

**THE TRANSFORMATIVE
COMMITMENT OF CITIES
AND TERRITORIES TO
GENERATION EQUALITY**

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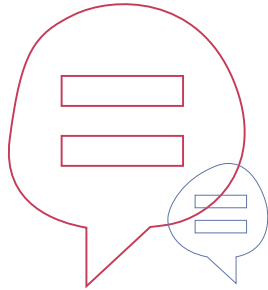
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PREFACE:

Emilia Saiz, Secretary General of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)



“Women represent more than half of the world population. Nevertheless, they continue to be one of the populations most exposed to violence of all sorts and pressing discrimination. (...) The status of women is one of ‘vulnerability’ or ‘invisibility’ even though they are proactive and effective actresses of transformation”.

With these words of the Durban Manifesto on the Future of Equality, local and regional governments gathered within UCLG made a clear call on this challenge and reminded us how we are still far away from the necessary progress on gender equality, 26 years after the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action.

UCLG, our global equality-driven movement, has unequivocally championed the path towards gender equality as a human right with implications for the whole-of-society. As such, the movement is committed to work on the transformations needed to guarantee not only that cities, metropolitan spaces, urban and rural areas are accessible and equally enjoyable for women and girls as they are for men and boys; but, most importantly, that women’s talent thrive in our territories and that their experiences and visions contribute to improving livelihoods for all.

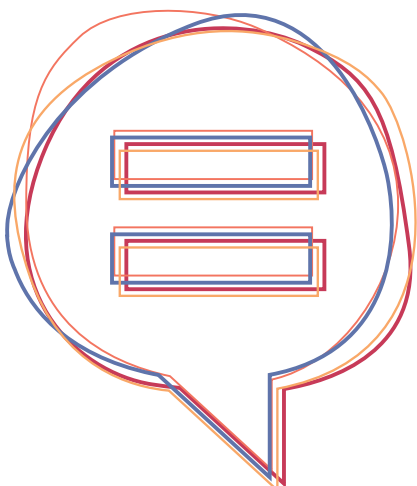
Women have historically been and continue to be at the frontlines of care be it in private, professional or public lives. While their key roles in managing financing and providing for the livelihoods of families is well known around the world, the place in public life has never matched this, no matter where in the world, equality is not a reality and women often take the worst part.

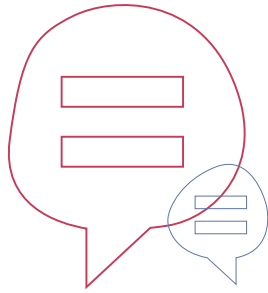
We need to make grander strides faster! The encounter of municipalism with feminism can form a strong alliance that puts forward a new way of understanding and governing our cities and territories, based on solidarity and empathy. This transformation needs to be a collective effort, to bring about a renewed social contract which sets people’s needs, voices and aspirations at the center of the political agendas.

Supporting and strengthening women’s participation and decision-making to ensure their needs and concerns are articulated into specific local policies and interventions is more important than ever before. The local level is the cradle of feminist leadership and represents a unique catalyst and enabler to empower women in public offices and as active leaders of our communities.

We need a new, feminist way of thinking about and exercising politics. A shared responsibility that cares for and thrives with girls, women, non-binary people, boys and men, migrants, young or older people, people with disabilities, LGBTQI+, indigenous, of all ethnicities, and in all their diversity, that are equally empowered.

Feminist municipalism is not about women rights but about a new type of society. One built from the bottom-up with local leaders that are committed to equality as the only possible pathway. Cities and territories that care for their people and the planet at the centre of political and all agendas. Our focus is defending and strengthening local public service provision, designed around the needs of the most vulnerable to better serve all of us.





Our movement always says that we do not have all the answers on how to get there but, standing on the strong shoulders of the local feminist leaders we have, in this publication laid out the different dimensions and building blocks of the Global Feminist Municipal Movement.

The voices of these women leaders and many more like them, men and women alike, are setting the tone for the Pact for the Future that our constituency was mandated to develop: co-creating a new social contract for the people, for the planet, and with governments.

The global feminist municipal movement is a key building block of a better normal: a world that has carried out the ecological transformation and renewed local democracy. It is also our contribution to Generation Equality. You will find UCLG leadership alongside other national leaders and other stakeholders, committed to the Global Acceleration Plan for Gender Equality being launched during the Generation Equality Forum in Paris.



Women Leadership and Development,
6 December 2015, Paris. @UCLG-CGLU



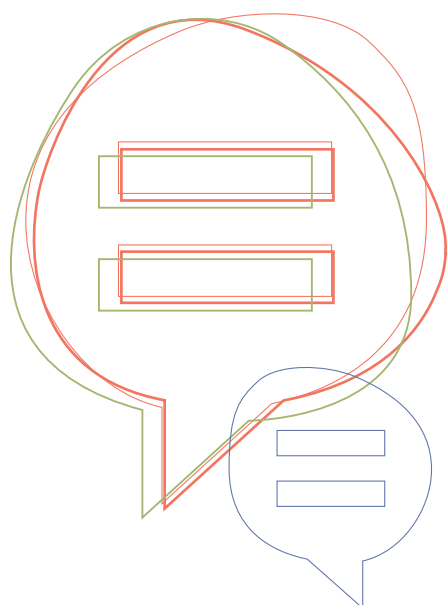
Introduction¹:

Ana Falú. UCLG Ubuntu Advisor on Gender

This document is an invitation to travel together along a path of democratic construction, towards a Feminist Municipal Movement, from which to achieve the effective recognition of the rights of women and diverse groups already enshrined in multiple international human rights instruments. But not only that; it also aims to deepen and improve local democracies for men and women, for society as a whole. UCLG, as an organization that brings together local leaders from across the world, promotes the equal distribution of power, the fair reallocation of resources and usufruct, and is committed to local democracies and strengthening ties with the community, as well as highlighting the importance of the voices of women and the diversity of those who live in cities and territories.

A central theme that runs through women's political engagement is "the personal is political"; one of the most powerful theoretical and political contributions of our time. The public and the private are spaces of tensions and conflicts that assign values to the mere fact of being women and being men, and essentialize differences based on biological attributes, which lead to inequalities.

The 21st century unearths women in all their diversity — migrants, workers, those in precarious situations, academics, students, heads of households, women forming part of the LGBTQIA+ community, of different ethnicities and religions, women in political leadership positions, and young people, among many others — as new and powerful political subjects. We are facing a new era, in which women, in their multiple diversities, are building a common agenda of their demands, which are witnessing and encountering mass expression in the streets, through mobilizations, increasingly provoking a reconfiguration of the public sphere by raising historical issues, such as violence, equal work for equal pay, the recognition of their contribution to development in cities, and reproductive work that guarantees life. In this way, they raise the important demand of political participation and access to decision-making spaces, in a bid to achieve more democratic and inclusive societies. Progressively, women have burst onto the political scene. Although they make up more than 50% of the world's population, as well as of the membership of political parties in different regions of the world, we are still far from parity.



¹ This publication, coordinated by Ana Falú, UCLG Ubuntu Advisor on Gender, is the result of the joint work carried out with Dr Leticia Echávarri and Flavia Tello, with the participation of María Alejandra Rico, María José Pinto and Rodrigo Messias.

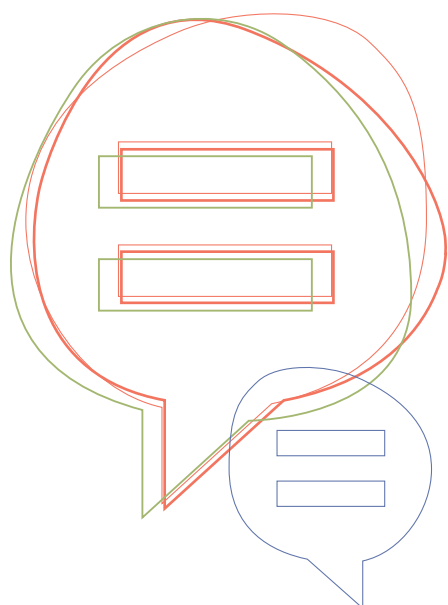


Three key topics to be addressed:

(i) The first refers to the existence of an institutional global framework, powerful, as UCLG is, that fosters and facilitates the construction and development of this Feminist Municipal Movement. There are precedents that have contributed to consolidating this new narrative and — not only that — there are also, and decisively, international instruments that support local action; those that foster commitments such as the Global Platform for Action leading to the 4th World Conference on Women (Beijing 1995), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to the New Urban Agenda (NUA), and those that are binding such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); and many others that were constructed through agreements in recent decades. In the process of developing these agreements, which were not without tensions, progress was made in the recognition of women as subjects of rights and policies. Women are: producers of wealth, providers of services, they dedicate time to others and undertake work, they constitute talent and hold capacities that development cannot afford to lose. Within this framework, the powerful statement of “leaving no one behind” is inserted, strongly linked to Women’s Right to the City as a powerful idea, yet one that is also relatively new and complex, since it encompasses all rights — civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental — still to be fully conquered by women.

(ii) The second alludes to the fact that this Feminist Municipal Movement is based on the leadership of women who, although all diverse, possess a particular shared characteristic that leaves a mark in their governance. Women are advancing — though not without great difficulties — within local governments as a result of different strategies, perhaps the most powerful of which is in occupying leadership positions. And it is along these paths that many of them contribute to a resounding transformation of the political sphere, questioning the hegemonic patriarchal leadership of political positions, which even has significant costs on their personal lives. Given this, it is of interest to understand the obstacles that persist in terms of their political autonomy, and to explore these trajectories with those women who have acceded to municipal power, and who have fostered transformations in the practices of the exercise of power, administrations, and the public policies developed within local councils.

