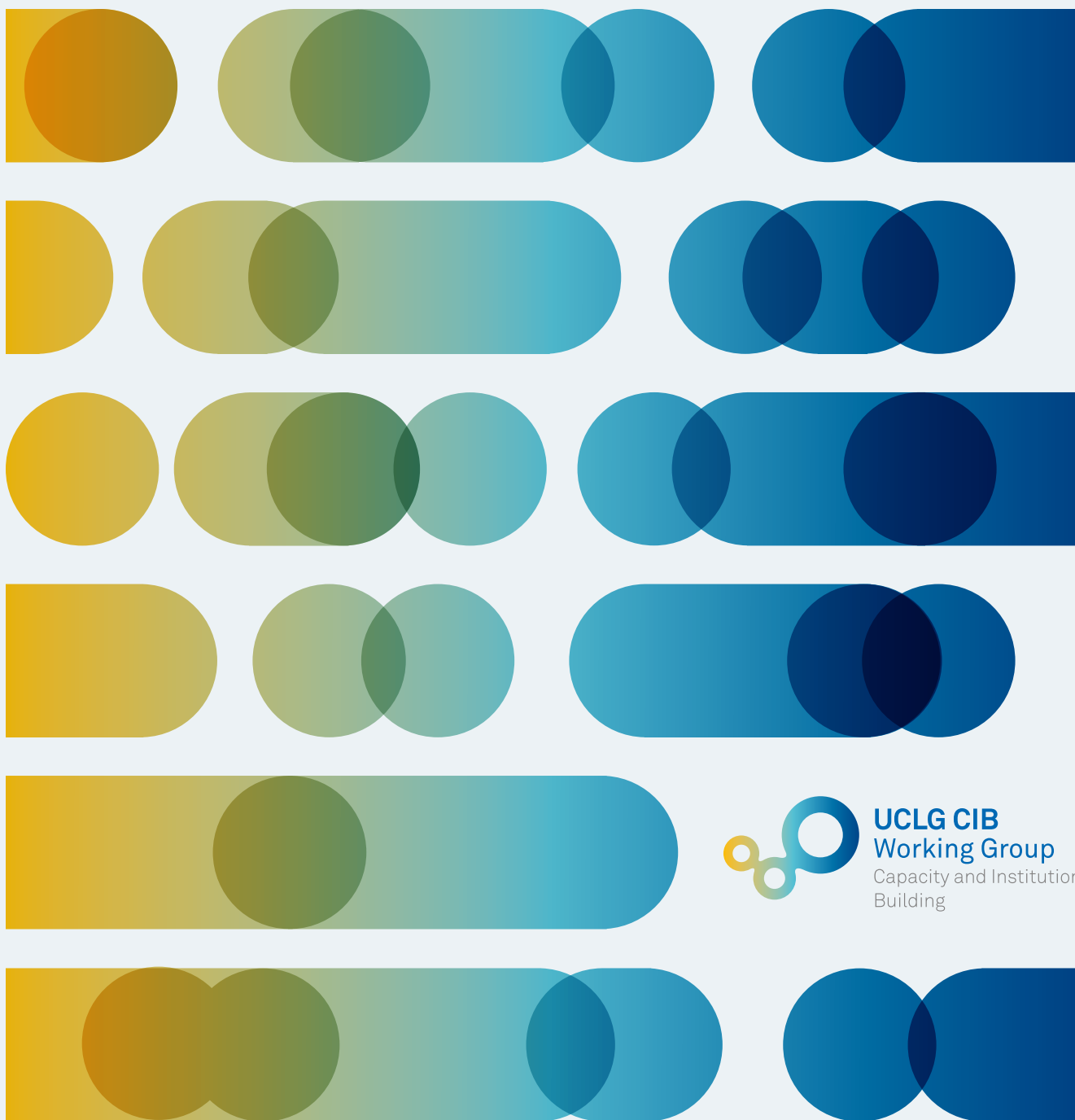



# Capacity Building for Gender Equality at the Local Level

Understanding the environment and learning from good practices



 **UCLG CIB**  
Working Group  
Capacity and Institution  
Building

Coordinated by the Capacity and Institution Building  
(CIB) Working Group of United Cities and Local  
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## Acronyms

ACOBOL – Association of Women Councillors of Bolivia  
AFCCRE – Association Française du Conseil des Communes et Régions d'Europe (French association of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions)  
AGGI – UN Habitat's Advisory Group on Gender Issues  
AICCCE – Associazione italiana per il Consiglio dei Comuni e delle Regioni d'Europa (Association of Italian municipalities and regions)  
ANCB – Association Nationale des Communes du Benin (National association of municipalities of Benin)  
CAF – Development Bank of Latin America  
CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women  
CEMR – Council of European Municipalities and Regions  
CIB Working Group – Capacity Institution Building Working Group  
CILG-VNG International – International Development Centre for the Innovative Local Governance  
CSW – UN Committee on the Status of Women  
CUF – Cités Unies France (French United local governments)  
EIGE – European Institute for Gender Equality  
EU – European Union  
FCM – Federation of Canadian Municipalities  
FEMP – Federación Española de Municipios y Provincias (Association of Spanish municipalities and regions)  
FNCT – National Federation of Tunisian Municipalities  
FSLGA – Federation of Sri Lankan Local Government Authorities  
GEAP – UN Habitat's Gender Equality Action Plan  
ICLD – Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy  
IDA – World Bank Group's International Development Association  
IDB – Inter-American Development Bank  
IDEAL – Inclusive Decisions at Local Level, program implemented by VNG International  
IFC – World Bank Group's International Finance Cooperation  
International IDEA – International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance  
IULA – International Union of Local Authorities  
NGO – non-governmental organization  
NLC – Cambodian National League of Communes  
OECD – Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development  
OECD DAC – OECD's Development Assistance Committee  
RALGA – Rwandan Association of Local Government Authorities  
REFELA – Réseau des Femmes Elues Locales d'Afrique (Network of Local Elected Women of Africa)  
SALAR – Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions  
SALGA – South African Local Government Association  
SDG – Sustainable Development Goal  
SIDA – Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency  
U20 – Urban 20, platform for mayors from G20 cities  
UCLG – United Cities and Local Governments  
UCLG ASPAC – United Cities and Local Governments Asia-Pacific  
UCLG MEWA – United Cities and Local Governments Middle East and West Asia  
UFGE – Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality  
UN – United Nations  
UNDP – United Nations Development Programme  
UNFPA – United Nations Population Fund  
UTO – Union of Towns Organisation  
VNG International – International cooperation agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG)  
VWSG – Vereniging van Vlaamse Steden en Gemeenten (Association of Flemish Cities and Towns)

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## Foreword by Peter Knip

One cannot deny that there is a systemic inequality between men and women worldwide. Universally, there are clear patterns of women's inferior access to resources and opportunities. Women are systematically under-represented in decision-making processes that shape their societies and their own lives. In my view, this pattern of inequality is a constraint to the progress of any society because it limits the opportunities of one-half of its population. When women are constrained from reaching their full potential, that potential is lost to society as a whole. Moreover, there is clear evidence that equal participation of women and men in governments, companies and other organizations in society leads to an improved labor environment, better communication between management and workers and increased productivity.

When designing and implementing international development projects and programs one should carefully consider the different roles of women and men in society because such differences demand different approaches. The purpose of integrating gender concerns in the analysis, formulation and monitoring of project interventions is not an end in itself. It is a means to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women in order for them to get equal access to and control over resources, access to municipal services, information, decision-making and opportunities to develop. In order to achieve this it is required to address both the condition as well as the position of women and men in a specific country, region, municipality, neighborhood and group.

I am inclined to say that especially local governments have many opportunities to contribute to gender equality. On the one hand, as political body of the local community they are able to lead, guide and facilitate local initiatives in favour of better participation and access for women. On the other hand, as employer they are able to use gender criteria in their employment policies. Last but not least, it is of course crucial that the political parties allow sufficient participation of women, so that the councils and number of mayors show equal participation of women and men.

The CIB Working Group brings the professionals responsible for international cooperation of cities and local government associations together. It is part of our professionalism and responsibility to explore how we can concretely implement the gender equality work of UCLG in our projects and programs. Although modest in nature, our collective attention for this very important objective of developing a society in which women and men enjoy the same opportunities, rights and obligations in all spheres of life will certainly contribute to the realization of human rights for all.

With this first publication we aim to give an overview and an inventory, highlighted by concrete cases, of what is happening in the field of promoting gender equality in the international work of the UCLG membership. It is our aim to produce a follow-up brochure with more technical tools to implement gender strategies in international programs. We see it as our role to produce documents and instruments and tools that will help UCLG to implement its political and learning agenda, which we believe is essential for the achievement of the UN Agenda 2030 and for local democracy as a whole.



As it was for a large part developed before the COVID-19 outbreak, the publication does not pay as much attention to this worldwide pandemic as you would expect. However, the coronavirus crisis also has a tremendous impact on women and girls. The social and economic fallout of the outbreak could have a long-term impact on gender equality, as the European Parliament recently stated, threatening the progress made in gender equality and potentially pushing an additional 47 million women and girls below the poverty line worldwide<sup>1</sup>. Across social, political, and economic spheres, the impacts of the virus are exacerbated for women and girls<sup>2</sup>. Forthcoming CIB work in the field of gender equality will make sure to further reflect on this.

**Peter Knip**  
Director of VNG International

<sup>1</sup> European Parliament (2021). *Understanding Covid-19s impact on women (infographics)*.

<sup>2</sup> FCM (2020). *Issue Brief: Gender and COVID-19*.



# 1. Introduction

Local governments and their local government associations play a large role in advancing gender equality at the local level through policy and programming. They stand closest to people, which gives them an acute awareness of the challenges and opportunities facing society. Local authorities have deep roots in the social, political and economic fabric of communities; this has placed them in a position to act as convenors of partners in the community. Around the world, local governments and local government associations have demonstrated that they can provide an effective decision-making framework for establishing social development priorities by fostering an environment of collaboration and dialogue with their citizens. Local governments are uniquely positioned to ensure the participation of all partners, including marginalized groups such as women and youth, in local, regional and municipal decision-making. They can create more inclusive communities by formulating policies and programs that are relevant for their citizens and at the same time contribute to the joint achievement of the global development goals, the reduction of poverty and promotion of gender equality.

Local government associations also play a core role in awareness raising on and implementation of gender equality measures at the local and regional level. They can use different tools and methods within their work, of which gender mainstreaming<sup>1</sup> is one of them. An increasing number and variety of institutional actors are adopting gender mainstreaming as a tool to increase gender equality and gender-responsive policies and measures. Some national associations of local governments, including the Norwegian<sup>2</sup>, the Swedish<sup>3</sup> and Canadian<sup>4</sup> associations, also integrate gender mainstreaming in their management. Others, including the French association (AFCCRE)<sup>5</sup>, the Italian association (AICCRE)<sup>6</sup> as well as the Spanish association (FEMP)<sup>7</sup>, the Basque association of local authorities, the Association of Malian Municipalities, the Federation of Colombian Municipalities, and the Association of Ukrainian Cities have put in place a Women Elected Standing Committee, to encourage the debate on gender equality among their membership.

<sup>1</sup> Definition by the Council of Europe: "Gender Mainstreaming is the (re)organization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy progresses, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and all stages, by the actors involved in the policy making".  
See website: [www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)

<sup>2</sup> See website: [www.ks.no](http://www.ks.no)

<sup>3</sup> See website: [www.skf.se](http://www.skf.se)

<sup>4</sup> See website: [www.fcm.ca](http://www.fcm.ca)

<sup>5</sup> See website: [www.afccre.org](http://www.afccre.org)

<sup>6</sup> See website: [www.aiccre.it](http://www.aiccre.it)

<sup>7</sup> See website: [www.femp.es](http://www.femp.es)



UCLG, the world organization of local and regional governments and their associations, has been placing for years gender equality at the core of its political and institutional agenda, by promoting and supporting a global feminist municipal movement, which seeks gender equality and women empowerment in local leadership and decision-making and providing different spaces for exchange, of experiences and practices. One of such spaces is its Capacity and Institution Building Working Group (CIB), a technical platform for professionals from local government associations and individual local governments active in the field of capacity development and local government development cooperation. The Working Group's goal is to advance the effectiveness and quality of international policies and programs of local and regional governments and their associations, through the exchange of knowledge and information, and coordination of efforts. Since 2017, the CIB Working Group places special focus on the topic of gender equality at local level in its activities, as many member organizations design and implement programs which include gender activities, and because the donor community is placing more emphasis on the importance to work on gender equality within development cooperation. After organizing several webinars and physical meetings on the topic of gender equality within CIB, the CIB leadership decided to develop this study, with external expertise and CIB members themselves, which stems from the conviction that especially local governments can play an important role in contributing to gender equality.

## 2. The enabling environment for gender equality in the world

### A. The international framework

Traditionally, the United Nations and the **Council of Europe**<sup>1</sup> have provided the international frameworks for an enabling environment for gender equality in the world. The Council of Europe has played a crucial role in fighting for equality for women and men, as has the European Union<sup>2</sup>.

**The United Nations** have a long history of addressing women's human rights and, after World War II, much progress has been made in securing women's rights across the world. The support of the United Nations for the rights of women starts with the UN Founding Charter which, in its article 1, encourages "respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion". This is confirmed by the UN's founding Declaration which was adopted by the General Assembly in 1948. Within the Economic and Social Council, the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is currently the main intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and women empowerment.

Following the beginning of the international feminist movement during the 1970s, the General Assembly of the UN organized the 1<sup>st</sup> World Conference on Women in Mexico City in 1975. In 1979, the General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which defines, in its 30 articles, discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end discrimination. Five years after Mexico, a second World Conference on Women was held in Copenhagen in 1980. A third conference, in Nairobi in 1985, saw the participation of around 15,000 representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The event was considered as "the birth of global feminism".

The fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, launched the Beijing Platform for Action, asserting women's rights as human rights and committing to specific actions for ensuring the respect of such rights. In 2010, the UN created a specialized agency, UN Women<sup>3</sup>, to speed up the progress in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women. In addition to the international frameworks, as of 2014, 143 countries in the world guaranteed equality between women and men in their constitutions, while another 52 countries have yet to make this commitment.

