - 2006

Year	Total No of candidates	No. of Women	% of Women
1987	8853	186	2.1%
1991	15990	409	2.5%
1997	Not available	Not available	Not available
2002	Not available	Not available	Not available
2006	25,523	4739	18.56
2011	Not available	Not available	Not available

Source: 1987 and 1991 statistics: Elections Department cited by De Silva (1995:233)

This is consistent with a 2009 study which reveals that nominations for women at recent parliamentary and provincial council elections are on the increase (Kodikara 2009).¹⁵ Yet in the case of parliamentary and provincial council elections this increase was mainly due to smaller political parties and independent groups that proliferated following the introduction of proportional representation and not from the major political parties which win the majority of seats. Was this also the case in local government? The pattern at local levels appears to be the same, except that the scrutiny of nomination papers filed by the UPFA, UNP, JVP, and ITAK in the five districts done as part of this study reveals wide variations in nominations depending on the party, the district as well as the local authority.

Nominations for women disaggregated by party, district and individual councils

Based on the study of nomination papers filed by UPFA, UNP, JVP and ITAK in the five districts of Badulla, Galle, Kurunegala, Moneragala, and Trincomalee in 2006 and 2011, in 2006 at the District level nominations for women ranged between 1.4% to 26.2%. In 2011, at the District level nominations for women ranged between 1.4% to 16.5%.

In 2006, at the individual local authority level it ranged from zero percent to 68.7% and in 2011 it ranged from zero to 100% (although the latter statistic is of course one exception to the rule).¹⁶

In 2006, nominations of women by the UPFA in the five districts ranged from a high of 5.7% in Moneragala to a low of 3.2% in Galle, while in 2011 it ranged from a high of 5.2% in Badulla to a low of 1.9% in Kurunegala. As an average, UPFA nominations for women decreased from 4.1% in 2006 to 3.4% in 2011. Nominations for women by the UNP ranged from 6.3% in Badulla to 1.4% in Moneragala in 2006 and a high of 15.3% in Trincomalee to 1.4% in Moneragala in 2011. The average number of nominations recorded a very slight increase from 4.2% in 2006 to 4.8% in 2011.

¹⁵ In parliamentary elections, from 1994 to 2004, the percentage of female candidates more than doubled.

¹⁶ Please note that statistical tables of nominations at individual local authorities are not included here.

In the case of the JVP, nominations for women ranged from a high of 26.2% in Trincomalee to 4.1% in Kurunegala in 2006 and a high of 14.6% in Trincomalee to a low of 4.2% in Badulla in 2011. The average number of nominations given to women increased slightly from 6.3% to 7.5%. Nominations for women by ITAK, which only contested in Trincomalee out of the five selected districts, increased from 9.7% to 16.5%.

The most dramatic increase in nominations at the District level was by the UNP in Trincomalee district, which increased nominations given to women from 2.5% in 2006 to 15.3% in 2011. The JVP doubled its nominations to women in Moneragala from 4.3% in 2006 to 8.7% 2011. ITAK also increased nominations of women from 9.7% in 2006 to 16.5% in 2011. The most significant decrease in nominations was by the JVP in Trincomalee where nominations fell from 26.2% to 14.6% in 2011 (see tables 14 and 15).

Table 14: Nominations for Women: 2006 Local Government Elections

	*UPFA			UNP			JVP			ITAK		
	Total no of nominations	Nominations for women	%	Total no of Nominations	Nominations for women	%	Total no of nominations	Nominations for women	%	Total no of nominations	Nominations for women	%
Badulla	284	12	4.2%	284	18	6.3%	284	13	4.5%	-	-	-
Galle	307	10	3.2%	327	15	4.5%	327	17	5.5%	-	-	-
Kurunegala	427	15	3.5%	439	17	3.8%	439	18	4.1%	-	-	-
Moneragala	138	8	5.7%	138	2	1.4%	138	6	4.3%	-	-	-
Trincomalee	117	6	5.1%	117	3	2.5%	103	27	26.2%	133	13	9.7%
Total	1273	51	4.1%	1305	55	4.2%	1291	81	6.3%	133	13	9.7%

Source: compiled by author from nomination lists filed at the Department of Elections