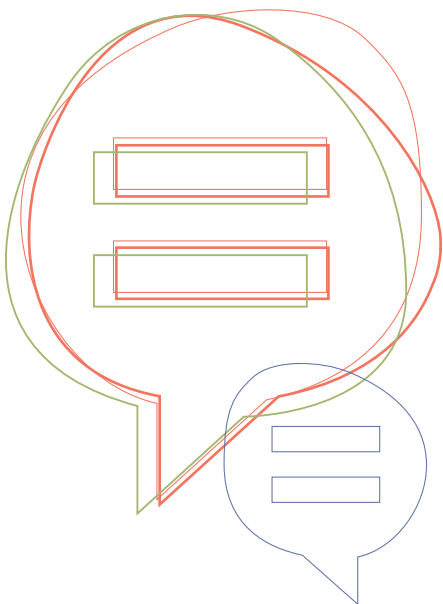
(iii) The third introduces us to a set of themes on the agenda that drive the Feminist Municipal Movement, narrowing the classic distinction between the public and the private by placing the sustainability of life at the heart of public management. Beyond





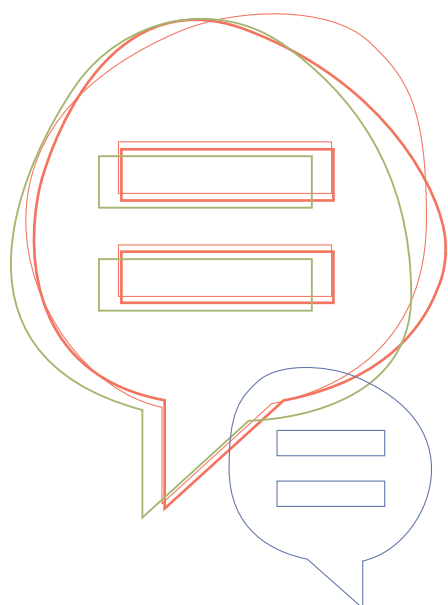
the differences, progress is being made, and the diverse voices of women have established new themes in their cities, in public spaces on both old/new public issues, such as; violence against the body, the first territory inhabited by women, care as a right, or the need for their equal integration into the economic and political spheres, as well as the need to reflect on other, more plural economies, that support economic autonomy and the transfer of income. Likewise, issues related to the city understood as a common good of our societies, and of women; of the necessary participation of women's voices in the definition of the public realm; the recognition of their practices and demands for themselves, and those arising from the roles assigned to them in the sexual division of labour, are often overlooked in the physical planning of cities and territories. The drive towards the "right to a life without violence" for women, as well as the recognition of their rights, through the breaking down of stigmas that subordinate and devalue them, that do not consider the inclusion of the diversity of women discriminated against because of their ethnic, racial or religious values, disabilities, ages or sexual identities. Underlying all of this is the decolonization of what we call development, and the recognition of its leading individual and collective roles, as well its power and radical nature.

We understand this invitation to collectively construct a Feminist Municipal Movement as a demand, and in particular, within the current context of the global pandemic we are experiencing, in which talking about gender is just as crucial as focusing local action on combatting increasing poverty, and the rapid changes taking place in technological processes (taking into account that only 20% of the world's population has access to networks), in order for connectivity to truly provide opportunities, information and possibilities. Also of concern are the various expressions of growing fundamentalisms, in particular those that seek to entrench conservatism and traditions over the control of women's bodies and autonomy; a world experiencing increasing mass migration and displacement, with devastating effects on the lives of thousands upon thousands of women and girls; and the complex geopolitical transformations taking place, many of which we can still barely discern, all in a context of successive subjugations of human rights and enormous resistance from women and organized civil society.





UCLG Congress. Durban 2019.
Special Session on Gender Equality



In accordance with the historical commitment of UCLG and the international municipal movement towards gender equality, this document compiles a range of interventions held within the framework of forums and events led by UCLG in March 2021, as well as a series of interviews undertaken between March and May 2021 with mayors and local leaders. As a specific contribution to the Generation Equality process and its two Forums in Mexico and in Paris, this publication articulates the strength and practical application of the union between municipalism and feminism. The quotes of the leaders included in the document are taken from the interviews or recent events promoted by UCLG around the topic. Within the framework of this same research process, a wide publication will follow this document, addressing the personal trajectories of these leaders in more detail, as well as examples of municipal and territorial policies with a feminist perspective.

SECTION 1.

Institutional frameworks and representation: Women's leadership in the local sphere

UCLG believes that gender equality should be the norm, and acting at the local level is key to influencing all spheres of decision-making and of society, just as the leadership and balanced participation of women is key in local power.

The 21st century is the era in which women are positioned as the world's central political subjects, revitalized in mass protest movements that are being echoed in urban territories across the globe, such as Ni Una Menos [Not One (woman) Less] and Million Women Rise, among others. From here, they drive the effective implementation of their already-recognized rights, while positioning a broad and diverse agenda, to which local governments around the world are markedly receptive (Falú, Echavarrí, 2017)².

These demands of feminist movements, together with the institutional framework developed in the processes of recognition of rights, have made it possible, among other things, for women to advance in their political leadership and to occupy key decision-making positions within local governments. Yet, even in the face of this progress, it is still necessary to consolidate and strengthen efforts aiming to achieve political parity.

² Falú, A., Echavarrí, L. (2017) "La tierra tiembla ante las voces de las mujeres. Nos organizamos y paramos para cambiarlo todo." ["The earth shakes with the voices of women. We organize and strike to change everything."] In: La política en la violencia y lo político de la seguridad [Politics in Violence and the Political Aspects of Security] / edited by Fernando Carrión M. Quito: Ottawa, ON, Canada: FLACSO Ecuador: IDRC-CDRI.



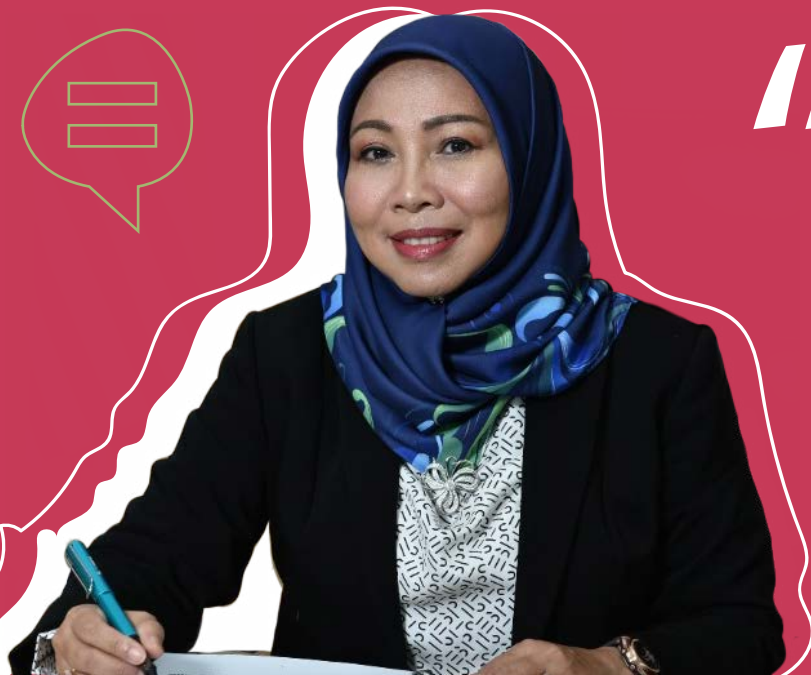
Municipalism cannot succeed without the presence of women at the leadership level. The world has witnessed this positive change in recent years with a substantial presence of women in governance. It is a proven phenomenon that development of policies without the contributions of women is not effective.

Khadija Zahra Ahmadi

Former Mayor of Nili



The challenge of being a woman leader in a position long dominated by men, is to gain the respect of the public and of colleagues for our abilities; proving that we can do as much — if not more — than our male counterparts. Further, we need to demonstrate that the changes we are making touch people’s lives, especially those of women, compared to previous mayors.



Noraini Roslan

Mayor of Subang Jaya

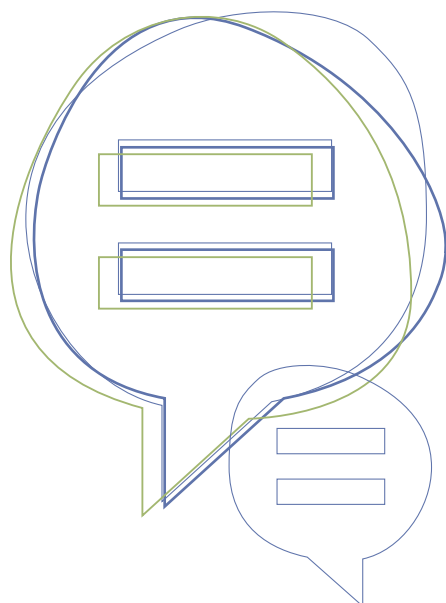
With the international community committed to Sustainable Development Goal 5 and its target 5.5 to “Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life” by 2030, it is imperative for these processes to be accelerated. Even more so when the crisis derived from the COVID-19 pandemic has had a different impact on the lives of women, with a tendency to roll back rights already achieved.

“The ambitions of the global agendas can only be realized by using a gender lens to ensure that the particular needs of women in urban areas are understood and addressed.”

- Bernadia Irawati Tjandradewi, Secretary General of UCLG Asia-Pacific

When referring to the leadership of women at the local level, it is crucial to address the full exercise of citizenship, a right fundamental to democracy, but one historically not devolved to women directly. Not only due to the minority representation of women in the public sphere, but also, and above all, because the agendas addressing issues related to gender that they defend are “diminished” and marginalized in state affairs (Segato, 2016)³.

³ Segato, Rita, 2016. La guerra contra las mujeres. [The War against Women.] Edit. Traficantes de sueños. [Dream Traffickers.] Madrid.