2020 marked the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing conference. Unfortunately, this anniversary was largely overshadowed by the COVID-19 outbreak. The majority of the 65th CSW-session was postponed to 2021 and took place under the theme "Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls". However, the Commission on the Status of Women did convene in March 2020, for a meeting that included opening statements followed by the adoption of a draft political declaration. Also at this occasion of the Beijing+25, the Generation Equality Forum was established, as a civil-society centered, global gathering for gender equality convened by UN Women and the governments of Mexico and France<sup>4</sup>. The Forum represents a major inflection point for gender equality, bringing together governments at all levels, corporations and change makers from around the world to define and announce ambitious investments and policies around the Global Acceleration Plan for Gender Equality and 5-year action blueprints.

<sup>1</sup> The Council of Europe was founded in 1949 and consists of 47 member states from Western and Central and Eastern Europe with the aim of working for the protection and progress of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in Europe. See website: [www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)

<sup>2</sup> See website: [www.ec.europa.eu/gender\\_english](http://www.ec.europa.eu/gender_english)

<sup>3</sup> See website: [www.unwomen.org](http://www.unwomen.org)

<sup>4</sup> See website: <https://forum.generationequality.org>

### UCLG calls for increased participation of women and feminist leaders in decision-making at CSW65

UCLG gathered its constituency to take part in CSW65 official sessions and on the Local and Regional Governments' Days. UCLG advocated for increased participation of women and feminist leaders in decision-making processes towards a sustainable, inclusive and just recovery, and for a new model of governing cities and territories with empathy and that places care at the center. Through different sessions, women mayors and feminist leaders recognized the value of care work and workers, and need to address informality and contribute to eradication of gender-based violence and inequalities, including in local decision-making<sup>1</sup>.

In preparation for the CSW65, UCLG Co-Chaired the Expert Group Meeting (EGM) with renowned experts that took stock of research and trends on women's participation and decision-

-making, for example regarding the stagnation of women representation in public life or increasing backlashes and attacks to gender equality frameworks. The EGM outcome report presented important recommendations and findings, which were taken into consideration and contributed to the deliberations of the CSW65, as an official document<sup>2</sup>.

In the Generation Equality Forum, UCLG is one of the co-leaders of the Action Coalition on Feminist Movements and Leadership, contributing for the definition of the blueprints and the engagement of the constituency of local and regional governments in the Forums. UCLG will continue to advocate for the recognition of the unique role of local and regional governments to achieve gender equality, especially with a view to the implementation of the Global Acceleration Plan<sup>3</sup>.



<sup>1</sup> UCLG (2021). Joint Statement to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women 65 (CSW65) of the organized constituency of Local and Regional Governments, gathered in the Global Taskforce (GTF).

<sup>2</sup> UN Women (2021). Report of the Expert Group.

<sup>3</sup> Generation Equality Forum (2021). Action Coalitions: A Global Acceleration Plan for Gender Equality.



## COVID-19: The Impacts on Achieving Gender Equality

From the start of its outbreak, COVID-19 has left its mark on everyone, all around the world. However, the impact of the coronavirus is most severely felt by the most vulnerable groups and simply by virtue of their gender, women and girls turn out to be among them. Economic impacts are felt harder by women, as they are generally earning less, saving less and more often are holding insecure jobs. Women are more likely to work in the health sector, having now a greater risk of being infected by the virus. At the same time, social stress is causing gender-based violence to increase exponentially, while support services are being closed down.

Fortunately, the international community soon recognized that policymaking in response to the pandemic should also incorporate women's voices and interests. António Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations, urged governments to put women and girls at the centre of their efforts to recover from COVID-19, at the launch of the UN Women Policy Brief on the Impact

of COVID-19 on Women. "That starts with women as leaders, with equal representation and decision-making power," he stated<sup>1</sup>. UCLG underlined this message in a COVID-19 Live Learning Event dedicated to the topic of gender, arguing that looking into the future, empowering women and girls is critical and argued that a different type of partnership between spheres of government and civil society, in particular women's groups, is needed for the aftermath of the crisis. Emilia Saiz (Secretary General UCLG): "It critical to commit to the global agendas in the recovery, we cannot allow priorities to shift and consider the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda as accessories."

Local governments, the level of government closest to the citizens, are now working on an inclusive response to the pandemic and its consequences.



## B. Agenda 2030: SDG 5 & SDG 10

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has further anchored gender equality in international frameworks. Both Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, which aims at "Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls", and SDG 10, which wants to "Reduce inequality within and among countries", call upon the 193 member states of the UN to advance in the field of gender equality<sup>1</sup>.

SDG 5 mentions the following relevant targets:

- End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere;
- Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private sphere, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation;
- Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage, and female genital mutilation;
- Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies, and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate;
- Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life;
- Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights;

- Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national law;
- Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women;
- Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

SDG 10 mentions the following relevant targets:

- By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status;
- Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard;

Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality.

<sup>1</sup> António Guterres' speech and the UN Women Policy Brief on the Impact of COVID-19 on Women can be found on the UN website: <https://www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/put-women-and-girls-centre-efforts-recover-covid-19>

<sup>1</sup> See website: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

## Why does SDG 5 matter to local government?

The Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy (member of the UCLG CIB Working Group) has published a Toolbox for local Governments to implement SDG 5 on Gender Equality<sup>1</sup>. It gives a precis as to why SDG 5 matters to local government.

### A matter of justice

Women account for half the population and therefore have the right to be represented as such. Female leaders in local governments can challenge gender stereotypes, set an example to younger girls, and enable women to feel truly represented and recognized in the democratic process.

### A matter of democracy

Women's experiences are different from men's and need to be represented in discussions and decision-making. A growing body of research suggests that where women are present in critical numbers and are able to participate effectively in local government, the result is more socially responsive in governance outcomes and there is a more transparent way of working.

### A matter of interest

Decisions by municipalities about development priorities, services and regulations affect the quality of life of both women and men, but not necessarily in the same way. In most countries, there are significant differences between women and men in the resources they command, the work they do, and in the responsibilities and the decision-making power they have.

### A matter of obligation

Local governments have the responsibility to protect women's and girls' rights, and mainstream gender issues. They are also responsible for implementing legal and policy frameworks that aim to end violence against women and girls, promoting women's political participation.



## 3. UCLG's work on gender equality

As stated in article 3 of its Constitution, gender equality is a key priority of UCLG's political agenda. Since its creation in 2004, UCLG has launched several important initiatives for gender equality and the empowerment of women. The UCLG Standing Committee on Gender Equality plays a crucial role under the heading of 'UCLG Women'; its President is also a member of the UCLG Presidency. The work of UCLG is guided by the global feminist movement, which contributes to the Pact for the Future, and that amplifies the voices of women leaders and enables the links with and among grassroots women's networks and feminist women and men.

In recent years, UCLG has developed elements for an *All-UCLG Gender Equality Strategy*, which remains to be validated and adopted by the membership. This draft strategy should be seen in the specific context of UCLG's engagement for the realization of Agenda 2030: UCLG aims at being at the forefront concerning the achievement of SDG 5, and especially regarding the target 5.5.1 aiming at ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at the local level of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

The suggested All-UCLG Gender Equality Strategy is conceived around **two pillars**, a political pillar and an institutional pillar. These pillars should help guide the commitment of the organization in the short, mid and long-term<sup>1</sup>.

**The political pillar** is intended to capture all the work in the field of policy by UCLG and its members. Building on the legacy of the Durban congress and on the implications of an Equality Driven Movement, UCLG promotes a feminist municipalism geared towards transformation that will put care, empathy, proximity and participation of women in local decision making at the heart of the agenda<sup>2</sup>. The movement considers the interconnection between the personal and the political, as individual trajectories mutually influence political engagement and decision-making. The political pillar defines two priorities:

1. empowering and supporting a strong-visibility of women at the local level and in the UCLG leadership;
2. meeting SDG 5 and mainstreaming gender equality in all 17 goals of the 2030 agenda at local level.

<sup>1</sup> ICLD (2018). *Policy Brief 3: A toolbox for Local Governments to implement SDG 5 on Gender Equality*.

<sup>1</sup> UCLG. *Basic Guide for active participation in UCLG's governing bodies*.

<sup>2</sup> See also the outcomes of the Live Learning Experience focused on gender and COVID-19: <https://www.beyondtheoutbreak.uclg.org/womens-leadership>



## The institutional pillar of the UCLG strategy

should help anchor gender equality measures in the different parts of the organization – its governing bodies, secretariats, working groups, events and actions. Its main priority is to achieve gender equality and to mainstream gender in all UCLG activities. In order to achieve that, the following objectives are defined<sup>1</sup>:

1. analysing and assessing the current position and internal practices on gender equality and gender mainstreaming in all UCLG sections and work areas and activities in the short term, and developing a mechanism to regularly keep this overall information up to date in the mid to long-term;
2. Raising awareness on gender equality and gender mainstreaming in all UCLG areas for all UCLG employees, interns, consultants and partners in order to increase their level of knowledge on these issues;
3. Providing frameworks, tools, training and mechanisms aimed at integrating gender sensitive approaches in all UCLG activities; iv) Collectively developing coordinated, consolidated action plans;
4. Collecting disaggregated data and qualitative change.

The agenda of the feminist municipalism thus considers the institutional dimension, women's leadership and an innovative agenda, which promotes the strengthening of local public service provision, gender-sensitive policies and projects, recognizing the differentiated impact of crises as the pandemic on migrants, workers, those in precarious situations, younger or older, heads of households, women forming part of the LGBTBIQ+ community, of different ethnicities and religions, persons with disabilities.

In addition to the committees and working groups, including CIB, gender equality represents a cross-cutting topic for UCLG, thus reflected in different activities of the world organization. Additionally, the UCLG regional sections, national associations and their members will be required to support the strategy and its future. Their political willingness will be the key factor for the success of the strategy.

## A. The role of the UCLG's regional sections

UCLG is a decentralized organisation, with regional sections in all continents representing bodies local authorities from all around across the world: Africa (UCLG-Africa), Asia-Pacific (UCLG ASPAC), Eurasia (UCLG Eurasia), Europe (CEMR), Latin America (CORDIAL), Middle East and West Asia (UCLG-MEWA) and North America (UCLG-Noram), as well as Metropolis (representing metropolises) and the Forum of Regions (representing regional governments). These regional sections provide guidelines and input for the policies, activities, programs and management of the world organization, from their perspective and on behalf of their members and members' associations. But they also carry out their own activities. This also applies for gender equality policies and activities as shown through examples of some of the sections.

**UCLG-Africa** has a very wide and lively network of local elected women: the Network of Local Elected Women in Africa (REFELA) was launched in 2011 in Tangier in Morocco. Today, REFELA<sup>1</sup> has precise governing structures: a General Assembly meeting every three years in the framework of Africities, a Bureau elected by the General Assembly and composed by 15 members, three for each of the five sub-regions of UCLG Africa, a presidency elected among the members of the Bureau and supported by 5 vice-presidents, one for each sub-region. The president of REFELA is member ex-officio of the UCLG Africa Executive Committee.

Through this network, locally elected women from all African countries exchange information, experiences and practices, and actively participate in global debates on sustainable development and equality, bringing the priorities of the African region on the world stage. In recent years, REFELA has launched several initiatives<sup>2</sup>, including several advocacy campaigns and the elaboration of an *African Charter for Equality between women and men at the local level*<sup>3</sup>. Locally elected African women are making great efforts for an improved and fairer development in their continent but also, and in particular, for more balanced power between women and men in their regions, but also for Africa.

The European Section of UCLG, the **Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)**, has a longstanding commitment to work on gender equality. This has been fed by the very active local elected women, starting with first European conference of local and regional women elected representatives in Pisa in 1983. A Standing Committee of local elected women representatives was formed as a statutory body within CEMR in 1992<sup>4</sup>. In the past 10 years, CEMR has intensified mainstreaming of gender equality within the organization through the introduction of representation quotas in CEMR governing bodies and, increasingly, the involvement of men in the gender equality activities.

In 2006, the *European Charter for Equality of women and men in local life* was launched by CEMR to encourage local governments to make a formal, political commitment to the principle of equality between women and men and to implement local policies for gender equality. Fifteen years later, the Charter is a great success and an important achievement for CEMR, enhancing a deep debate on gender equality at a local level all over Europe and creating wide and real interest at all levels of governance and involving different stakeholders. Equality Charters in other regions have been inspired by the European Charter for Equality: the *Euro Mediterranean Charter for Equality between women and men in local life* (2017)<sup>5</sup> and the *African Charter for Equality between women and men at the local level* (currently under preparation by UCLG Africa/REFELA with the support from CEMR/PLATFORMA and UCLG)<sup>6</sup>.

With the work done by PLATFORMA<sup>7</sup> for the recognition of local governments' role in development cooperation (*decentralized cooperation*) by the European Union, CEMR took the opportunity of bringing gender equality advocacy to European Development Policy, and gender equality was inserted as an objective and theme to be supported in decentralized cooperation development projects and programs.

<sup>1</sup> Based on points 32,33, 34, 35, 36 of the UCLG Gender Equality Strategy.

<sup>2</sup> The Campaign of African Cities without Street Children was launched by REFELA during Africities in Marrakesh in November 2018.

<sup>3</sup> See the case study presented in this publication about the Euro-African Pact for gender equality (page XXX).

<sup>4</sup> The CEMR Standing Committee of elected women representatives changed name to become the Standing Committee for Equality in 2011. The Committee has been chaired over the years by dynamic and committed local elected women and men. For more information, see the CEMR website: <https://ccre.org/en/activites/view/11>

<sup>5</sup> COPPEM (2016). *Euro-Mediterranean Charter for Equality between Women and Men in local Life*.

<sup>6</sup> PLATFORMA (2020, August 27). *African and European leaders take steps towards an African Charter for local gender equality*.

<sup>7</sup> PLATFORMA is the pan-European coalition of towns and regions – and their national, EU and global associations – active in city-to-city and region-to-region development cooperation. It was launched in 2008, with CEMR hosting its secretariat. See website: [www.platforma-dev.eu](http://www.platforma-dev.eu)



**Metropolis**<sup>8</sup>, the global network of major cities and metropolitan areas, operates as the metropolitan section of UCLG. In 2020, the organisation represents 141 metropolises all over the world. Metropolis has a strong commitment to gender mainstreaming strategy as a crucial perspective present on its vision in, while drafting every public policy, and while managing the services offered in metropolises. Metropolis actively brings its gender experience and knowledge to the broader UCLG network, in particular highlighting practices on metropolitan governance with a gender perspective, such as mobility and public spaces, in line with SDGs 5 and 11.