Table 15: Nominations for Women: 2011 Local Government Elections

	UPFA			UNP			JVP			ITAK		
	Total no of nominations	Nominations for women	%	Total no of Nominations	Nominations for women	%	Total no of nominations	Nominations for women	%	Total no of nominations	Nominations for women	%
Badulla	286	15	5.2	286	9	3.1	286	12	4.2			
Galle	327	12	3.7	327	14	4.3	327	23	7.0			
Kurunegala	454	9	1.9	454	17	3.7	454	32	7.0			
Moneragala	138	5	3.7	138	2	1.4	138	12	8.7			
Trincomalee	157	5	3.2	157	24	15.3	157	23	14.6	109	18	16.5
Total	1362	46	3.4%	1362	66	4.8%	1362	102	7.5%	109	18	16.5%

There were however, wide variations in nominations for women at the level of individual local authorities. In 2006, the JVP gave the highest number of nominations to women with 68.7% nominations given to women in the list for Trincomalee Urban Council. In 2011, this distinction went to the UNP, which fielded an all woman list for Verugal Pradeshiya Sabha. It is noteworthy that both in 2006 and 2011 there was at least one woman in every list fielded by ITAK in the Trincomalee District.

It is also significant to note that amongst the five selected districts, Trincomalee records the highest proportion of women nominees amongst the ITAK, JVP and the UNP in 2006 and 2011. This appears, at least to some extent, to have to do with the relative hesitation of men, especially younger men, to play a prominent public role given the conflict.

Other instances where women secured more than 20% of the nominations in 2006 have to be credited to the JVP nomination lists in Gomarankadawela PS (33.3%), Kuliyaipitiya PS (25%), Seruwila PS (24.9%), Trinco town and Gravets PS (24.9%), Thambalagamuwa PS (24.9%), Mawathagama PS (23.59%), Ambalangoda PS (20%). ITAK also gave 22.2% of its nomination to women in Kinniya UC.

In 2011, party lists which had more than 20% of women were as follows: JVP lists in Thambalagamuwa PS, Padavisripura PS and Trinco Town and Gravets PS (33.3%); UNP list in Kinniya UC (22.2%) and the ITAK lists in Morawewa PS (41.67%) and Kinniya UC (22.2%).

The highest nominations given to women by the UPFA across the five districts was 18.18% in Welivita Divitura PS in Galle and 16.67% in Soranatota PS in Badulla.

Nominations under the youth quota

In 1990, a 40% quota for youth candidates —defined as those between the age of 18 and 35 years— was made mandatory in nomination lists for local authority elections. Non-fulfillment of this requirement meant that the list would be rejected. A question for those working to increase representation for women has always been to what extent the youth quota benefited young women. There are no studies on the gendered impact of the youth quota on representation. However, as part of this study, ICES attempted to ascertain how many young women obtained nominations under the youth quota in the five selected districts.

In 2006, of the total number of nominations given to youth across all five selected districts, the percentage of women nominees by party was: 2.9% for UPFA; 7.0% by the UNP; 8.9% by the JVP, and 13.7% by ITAK. At the district level, the JVP had the best record with 40.5% of its nominations under the youth quota given to women in Trincomalee. In 2011, nominations for women under the youth quota across all five districts were as follows: 4.8% by the UPFA, 5.5% by the UNP, 13.95%

by the JVP and 22.2% by ITAK. At the district level, the best nominations record was with the JVP who gave 26.1% of nominations to women.

Of the total number of women elected in the five selected districts, more than half had secured nominations under the youth quota in 2006 and 2011.

Ethnicity of women nominated

With reference to ethnicity, the majority of women who obtained nominations from the UPFA, UNP and JVP in the five districts were Sinhala, with the exception of UNP in Trincomalee District. The UNP gave nominations to fifteen Tamil women (62.5%) and four Muslim women (16.6%) in Trincomalee. (see Tables 16 – 23). In Verugal PS, the UNP fielded an all women list comprising 9 women, all Tamil. All the women who obtained nominations from ITAK in Trincomalee were Tamil.

Table 16: Nominations for Women by the UPFA 2006

UPFA	Nominations			Ethnicity						Youth Quota			
	Total no of nominations	Nominations for women	% of total	Sinhala	%	Tamil	%	Muslim	%	Total youth Quota	No of women	% of youth quota	As a % of total nominations for women
Badulla	284	12	4.2%	11	91.6%	1	8.4%	0	0.0%	113	5	4.4%	41.6%
Galle	307	10	3.2%	10	100%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	124	5	4.0%	50.0%
Kurunegala	427	15	3.5%	14	93.3%	1	6.7%	0	0.0%	170	5	2.9%	33.3%
Moneragala	138	8	5.7%	8	100%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	55	2	3.6%	25.0%
Trincomalee	117	6	5.1%	5	83.3%	0	0.0%	1	16.7%	50	3	6.0%	50.0%
	1273	51	4.1	48	87.3%	2	3.6%	1	1.8%	512	20	2.9%	39.2%