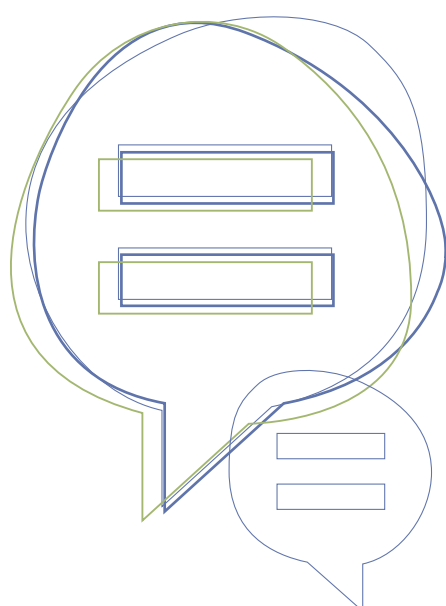




Bernadia Irawati Tjandradewi, Secretary General of UCLG Asia-Pacific at the UCLG Retreat and Campus. Tangier. 2019

Even when women make up around 50% of the membership of political parties in regions such as Europe and the Americas, their eruption into this space has led to multiple and varied resistances to progress, not only of women themselves as political subjects, but also resistance to the ideas they contribute and which, in some way, have caused cracks to appear in the status quo of political power; a power that has traditionally been masculinized. Despite this resistance, women have been occupying more and more spaces, transforming traditional ideas of democracy and development across the world as a result of their subjectivities and personal experiences.

In this way, issues such as gender violence, unpaid care work – which is chiefly undertaken by women – sexual and reproductive rights, the mandate of power, “ownership” (Segato, 2016) and domination over women, and the economic dependence of women, among many other scourges traditionally conceived as private issues, have been brought to light through the political agenda of the Feminist Movement as from the second half of the last century, and increasingly throughout the last decade, as these existing and traditionally invisible realities are “named”, and “given a name”. “Our political similarity comes from the history of our oppression as women” (Lagarde, 2001)⁴.



⁴ Lagarde, Marcela, 2001. We Women Want Power. In Envío magazine. Nicaragua: University of Central America, UCA.



1.1. Where are the women in Local Governments? Still a long way to achieving parity

Women have made progress in occupying political decision-making positions, and the obligation of gender quotas has been a fundamental aspect in these advances. Although we are witnessing a gradual increase in the representation of women at multiple levels of decision-making, a glass ceiling persists that prevents their rise to the real spheres of power. Data from across the world reveals the widespread under-representation of women at all levels of decision-making, and municipalities are no exception.

In order to monitor the progress towards Target 5.5 of the SDGs from a municipal perspective, a new indicator was adopted in addition to that established regarding parliamentary representation. This is SDG indicator 5.5.1b, created by UN Women with the support of UCLG, aiming to measure the proportion of seats occupied by women in local governments.



A woman casting her vote in Idiko-Ile during the February 23, 2019 Presidential Election in Nigeria.

In accordance with this indicator, of the 133 countries that have reported their data, women represent 36% of decision-making bodies in local governments, but only 15% of these countries have exceeded 40%. In more than half of countries, women represent between 10 and 30%, while in 12% of countries, women are present in less than 10% of decision-making bodies at the local level. Of these 133 countries, women have achieved 50% representation in a mere two⁵.

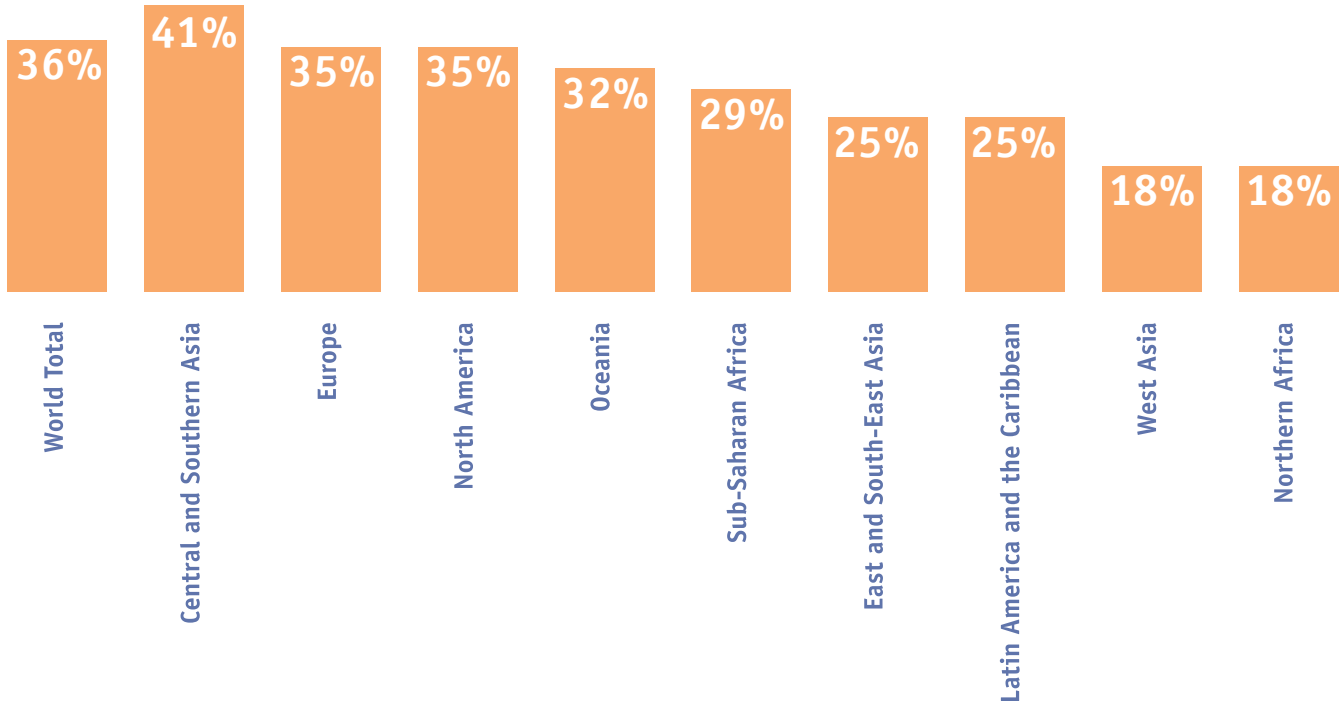
At the global level, representation data for women in

⁵ UN Women, 2020. Women's representation in local government: A Global Analysis.



decision-making bodies, as councillors or elected officials, is not homogeneous across regions, as can be seen in Graphic 1 below:

Graphic 1. Regional percentages of women's representation in local decision-making bodies.



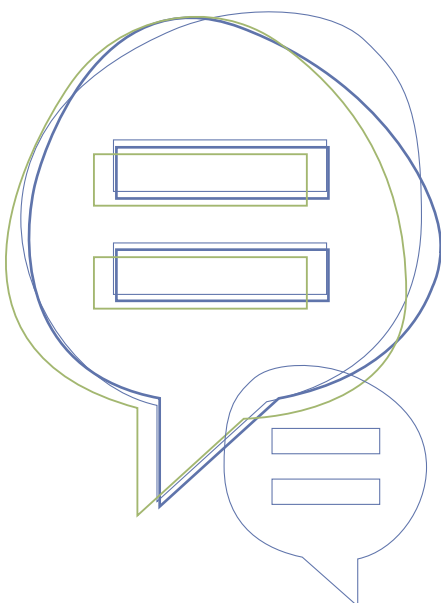
UN Women, 2020. Women's representation in local government: A Global Analysis.

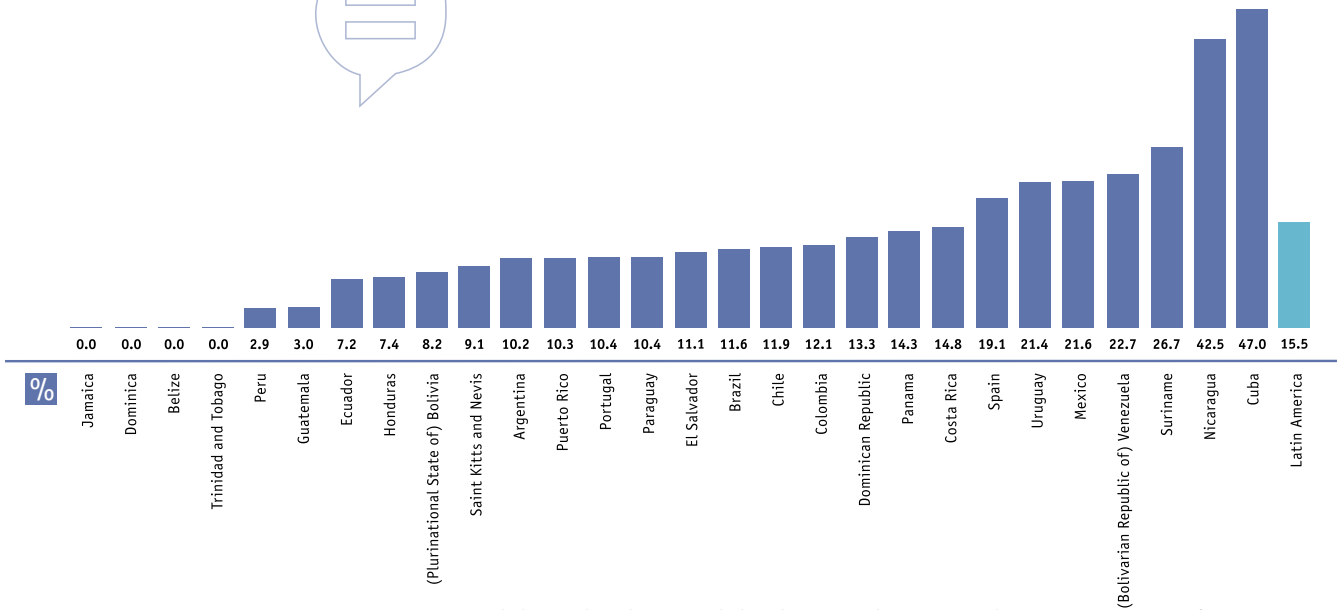
While we can celebrate the fact that representation within local government decision-making bodies is slightly higher than those achieved in parliaments at the global level (36% and 24.9% respectively), the truth is that we are even further away from achieving representative balance in executive positions. According to the research carried out by the City Mayors Foundation, in 2018, women represented a mere 20% of the world's mayoralities.