In this sense, Metropolis' research Safety and public space: *Mapping metropolitan gender policies*<sup>9</sup> has allowed for the mapping of the policies implemented by metropolises from around the world in order to address sexual violence against women and girls in public space. The objectives of the publication were to i) position a gender-sensitive vision on the political agenda of Metropolis' members to build safe, inclusive and resilient cities for all ii) to increase awareness of Metropolis' members to end sexual violence against women and girls in urban public spaces; and iii) to disseminate data and case studies identified among the membership through USE Platform's website. The publication is available on the Metropolis website.

In addition, and as a consequence of the pandemic, the C4GH platform was launched to provide governments with responses to the Covid19 health emergency. The platform was developed with a gender-sensitive approach, and currently gender-sensitive or gender-specific initiatives can be found.

**UCLG ASPAC**<sup>10</sup>, the Asia-Pacific Section of UCLG, is also committed to gender equality. A status report on women's representation was produced in 2010 with the UNDP and this was updated in 2013. The number of women's representation in the national parliaments has increased in the region, but this positive trend is not reflected at the local level. It was found that there has been a decrease of 3% in the number of women councillors since 2010. Considering gender equality as a crucial issue, UCLG-ASPAC has established a Standing Committee of Women for Local Government. Strong efforts have been made by the secretariat to support this Committee and its focus. Cities Alliance<sup>11</sup> has agreed to support UCLG's ASPAC plan on strengthening women in local governments.

**UCLG-MEWA**<sup>12</sup>, the regional section of the Middle East, supports "the political, social and economic participation of women in local life as the most significant duties of local authorities". The UCLG-MEWA Committee on Gender Equality was launched during the joint Executive Bureau and Council meeting held on 19 December 2014 and has established several priorities: i) A quota

system for the greater political participation of women; ii) developing social, political, and economical regulations for enhancing the access of women to all types of services; iii) Awareness raising campaigns in order to eliminate gender-oriented prejudices in society; iv) sharing and the dissemination of good local authority practices in the field of gender equality; v) the dissemination and implementation of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women; vi) the localization of Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG 5 on Gender Equality. UCLG-MEWA is currently implementing a project in Turkey, on monitoring the implementation of SDG5 at the local level. The overall aim of the project is to mainstream and institutionalize gender equality within municipalities.

The activities of the UCLG sections raise awareness on gender equality as well as facilitates exchange of information and experiences. They also feed into the advocacy efforts of UCLG and of the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, leading to bottom-up lobby & advocacy.



<sup>8</sup> See website: [www.metropolis.org](http://www.metropolis.org)

<sup>9</sup> Metropolis (2018). *Safety and public space: Mapping metropolitan gender policies*

<sup>10</sup> See website: [www.uclg-aspac.org](http://www.uclg-aspac.org)

<sup>11</sup> See website: [www.citiesalliance.org](http://www.citiesalliance.org)

<sup>12</sup> See the website: [www.uclg-mewa.org](http://www.uclg-mewa.org)

## 4. Capacity building for gender equality

The members of the CIB Working Group carry out international capacity programs with and by local governments, all around the world. These capacity programs cover a variety of themes and issues, from solid waste management to local economic development to inclusive democratic governance. Programs continue to adapt and evolve to include activities related to **advancing gender equality, the empowerment of women, and women in local leadership**. Within capacity building programs there is a need to not only inform people about the existing international framework and laws backing women rights, but also to provide strong models and voices of women who contribute and support other women and networks all over the world. This can be achieved through the **exchange of knowledge and information** and enabling **cooperation** among members of these networks. **Statistics and data** are crucial to know precisely what the reality of women and men on the ground is, to measure the progress, and to organize an appropriate advocacy.

### A. Challenges and needs as basis for guidelines for action by practitioners

CIB member organizations have the capacities and the great potential to improve women's rights and conditions in the world and thus contribute to the achievement of gender equality. However there are many challenges that need to be faced when it comes to a complicated and difficult subject such as the equality of women and men.

The needs and challenges can be summarized in 12 points. These could be considered as guidelines for action by practitioners who are ready to commit themselves in favour of gender equality in development cooperation projects:

Challenge	Need
<u>Information and data</u> are necessary to have a precise vision on women's conditions and gender equality at the local level in the world; at the moment this is not available.	The collection and dissemination of information and data are fundamental to measure reality and foresee adapted responses and policies.
<u>Knowledge and expertise</u> on gender equality and women's rights issues seems to be missing in many local governments and national associations, as well as in the international arena. At the same time there is a need for programs, tools, and policies aimed at advancing gender equality.	If we want to achieve gender equality by 2030, in line with the objectives of Agenda 2030, it is necessary to increase the number of capacity building programs and projects related to gender equality, to make sure knowledge and expertise continue to increase.
<u>Legislative support</u> for women's rights and gender equality in the world.	Local, national and international advocacy is fundamental to improving women's rights and conditions, at all levels of governance and in many fields.
<u>Exchange of experiences and best practice</u> to support women in politics.	Appropriate initiatives in the framework of capacity building programs, for example peer learning reviews, can help the transfer of best practices to those countries where a lot of work remains to be done in the field of gender equality.
<u>Training</u> for gender equality in local governments.	Elected representatives and civil servants need to receive adapted training on legislation, programs, tools, initiatives, methods, etc. in favour of gender equality.
Changing the perception of and promoting <u>women leadership</u> .	Girls and women need to become connected to inspiring role models to encourage their political commitment and combat the roles that tradition and stereotypes offer them. Exchange, networking and cooperation are important for boosting women leadership.
<u>Mentoring support</u> for newly elected women.	Women candidates or newly elected women have to face obstacles that men do not even realize exist. Support and mentoring are important tools for them and need to be foreseen at the local government level.
<u>Background barriers</u> (history, culture, religion, traditions, social stereotypes).	Women often lack the instruments to overcome the historical, cultural, traditional, social barriers that they have to face. It is important to help them to speak up, and, if possible, build common reflections and answers to these barriers.
<u>Raising awareness</u> on women's rights and gender equality (for the population as well as for elected representatives at local level).	It is very important to inform women and men in general, and civil servants and elected representatives in particular, about gender equality as a human right and also as a resource for the development for humanity. The cooperation of local governments with civil society is important in this respect.
<u>Including the voice of women</u> in tackling development issues (poverty, education, economic development, climate, transports, migrations, conflicts, etc.)	Women represent more than half of the population of the planet; not getting their input is a loss for society. Gender equality and inclusion of women in particular needs to be taken into account in the development of policies, programs and projects.
<u>Financial support</u> : the main issue for gender equality programs and projects	Appropriate policies and programs, accompanied by sufficient resources, are necessary to properly address the issue of gender equality in local government development cooperation projects.
<u>Political will and commitment</u> for gender equality.	There is still a lack of interest and/or (political) will at all levels of government to commit and work on advancing gender equality. Practitioners need to focus on this aspect when designing future activities related to gender equality in their capacity building programs.

## B. Thematic angles and modalities for projects aimed at advancing gender equality

CIB member organizations have the The twelve case studies brought together in this publication demonstrate how local government development cooperation projects can concretely improve gender equality at both the local and regional level. Looking at the work which is already undertaken, we can distinguish different thematic angles for projects supporting gender equality at the local level, and different modalities.

### Six possible thematic angles for projects which aim to support gender equality at local level

#### 1. Gender equality in local policies

Capacity building programs could assist local government in integrating gender issues in local policies, (multi-annual plans and programs. Different tools already exist to help identify specific competences of local governments in this field, such as the European Charter for the Equality of women and men, which can be adapted to the reality of the country where the project is implemented. Some cases of this publication also show how gender mainstreaming is a useful method when integrating a gender dimension in local policies.

#### 2. Localising SDG 5

In a development cooperation project, it is normal that two or more local governments to work together and in parallel for a common goal. It would make sense that this exercise is done within the framework of SDG 5 of Agenda 2030, thus providing an opportunity to motivate multiple communities to go forward and "leave nobody behind". National and umbrella organizations of local governments could accompany this exercise and help localize the SDG agenda and SDG 5 in particular.

#### 3. Women leadership/gender equality in decision-making

The unequal participation of women and men in decision-making is one of the crucial issues related to gender equality in the world, as confirmed by the data gathered for this publication. Support for women's leadership in decision-making and governance is essential to overcoming existing barriers. The transmission of existing models, good experiences and practices are important to encourage women to take part in decision-making and public life.

#### 4. Implementing the Beijing Action Plan

The Beijing Action Plan offers a framework for the world to advance towards gender equality and the achievement of SDG 5 of Agenda 2030. Local and regional governments could build development cooperation projects around the assessment of the Beijing Action Plan at the local level since local governments have been recognized as actors for the implementation of the Beijing action plan since 2000 already.

#### 5. Linking gender equality to global grand issues and vice versa

Economic and social development at the local level, but also broader subjects which have global dimensions, such as human rights and migrations, conflicts and war, natural disasters, climate change, and poverty, should all be analysed from a gender equality perspective.

#### 6. Gender-based violence

Many women in this world still face gender-related violence. Local governments can play an important role in the prevention of, and also the struggle against, violence against women. Capacity programs could focus on enhancing capacities of local governments to effectively do so.



## Seven modalities for projects to support gender equality at the local level

Local governments and their associations can use different project modalities to work on improving women's conditions and advancing gender equality, including the following ones:

### 1. Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is the classical method that practitioners can use to work on gender equality within a development cooperation project. It integrates the gender dimension to the different aspects of a project and in different implementation phases. For this to work, clear political will is required, as well as precise monitoring and evaluation of results. Several cities, regions and associations have gender mainstreamed their policies and programs already. A development cooperation project can be a good opportunity to transfer knowledge and experiences to partner countries/local governments, taking into account their specific environment and needs.

### 2. Gender budgeting

Gender budgeting is a tool for gender mainstreaming, which focuses on how public resources are collected and spent. According to the Council of Europe, the purpose of Gender Budgeting is threefold<sup>1</sup>: "i) to promote accountability and transparency in fiscal planning; ii) to increase gender responsive participation in the budget process, for example by undertaking steps to involve women and men equally in budget preparation; iii) to advance gender equality and women's rights". Gender budgeting can be applied to any level of government, including the local level. Local governments' proximity to people's everyday lives means that there is the potential to respond more directly to women's and men's needs when it comes to public policy and service delivery, through adequate spending. Gender budgeting has been practised by several local and regional governments already; it can be therefore an interesting methodology to apply in the framework of a local government development cooperation project.

### 3. Institutional capacity building and peer learning

Gender equality can be strengthened through institutional support. A capacity building project can help a local government or national association to design, prepare and set up the institutional framework necessary to strengthen the institutional basis for gender equality. A capacity building project is the ideal setting for encouraging local governments to take ownership of the institutional dimension of gender equality and consequently of its political meaning. Peer learning is a useful technique in this regard; this can be facilitated through involvement of multiple local governments, or the national association.

### 4. Encouraging exchange and networking

A development cooperation project can be an opportunity for exchange of experiences and learning between two or more local/regional governments so as to understand the way gender equality is treated in other local governments/countries. Exchange activities can cover many themes: from legislation to local services for women and their daily life, to exchanges of experiences between locally elected people or civil servants working on gender equality. Study visits can help to deepen subject knowledge or to learn about an initiative which has an important local impact. In addition, a development cooperation project can also encourage and support (informal) women's networks. For several local governments associations and international organizations, as shown in the case studies of this publication, this is the first step towards starting to work on gender equality.

### 5. Training and mentoring for women and men

Trainings and the transfer of knowledge are necessary to support gender equality. National associations of local governments should play a crucial role in fulfilling this need and reinforcing capacities. Training and mentoring can help to train women for a job, a position and leadership, and men on the need and principles behind gender equality, and how to adjust norms, values and actions to this reality.

### 6. Encouraging equal participation and representation of women and men within project activities

Some development cooperation projects use a simple method to help gender equality: encouraging the equal participation of women and men in activities, conferences, meetings and at the different stages of a project. It can be an opportunity to involve more women in a project where normally men are more involved, but it can also be an opportunity to involve more men in a project on gender equality or in any other issues which can be considered as a matter for women. Such an approach can be relevant in a development cooperation project linked to women's issues or problems which are not also easy to discuss in some particular contexts.

### 7. Gathering disaggregated data

According to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)<sup>2</sup>, disaggregated data allows for the measurement of differences between women and men on various social and economic grounds and is one of the requirements for creating gender statistics. Gathering disaggregated data can also be done within a project, to help understand a social, economic, or a political context. It is an important modality to be used in a development cooperation project, as it measures the situation and needs of women and men on the ground; important input for the monitoring, evaluation and learning within a project.



<sup>1</sup> EIGE developed several toolkits for gender mainstreaming. See their website for an overview: [www.eige.europa.eu](http://www.eige.europa.eu)

<sup>2</sup> See website: [www.eige.europa.eu](http://www.eige.europa.eu)



## Engaging with the international donor community on the topic of gender equality

Regarding gender equality, the gap between theory and practice is often addressed. According to the OECD<sup>1</sup>, "in 2016-2017, members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) targeted an average of USD 44.8 billion per year, corresponding to 38% of their bilateral aid, towards gender equality and women's equality. This is higher than before. At the same time, support to programs specifically dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment as their principal objective remains consistently low. In 2016-2017, funding for dedicated programs with principal objective remains low at 4% and 62% of aid remains gender blind. In the economic and productive sectors, dedicated gender equality programming represented only 1% of total aid – a decrease from previous year." Additionally, in 2020-2021, women have been hit hard by jobs crisis as a consequence of the corona crisis<sup>2</sup>.

Despite the difficult environment for the implementation of policies in favour of gender equality – especially during times of crises – it is important to underline, in the framework of our reflection on capacity building and gender equality, that the world's **donor community is paying increasing attention to gender equality and to gender related issues**, with various initiatives and programs which concern women or gender, including in international and development cooperation.

<sup>1</sup> OECD (2017). *Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women's empowerment*.

<sup>2</sup> See website: <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/en/themes/inclusive-recovery#gender>

### Gender equality efforts and funding by bilateral and international/multilateral donors

When looking at the shares of bilateral allocable ODA integrating or dedicated to gender equality in 2018-2019, Canada (92%), Iceland (88%), Sweden (84%) and Ireland (79%) rank first among DAC members<sup>3</sup>. According to the research published by OECD: "Spain, in turn, has a particularly high share of aid dedicated to gender equality as a principal objective (half of total ODA for gender equality, red.) with gender programming especially in the governance sector with support for women's rights organizations and ending violence against women."