Table 17: Nominations by the UPFA 2011

UPFA	Nominations			Ethnicity						Youth Quota			
	Total no of nominations	Nominations for women	% of total	Sinhala	%	Tamil	%	Muslim	%	Total youth Quota	No of young women	% of youth quota	As a % of total nominations for women
Badulla	286	15	5.2%	12	80%	3	20%	0	0%	115	9	7.8%	60.0%
Galle	327	12	3.7%	12	100%	0	0%	0	0%	131	8	6.1%	66.7%
Kurunegala	454	9	1.9%	9	100%	0	0%	0	0%	177	4	2.2%	44.4%
Moneragala	138	5	3.7%	5	100%	0	0%	0	0%	55	3	5.4%	60.0%
Trincomalee	157	5	3.2%	4	80%	1	20%	0	0%	65	2	3.1%	40.0%
	1362	46	3.4%	42	91.3%	4	8.7%	0	0%	543	26	4.8%	56.5%

Table 18: Nominations for Women by the UNP 2006

*UNP	Nominations			Ethnicity						Youth Quota			
	Total no of nominations	Nominations for women	%	Sinhala	%	Tamil	%	Muslim	%	Total youth Quota	No of women	% of youth quota	As a % of total nominations for women
Badulla	284	18	6.3%	14	77.7%	4	22.3%	0	0.0%	116	12	9.5%	66.6%
Galle	327	15	4.5%	15	100%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	130	11	8.4%	73.3%
Kurunegala	439	17	3.8%	17	100%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	175	10	5.7%	58.8%
Moneragala	138	2	1.4%	2	100%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	55	1	1.8%	50.0%
Trincomalee	117	3	2.5%	3	100%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	50	3	6.0%	100%
	1305	55	4.21	51	92.7%	4	7.3%	0	0%	527	37	7.0%	67.3%

Table 19: Nominations for Women by the UNP 2011

*UNP	Nominations			Ethnicity						Youth Quota			
	Total no of nominations	Nominations for women	%	Sinhala	%	Tamil	%	Muslim	%	Total youth Quota	No of women	% of youth quota	As a % of total nominations for women
Badulla	286	9	3.1	9	100%	0	0%	0	0%	115	0	0.0%	0.0%
Galle	327	14	4.3	14	100%	0	0%	0	0%	131	9	6.9%	64.3%
Kurunegala	454	17	3.7	17	100%	0	0%	0	0%	177	10	5.6%	58.8%
Moneragala	138	2	1.4	2	100%	0	0%	0	0%	55	1	1.8%	50.0%
Trincomalee	157	24	15.3	5	20.8%	15	62.5%	4	16.6%	65	10	15.4%	41.7%
	1362	66	4.8	47	71.2%	15	22.7%	4	6.1%	543	30	5.5%	45.4%

Table 20: Nominations by the JVP 2006

JVP	Nominations			Ethnicity						Youth Quota			
	Total no of nominations	Nominations for women	%	Sinhala	%	Tamil	%	Muslim	%	Total youth Quota	No of women	% of youth quota	As a % of total nominations for women
Badulla	284	13	4.5%	11	84.6%	2	15.4%	0	0.0%	116	11	9.4%	84.6%
Galle	327	17	5.5%	16	94.1%	0	0.0%	1	0.9%	130	8	6.1%	47.0%
Kurunegala	439	18	4.1%	18	100%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	175	7	4.0%	38.8%
Moneragala	138	6	4.3%	6	100%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	55	3	5.4%	50%
Trincomalee	103	27	26.2%	27	100%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	42	17	40.5%	62.9%
	1291	81	6.3%	78	96.3%	2	2.5%	1	1.2	518	46	8.9%	56.8%

Table 21: Nominations by the JVP 2011

JVP	Nominations			Ethnicity						Youth Quota			
	Total no of nominations	Nominations for women	%	Sinhala	%	Tamil	%	Muslim	%	Total youth Quota	No women	% of youth quota	As a % of total nominations for women
Badulla	286	12	4.2	12	100%	0	0%	0	0%	115	9	7.8%	75.0%
Galle	327	23	7.0	23	100%	0	0%	0	0%	131	16	12.2%	69.6%
Kurunegala	454	32	7.0	32	100%	0	0%	0	0%	177	24	13.5%	75.0%
Moneragala	138	12	8.7	11	91.7%	1	8.3%	0	0%	55	10	18.2%	83.3%
Trincomalee	157	23	14.6	22	95.6	0	0	1	4.4%	65	17	26.1%	73.9%
	1362	102	7.5	100	98.2	1	0.9	1	0.9	543	76	13.9%	74.5%