Nevertheless, the representation of elected women in local government by country varies overwhelmingly by region. In Latin America and the Caribbean, for example, we found averages from close to 50% of elected women mayors, to zero representation (0%) in other countries, as shown in the following graph:

Graphic 2: Latin America, The Caribbean and The Iberian Peninsula (28 countries): Elected mayors who are women, latest available data (Percentages)

Representation data is indeed relevant to develop a diagnosis of the state of democracy and gender equality. Nevertheless, the monitoring of women's representation in the municipalities has not had the same expression as at the level of national parliaments, with the collection of disaggregated data at the local level being one of the main challenges.





Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2018-2019, Indicators: Elected mayors who are women

Although electoral bodies and national institutions of statistics have been making efforts to produce and monitor data, the reality is that the systematization of information is not homogeneous. At the local government level, insufficient data, together with the inconsistency, limited quality and comparability of data, make it difficult in many cases to make visible the gaps that still persist throughout the world. Obstacles to data collection refer mainly to the existence of different types and levels of local governments, even within the same countries. Additionally, the fact that elections and government terms may also vary with respect to the national level makes collection and comparability even more complex.

PARIS, FRANCE - MARCH 11, 2020: Municipal elections campaign posters in the streets of the French capital.

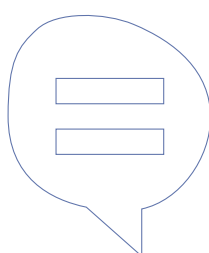




From the positions that women have been occupying, and thanks to their connections and networks, impetus is being given to strong processes tending to definitively reverse the concept of the political as masculine, questioning the hegemonic patriarchal leadership in political leadership positions in cities and territories. Here, steady progress has been made, notably in implementing measures to equalize historic inequalities, such as political quotas for parties' electoral lists – so-called positive actions or legislations. Nevertheless, it should be highlighted that although these necessary equalization instruments, which were intended to be temporary, have achieved that legislative bodies ensure a certain percentage of women's participation, they have not been able to push forward the representation of women in the executive branches of local government in the same way. It is here that current trends propose parity measures as a definitive framework for representative justice within democratic systems (Bareiro and Soto, 2015).⁶

BOGOTA, COLOMBIA - OCTOBER 27, 2019: Bogota mayoral candidate-elect Claudia López closes her political campaign after winning the electoral consultation Editorial credit: Sebastian Barros / Shutterstock.com

1.2. Local territories as catalysts for women's political participation



The Joint Statement to the 65th Session of 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), establishes, among others, as a guiding

⁶ Bareiro, Line and Soto, Lilian, 2015. La hora de la igualdad sustantiva. Participación política de las mujeres en América Latina y el Caribe hispano. [Time for substantive equality. Women's political participation in Latin America and the Hispanic Caribbean.]



framework for local government action: the 1998 International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) Worldwide Declaration on Women in Local Governments; the 2013 Paris Local and Regional Governments' Global Agenda for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life; the 2006 European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life; and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) recommendations, particularly number 35 on the need to tackle all types of violence against women and girls, including at the local level.

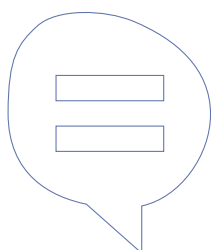
Within, UCLG, represented by its Secretary General, Emilia Saiz, affirms that:



UCLG an Equality Driven Movement

UCLG-Women session during CSW65, 19 March 2021. Above, from left to right: Emilia Saiz, Secretary General of UCLG, Claudia López, Mayor of Bogota, Thembisile Nkadimeng, Mayor of Polokwane and Co-President of UCLG. Below: Carolina Cosse, Mayor of Montevideo, Rosa Pavanelli, Secretary General of Public Services International, Mayra Mendoza, Mayor of Quilmes

“Generation Equality is a true turning point to advocate that equality is no longer an option, but a necessary element for recovery. Women can bring new approaches to policymaking and a new municipalism to the table in international, national, regional and local arenas; and local governments can be a catalyst for women’s participation and feminist policymaking. In this framework, the actions of local governments, given their powerful reach and proximity, are promising means to put an end to political violence against women leaders.”⁷



⁷ UCLG(2021): [The Feminist Municipal Movement takes stock of the Beijing](#)



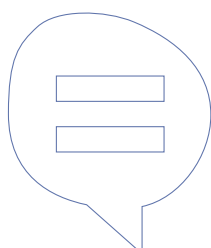
The political domain, being a historically patriarchal context, has been shaped as a space of tensions, power struggles and competitions that have caught up with the women who have joined it. In fact, we are currently witnessing strong resistance to the advancement of women leaders, women's rights and gender equality. An attack that seeks to weaken the strength of an undisputed political renaissance led by women with transformative agendas.



UCLG Executive Bureau 2004 São Paulo. (Center) Elisabeth Gateau Secretary General of UCLG (2004-2010); (Left) Anna Tibajuka, former Executive Director of UN-HABITAT, and Marta Suplicy, former Mayor of São Paulo and co-founder of UCLG. (Right).

Within this framework, the role of networks of local governments is fundamental when it comes to encouraging advances that articulate equality in the diversity that exists among women, overlapping by their distinct intersections. One of the most decisive challenges for women who participate in spaces of power and decision-making lies in promoting joint action agreements with a political agenda in defence of women's rights, from the different spaces and political platforms of which they form a part. In this sense, it is essential to strengthen the "sisterhood" of women leaders and politicians based on gender awareness.

The coordination mechanisms available at the municipal level include the national associations and networks of women mayors and councillors that bring together the political leaders of the different political parties at the municipal level. The defence of women's political rights and the political empowerment of their members are central to the agenda of these associations; although one of their efforts in recent years has been to become a critical



[Process at the Generation Equality Forum in Mexico](#)



mass with a greater capacity for agency and political impact in different spaces, through the construction and articulation of gender equality agendas from a feminist leadership.⁸

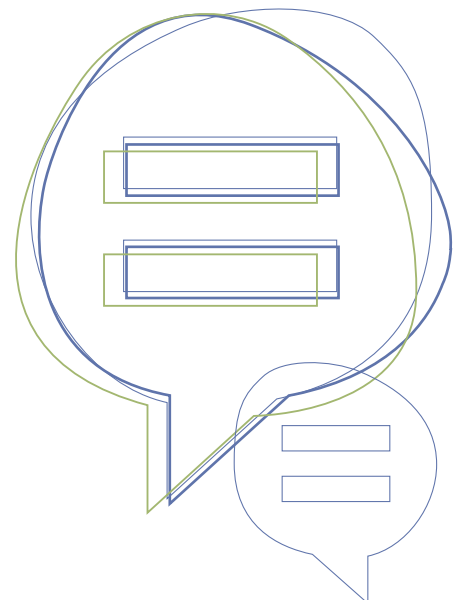
⁸ UN Women, 2018. Hacia la democracia paritaria en los municipios. [Towards parity democracy in municipalities.]



We women, as local leaders, have a special responsibility to promote gender equality in decision-making, but also to encourage and support women to participate in political life. I know from experience how important this was when I was young. Knowing that I had someone to support me, that there were older women who told me: stand up Carola, defend your vision.

Carola Gunnarsson

Mayor of Sala, Vice-President of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR), UCLG Vice-President for Europe



SECTION 2.

When the personal is political

“Everything surprises us, intrigues us, questions us. Because for us, the political world is not another world, a world apart. It is the world of all of us. It is the world in which we live. It is an extension of our everyday world. An everyday world that we want to transform, because everyday life is life. For us, women’s life and political life are the same thing. These lives are in perspective. It is the ability to be oneself without trying to be someone else.”

- Souad Ben Abderrahim, Mayor of Tunis



Souad Ben Abderrahim, Mayor of Tunis. Workshop: Better communication on migration: a challenge for local governance - 18 and 19 September 2018 Credits @UCLG-UCLG

It is undeniable that women’s personal experiences, life trajectories, situations of struggle and activism to respond to collective needs influence their political vocation and careers in various ways. Success stories that started with a social commitment. And in this sense, the political agendas that these women leaders construct are marked by their historical experiences as women, and the gender roles with which they have been historically socialized.

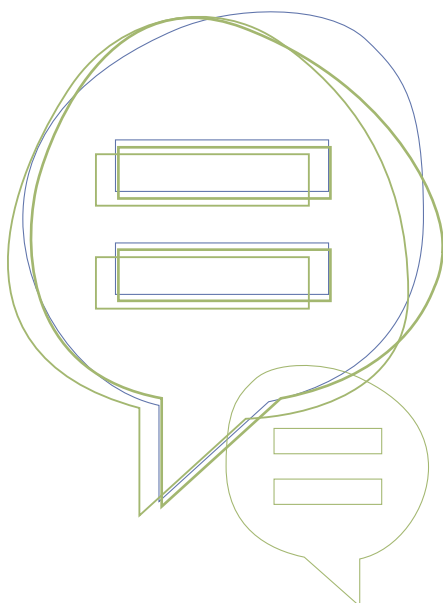


THE PUBLIC AND THE PRIVATE IN POLITICS

What is public and what is private has become a field of political dispute. A clear example is the issue of violence against women. At the end of the 1960s and throughout the 1970s, women's movements coined the phrase "the personal is political", by which they brought into public debate, among other issues, the view that violence was not a "private matter". They managed to highlight and place on the public agenda something that had been hidden and not talked about for so long, let alone sanctioned. These examples of private and public violence are expressed in a continuum, and have different expressions, leading to very critical situations in some countries.

Although women are not duly recognized as full citizens of the public sphere, they have always participated actively in organized movements, resisting and developing alternative strategies and practices. This process led by women gradually transformed the political sphere as they questioned the sovereign male authority and generated the ensuing conflict.

In this way, issues that were understood to belong to the private sphere are made visible and denounced, and enter the public and political sphere. Thus, social and political issues that until now were understood to be the preserve of the individual and private – such as violence against women, sexual identities, sexuality itself, reproductive and care tasks – acquire the character of public problems, and are now recognized as work and rights in regional, international and local agendas. These issues, previously no-go areas for state action, are now entering into national agendas as public problems, being addressed by public policies and law.



2.1. The importance of the trajectory

Women's entry into local politics contributes to a gradual shift in their influence on democracy and their transformative capacity to generate more inclusive cities and territories.