**The European Union** has certainly been there from the start of the process for gender equality across the European continent. In October 2015, the EU adopted the "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming Lives of Girls and Women through EU External relations (2016-2020)", a Gender Plan action focusing on four pivotal areas: i) ensuring girls and women's physical and psychological integrity; ii) promoting the economic and social rights/empowerment of girls and women; iii) strengthening girls' and women's voice and participation; iv) Shifting the European Commission services 'and the European External Action Services' institutional culture to more effectively deliver on EU commitments. In the European Consensus on Development<sup>4</sup>, the promotion of women's rights and the empowerment of women and girls and their protections is a priority across all areas of action, including programs concerning local authorities and their associations.

<sup>3</sup> OECD (2021). *Development finance for gender equality and women's empowerment: A 2021 snapshot*.

<sup>4</sup> *The European Consensus for Development is a shared vision and framework for action for development cooperation for the EU and its member states. It is a blueprint which aligns the Union's development policy with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.*

The EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 delivers on the Von der Leyen Commission's commitment to achieving a Union of Equality. The Strategy pursues a dual approach of gender mainstreaming combined with targeted actions, and intersectionality is a horizontal principle for its implementation. While the Strategy focuses on actions within the EU, it is coherent with the EU's external policy on gender equality and women's empowerment. The Von der Leyen Commission promotes gender equality and women's empowerment in its international partnerships, political and human rights dialogues with third countries, EU trade policy as well as in the EU's neighbourhood and enlargement policies, including in the context of accession negotiations and the Stabilisation and Association Process. Moreover, gender-related actions are included in the EU's actions in fragile, conflict and emergency situations<sup>5</sup>.

**UN Women**<sup>6</sup> has developed a series of flagship programs to deepen its efforts and achieve transformative results:

- Supporting the SDGs with the UN Women's flagship program
- Women's political empowerment and leadership
- Women's access to justice
- Transformative financing for gender equality
- Demanding rights to reproductive, maternal, new born, child, and adolescent health services
- Safe cities and safe public spaces
- Prevention and access to essential services to end violence against women

<sup>5</sup> European Commission (2020). *A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025*.

<sup>6</sup> See website: [www.unwomen.org](http://www.unwomen.org)

- Women's leadership, access and protection in crisis response
- Addressing the gender inequality of risk in a changing climate
- Women's engagement in peace, security and recovery
- Better gender statistics for SDGs evidence-based localization

As an example, from 2014 to 2017<sup>7</sup>, UN Women has contributed to the leadership and participation of women around the world by supporting 17 constitutional reform processes and training 7,000 women leaders, aspiring candidates, and elected public officials in 32 countries. Furthermore, in 2017, UN Women contributed to the amendment or reform of 27 laws in 17 countries to strengthen women's rights. In the same year, the EU launched a major new initiative to be implemented by the UN – the Spotlight Initiative<sup>8</sup>. With a funding of €500 million, the initiative is aimed at starting a global movement to end all forms of violence against women and girls.

UN Women also kicked off their Generation Equality Forum in 2021, aiming to accelerate the global public conversation for urgent action and accountability for gender equality<sup>9</sup>. It seeks to celebrate the power of women's rights activism, feminist solidarity and youth leadership to achieve transformative change.

<sup>7</sup> UN Women (2018). *Annual report 2017-2018*.

<sup>8</sup> European Commission (2020). *A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025*

<sup>9</sup> See website: [www.forum.generationequality.org](http://www.forum.generationequality.org)

**UN-Habitat**<sup>10</sup> established the Advisory Group on Gender Issues (AGGI) in 2012 as an independent body to advise the Executive Director on all issues related to gender issues in the agency work. UN-Habitat has also launched the Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP) in order to realize the UN-Habitat Policy and Plan for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in Urban and Human Settlements<sup>11</sup>. Gender equality is a transversal issue within UN-Habitat which is committed to mainstream gender issues in all projects and programs of UN-Habitat. The organization encourages cities to implement urban policies taking into account gender equality at all levels.

Following U20 – Buenos Aires 2018, UN-Habitat, in cooperation with the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), published the UN-Habitat white paper on "Gender Inequalities in Cities" which examines gender-related challenges in cities and gives practical recommendations for national and local governments on how to mainstream gender and achieve gender equality in cities through urban regulations, governance, public policies, and other directives<sup>12</sup>. As for financial support, many country level projects are run by UN-Women and other agencies working on gender equality, including the UNDP and UNFPA.

<sup>10</sup> See website: [www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org)

<sup>11</sup> UN-HABITAT (2015). *Policy and Plan for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women for 2014-19*.

<sup>12</sup> CAF, IDB & UN-HABITAT (2020). *Gender Inequalities in Cities*.

**UNDP – the United Nations Development Programme**<sup>1</sup> has targeted, gender-focused programs and works mainly in the following areas: i) Gender-based violence; ii) Gender, Climate and disaster resilience; iii) Gender, crisis response and recovery; iv) Gender equality in public administration; v) Transforming institutions to advance gender equality; vi) Women's economic empowerment; vii) Women's participation in decision-making.

Launched in 2011, the Gender Equality Seal incentivizes UNDP Country Offices to integrate gender equality into all aspects of their development work. In this framework, country offices' achievements are marked by a range of significant contributions to gender equality. For instance, in 2013-2014, UNDP Somalia assisted the government in reaching the 25% quota for female representation in the Federal Parliament. In 2015-2016, UNDP Moldova helped to establish services for women victims of domestic violence. UNDP Afghanistan has contributed to women's entrepreneurial opportunities in 19 provinces throughout the country. With the largest operational platform within the United Nations system, working on the ground in some 170 countries and territories, UNDP's work and expertise are central to achieving the SDGs. This unique position has prompted UNDP to adopt an official Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2021<sup>2</sup>, which commits the organization to intensify its efforts to mainstream gender equality across all of its areas of work.

**The World Bank**<sup>3</sup> works with public and private sector clients to close gaps between males and females globally to achieve a lasting impact in tackling poverty and driving sustainable economic growth. The Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality (UFGE) is a multi-donor trust dedicated to strengthening awareness, knowledge, and capacity for gender-informed policy-making. It invests in priority areas critical to closing gaps between what is known and what is done to advance gender equality. The UFGE is closely aligned with the World Bank Group's strategy for gender equality and regional priorities, and currently supports more than 150 activities in more than 80 countries. The UFGE supports World Bank and IFC projects and is managed by the World Bank's Gender and Development Group. Since its launch in 2012, the UFGE has received generous contributions from many countries and important private foundations. The World Bank Group is taking broad, fast action to help developing countries strengthen their pandemic response, increase disease surveillance, improve public health interventions, and help the private sector continue to operate and sustain jobs. Over 15 months, through June 2021, the World Bank Group is making available up to \$160 billion in financing tailored to the health, economic and social shocks countries are facing, including \$50 billion of IDA resources on grant and highly concessional terms<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> See website: [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)

<sup>4</sup> The World Bank made an overview of the projects developed in a response to COVID-19 on their website: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/about/what-we-do/brief/world-bank-group-operational-response-covid-19-coronavirus-projects-list>

<sup>1</sup> See website: [www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)

<sup>2</sup> UNDP (2018). UNDP Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2021.

## 5. Suggestions for gender equality activities within CIB work plans of the next years

The CIB Working Group already places emphasis on the topic of gender equality at local level in its work plans and activities, based on the growing interest of both donors and members of CIB in this topic. Please find below some additional suggestions for gender equality activities which CIB could undertake in the coming years.

### A. Raising awareness of gender equality and supporting women's visibility in the UCLG leadership

The equality of women and men is not only a fundamental right recognized in the UN Charter adopted in 1945, but gender equality is also evidenced by a world where women represent more than half of the population. UCLG needs to reflect this reality. In line with its Constitution, the rules of procedure of UCLG establish that "sections will make due effort to promote an equitable gender balance in such representation: no gender should be represented by less than 30% in 2019". In this light, the members of the CIB Working Group, also active in sections, could work to raise awareness on this topic and contribute to giving better visibility to women in the UCLG leadership.

#### → Possible actions:

- Make sure to keep the topic of gender equality on the agenda of the CIB Working Group meetings;
- Feed into the debates on this topic within the UCLG world organization, with best practices and experiences from the field;
- Dedicate a section of the CIB newsletter to gender equality, in order to showcase the gender actions of CIB members and highlight actions of female role models.

### B. Encouraging women's participation in decision-making at the local level in the beneficiary countries of the CIB Working Group members' programs

Women's participation in decision-making is a sine qua non condition for democracy and consequently of local democracy. It is of crucial importance that gender equality is taken into account in the programs implemented by the members of the CIB Working Group. This effort will help the members of the different sections of UCLG to meet the final goal of UCLG for Gender Equality.

#### → Possible actions:

- Mainstream gender in any international cooperation projects of the CIB member organizations;
- Develop peer learning/review programs and activities on gender equality, in partner countries;
- Communicate about the lessons learned, achievements and difficulties in these programs, to enhance learning.

### C. Develop a study on the situation of women in conflict areas and the role of local governments

Women & conflict is an issue which is getting increased attention on the international agenda, particularly within the UN. An analysis of the situation of women and conflicts shows that on the one hand conflicts are the cause of many tragic situations for women, while, on the other hand, post-conflict situations offer some timely opportunities for a change with regard to conditions of women. Some members of the CIB Working Group already work on the role of local governments in conflict areas. It would be interesting to concentrate more on the issue of women in conflict and dialogue about this important topic. The UCLG Peace Prize award ceremony, which takes place



every three years, could be a flagship moment to showcase the role of women for peace.

→ **Possible actions:**

- Organize (online) events on women, conflict and local governments, with association of different regional sections and the UCLG Peace Prize;
- Pay special attention on the role of women in peace in the next edition of the UCLG Peace Prize.

## D. Support UCLG in the achievement of SDG 5 of the Agenda 2030

The link between the achievement of the global agendas and the empowerment of women is broadly recognized and necessitates a push by local governments. UCLG is engaged with the UN to monitor and help boost the implementation of SDG 5 in the framework of the Sustainable Goals of the Agenda 2030.

→ **Possible actions:**

- Mainstream the achievement of SDG 5 of the Agenda 2030 in the programs of the CIB member organizations and report on this;
- Contribute to building a mechanism of monitoring the collection of disaggregated data on gender at local level with UCLG.

## E. Feed the UCLG narrative on Gender Equality and Development

UCLG is big and diverse, with different cultures, customs, and thoughts and ideas on gender equality and development. The importance of building a common language and position is crucial, if we want to advance gender equality at local level and in the world organization itself. The CIB Working Group could help to open up such a process.

→ **Possible actions:**

- Organize sessions to help build a common language and position on gender equality;
- Help UCLG to feed/build its narrative on the theme of Women and Development.

## F. Support and contribute to UCLG's gender related advocacy towards donors

The issue of gender equality has only recently become part of the agenda of international cooperation, although ad hoc programs had already been initiated by some donors. The European Commission inserted gender as a priority for the programming period 2014-2020, and now also for 2021-2027. Some members of the CIB Working Group have started to work on this theme (FCM and VNG in Tunisia; PLATFORMA and CEMR for the work existing on this in Europe, and so on... see case studies at the end of this publication), in response to donor developments and shifting priorities, or at their own initiative.

UCLG has further engaged with UN Women, among others. The CIB Working Group could (further) support UCLG in discussing this topic with donor organizations, based on the common narrative mentioned before.

→ **Possible actions:**

- Identify the donors working on/placing emphasis on gender issues;
- Support UCLG advocacy work on gender equality.

## G. Carry out an internal assessment on gender equality in your own organization

A powerful engagement on gender equality by UCLG is only possible if members are willing to be proactive on this issue, particularly national associations, elected representatives, and also civil servants. It will be crucial for each national association especially to carry out an internal assessment on this theme, which evaluates the participation of women and men in the decision-making bodies, the capacity of its civil servants to work on gender equality, and the existing mechanism and tools.

→ **Possible actions:**

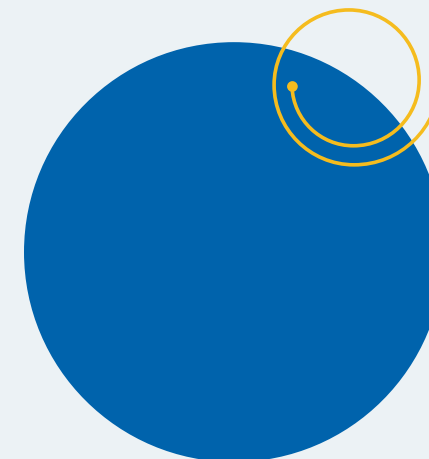
- Carry out a gender assessment, within own organization (CIB members);
- Help and encourage other UCLG members to carry out such an assessment (CIB working group & members).

## H. Help UCLG to strengthen partnerships with women's associations

UCLG wants to strengthen its partnerships with women's organizations and civil society, to be able to act as a catalyst of SDG 5 of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. The local dialogues between these organizations and local governments have proven to be instrumental for women running in local elections. They are also vital for locally elected women to create a link with local women, to understand their needs, and to try to find answers for their concerns and issues. The members of the CIB Working Group should aim at building institutional, structural dialogues with women's associations in their programs.

→ **Possible actions:**

- Identify women's associations in beneficiary countries of the CIB programs, as partners;
- Encourage cooperation between local governments and women's associations in projects run by CIB members.





## 6. Case studies

As mentioned in this publication, several UCLG and CIB members are carrying out interesting capacity building programs and activities in the field of gender equality.

### Towards an African Charter for gender equality at the local level

Between 2018 and 2021, the CEMR Standing Committee for Equality (European section of UCLG), PLATFORMA and REFELA (network of African Locally Elected Women of UCLG Africa), together with UCLG, have worked on developing a Local Authorities Charter for Gender Equality in Africa, based on the example of the European Charter for Equality<sup>1</sup> that was launched by CEMR in 2006. This cooperation is an excellent example of international cooperation on the topic of gender equality, which also feeds UCLG's advocacy in this field.

<sup>1</sup> See website: [www.charter-equality.eu](http://www.charter-equality.eu)

### The Africa–European Pact for local equality

During the 8th Africities Summit held in Marrakesh in November 2018, organized by UCLG Africa, a special session was dedicated to “Gender equality and the social inclusion strategy for a just transition of Africa”. On this occasion, the Africa-Europe Marrakesh Pact for Local Equality was signed by the Chair of REFELA, the Secretary General of UCLG Africa, the Secretary General of CEMR, and the Secretary General of UCLG.