Table 22: Nominations by ITAK 2006

ITAK	Nominations			Ethnicity						Youth Quota			
	Total no of nominations	Nominations for women	%	Sinhala	%	Tamil	%	Muslim	%	Total youth Quota	No women	% of youth quota	As a % of total nominations for women
Badulla	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Galle	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kurunegala	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moneragala	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Trincomalee	133	13	9.7%	0	0.0%	13	100%	0	0.0%	51	7	13.7%	53.8%

Table 23: Nominations by ITAK 2011

ITAK	Nominations			Ethnicity						Youth Quota			
	Total no of nominations	Nominations for women	%	Sinhala	%	Tamil	%	Muslim	%	Total youth Quota	No women	% of youth quota	As a % of total nominations for women
Badulla	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Galle	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kurunegala	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Monaragala	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Trincomalee	109	18	16.5%	0	0%	18	100%	0	0%	45	10	22.2%	58.8%

4. Converting Nominations into Seats

In PR systems with preferential voting as practiced in Sri Lanka converting nominations into representation becomes the burden of individual candidates within the party list. This study also notes that even when women do get nominations they find it more difficult to translate nominations into elected seats. A comparative analysis of nominations and representation statistics of men and women of the two major parties in Sri Lanka at the 2006 and 2008/9/11 local government elections reveal that there are differences in electoral performance of male and female candidates with female candidates of the UPFA and UNP doing worse than their male counterparts in translating nominations into representation. Underlying this disparity in success rates is a lack of adequate support and mentoring given to women candidates from political parties, and the lack of experience of women candidates in running an election campaign.

In 2006, the UPFA gave nominations to 1222 men of whom 344 got elected. i.e. 28.1%. And of the 51 nominations to women, 8 got elected. i.e. 15.6%. The UNP gave 1238 nominations to men of whom 295 got elected. i.e. 23.8%. Of the 54 women who got nominations 5 got elected. i.e. 10.5%

In 2011, the UPFA gave nominations to 1316 men of whom 631 got elected. i.e. 47.9%. They also gave nominations to 46 women of whom 11 got elected i.e. 23.9%. The UNP gave nominations to 1296 men of whom 284 or 21.9% got elected. They also gave nominations to 66 women of whom 2 got elected i.e. 3.03%.

Table 24: 2006 Nominations and Representation of men and Women (UPFA) in the 5 districts

Political Party UPFA	No of nominations for men	No of men elected	Number of nominations for women	No of Women elected
Badulla	272	72	12	2
Galle	297	90	10	2
Kurunegala	412	114	15	1
Moneragala	130	44	8	1
Trincomalee	111	24	6	2
	1222	344	51	8

Table 25: 2006 Nominations and Representation of Men and Women (UNP) in the 5 districts

Political Party UNP	No of nominations for men	No of men elected	Number of nominations for women	No of Women elected
Badulla	271	61	13	4
Galle	312	69	15	0
Kurunegala	409	116	18	1
Moneragala	132	25	6	0
Trincomalee	114	24	3	0
	1238	295	54	5

Table 26: 2011 Nominations for and Representation of men and Women (UPFA) in the 5 districts

Political Party UPFA	No of nominations for men	No of men elected	Number of nominations for women	No of Women elected
Badulla	271	113	15	4
Galle	315	161	12	1
Kurunegala	445	212	9	3
Moneragala	133	75	5	0
Trincomalee	152	70	5	3
	1316	631	46	11

Table 27: 2011 Nominations for and Representation of Men and Women (UNP) in the 5 districts

Political Party UNP	No of nominations for men	No of men elected	Number of nominations for women	No of Women elected
Badulla	277	62	9	1
Galle	313	71	14	1
Kurunegala	437	106	17	0
Moneragala	136	26	2	0
Trincomalee	133	19	24	0
	1296	284	66	2

Table 28: 2006 Nominations to Representation ratio in the 5 districts

Political Party	Total No of nominations for men	No of men elected	%	Number of nominations for women	No of Women elected	%	
UPFA	1222	344	28.1%	51	8	15.6%	
UNP	1238	295	23.8%	54	5	10.8%	

Table 29: 2011 Nominations to Representation ratio in the 5 districts

Political Party	Total No of nominations for men	No of men elected	%	Number of nominations for women	No of Women elected	%	
UPFA	1316	631	47.9%	46	11	23.9%	
UNP	1296	284	21.9%	66	2	3.0%	

These statistics point to the fact that even though the UPFA gave less nominations to women, the success rate of women winning seats was higher than the UNP. Thus women candidates contesting from the party with the winning streak clearly have an edge over women candidates from other parties. Nevertheless, the number of women from the UPFA as a percentage of the total number of women elected decreased in 2011 (see Table 7 above). Furthermore, even though UNP women candidates were not as successful as the UPFA women candidates or as compared to UNP women in 2006, the total number of women elected from the UNP in 2011 in fact increased (Table 6 above).