Equally significant is the reflection of Mayor Valérie Plante from the city of Montreal, who tells us:



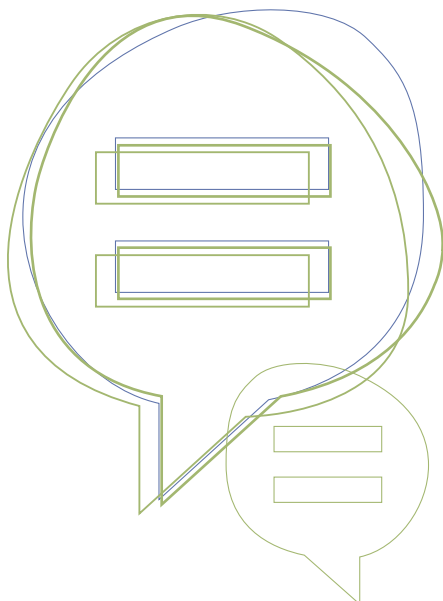
There are numerous examples of women who arrive into governance and demonstrate that care can indeed be placed at the centre, people at the centre, cooperation, empathy... and that this produces good results. Efficient results in terms of management and public policy. All of which results in better politics for all, also for men.

Ada Colau

Mayor of Barcelona, and UCLG Special Envoy to the United Nations

“Women are increasingly present in politics. The positive side is that a variety of women are represented. This diversity is key to encouraging more women to participate in politics, and I am very proud to be among them. One of the qualities I have noticed about women in politics is that they tend to be active listeners and have a much more nuanced understanding of the issues.”

- Valérie Plante, Mayor of Montreal



The municipal level represents a key space for women’s citizenship. The proximity of relationships allows women to recognize each other, both in terms of shared adversities and mutual interests for their political and collective action. Local territories thus become a school of democracy and citizenship, constituting the nucleus of life in society and coexistence, where both individual and collective aspirations take shape and are built.



Valérie Plante, Mayor of Montreal.
2018 High Level Political Forum,
New York. @UCLG-UCLG

From Latin America, the Prefect of Pichincha reflects:



I believe that the presence of women in leadership positions makes a difference. Our view of the world, of society, of the family, is different, and this means that we know how to place priorities linked to life and care above all others; the precedence of intervention in citizen's demands does make a difference. The agenda of women's rights and priority groups become particularly relevant. All those who govern value physical work and the advancement of infrastructure, but us, women who govern, know that everything makes sense only when life is at the centre of the action.

Paola Pabón

Prefect of Pichincha



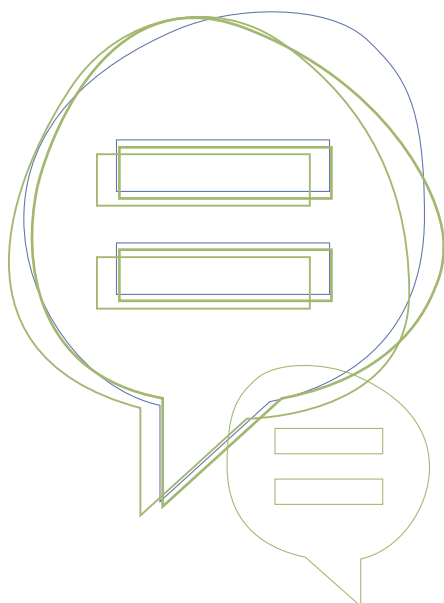
Women's political participation in local territories has made it possible to initiate other, more collaborative and less hierarchical modalities of exercising power, an aspect that is directly linked to their life experiences and activism. Patricia Morla, a female Councillor from the city of Carlos Paz, linked to the movement of people with disabilities, tells us:



I started to participate in social activities, in neighbourhood centres, school cooperatives, mothers' clubs, leading initiatives on transport. One day, I met the man who would later become the Mayor of the city, and because of the social work I was doing, he asked me to join his political team. From there, I started working to support people with disabilities who were not being served by governmental spaces.

Patricia Morla

Councillor Carlos Paz



Very often, women begin their political careers undertaking community work in informal entities (parents' associations, volunteers in community kitchens, community organizations), as well as formal ones (trade unions, professional associations, NGOs). It is in these spaces where the majority of women forge their leaderships and grow, empowering themselves and being recognized. Notable examples of this influence are the cases of Ada Colau, a social activist in the fight against evictions, who was politically promoted by the social movement itself until she became Mayor of Barcelona in 2015, or of Thembisile Nkadimeng, Mayor of Polokwane, and Khadija Zahra Ahmadi, former Mayor of Nili, who recounts:

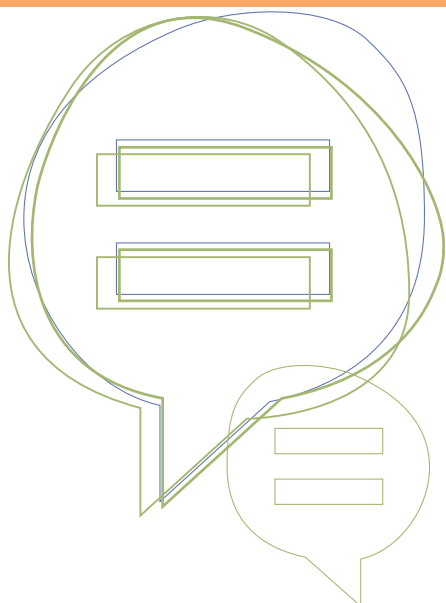


The historical struggles waged against colonialism and apartheid injustices against the majority of the people of South Africa and the regime's acts of terror in communities and families awakened a deeper consciousness. The struggle became a daily way of life as lives were disrupted at night, in schools and within communities. I consciously joined the struggle after family members were injured and even lost their lives at the hands of the Police who took the role of being enemies of the people. My path to becoming an activist was thus carved at a very early age when joining politics was not fashionable but a means to fight back for the survival of not only my generation, but future generations after me.



Thembisile Nkadimeng

Mayor of Polokwane, President of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) and Co-President of UCLG



Women's leadership at the municipal level is often supported by a mutual recognition with their local communities, which is based on a deep understanding of the needs of the community. The municipal space thus has this powerful quality to foster substantive representation, insofar as it is closer to people's reality and needs. In this sense, the local level is the first school where women can consolidate their skills and capacities as leaders, and a powerful driving force for new political projections.



I was born as a refugee, but that doesn't mean I have to live my whole life as a refugee. I returned to my country, without my family's consent, when I was only 23 years old. I wanted to help the people of my country. My intention was to help my people so that no girl would go through the bitter experience of not having a home, suffering poverty or being a minority. It was necessary to take action to address the challenges, which was not easy. But I firmly believed that I could bring about change.

Khadija Zahra Ahmadi

Former Mayor of Nili

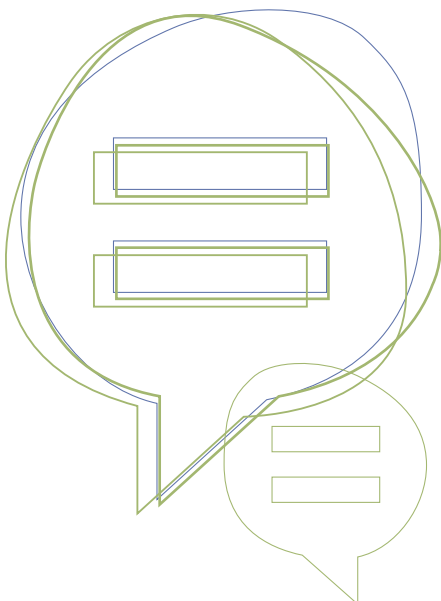
2.2. Dismantling stereotypes and overcoming barriers to advance rights

For these women leaders, decision-making spaces often become an obstacle course: gender discrimination and bias, the object of suspicion and devaluation. It's not so easy for women to be part of a predominantly androcentric system.

Women in politics face constant double-standard criticism that seeks to degrade them from their positions of power and attempt to bring them down.

One obstacle that women must face in the domain of political power is what has become known as the "glass ceiling": a set of invisible barriers that prevent women from rising to decision-making positions. Alongside these "glass ceilings", feminist literature has recognized other barriers to women's leadership. On the one hand, there is the so-called "sticky floor", which refers to the process by which women tend to become "stuck" without opportunities for political ascension.

Another phenomenon, known as the "glass labyrinth", accounts for the myriad of obstacles that women have to overcome in order to reach a hierarchical position, which prove to be more difficult to overcome than for men. Thus, it generally takes longer for women to gain access to leadership positions.

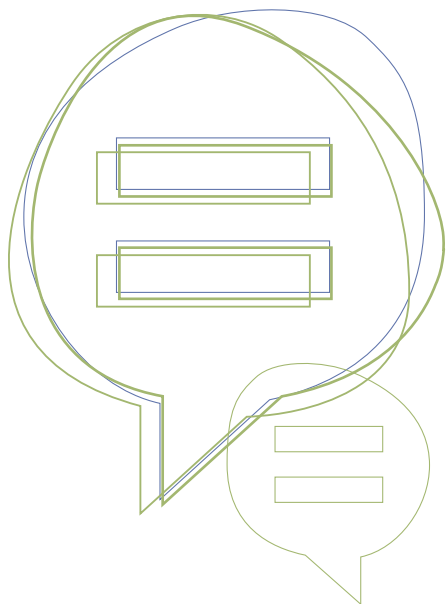




Being mayor is definitely a great challenge. It is difficult for women like me to break into a realm dominated by men. Women leaders often need to demonstrate their worth slightly more than their male counterparts, and work harder to earn the respect of their peers. Right now, women politicians need strength, perseverance, flexibility and tenacity. The strength to take risks, learn from mistakes, cope with insults, and the courage to fight for what they believe in and never give up.

Madelaine Y. Alfelor-Gazman

Mayor of Iriga, Treasurer of UCLG



Another of these barriers is the so-called “glass wall”, which alludes to the horizontal segregation that prevents or relegates women to certain areas, usually associated with gender stereotypes. Nevertheless, it is not only a “glass ceiling” that women face: there is also the “concrete ceiling” that self-limits women’s leadership and is related to the double or triple work days that women experience. Those that generate guilt and are the biggest obstacle to women’s participation in politics, as a consequence of the overburdening of care responsibilities and the constant questioning from society for “abandoning” or “neglecting” their domestic and care responsibilities, or putting them in second place.