The Pact is a commitment from local Africa and local Europe to work together to advance gender equality and to empower women and girls. In this Pact, all concerned parties recognize their active engagement in the processes of promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The signatories also stress their support to the capacity building of local and regional governments in the implementation of the Pact.

The African and European sections of UCLG, under the patronage of the World organization of Local governments, commit to contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and SDG 5, notably through the drafting of the African Charter for Gender Equality in Cities and Local Governments, which will build on the principles contained in the New Urban Agenda, aiming at creating strong local governments and delivering inclusive basic services and sustainable societies.

### Building an African Charter

The development of an African Charter for Equality is supported in large part by PLATFORMA, an EU-funded project for decentralized cooperation of which CEMR is a lead partner. The reflection and preparatory process has been coordinated by CEMR/PLATFORMA, UCLG Africa/REFELA and UCLG and takes inspiration from the experience of the European Charter for Equality of women and men in local life, launched in 2006. The Africa-Europe Support Committee, composed of elected representatives, mayors, and members of the Standing Committees on Gender Equality of the African and European Section of UCLG, held its first meeting in July 2019 in Paris. The Africa-Europe Support Committee was established with the task of encouraging and supporting the drafting of an African Charter for gender equality at the local level, in concertation with a working group within UCLG Africa and REFELA. This was the first step towards the Local Authorities Charter for Gender Equality in Africa.

During the Paris meeting, participants discussed fundamental topics to be taken into account in the African Charter and the development and drafting process of the Charter, which is firmly rooted in a participatory approach. Following this meeting, an online consultation on the content of the Charter was launched to collect the expectations, opinions and proposals of this public on how to write and adopt the Charter and to define the key topics to be addressed in the Charter. The online consultation took place in late 2019 and input was received from over 100 stakeholders in Africa.

The most interesting part of the Paris meeting certainly was the possibility for the African colleagues to learn from the European colleagues about their firsthand experience of the Charter. For example why it has been so important to have such an instrument to involve local governments in gender policies at a local level, how the Charter was elaborated and particularly how the topics were selected, how it was launched and how the European local governments were involved and persuaded to commit to it. The evaluation of the implementation of the European Charter, with monitoring indicators developed

in 2015, is a further step for European local governments and it will also be of great added value for Africa colleagues so that they can gain time and economize resources by being aware of the obstacles to avoid and the things that need to be done.

African and European locally elected women and men met again during the 2019 UCLG Congress in Durban, with many debates on gender, and one in particular concerning this cooperation. A second working meeting of the Africa-Europe Support Committee took place in July 2020 to exchange on the results of the consultation and on the preliminary architecture of the Charter. A number of recommendations were made on Charter support tools and its eventual dissemination and promotion.

A draft Charter text is expected to be ready in English, French and Arabic before the end of 2021. The launching of the African Charter and of the signature process was planned for the 9th Africities Summit organized by UCLG Africa; however, due to the COVID pandemic the Africities summit has been rescheduled to April 2022 instead of November 2021 as was originally planned. A new phase for gender equality in African local governments will then be born.





# FCM acting for gender equality in the world

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)<sup>1</sup> has been the national voice of municipal government since 1901. The members of the FCM are municipalities of more than 2,000 municipalities of all sizes, from Canada's cities and rural communities to northern communities and 20 provincial and territorial municipal associations. Programs for increasing sustainability and enhancing the quality of life for people across Canada and around the world are part of the FCM's various missions. In recent years, advancing gender equality at local level has increasingly become a central priority in FCM's actions, at home and abroad.

## A national program on Women in Local Government

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has implemented national programs focused on women in local government supporting initiatives that increase women's political participation in municipal government for 15 years. These programs have explored various approaches to increasing women's participation such as mentorship, campaign schools, and engagement of marginalized women. Most recently, FCM implemented a program that focused on the development of a strategy to encourage more women to run, win, and lead in municipal politics. Using the knowledge gained through the implementation of these various programs, FCM aims to continue programming in support of women in local leadership bringing together its national and international experiences.

## International action aimed at advancing gender equality at local level

Within its international capacity building mission, FCM implements several programs addressing gender equality in different countries and regions of the world:

**The Inclusive Leadership Program** (2018-2022) is aimed at the new generation of women leaders emerging in Tunisia. Following the adoption in 2016 of an amendment to Tunisian electoral law that included a provision supporting gender parity among municipal councils, 47% of representatives elected in the 2018 local elections were women. Nevertheless discrimination against women is ongoing and undermines their involvement in local politics.

The objective of the FCM program is to ensure that citizens and elected officials have more influence over the management of local affairs in eight Tunisian municipalities. With technical support from Canadian municipal specialists, these municipalities will reinforce their ability to integrate the gender aspect into their day-to-day management practices. This will enable them to develop a better ability to provide women and the most vulnerable groups with inclusive and gender-specific services in partnership with civil society. This project also provides support to various national institutions to create an environment that promotes the political involvement of women in the management of local affairs.

The project is being implemented with the support of the Centre international de développement pour la gouvernance locale innovante (CILG-VNG International)<sup>1</sup>.



**The Cisal Fund** aims to strengthen the capacity of civil society and empower local governments in Colombia and Peru. In 2017, the Women's Association in Capacmarca, Cusco, (Peru) was the beneficiary of the Cisal Fund. Before the Cisal Fund, the association counted 32 (female) members, who weren't organized at all – they did not meet regularly and were not legally recognized. The Fund has helped to organize the association and purchase production equipment for 20 female heads of households. Today the association supports close to 150 women who are able to work on the land and feed their families. Furthermore, women are now part of the development of the region. Without representation at the regional level, as was the case before the Cisal Fund, there was no hope for such a transformation. The Cisal Fund has helped to establish a women's agenda, which gives them the tools and shows the way to improve their economic situation, their food sovereignty, and their children's health, but also their political participation and the role they have in society.

**Women in Local Leadership:** This program (PMI-WILL) by FCM in the framework of the Partnership for Municipal Innovation program began in 2021. This project will work in five countries: Benin, Cambodia, Ghana, Sri Lanka and Zambia. On the basis of the Canadian experience, this initiative will support women municipal councillors and local governments in partner countries as they work to deliver more inclusive services and reduce the barriers to women's participation in local governance. FCM will engage regional networks in Africa and Asia, as well as global municipal networks, in the implementation of the program. The Partnership for Municipal Innovation – Women in Local Leadership (PMI-WILL) is a 6-year program, supported by a contribution of up to \$26 million from Global Affairs Canada, with an additional in-kind contribution of \$1.61 million from Canadian municipal experts.

**Strengthening women's participation in Colombia's municipal politics:** this project is part of the program on "Sustainable and Inclusive Communities in Latin America" and aims at achieving active and equal participation by women and girls in their communities, including at the political level. In this framework, the town of Bolton-Est, Quebec, works with FCM on advancing women's leadership, with the Mayor of Bolton, Joan Westland, directly involved in the project.

This work is centred on three aspects of political leadership: i) the ways in which strategic planning can be used

to develop and execute projects in the community; ii) the importance of women helping women; iii) the value that can be realized by listening without judging.

Within this program, leadership trainings have been organized for diverse groups of women of all ages. Bureaucrats, independent business artisans and others, both from the Indigenous Wayuu and non-indigenous communities, have come together in sessions on strategic planning for professional personal development, a cornerstone for achieving more participation by women in decision-making positions.

<sup>1</sup> See website: [www.fcm.ca/en/programs/international-programs](http://www.fcm.ca/en/programs/international-programs)

<sup>1</sup> See case study on page XXX



## The Swedish capacity building initiatives

Sweden has a long-standing history with national and local governments working with gender equality measures and policies. The current national government call itself a feminist government, meaning that gender equality is central to the government's priorities – in decision making and resource allocation. The objective of the current Swedish gender equality policy is that women and men shall have the same power to shape society and their own lives. With this as its starting point, the government itself is working towards six goals:

1. Equal division of power and influence;
2. Economic equality;
3. Equal education;
4. Equal distribution of unpaid housework and provision of care;
5. Equal health;
6. Ending violence by men against women.

In line with these goals, the Swedish members of the CIB Working Group are very active in the field of gender equality, within their local government development cooperation projects. Gender mainstreaming is an important strategy for reaching these gender equality objectives.

## SALAR's work on gender equality in Sweden

The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) adopted the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local life in 2006, committing itself to promoting gender equality in its capacities as a political organization, employer and service provider. Furthermore, SALAR has since many years a strategy of working with gender mainstreaming and is thus working to implement a gender perspective in all its planning, decision-making and in its operations and services of its members. Moreover, SALAR played a crucial role in the implementation of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men and financially supported the creation of the Observatory of the European Charter for Equality in 2010<sup>1</sup>.

## International cooperation activities aimed at gender equality

SKL International, the branch of SALAR working for international cooperation for development, and ICLD, the Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy (ICLD), are two important Swedish actors in local government development cooperation and both focus on gender equality in many of their activities.

**SKL International** works on advancing gender equality at the national and local level in its partner/project countries, directly supporting ministries, local administration, and local government associations, as well as supporting partner organizations in international development cooperation projects. In this regard SKL International has:

- i) included practical examples dur-

<sup>1</sup> See website: [www.charter-equality.eu](http://www.charter-equality.eu)

ing study visits on how Sweden and Swedish municipalities work; ii) created and/or strengthened gender working groups in local government associations and gender focal points in municipalities; iii) supported local government associations in its work to integrate a gender equality perspective into its activities and communications; iv) conducted gender analysis in partner and project countries in order to identify the best entry point for the work with gender equality in each context; v) used gender statistics and gender analysis tools when forming new public policies; vi) used gender tools when establishing citizen's offices; vii) shared and built knowledge, tools and inspiration with the different partners and stakeholders in order to integrate gender equality in urban planning, citizens dialogue, statistics, data and indicators. In its projects, SKL International often uses the 4R method to work with gender mainstreaming. The 4R method was developed by SALAR in the 1990's and is a hands-on, four-step approach to implementing gender mainstreaming at the local level. SKL International has developed a guide in English on how to use the 4R- method. As of 2020, SKL International also has an internal gender equality policy, which is operationalized through an Action Plan 2020-2024 and annual work plans.

**ICLD** is an independent entity with very close links to the Swedish Association of Local and Regional Authorities (SALAR), whose operations are financed by SIDA (the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency). The ICLD Board of Directors comprises representatives of SALAR, the Lund University and the Gotland Region. The organization is dedicated to supporting good governance, strengthening local democracy, and reducing poverty. ICLD manages international training programs and municipal partnerships, and supports research on topics relevant to local democracy and development. It is also very active in promoting gender mainstreaming and gender balance as



part of its policy and partnership programs.

ICLD currently carries out different programs which give specific support to women leaders in contexts where politics and leadership are dominated by men, as well as programs that emphasize on establishing gender balance in local government structures. A concrete example of this is the *Advanced International Political Leadership Program*, which is a global program turning to Albania, Botswana, Georgia, Indonesia, Kenya, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, Mozambique, North Macedonia, Serbia, South Africa, Tanzania, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, Vietnam, and Zambia. The program, which is done in partnership with SALAR, started in 2013 and is still ongoing. Through the program, 150 top politicians, all women, have been trained to enhance their political leadership skills by applying

the knowledge, methods and tools such as i) advanced training in communication, strategic planning and leadership; ii) International exposure to different political experiences; iii) Swedish mentorship, including a study visit to a Swedish municipality or region; iv) an opportunity for the women elected in a municipality to help achieve the SDGs; v) the importance of good governance in form of equality, inclusion, transparency and accountability. Many of the participating Mayors and Councillors work and vote for gender balanced bills and policies. Some of them also communicate on a regular basis with other women groups on a grass root level, with whom they have shared methods and tools acquired from the program. Some of these participants have been appointed Members of Parliament.



## Gender mainstreaming in local democracy

Another program launched by the ICLD for the period 2018-2023 with three cohorts, is *Gender Mainstreaming*. This program is focused on local government officials from Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia with the aim of developing gender equality in municipalities and contributing to gender-equal lives for all citizens. The program is based on Agenda 2030 and its 17 sustainable development goals, with a special focus on SDG 5 concerning gender equality.

In addition to specific results in participating teams' change processes during the program period so far, such as the development of policies against sexual harassment in the workplace, increased participation of women in decision-making processes and changed attitudes at the institutional level regarding GBV, the first cohort and on year into cohort two, has given several learnings.

As the program during its first cohort 2018-2019, had connected following research, ICLD has gained insights and improvements to cohort two of the program, but also generic reflections valid for all programs and for the entire ITP-unit at ICLD.

Some important learnings:

- Participants have reflected on the importance of having a policy at the local level, in order to be able to operationalize political decisions, guidelines and gender mainstreaming. Before implementing their change process, teams must be prepared to work out a policy and/or update the existing one.

- The participants reflected on the importance of having access to key figures, statistics and facts about the challenges that gender mainstreaming addresses, in order to formulate good arguments about the same, and they reflect on the fact that this is one of the knowledge they gained through participation in ICLD's program.
- They further state that it is important that both the education and the teams involve their elected politicians at an early state and identify so-called 'Gender Champions' in order to ensure accountability and sustainability.
- The Swedish phase is an important part of the Gender program, as well as in all other programs, where participants meet Swedish colleagues, shadow them in a municipality and meet Swedish experts and make study visits and more. But we have a lot to gain from preparing all parties better to dare to go outside their comfort zone by just showing good examples. The Swedish municipalities should be prepared for the fact that they need to go deeper than just telling how they do/work. The expectations are that they not only tell how they do, but that they talk about the challenges and difficulties, how they have handled them, and what processes have led to their strategies and policies. That they share their weaknesses and problems too. ICLD, on the other hand, can list common challenges that we see in both participating municipalities and in Swedish municipalities. A common platform for all parties to reflect on based on their role; lecturers, participating Swedish municipalities and experts.

ICLD is also making an effort to integrate SDG 5 into local policies and practices in Bosnia Herzegovina, through another ongoing project. This project involves: i) the municipality of Visoko which is the only municipality of Bosnia Herzegovina led by a female Mayor; ii) the municipality of Zepce which has been one of the first municipalities to develop a Local Gender Action Plan; iii) the municipality of Ilidza, in Republika Srpska, which is at the forefront of developing and implementing gender mainstreaming policies and has an active political party association of women, as well as a Municipal Council Committee on Gender Equality, one of the first established. This projects is now extended to 17 municipalities in Bosnia and Hercegovina in collaboration with the associations of municipalities in the country and with SKL International. Moreover, ICLD published a toolbox on policies and practices to implement SDG 5 by local governments. This toolbox is available in six languages and is free to download at ICLD's website<sup>2</sup>.