The uneven success rate of men and women from the same party reflected in the statistics above, however, confirm that women candidates face additional barriers at the level of running a campaign after receiving nominations.

5. Conclusions

This comparative analysis of 2006 and 2008 – 2011 local government elections point to the fact that women's representation has increased marginally from 1.8% in 2006 to just over 2.0% in 2011. While the majority of women elected to local government continue to be Sinhalese, the increase in the percentage of women can be attributed to the election of a substantial number of Tamil women (more than double the number elected in 2006) into local government following elections in the North and some parts of the East after a gap of more than 15 years. Muslim women however continue to be under represented, with Muslim women comprising only 3.26% of all women elected to local government. The total number of Muslim women however increased from one woman in 2006 to three women in 2011.

Representation is however not uniform across the districts. In fact there are significant variations in the gendered geography of representation at local level. Once representation statistics are broken down by district, the highest percentage of women in local councils is in Mullaitivu district (5.55%) followed by Colombo which has 5.08% .

The highest number of elected women both in 2006 and 2008 -2011 are from the UPFA, although there is a slight decrease in this percentage from 2006 to 2011. This can be attributed to the intense competition to contest from the UPFA given the UPFA's enduring popularity and the low number of nominations given to women by the UPFA. In contrast, the percentage of women from the UNP increased even though the UNP most likely lost its share of overall seats in local government.

On the issue of nominations for women, despite commitments made in election manifestos, the average percentage of nominations for women by the two major parties in Sri Lanka in the five districts under study, remained below 20% - the percentage that has been promised in their election manifestos. While nominations for women by the UNP did record an increase from 2006, there was a tendency to nominate women for the sake of nominating, without any potential to win, particularly in areas where the party was weak. Nevertheless, in a context where many UNPers crossed over to the UPFA or were disinclined to contest from the party given their losing streak, some women with the potential to win, who otherwise may not have got nominations did get nominations which they were able to convert to a seat. The study also reveals that the UNP was not averse to giving nominations to women from the minority communities, even though they were unable to convert nominations into seats.

The highest number of nominations for women from the five districts were given by the ITAK in Trincomalee in both 2006 and 2011.

This study appears to confirm that women do face additional barrier in converting nominations in to seats given the lower success rate of women candidates as compared to male candidates. The study also indicates that the ability of women candidates to convert nominations into seats will depend on the popularity of their own party at elections and therefore outside their own control. In such a context unless the party on a winning wicket gives a substantial number of nominations for women, increased nominations for women by other parties will not have the same impact. These findings point to the need for a mandatory quota for women in nominations lists if women's representation in local government is to be increased beyond 2%.

As noted at the outset of this study, the lack of official nominations and representation statistics disaggregated by sex posed a considerable challenge in compiling these statistics. As much as there is a need to work towards increasing nominations for and representation of women in local

government, there is also a need to demand for reform of nominations papers so that sex disaggregated data is collected as a matter of routine at every election.

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This study of the 2006 and 2008-2011 local authorities elections held in Sri Lanka, compares the number of women elected to local authorities following the 2006 elections with figures from the 2008, 2009 and 2011 elections disaggregated by district, party and ethnicity across all 25 districts of the country. Secondly, it compares the number of nominations given to women at the 2006 and 2011 elections by the four major political parties –United Peoples Freedom Alliance (UPFA), United National Party (UNP), Janathe Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), and the Illankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi (ITAK) —disaggregated by ethnicity, in the districts of Badulla, Galle, Kurunegala, Moneragala and Trincomalee. This study aims to unmask and disaggregate national averages and statistics with a view to identifying and analysing patterns and trends in representation of and nominations for women at local government in Sri Lanka. In the absence of official sex disaggregated data on nominations, the study fills a critical gap while emphasizing the need to review the official election data-gathering framework from a gender perspective. The study was conducted as part of the Changing Minds: Nominations and Votes for Women Programme implemented by the Women and Media Collective and the International Centre for Ethnic Studies in collaboration with five other women's organisations.

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