Carolina Cosse, Mayor of Montevideo, tells us that she had her children at a very young age “with my children, we were growing up together.” In this context, she mentions how the support of other women enabled her to advance in her studies and her activism:

In many cases, the cost-benefit analysis is crucial in many women’s decisions not to work in politics, as it acquires gender connotations derived from the sexual division of labour and the expected role of



I couldn't have done anything without the help of my grandmother and my mother. This is interesting not only for my personal life, but also for the lives of others. It's good to say 'you can do it', but it's not good if what we are conveying is that they can do it on their own. We cannot get there on our own. If I was able to do so, it's because others supported me, and if I am now Mayor, it's because many others fought before me, before my grandmother, for many causes. This should help us to understand that we need others and that we must support others. I believe that feminism is inherent to a great message of hope for the world. [...] All of which needs to be translated into the formulation and implementation of public policies.

Carolina Cosse

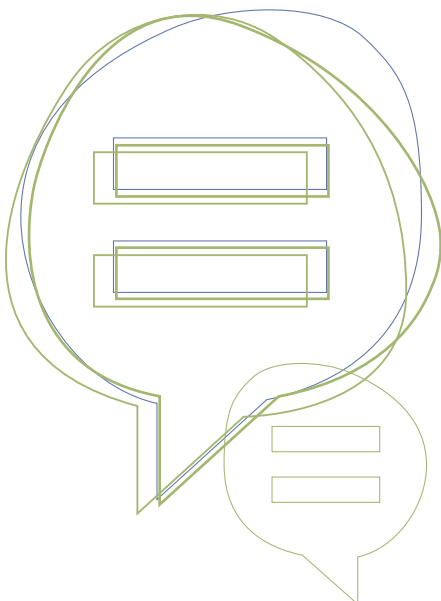
Mayor of Montevideo, UCLG
Vice-President for Latin America

females as responsible for the social reproduction of life and care. Added to this is also the suspicion of how they arrived there, and the permanent questioning of their capabilities. How much of this has hindered any man's political career?

"The objectification of women in politics means that more than once, our ideas and our projects are not talked about. It's frustrating how it boils down to appearance, to figure, and this means we have to double and even triple our effort at times. There is a big magnifying glass focusing on our capabilities, which is very different to the case of men. Finally, I have the feeling that competent women with a certain position in politics are seen as a risk; we are difficult to control and that's dangerous for the establishment."

- Paola Pabón, Prefect of Pichincha.

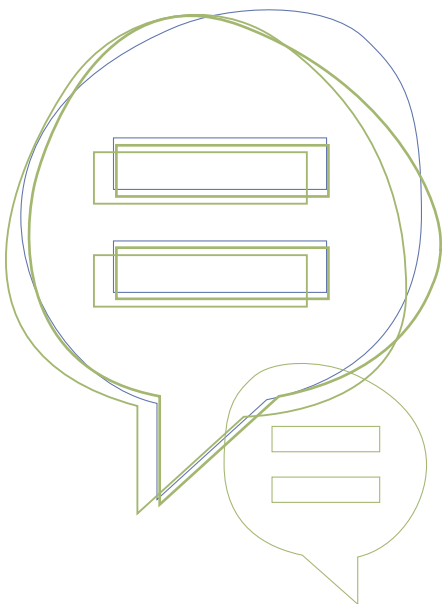
On the other hand, resistance to women's advancement and leadership has given rise to a scourge that not only undermines women's political rights, but also democracy itself: gender-based political violence.





Paola Pabón, Prefect of Pichincha

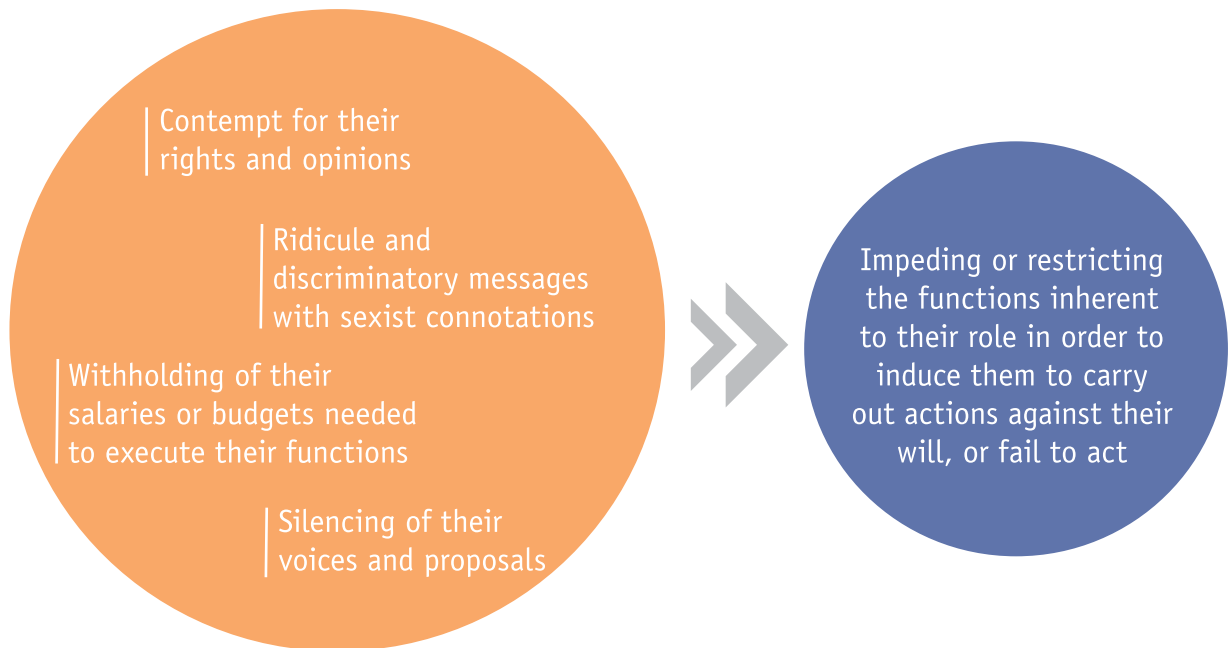
Women in politics are constant targets of insults, smears, harassment and various manifestations of violence. The category of gender-based political violence is violence suffered by women because of the mere fact that they are women. Restrictions, exclusion, pressure, blackmail, rejection, sexist acts and ultimately gender-based criminal acts, are part of the broad spectrum of manifestations of violence that women may experience throughout their political careers. The contempt for their rights or opinions, the boycott and silencing of their voices and proposals, the withholding of their salaries or budgets needed to execute their functions, ridicule and discriminatory messages with sexist connotations, are daily and normalized examples of political violence. Behind this violence is the purpose of reducing, suspending, impeding or restricting the functions inherent to the position held by a woman in politics, in order to induce or oblige her to carry out actions against her will, or fail to act, in the fulfilment of her functions or in the exercise of her rights.





Graphic 3: Structure of political violence against women

Political violence against women



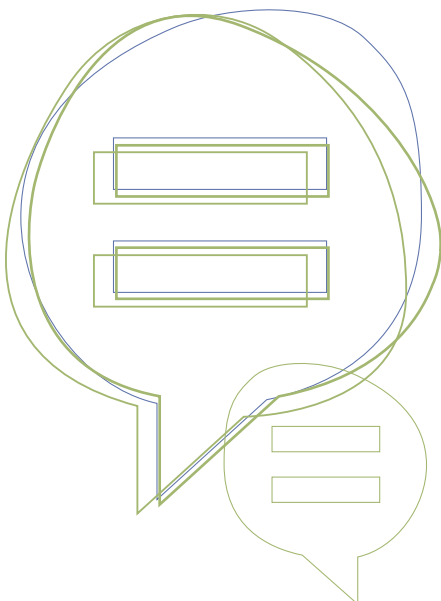
Source: Developed by the author

Here, it is important to highlight the impact of the relationship between corruption and gender, although from a non-essentialist perspective: elected women who refuse to become accomplices in practices of corruption, embezzlement, influence peddling, clientelism and partisan favouritism are often targets of gender-based political violence, becoming victims of threats, extortion, physical and sexual violence, kidnapping and even political femicide.

“In the summer of 2018, a report showed that the more women there are in local and national politics, the less corruption there is. [...] women set different political priorities than men. Their concern is to support the individual. Schools, healthcare, the fight against poverty. The more women there are in politics, the more attention there will be for these issues [...] For us, governing means acting and interacting on the basis of reality.”

- Souad Ben Abderrahim, Mayor of Tunis

Although this is replicated at all levels, it is at the local level where it is most prevalent and normalized, and where the forms in which it is exercised are most brutal. In a 2013 survey of 235 women



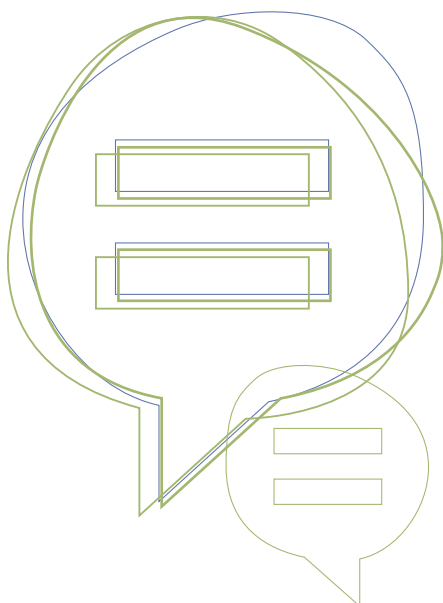


Souad Ben Abderrahim, Mayor of Tunis (middle) during the UCLG World Congress in Durban, South Africa

mayors and councillors in Latin America, 46.9% of respondents reported having been victims of political violence (Tello, 2013). In Mexico, during the 2018 elections, 106 women candidates were assaulted and 16 were murdered. Among them, 80 held the post of mayor or city manager⁹. In 2019, there were 79 death threats against Mexican women politicians; a 276% increase over the previous year¹⁰. The most important electoral process in the country's history, which took place in June 2021, claimed the lives of more than 80 candidates. Further, a case that shook the entire Latin American region, but especially municipalism and feminism, was the political femicide of Marielle Franco, a Councillor from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

9 Etellekt Consultores, 2018. Primer Informe de Violencia Política contra Mujeres en México 2018. [First Report on Political Violence against Women in Mexico 2018].