## Changing the system in Tunisia

Tunisia's new Constitution of 2014, which came about after the Arab Spring, provides for comprehensive decentralization of the country. In April 2018, the adoption of the Local Government Law (Code des Collectivités locales) was an important step forward. At the same time, the new Tunisian Constitution enshrines many rights for women; for example, article 46 guarantees parity between women and men in all elected assemblies<sup>1</sup>. International Development Center for the Innovative Local Governance (CILG-VNG International) undertakes various activities and projects to support this objective.

## Gender quotas and parity in electoral lists

In 1999, Tunisia introduced voluntary gender quotas for elections, thus allowing the increase of women's participation in politics which rose from 4% in Parliament in 1989 to 23% in 2004. Thanks to pressure from civil society, women's participation increased further in 2011 and this led to the introduction of the legal requirement of gender parity in electoral lists. As a result, the percentage of female deputies in the Constituent Assembly increased further to 26% and in the 2014 legislative elections it reached 31%. At present, following the municipal elections in May 2018, 47.5% of all councillors are women and 19% of all mayors, a percentage that had been reached thanks to the application of vertical and horizontal parity in the municipal electoral law of 2018. However, women are still excluded from most executive and leadership roles.

## CILG-VNG International's work in Tunisia

CILG-VNG International is the Middle East and North Africa daughter company of VNG International, the international cooperation agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities. CILG-VNG International was set up in order to accompany the process of decentralization and the strengthening of democracy in the region.

In 2014, CILG-VNG International has launched the National Committee for the Promotion of Equality of Women and Men in Local Life (CNP-EGAL) under the patronage of the Ministry for Women, Family and Children. Under this framework for gender-sensitive decentralization, several initiatives have been started in Tunisia to support equality of women and men at both the national and local level, like gender mainstreaming in legislation and public policies by:



<sup>2</sup> ICLD (2018). Policy Brief 3: A toolbox for Local Governments to implement SDG 5 on Gender Equality.

<sup>1</sup> UN Women (2014, February 11). Tunisia's new Constitution: a breakthrough for women's rights.

- Legal texts: urban planning and development, economic and social development plan, finance law and local authority law.
- Lobbying & Advocacy campaigns to influence public decisions.
- The development of tools promoting the integration of gender in local governance. Tools are for example strategies for the inclusion of women in the city, practical guides and gender-sensitive City Charters or Gender Equality Charters in the city.
- Gender-sensitive crisis management guide.
- Gender-sensitive guide to the management of public spaces.
- Municipal guide about accountability tools and mechanisms.

CILG supported the conception of town charters and a national charter which aim to promote equality between women and men and women participation in local affairs. The strategy for the inclusion of women in local life in the city of Béja is also one of these actions which has proved the efforts for the consolidation of reforms in Tunisia, in particular as far as decentralization and local governance are concerned.

## Program on increased participation of women in decision-making

Béjà is a city of around 62,000 inhabitants of which more than half are women. Women in Béjà, no matter their age, run into many inequalities. While women's literacy is much higher than that of men, women are much less represented in the labour market and in decision-making processes. In order to support women's participation in local development and decision-making, a pilot strategy has been started under the framework of the second phase of the Program for the Support of Urban Democratic Governance and Local Economic Development, which is being implemented by CILG-VNG International with financial aid from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Denmark and the Netherlands. Under this framework, the CILG-VNG International project aims to support women from small communities, thus contributing, even if on a small scale, to the advancement of the conditions of women, and more generally using this experience as a pilot project for other environments.

### An example of a pilot strategy to support women's participation in local development and decision-making



The pilot strategy covered the period 2017-2019 and was based on five main points which each aim to achieve specific results in the short and medium term and involve precise activities. These were:

#### Economic Development and Employment

The project involved activities aimed at the strengthening of women's inclusion, in particular young women, in economic life, and at improving their access to employment and their working conditions, as well as supporting women's entrepreneurship and the improvement of the social and cultural environment regarding their participation in decision-making.

#### Social Development

The activities aimed in particular at reducing violence against women and raising awareness on the equality of women and men in society.

#### Access to culture and recreation activities

The project aimed to reinforce women's access to cultural and recreational activities, for example concerning schooling and education, but also in cultural centres and for leisure activities for women.

#### Participation in public life and decision-making

Activities under this framework aimed at reinforcing the participation of women, in particular young women, in public life and decision making, as well as in strengthening their capacities and adapting mechanisms concerning women's inclusion.

#### Strategic governance

This is a transversal activity which aimed at improving the mechanisms concerning the strategy on information and institutional and governance points of view. The activities in this framework mainly concerned the reinforcement of the capacities of local actors, improving coordination, follow up and evaluation, as well as resources for the implementation of the strategy.

Together with the support of FCM, CILG-VNG International have also created support for the Tunisian Federation for Municipalities in gender mainstreaming, through:

- Gender training for members of the federation and its administration.
- Support for lobbying "gender equality and the fight against discrimination and violence against women at the local level" in coordination with the CNP EGAL: elected officials, municipal employees and members of local associations.

In addition, and to ensure a high influence in communal affairs for female Tunisian citizens and representatives, the program is set up in eight municipalities. The support provided by the program targets local administrations and councils as well as local organizations of civil society, especially women organizations. The program support includes a technical and financial assistance to develop local and inclusive services which consider women needs. This will be conducted through pilot projects which aim to reinforce municipal competencies to take actions locally regarding gender inclusion in the delivery of local services with the collaboration of women and/or feminine associations. The program also supports the commitment of female citizens and/or feminine associations to develop women's leadership in the management of local affairs and their support towards the setting and the defence of joint initiatives between the civil society and the municipality.

## Inclusive municipal leadership

Since its creation, CILG-VNG International has contributed to the integration of gender in local governance, through various programs: Support Program for Democratic Urban Governance for the Construction of Peace in the MENA Region, PAGUDEL 1 and 2, and PLMI (For an inclusive municipal leadership program). The promotion of gender equality in local governance and decentralization is done based on gender training actions for municipal teams from partner communities, local associations, and national partners (Ministries in charge of local affairs, women, urban planning, etc.).

Since many local and elected women are encountering various difficulties to exercise their functions, CILG-VNG International in partnership with FCM and FNCT have supported the creation of a network of elected women on March 8, 2020 which has as objectives:

- Implementing Successful Women's Leadership
- Preventing violence against elected women
- Developing solidarity between elected women
- Exchange of experience
- Gender equality and participation in local governance





# Benin and Flanders join forces on capacity building and gender

The Association of Flemish Cities and Towns (VSG)<sup>1</sup> includes all 300 municipalities and cities of Flanders. One of its main roles is to support local authorities by providing training, advisory support, and publications in various fields. The association is very active in development cooperation and capacity building. Some of the ongoing projects focus specifically on advancing gender equality at local level, such as the ongoing program in Benin. Through association capacity building and multiple study visits back and forth, the VSG works on enhancing gender equality within the governance of the ANCB and the VSG.

## The position of women in Benin

Benin is a unitary state with a one-tier decentralization system based on 77 municipalities, including 3 special status cities (Porto Novo, Cotonou and Parakou). The constitution provides for the financial and political autonomy of these local governments, who also have their own budgets. Although Benin has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), as well as the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), there is still much progress to be made regarding women's rights in Benin.

Women in Benin are poorly represented in public and political life. Seventy women out of 1,815 candidates were elected as councillors in the 2020 communal and municipal elections. Four women out of 77 were elected or appointed as mayors in the fourth term of decentralization<sup>1</sup>.

## Association Capacity Building in Benin

In 2017, the VSG started a program with its sister organization, the Association Nationale des Communes du Bénin (ANCB), to support gender equality. The program is expected to last five years and will cover the period of the beginning of 2017 to the end of 2021. It is being financed by the Federal Government of Belgium with a budget of €40.000 per year. The objective of the program between the Flemish and Beninese association is to capacitate the Beninese Association so it can take up its role in supporting municipalities in Benin to mainstream gender equality in local policy and to include a gender approach in all the Local Development Plans. To do so, the VSG has carried out training sessions for the ANCB staff on gender equality (two times two days) and held exchange visits.

The ANCB and VSG are working with a pilot group of twelve Beninese municipalities: Agbangnizoun, Bohicon, Dogbo, Houeyogbé, Lalo, Ouinhi, Toviklin, Za-kpota, Materi, Pèrèrè, Péhunco and Toucountouna. The idea is that this pilot group of twelve municipalities experiments with how to integrate gender equality in their territory with the aim of demonstrating it to all 77 municipalities in Benin. At this stage, the ANCB mainly supports the pilot municipalities individually, but the municipalities come together once a year to exchange their experiences and to learn from each other. Each municipality has a Gender Focal Point working on the program.

## Developing a strategy: gender equality at the local level

In 2018, the two Associations worked with the University of Leuven (Belgium) and the University of Parakou (Benin) and developed a strategy on how to work on gender equality at the local level. Templates have been created that the Association of Municipalities of Benin now uses to support the twelve pilot municipalities with the integration of gender equality in their policies. These templates are used to identify and do the follow up of possible projects or activities on gender equality in local policies. This can cover different activities in the different municipalities.

## Integrating gender equality in the governance of the ANCB

The Association of Municipalities in Benin also organizes political meetings and thanks to the support of the VSG, a Network of Local Women Elected in Benin, which has existed as of 2003, now meets at least once a year. The network covers all the municipalities of Benin and together the female councillors of the network identify topics which the Association could advocate at national level. The association has also set up a political commission on Gender, Social affairs and Citizen's participation which takes part in the project on gender with VSG. Urgent concerns of the municipalities regarding gender and citizen participation are discussed in these commission meetings. The VSG helps with the building and reinforcing of the networking, as well as with the working method. In the framework of these activities, a study visit of the National Association of Municipalities of Benin to the Flemish Association was organized in 2019 in order to learn how the VSG and Belgian municipalities work concerning gender.

## Gender equality within the governance of the VSG

For the VSG, it is important that not only the partnership with its sister association in Benin focusses on gender, but that all decentralized cooperation programs of Flemish municipalities integrate a gender perspective. This is why the VSG has organized many training sessions for Flemish municipalities and their partners from the South. But despite the efforts, many obstacles still exist. First of all, there is the existence of many barriers to gender equality from the cultural and traditional point of view. This tendency does not only exist in partner countries like Benin, but also in Belgium. Secondly, the lack of expertise and experts working on this issue is another great obstacle to the work being done on gender equality.

In December 2019, the VSG organized a conference on decentralized cooperation in West Africa. This conference saw representation of all the countries of West Africa and brought together all the Flemish municipalities and their municipal partners and local government associations from Benin, Niger, Senegal and Morocco. Ahead of this conference, the VSG asked for gender-equal delegations from the local authorities and made sure that gender became an integral component in the content of the debates.



<sup>1</sup> See website: [www.vsg.be](http://www.vsg.be)

<sup>1</sup> Ayosso, A. (2020, June 10). Pas d'amélioration de la place des femmes dans les mairies.



SALGA is an association of all 257 South African municipalities and the sole voice and representative of local government in South Africa. One of SALGA's priorities is examining the best practices from around the world in order to help South African local governments to draw on global expertise to better inform its own practices. Gender equality is a founding principle set out in the Constitution of South Africa. In 2015, women were in the following positions of power in local governments<sup>1</sup>: 106 of South Africa's 278 municipalities had a female mayor, i.e. 38%; 39% were councillors, 34% managers, and 26% Directors. To make sure even more women participate in local decision-making processes, SALGA is implementing several (international) projects and initiatives to strengthen women's capacities in South Africa.

## Gender Initiatives of the South Africa Local Government Association

### SALGA's own Women's Commission

SALGA has undertaken to institutionalize the advancement of women in political and decision-making positions through the formation of SALGA Women's Commission (SWC). The mandate of the Women's Commission is "to coordinate, promote and advocate for gender appropriate strategies and practices within member municipalities and feed into national, regional and the global agenda and processes". The SWC is one of the governance structures chaired by a female politician who is also a member of the National Executive Committee on an ex-officio basis. The Association has advocated for 50/50 representation in local government elections and has signed the Benoni declaration<sup>1</sup>. The SWC has adopted a Program of Action that outlines the work of the SWC as mandated by the Terms of Reference.

### EU project on enhancing participation and involvement in decision-making

SALGA's EMCD (*Enhancing Municipalities Capacities for Development*) project is supported and funded by the European Union. The specific objectives of the project are to: i) build the capacity of municipalities to facilitate inclusive, participatory inter-municipal planning

<sup>1</sup> The Benoni declaration "affirming support for global and pan-African actions to end violence against women and children" was signed in November 2006 in the City of Benoni, South Africa, at the end of a Conference bringing together 170 delegates from 23 African Countries

and governance for effective long-term socio-economic development; and ii) enhance the capacity of municipalities to be more responsive and inclusive in the delivery of services and promotion of socio-economic development. Working on increasing the involvement and participation of women stands central in the project, which is implemented in twelve municipalities, located in four provinces (Western Cape, Free State, North West and Northern Cape). The other beneficiaries of the project are organized community groups (NGOs, CBOs, FBOs including women, men, youth, elderly persons and persons with disabilities).

### Knowledge sharing summit for women and youth on Local Economic Development

One of the activities of the EMCD project was to convene a knowledge sharing summit for women and youth on Local Economic Development. The first summit was held on the 7th to 8th October 2019. Organizations representing women, youth and persons with disabilities gathered with the aim of:

- Ensuring that targeted groups have a greater say in decision making processes – i.e. those which encompass participation in planning, implementation and monitoring as active citizenry in Regional Economic Development initiatives.
- Ensuring that vulnerable or marginal groups, mainly women, people with disabilities and the young, participate in STR processes.

- Establishing strategies that must be considered at a regional and then local level to ensure inclusive economic participation by women, persons with disabilities, and the young.