10 See: <https://vocesfeministas.mx/7108-2/>





VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN POLITICS

In Bolivia, a country that has been a pioneer in making this scourge visible and advancing in the enactment of a law on harassment and political violence against women, cases have been reported of women mayors and councillors who have been victims of physical aggression, abduction and rape, often perpetrated by colleagues from their own party who, through these acts, sought the resignation of their incumbent colleagues in order to pave the way for their male substitutes. One of the most emblematic cases was that of Juana Quispe Apaza, who became the first woman councillor of the Municipality of Ancoraimes. Following various forms of harassment and violence aimed at preventing her from holding the office to which she was elected, in the end she was murdered in 2012. An event that spearheaded the approval of Law 243 against Harassment and Political Violence against Women, enacted on 28 May 2012.

In this way, overwhelming support was shown towards women who burst onto a stage that historically “does not belong to them”. Political violence reveals that the political realm is a complex and hostile arena for women, especially for those women who are intersected by race, ethnicity, social class or sexual orientation. It is about driving actions that dismantle these practices, which are normalized, widespread, invisible, and, in most cases, go unpunished; and which threaten not only women’s political rights, but also democracy. On 14 March 2018, Marielle Franco, an activist for the rights of women and LGBT community, died as a result of political femicide. Marielle was an activist for the rights of women and dissidents. She had a particular way of exercising her leadership, and all her bills were collectively defined, drawing on daily life, the life experiences of the poorest women, those oppressed by the patriarchy.¹¹

“I resolve to act collectively to guarantee rights in such a sexist space as the State.”

- Marielle Franco

¹¹ [Marielle Franco: el nacimiento de un mito | Se cumplen dos años del asesinato de la activista brasileña](#) [Marielle Franco: the birth of a myth | Two years after the murder of the Brazilian activist] Consulted 5/6/2021

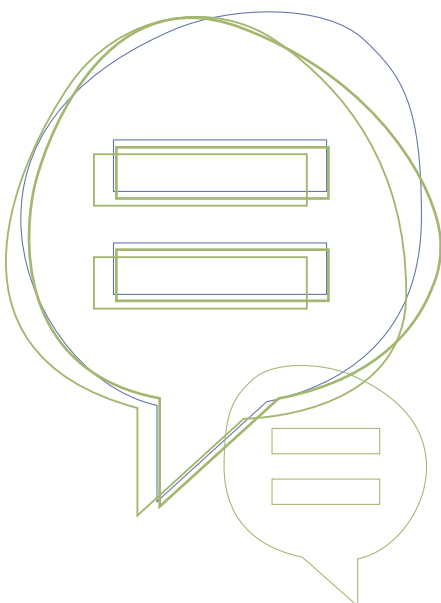




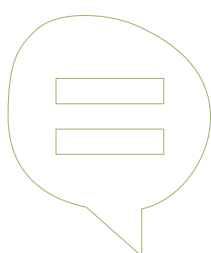
Photo: Publication Marielle Franco



Being in the public eye inevitably brings its share of obstacles and criticism. But there is one thing in particular: women still experience a disproportionate level of violent and sexually-oriented hate messages online. These behaviours create mental and emotional stress and consume a lot of energy. Such obstacles are inevitable; but they should never deter us from working to create a more inclusive and sustainable city.

Valérie Plante

Mayor of Montreal



The digital era has also brought with it new forms of violence against women with a high public profile, who live with insults, threats or humiliations of a sexist nature every day, whether direct or anonymous, transmitted via social networks. For many women leaders, this phenomenon signifies the definitive exhaustion of their political vocation. Numerous women have abandoned their political careers in the face of the magnitude of cyber-bullying they receive, even at times spreading to their families.



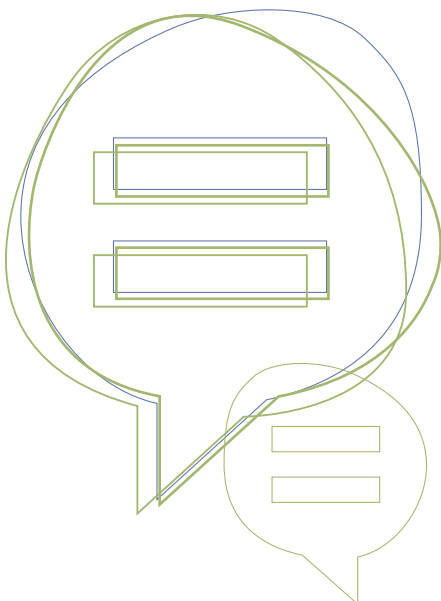
The political arena in Gambia is really difficult for a woman. The belief is that women belong in the home; so we automatically have a barrier against us. For me it was very difficult, because nobody wants to see themselves and their families subject to slander and insults on social media. It got to the point where my mother became ill and fell into a coma because it was too much for her, and later she tried to persuade me to leave politics, because it is a male-dominated arena. But I told her I would not give up: let them say whatever they want. So, stubbornness, faith in change, are what pushed me forward.

Rohey Malick Lowe

Mayor of Banjul

Likewise, when women in politics are sought after by the media or are the subject of news coverage, they are exposed to gender stereotypes, sexist communication and gender microaggressions. Their capabilities to lead and govern are often consistently discredited by a sexist double standard.

In debates or interviews, many women politicians have had to face questions or controversy linked to their maternity, “whether they will be able” to find a balance between governing and family, whether they put on or lose weight, whether they dress well or poorly, or even whether they spend more money on clothes or wear make-up. Personal aspects about which men are never questioned. Yet, at the same time, women have more support because society sees them as more honest, more committed, more capable of working. Qualities that are not necessarily expressed in all women, or absent in men, but which are part of the politico-cultural collective imagination. Thus, despite the obstacles, women are progressively gaining acceptance and occupying positions at the highest levels of decision-making. It is interesting to underline here how many of these changes contribute to the symbolism in the empowerment and cultural construction of girls today.

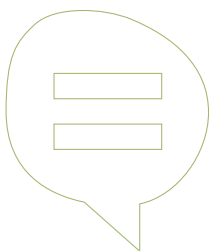




Walking the path as mayor was not easy. I had to make many sacrifices; from rejection to the loss of family and relatives. My father was the first person to whom I had to prove that I was an independent girl who does not harm the dignity of the family with her work, which is very important in Afghan society, which is conservative and traditional. Secondly, it was very difficult for my husband to accept my work as a political leader. In the end, I had to choose to be alone on this journey in a male-dominant government system where a lack of confidence in women's abilities persists in the traditional and conservative Afghan society. Coupled with that, the absence of women in the top political positions in the past and in technical leadership positions, along with the perception that women play a purely symbolic role, has made it much more difficult for younger people like me. But the country's need at the policy and decision-making levels, as well as the lack of presence of women, persuaded me to participate in this competition despite the endless instability and insecurity in Afghanistan. And I have managed to be recognized as one of the most prominent mayors with both technical and political capabilities.

Khadija Zahra Ahmadi

Former Mayor of Nili





Innovative, pioneering, women mayors like Thembisile Nkadimeng, Mayor of Polokwane, President of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), Co-President of UCLG proudly tell their stories.

“I’m the first woman mayor of the city, and this means a lot to me, but also to all women in the province. Breaking down the barriers of patriarchy has been difficult; the responsibility in itself has been overwhelming and challenging most of the time. Its daily significance for me is to remember that I am carrying the torch for all the women who will come after me. It means I have to work even harder to maintain and make our presence felt as women.”

II Forum of Local and Regional Governments, September 24, 2019 SDG Summit. Thembisile Nkadimeng, Mayor of Polokwane, President of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), Co-President of UCLG Credits @UCLG-UCLG/Ege Okal for Joel

- Thembisile Nkadimeng, Mayor of Polokwane, President of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), Co-President of UCLG.





Despite all these barriers, an extraordinary strength and courage embodies the political vocation of women who decide to lead the change that their own life experiences call for. This is the case of Mayra Mendoza, Mayor of Quilmes:

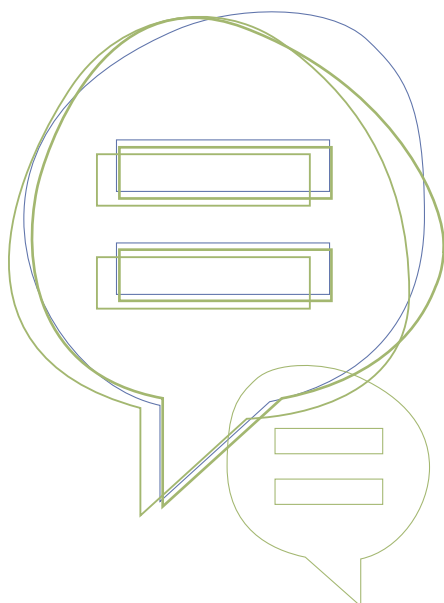


Women in the neighbourhoods are the ones who face the greatest needs for basic infrastructure, because we are the women who live and inhabit these neighbourhoods. So, we are the ones that know what is needed for our children to thrive. All the adversity that I have encountered throughout my activism has been converted into strength, has been converted into a call for organization.

Mayra Mendoza

Mayor of Quilmes

Others see their management as clear opportunities to generate examples for the future, as in the case of the Mayor of Barcelona, Ada Colau:



“I didn’t realize how important it was to be the first woman mayor. But, I meet a lot of girls in the street who tell me ‘I will be mayor’. They assert it; they don’t say ‘I want to be mayor’. They say: ‘I will be mayor’. So, role models really matter, because that’s what makes many girls believe it is absolutely natural and logical to be able to be mayors, presidents or whatever else they want to be.”

- Ada Colau, Mayor of Barcelona, UCLG Special Envoy to the United Nations.