SALGA hosted the second knowledge sharing summit on Local Economic Development (LED) for Women and Youth from 23 – 24 November 2020 with the aim of sharing and identifying practical actions that can be taken by municipalities to promote the involvement of women and youth in local economies. The summit was held via Zoom due to COVID-19 outbreak and there were 95 participants in attendance. The summit was hosted under the theme Changing Gear: Practical Municipal Actions to Promote Women and Youth in Local Economies. The purpose of the summit was to improve the economic development opportunities afforded to women and youth by focusing on local economic development planning processes

### Collaboration with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities

Moreover, SALGA implements the BIGM Program (Building Inclusive Green Municipalities), which is supported and funded by Global Affairs Canada and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and includes a large gender component. The project aims to improve the capacity of South African municipal governments to support effective service delivery, inclusive local green economic growth, and enhanced climate change mitigation and adaptation measures. As a result, the project will benefit approximately 1,500 business community representatives in six Eastern Cape municipalities, particularly women, youth and other vulnerable groups interested in becoming business operators. Ultimately the whole community will benefit through an improved business environment,

job creation, and enhanced, green local services.

The BIGM project has its own Gender Equality Strategy, which aims at increasing the capacity of South African municipal partners to become more receptive and inclusive of the needs of women and vulnerable populations in their policies and service rendering as it relates to LED, Climate Change and Asset Management. The BIGM project ultimately seeks to reduce the gender inequality gaps in the target populations of the project in eight Eastern Cape municipalities, including Anchor Cities and localising SDGs. The High Commission in Pretoria introduced Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy to put gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls at the heart of international development, humanitarian, peace and security efforts.

SALGA appointed a service provider to assist six municipalities to review their gender strategy using the feminist international assistance policy as a baseline. The policy states that to achieve the goals of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, Canada will focus its efforts on six action areas:

1. Core Action Area: Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls
2. Human Dignity (e.g. health and nutrition, education, humanitarian action)
3. Growth that Works for Everyone
4. Environment and Climate Action
5. Inclusive Governance
6. Peace and Security

### WVSG partnership: adding a gender perspective to waste management

The WVSG project in South Africa integrates a gender perspective in waste management, which is necessary as women and men are assigned different roles in society and thus have also different uses, needs and approaches to waste and waste management, both at the household and community level. The change model of the WVSG in South-Africa is based on actors (carriers of social change) and was realized through the outcome mapping methodology (which is based on three spheres of change). The WVSG – SALGA project devotes several activities to the empowerment of women, and in particular women from socially and economically marginalized groups, as well as people from other disadvantaged groups. Municipalities have waste ambassadors and more than 65% are women and youth.



# Improving municipal governance for all: ACOBOL working on inclusive government structures

The Association of Women Councillors of Bolivia (ACOBOL) was established to develop, support and promote women leaders. Women were largely absent from Bolivia's municipal government structure. Research conducted by ACOBOL found that:

1. Bolivians believe there is gender discrimination and that this is a serious problem;
2. Men are twice as likely as women to participate in municipal meetings;

3. There is a significant gender gap in terms of the presentation of requests to the municipality, which is an even more important variable than participation in municipal meetings.

To tackle this set of issues, ACOBOL has followed a number of different strategies over the years, and has been supported consistently by FCM since 2002<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> FCM (2009). *Promoting women's leadership in local government: Local government associations help women meet the challenge.*

ACOBOL was instrumental in developing 'affirmative action' electoral legislation, The Law of Citizen Groups and Indigenous Peoples, which promotes the participation of citizen groups and of indigenous peoples as well as women. The Law requires 30 percent of each political party's candidates to be women. The proportion of elected women councillors has increased from about 18% in 1991 to 46% by 2004, due to the implementation of the electoral law. However, this law does not apply to mayoral candidates, and only about 4 per cent of Bolivia's mayors are women.

The number of women in office is not the only measure of success for ACOBOL. The association aims to improve the participation of women in municipal affairs and ensure that local government benefits both women and men. To ensure success, ACOBOL led training programs for all municipal councillors, aimed at producing operational plans through participatory municipal management. Gender equality was an integral dimension of the training through:

- Supporting a political culture and citizenry that recognizes equality as a value;
- Promoting more participation and greater empowerment of women and the exercise of responsible citizenship;
- Developing the capacity of elected men and women to understand and address the strategic needs of women, and integrate this learning in their decision-making; and,
- Working towards municipal management practices that combat gender inequality and social exclusion in order to ensure greater sustainable development.

In order to decrease gender discrimination in the operations of municipal government, ACOBOL embarked on a gender responsive budgeting program that sought to identify resources allocated to benefit women, and to increase gender equality. Even with a clear process for ensuring that budgets contributed to women's and men's participation, and to gender equality, ACOBOL found that additional initiatives were necessary. ACOBOL members successfully worked with the National Ministry of Finance in 2005 to ensure the financing of municipal budgets for gender equality activities. Subsequently, ACOBOL encouraged women to request funding for relevant services, held consultations in the preparation of such requests, and compiled and publicized a selection of the resulting proposals. It felt that encouraging municipalities to compare their performance and to learn from best practices

would strengthen gender budgeting. ACOBOL decided to measure and publicize the extent to which the budgets were benefiting women as well as men, using indicators like the per cent of resources directed to gender projects, activities and programs out of the total municipal budget, and the existence of a municipal resolution on investment and gender equity, among others.

ACOBOL members are committed to improving municipal governance for all citizens – women and men. This process has proved risky. Women councillors are threatened, intimidated and harassed to such an extent, especially in rural areas, that ACOBOL has been pressing for a federal law to limit violence and harassment of municipal officials. A draft law prepared by ACOBOL to address harassment and gender violence in politics makes Bolivia a lead-

er among Latin American countries, where complaints are frequent but no penalties are provided for by law. The draft legislation is currently before the Bolivian Chamber of Deputies and Senate undergoing detailed review and has obtained broad approval. To get this far, ACOBOL documented the problem, held workshops and seminars to publicize and validate its findings and developed the draft legislation. ACOBOL members also worked closely with legislators and the Social Political Commission of the Chamber of Deputies, as well as with the media to promote the legislation's adoption.

While ACOBOL members feel their work is not done, they are proud of their accomplishments, and of their contribution to improved democratic local government for women and men of Bolivia's municipalities.





# The IDEAL program for Rwanda

Since the devastating 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, Rwanda has emerged as an impressive story of transformation in Africa. Among many areas, Rwanda has become a pioneer and a role model for its dedication to, and progress made on, gender equality and women's empowerment<sup>1</sup>. Today, Rwanda is one of the global leaders in gender equality progress. In 2017, the World Economic Forum ranked Rwanda as the fourth best country in closing gender gaps, behind only Iceland, Finland and Norway. Moreover, the National Constitution adopted in 2003 and revised in

2015 preserves the principles of gender equality and women's rights and provides for the minimum 30% quota for women representation in all decision-making. Despite the considerable achievements in gender equality promotion, women/girls in Rwanda still face various challenges limiting their active and meaningful participation in governance processes. This is why gender mainstreaming remains one of the key priorities in VNG International's program IDEAL, in which it cooperates with the Rwanda Association of Local Government Authorities.

<sup>1</sup> UNDP (2018). *Gender equality strategy: UNDP Rwanda (2019-2022)*.

der mainstreaming within the beneficiary districts is one of the priorities of the program. In fact, one of the envisaged outcomes is that the local decision-making processes of Rwandan secondary city districts become more inclusive in the framework of urbanization.

## Linking to the National Strategy for Transformation

The IDEAL program in Rwanda fits into a broader policy framework of the Rwandan government to promote and strengthen gender equality. The National Strategy for Transformation has three priorities: economic transformation, social transformation, and transformational governance. The strategy includes a specific focus on gender equality promotion. In this perspective, the Government is committed to continuously update its laws and policy on gender, to support education for all, to eradicate all forms of discrimination, to fight against poverty (which has strong gender connotation) and to practice positive discrimination policy in favour of women. The general objective of the Rwandan Decentralization Policy (adopted in 2000 and revised in 2013) focuses on promoting community participation, empowerment, transparency and accountability. Particular attention is paid to gender equality and social inclusiveness as one of the policy's driving principles.

## The Transformative Agents of Change for Gender Equality-approach

At the beginning of 2017, VNG International approached The Hague Academy of Local Governance with a request to design a gender component for the IDEAL program in Rwanda. Their proposal to launch an 'agents of change'-approach was selected (beginning 2018)

by RALGA and the Local Government Institute as an approach for immediate implementation in the framework of the IDEAL program. The program "Transformative Agents of Change for Gender Equality" is aimed at different clusters of actors. The main goal is to have the agents of change inspire the next generation of local governance practitioners and leaders on issues of inclusive governance, transformative leadership, and sensitivity to gender issues in governance processes.

At present, 30 district staff (18 female and 12 male) across the 6 secondary cities have undergone a series of on-line and face-to-face training sessions equipping them with the capability to analyse and assess gender gaps embedded in their existing initiatives. These agents of change staff have also committed to implementing individual actions that adopt a more gender sensitive lens in their day to day work. During the course of 2021, they will receive further support and coaching in the implementation of these actions.

## The Hague Academy: Working with other partners on Gender in Rwanda

In 2017, The Hague academy for local governance, in collaboration with CARE Rwanda, organized a round table on opportunities and challenges for women's meaningful participation in local governance processes. The round table identified a number of persistent gender issues that limit women's participation in local governance processes such as: i) a heavy domestic workload for women (hence less time to participate in governance processes); ii) social norms and values which may not be supportive of women's active participation in public governance processes, iii) gender roles and stereotypes (this refers to socialization of gender roles in Rwanda) and iv) lack of education, skills

and confidence for women. The main challenges identified are similar to the ones above: heavy domestic workload, cultural belief/perception not in favour of women leadership, especially at the local level and lack of self-confidence which affects and limits women's meaningful participation.

## Gender Sensitive Inclusive training with National Government

The present period of implementation covers 2018-2020 and has different phases and spheres of actors. In November 2018 The Hague Academy organized a three-day course on Gender Sensitive Inclusive Governance in Rwanda. A total of 17 Gender Monitoring Offices attended the course (10 women and 7 men). A participant said that *"The training program was an optimal learning experience that enhanced our skills in relation to the principles of governance and the delivery of gender equality. The training also helped us reflect on the approaches and tools of gender analysis. The course contextualized our challenges with practical and relevant examples"*.

A key role that the Gender Monitoring Office (GMO) plays in Rwanda, is the auditing of Gender Budget Statements allocated to implement gender commitments in the districts. This year (2021), the auditing of the GBS in the 6 secondary districts will be conducted with the support of IDEAL. The aim of the audit is to measure the result of GBS implementation in communities, identify good practices and challenges in implementation and provide concrete recommendations for improvements specifically in urbanising districts.

## IDEAL: making local decision-making processes of Rwandan secondary city districts more inclusive

In May 2017, VNG International launched a renewed partnership with RALGA (Rwanda Association of Local Government Authorities), in view of the implementation of a new multi-country program (IDEAL 2017-2021). The IDEAL program in Rwanda supports six secondary city Districts - Musanze, Rubavu, Rusizi, Nyagatare, Muhanga and Huye. The objective of the IDEAL program in Rwanda is to strengthen inclusive local governance and social cohesion in times of urbanization. Gen-





# The Catalan gender impact assessment

In Catalonian legislation it is required that a gender perspective is included in every law approved by the regional government. It also establishes that reports submitted along with any new bill, decrees and projects shall incorporate a gender impact assessment of the measures included in the regulation. The Catalan Women's Institute is the one in charge of developing these gender impact assessments.

The Catalan Women's Institute is the institution in charge of the design, implementation, coordination and assessment of the gender equality policies developed by the Catalan Government. It has the powers granted to it by the law that created the Institute in 1989; and later modified by the two main laws regarding gender equality and gender-based violence in Catalonia: *the Law 5/2008, of the women's right to eradicate gender-based violence* (now Law 17/2020 since it was modified last December) and *the Law 17/2015, on the effective equality between women and men*. The Catalan Women's Institute also designs and implements the Action Plan for Gender Equality Policies in the Catalan Government, which lasts for a few years, the current one is from 2019 to 2022.

The Catalan Women's Institute is also in charge of the annual report on the execution of gender mainstreaming in the Governments' Administration (Generalitat de Catalunya). This report is a tool for implementation and evaluation, which started with the Action Plan for Women's Policies 2012-2015. It gathers and evaluates the gender mainstreaming reports of the thirteen departments of the Catalan Government, to ensure that all the public policies have a gender perspective.

Since January 2021, an evaluation on the social impact of the Law 17/2015 is being carried out by different bodies of the Government, including the Catalan Institute for the Evaluation of Public Policies – Ivàlua, the National Council of Women of Catalonia, or the Gender Equality Observatory, among others. The final report of the evaluation will be made public by the end of 2021.

## Guidelines of the Catalan gender impact assessment

The guidelines to carry out the gender impact assessment set five basic questions which need to be responded to and disaggregated by sex:

- Who does what?
- Who has access to what (services, resources, etc.)
- Who exerts control over what?
- What differences are there, and why?
- What are the key factors influencing the gender impact?

Since 2010, the Catalan Women's Institute has developed a standardized template applicable to all gender impact assessments of the Region of Catalonia. The Region of Catalonia implements gender equality measures and activities in its international actions and activities. It also has a staff member dedicated to the issue of gender equality within international cooperation.

The International development Master plan for 2019-2022 is based on an integrated Gender and Human Rights Approach. The Master plan includes among its 7 strategic objectives the protection and guarantee of women's human rights and the transformation of structures that promote inequalities between women and men. The Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation openly calls for proposals to include among its priorities and criteria for the evaluation of the gender approach and is very active in participating and supporting events which deal with gender equality.





# Getting women selected in Cambodia

The election system in Cambodia is proportional representation. Anyone who wants to stand for election has to affiliate themselves with a political party. However, many political parties put women candidates at the middle or the bottom of the candidate list, thus giving little opportunity for women to be elected. In such situations, the NLC strongly calls for political parties to place women candidates higher on the electoral lists during the period leading to local elections. Once women become candidates, the NLC organizes training for them, on topics such as public speaking and election campaign planning. When elected, the NLC provides training to women councillors on planning, project monitoring, basic financial management, and good governance. By offering all of these services to its members, NLC is supporting the empowerment of women in decision-making.

## The National League of Communes/Sangkats and its governance system

The National League of Communes/Sangkats (NLC) is a local government association which represents 1,849 Local Government Units in Cambodia with the aim to enhance the status and capacity of Communes/Sangkat Councils, and to achieve a democratic and decentralized administration that is effective, sustainable, transparent, accountable and self-resilient in Cambodia. The NLC reserves seats for women and youth in its governing bodies. For example, in the National Council, Na-

tional Executive Bureau, and National Board, 25% of members are women and there is 25% youth representation.

Furthermore, the National League of Communes/Sangkats has also established a Standing Committee for Women and Children's Affairs. In 2019, the members of the Committee visited several provincial governors and provincial party leaders with the purpose of studying the performance of women's representation in local government, including those with low representation, in order to seek support from the relevant institutions for them. This initiative was important for several reasons: i) it raised awareness within the provincial leadership on the need to support women; ii) it made it possible to identify the different approaches that existed in the different provinces for the selection of women: some had given priority to women with higher education, others to women with local experiences, others to women interested in working in the local office; and iii) it created the opportunity for young women to get involved in local politics.

NLC planned to visit more provinces during 2020, but due to the pandemic of COVID-19 the planned visits were delayed to 2021. NLC will resume the visit once the pandemic subsides. NLC publishes data on local women councillors and women's challenges in politics.

In January 2019, the National League of Communes/Sangkats published a document called *Brief Data on Local Women Councillors and Women's challenges in politics*. This document provided for a concrete vision of the situation of women in local governments in Cambodia and the political, economic, social and cultural challenges women face in order to enter politics in Cambodia. It is clear that women in Cambodia have to face many challenges:

### Political challenges

- there is no law or policy that political parties have to respect gender balance;
- a lack of policy for gender equality;
- there are no constitutional requirements against discrimination for women in politics;
- most political leaders are men who look for other male candidates;
- political parties do not have a clear policy to motivate women to run for elections;
- women often lack self-confidence to enter politics;
- women find it difficult to find a balance between family responsibilities and political life;
- there is a lack of support from family and society;
- there is limited capacity of relevant institutions to analyse gender, advocacy and gender mainstreaming.

### Economic and Social challenges

- women are economically disadvantaged due to obstacles concerning mobility and limited participation/access to networks;
- poverty makes daily life a primary concern of women; no time to aim or wish for a public role;
- women are concerned about their safety regarding long distance mobility, as well as their children and house work;
- social and family status are a burden for women who wish to perform professional work and thus their decision to take part in public life.

### Cultural challenges

- many men consider women as weak, and classify them as unsuitable for a leadership role;
- most parents provide for more education opportunities to boys than girls;
- most women focus on their work for the family, more than on public and social activities;
- men often contribute to building a negative stereotype of women;
- the existence of cultural norms and gender perceptions on the roles of women and men in society;
- a lack of self-confidence due to low education and traditional beliefs, i.e. that the main work of women is housework.

NLC concluded that only a few women are able to overcome social barriers and gender perception and enter into public positions. These few women should be regarded as role models and inspire other women to build up their careers and skills.

## International cooperation in the field of gender equality

The NLC is implementing a project funded by the Government of Canada through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities called Municipal Innovation for Local Economic Development. One of the project's objectives is the promotion of women in local governments. In this framework, the NLC has adopted a Women Advocacy Strategy to promote women in local government, which focuses on four key initiatives:

- Calling on political parties to give women the opportunity to stand for local elections and to put them higher on the lists of political parties;
- Training women candidates standing for local elections;
- Training women councillors/mayors who have been elected to office;
- Meeting with provincial governors and political parties to call on them to support women in office.

All of these activities make sure to involve Cambodian women active in (local) governance, as role models for other women.



# Gender mainstreaming in all policies and activities of the City of Barcelona

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of June, Barcelona elected its first female Mayor, Ms. Ada Colau. Holding strong views on equality between women and men, gender has a central place in her political perspective and governance system for Barcelona. For instance, the City of Barcelona has a City Councillor's Office for Feminism and LGBTI+ Affairs. Its aim is to incorporate gender perspective in every area of politics and society in order to combat the more structural aspects of gender inequality and sexism, as well as overcoming any situations of discrimination that persist in society.

## Applying gender mainstreaming in all local policy areas

The initiatives and policies of the Councillor's Office are based on the incorporation of the gender perspective in all areas (culture, economy, international relations, sport, health care, employment, participation, etc) by applying gender mainstreaming. The City Council has a specific gender mainstreaming department whose task is to ensure that gender equality is the central goal of the entire City Council, municipal areas and districts, in all its areas of activity. Specific gender related activities include:

- Encouraging the political and social participation of women and LGBTI+ people;
- Incorporating a feminist and gender equity approach in all the city's council areas and policies;
- Offering specific prevention and assistance services for women against gender violence;
- Promoting an awareness-raising campaign against gender violence and also programs for promoting gender equality in schools;
- Offering specific services for reporting cases of LGBTI+-phobia to the police and supporting victims;
- Offering legal, psychological and community support tools to women and LGBTI+ people.

All these activities are part of the city government's plans, protocol and measures. In 2018, the City of Barcelona also launched the We Won't Keep Quiet Protocol, a campaign against sexual assault and harassment in private night-time leisure venues.

## Plan for Gender Justice (2016-2020)

In 2016, the City of Barcelona launched a Plan for Gender Justice (2016-2020) – an action plan working towards the elimination of gender inequalities. The plan has four strategic areas: i) Institutional changes: increasing institutional gender expertise, for example via gender training or gender budgeting; ii) Economy for life and time management: promoting gender equality in employment and entrepreneurial support programs, as well as promoting a gender-equitable division of domestic work; iii) City of rights: addressing structural barriers that infringe upon human and social rights in the city; iv) Liveable and inclusive neighbourhoods: ensuring that urban public space is safe for, and inclusive of, women and girls, which emphasizes the need to address gender-based violence.



## Global Justice and International Cooperation Master Plan (2018-2021)

The plan for Gender Justice also contains a chapter on global justice and international cooperation. This underlines that *"20 years after the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, progressive advances are being made in the majority of countries regarding the elimination of elements discriminating against women in legal frameworks, but serious discrimination still persists. Faced with this reality, the objective is to have a strong presence in the networks of the world's cities that promote the fight against inequality in order to defend a diverse, equal, and just society, not only for Barcelona, but for all cities. Gender equality cannot be attained behind closed doors; it is essential to act globally and in collaboration"*.

The city of Barcelona is currently evaluating this first plan for justice with the political aim of continuity.

In this framework, the City of Barcelona is implementing various projects to educate people about social justice and a gender perspective across a large number of cities in the world for: prevention against violence, co-education, sexual rights, feminist activities, LGBTI+, etc. The cities with which Barcelona cooperates in this field are: La Havana (Cuba), Gaza, Bethlehem and Nablus (Palestine), Bogota and Medellin (Colombia), Dakar (Senegal), Kolda (Senegal), Rabat (Morocco), San Salvador (El Salvador), Quito (Ecuador), Amman (Jordan), Tunis (Tunisia), Sarajevo (BiH), Maputo (Mozambique), La Paz (Bolivia) and Bamako (Mali).

The specific objectives of these inter-municipal projects are:

- To promote women's leadership and gender equality in international networks and bilateral collaboration.
- The indicator for this objective being: "increasing the number of women participating in international networks and bilateral cooperation" and "improving the exchange of knowledge on the subject of gender, under the framework of international and bilateral collaboration".
- To make sure of progress regarding the objective of sustainable development.
- The indicator for this objective is the number of actions carried out online to achieve the objective of the millennium in the framework of the Agenda 2030.

- To reinforce the gender perspective in funded projects and projects with local entities.
- The indicator for this objective being the evolution of the average rating for the incorporation of gender perspective in funded international collaboration projects.

## Successful international cooperation projects

In **Amman**, with the collaboration of the ONG Associació Catalana per la Pau, and the Jordan NGO Arab Women Organization (AWO), with the technical support of the Gender Department of Barcelona Municipality, we're driving a Gender Audit Study of Greater Amman Municipality (GAM). This project is now under implementation, with important delays due to COVID-19 context limitations (international and local mobility).

In **Sarajevo**, with the collaboration of the ONG Medicus Mundi, and the Bosnian NGO Fondacija Lokalne Demokratije (FLD), with the technical support of the Gender Department of Barcelona Municipality, we're implementing a technical exchange program for GBV Prevention Local Programs and the existing co-management examples between the municipality and local NGO. This program is under implementation but also with important delays also due to COVID-19 context limitations.





# Constructive actions by Sri Lankan Local Government Association to support locally elected women

Sri Lanka is a unitary democratic republic with three levels of government: national, provincial, and local. Local government is enshrined in the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment to the constitution<sup>1</sup>. The Local Govt. Election Act was amended in 2017 to include a 25% mandatory quota for women in the local councils. Women have participated fully in exercising their voting rights in Sri Lanka since universal franchise was introduced in 1931. Nevertheless their representation in political assemblies from Parliament to local councils has been low. Generally speaking, the situation for women in Sri Lanka remains difficult. The Federation of Sri Lankan Local Governments Authorities has therefore decided to take gender equality into account in its work.

## The Federation of Sri Lankan Local Government Association working on gender

There are three voluntary associations in the country, representing municipalities, urban councils, and pradeshiya sabhas: the National chapter of Mayors, the United Urban Councils Association, and the Sri Lanka Pradeshiya Sabha Association. These three associations jointly created the Federation of Sri Lankan Local Government Authorities (FSLGA) in 2007, as an umbrella organization representing the interests of local government authorities in Sri Lanka. Membership to all the three bodies is voluntary and all are funded by member subscriptions and other income-generating activities.

As part of its core activities, the FSLGA gives priority to supporting women in governance, building their capacity to perform as effective councillors, to invest funding to prepare knowledge products, and to ensure that women are included in all the association work. The association elected its first female president in 2020.

## International cooperation with Canada

As of 2007, FSLGA works extensively with elected women representatives to build their skills and capacities. In addition to its core activities, the FSLGA also works with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities on a project to improve the capacities of women in the governance sphere, which started after the introduction of the quota system in 2017. The associations work extensively to improve the capacities of women and men prior to election and in post-election periods. In addition, they focus especially on improving the skills and knowledge of women so that they can be effective and efficient councillors standing alongside with men. The FSLGA promotes women to engage in governance both as elected and community representatives.

## Difficulties within the gender actions of FSLGA

Despite the intrinsic motivation and interest for supporting women in local governance and decision-making, FSLGA does not have a staff member dedicated to gender issues. It appears that there is limited interest from donors for improving the skills of women in governance and that makes it difficult to raise funds for projects concerning gender equality. In addition, there are cultural barriers, a lack of interest from women with the appropriate capacities to get into politics, and difficulties in keeping stronger women in the political field. Women's voices are not heard within the political parties. In the Parliament, women's issues are not seen as a key area of discussion. At the same time, the percentage of women elected to Parliament in 2020 was only 5.3% (as compared with 4% in 1931)<sup>1</sup>.

## More female representation in local governments since 2018

On the bright side, the local council elections of February 2018 led to 1,959 elected women in 341 councils, which represents 22%. This is a significant rise from 2011 when they represented approximately 1.8%. The FSLGA will continue to make considerable efforts to encourage more women to become engaged and motivated in local governance. However, the lack of resources makes it difficult for the association to reach all/more (potential) locally elected women and to strengthen the capacities of all the new councillors.



<sup>1</sup> CLGF (2018). *The Local government system in Sri Lanka – country profile 2017-2018*.

<sup>1</sup> German Cooperation, GIZ & ADB (2015). *Country Gender Assessment: Sri Lanka, an update*.



## 7. Concluding remarks

Gender equality is a subject which requires hard work, since it deals with stereotypes, social models, culture, and tradition. While different international frameworks for gender equality are in place, the reality on the ground is often very different. Local governments are best positioned to work on advancing gender equality, as they work closest to the citizens, organize concrete initiatives and obtain tangible results.

Both donor organizations and implementing agencies, including local government associations and local governments, have enhanced their activities and programs in the field of gender equality in recent years. Different CIB member organizations are experimenting with gender mainstreaming and budgeting, at home and abroad, are organising trainings and coaching sessions and creating enabling institutional frameworks, all to help achieve SDG 5. Activities are targeted at locally elected representatives, as well as civil servants, to help create cultural change.

There are many (practical) hurdles to overcome, in all regions of the world. Sadly, the COVID-19 pandemic has amplified gender disparities, as women and girls are among the most vulnerable groups to the social and economic repercussions of the pandemic, women are bearing the brunt of the negative effects.

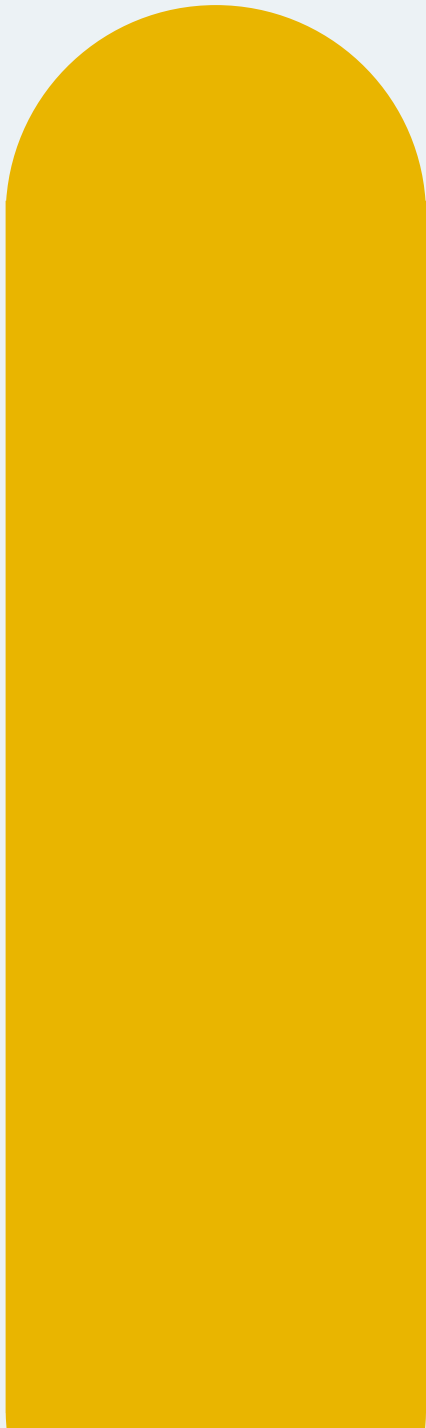
26 years after the Beijing conference and 9 years before the 'deadline' of Agenda 2030 on sustainable development, all actors in development cooperation - including international organizations, national governments, local governments, civil society, private sector and many more - need to gear up and do everything in their power to contribute to achieving gender equality, for our future generation. The CIB working group will continue focussing on gender related topics, hoping to make a moderate contribution to this large objective.





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