Some critical issues, developed by UCLG Ubuntu Gender Advisor:

- The difficulty for women, particularly the poorest women, to enter into politics.
- The masculinization of public and political life, which is constantly renewed, and with increasing resistance towards the advancement of women.
- The absence or insufficiency of effective commitments by political parties to encourage, support and increase women's leadership in internal power structures and as electoral candidates.
- The multiple meanings of participation assigned to women, the risks of certain forms of participation. Be attentive to discourses in which women's "virtues" are enumerated, identified as:
 - Agents of change;
 - Facilitators of community action;
 - Mediators of family needs.



Barcelona. 2019. Meeting of the UCLG Presidency at the World Secretariat

SECTION 3.

What agendas are women in local power driving? A strategic look towards the future

The leadership of women in decision-making positions are telling indicators of the progress of democracies across the world. It is these leaderships that are being built on the basis of a radical critique of the construction of power, as well as the traditional, top-down governance in the exercise of power. It is these leaderships that have been establishing substantive, strategic and practical issues linked to women's needs. These new leaderships headed by women also imply a revision of the patriarchal structures and androcentric policies since, despite the progress and ground won, there is a renewed masculinization in leadership roles and within political parties.

In this context, the Global Feminist Municipal Movement places the reproduction, sustainability and care for the fabric of life at the heart of the public agenda, and of the agenda of local governments, as the central axis of public policy as a whole. Framed within a series of international human rights instruments, declarations, charters and agreements, this political agenda established by the Feminist Municipal Movement constitutes a strategic perspective towards achieving the cities and territories in which we want to live in the future, that care for their citizens and prioritize the maintenance of life's reproductive fabric under a holistic perspective.

Vice-Mayor of Tours, Elise Pereira-Nunes recounts:



I have worked as a volunteer for the rights of women and other minorities, and now in local politics, I have the challenge to ensure a safe city for all, to raise awareness among the police and to make the city accessible for all kinds of people; women, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and the LGBTI community.

Elise Pereira-Nunes

Vice-Mayor of Tours



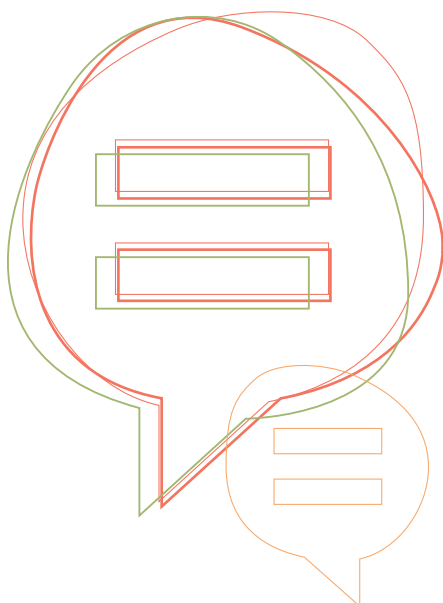
From this strategic perspective, it is possible to distinguish two main constitutive dimensions that imply a radical reconfiguration of the traditional divisions of local government policies and public administrations. The first alludes to a set of questions, key orientative points, when it comes to establishing and promoting more democratic and inclusive morphologies in local territories. The second dimension refers to the main public problems that must be urgently addressed, central to this agenda, such as care as a right, violence against women and girls in public and private spaces, the reconstruction of the social fabric and solidarity in neighbourhoods, and the achievement of women's economic autonomy.

3.1. Constructing democratic and inclusive morphologies in local territories: The key points guiding the political agenda of the Feminist Municipal Movement.

- **Contribute to a high-intensity democratization that is cross-cutting in terms of feminist demands and women's participation in political decision-making spaces.** In this vein, encouraging what Boaventura de Sousa Santos¹² (2017) calls "demodiversity", i.e. the articulation of women's voices and demands in mechanisms of participatory democracy and representative democracy, with the addition of community democracy in some contexts (such as Africa, Latin America and Asia). Working actively in this way ensures a target to be reached and an alternative to authoritarian and fundamentalist movements that threaten progress in achieving equality.

Thus, thinking about a feminist political agenda for local governments is synonymous with broadening the participation of citizens in their territories.

"[...] I believe that citizen participation is something that cannot be left out of the governance of any of our feminist municipalities. Citizen participation also reduces the margin of error for those of us who govern. And we need to be truly committed to participation. It's difficult to sit at a roundtable and listen to what everyone has to say, and to have to explain

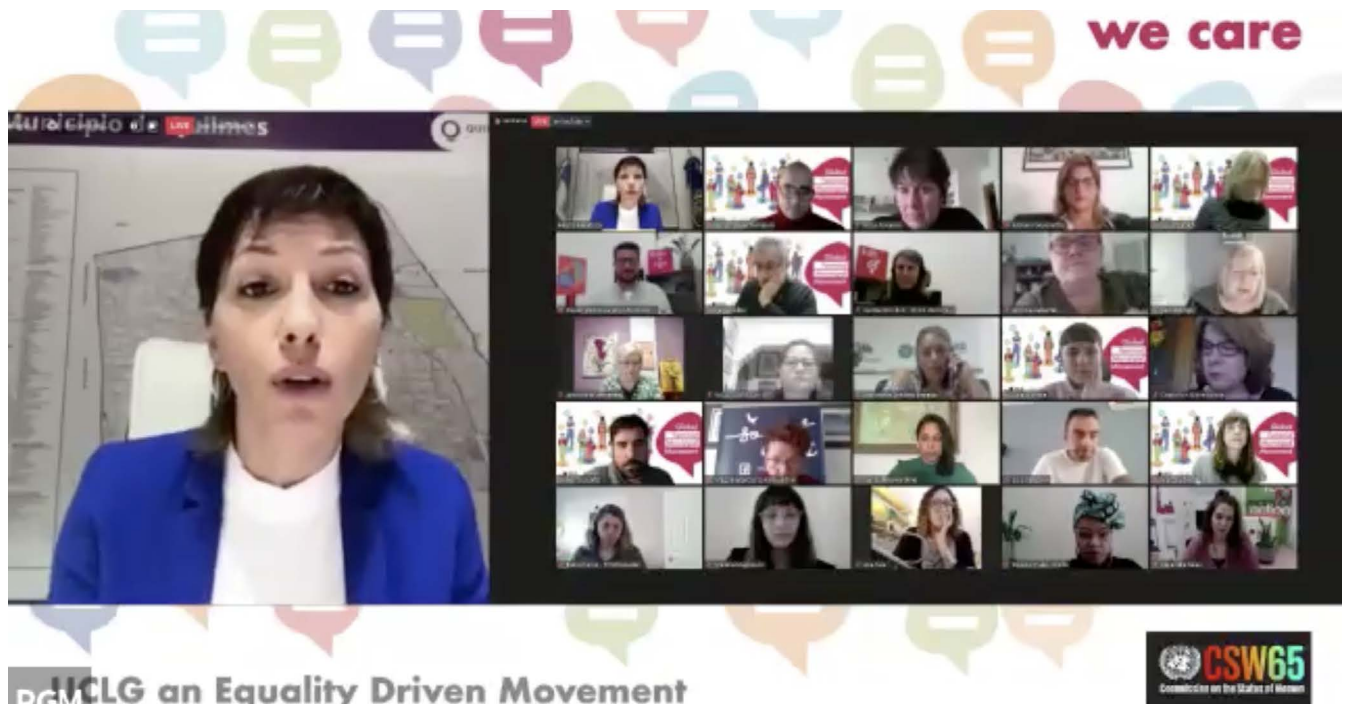


12 Demodiversidad. Imaginar nuevas posibilidades democráticas. [Demodiversity. Toward Post-Abyssal Democracies] by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (Author), José Manuel Mendes (Author), Cristina Piña Aldao (Translator), Álex Tarradellas (Translator). 2017 Collection. Epistemologías del Sur [Epistemologies of the South]



and make transparent what budget is available to do things. Therefore, I believe participation is key. It is local democracy that can take women and feminists forwards. And of course, in this logic of participation, to be able to actively listen in order to design public policies that are inclusive.”

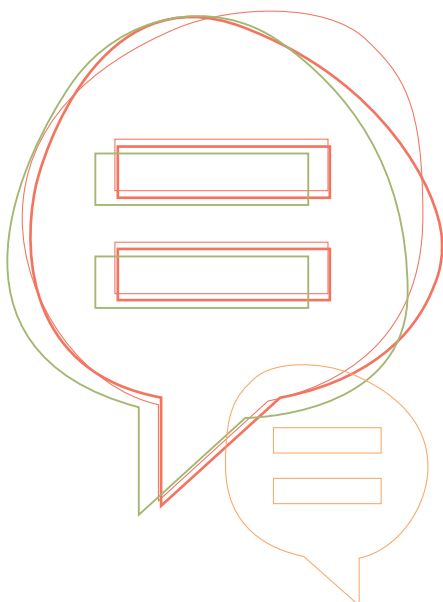
- Mayra Mendoza, Mayor of Quilmes.



UCLG-Women session during CSW65, March 19, 2021. Mayra Mendoza, Mayor of Quilmes

- **Consolidate processes aiming to de-patriarchalize politics and public policies**, placing the sustainability of life and care at the centre. It is here where the leadership of women politicians has been crucial. Advocating for gender equality and the rights of women and their diverse intersections, ethnicities, sexual identities, abilities, ages, countries of origin, religions, and so many others. As such, we recognize the multidimensionality and intertwined nature of the diverse systems of oppression.
- **Consider the practical needs of gender and the strategic interests (Molyneux, 1985; Moser, 2005; Young, 1997)¹³ of**

13 Molineux, Maxine (1985) Mobilization without emancipation? Women's interests, the State, and revolution in Nicaragua. *Revolution in Nicaragua. Feminist Studies*. P. 227. Moser, Caroline (1991) "La planificación de género en el Tercer Mundo: enfrentando las necesidades prácticas y estratégicas de género" ["Gender planning in the third world: Meeting practical and strategic gender needs"], *Una nueva lectura: género en el desarrollo [A new reading: gender in development]*, Lima, *Entre Mujeres [Among Women]*, pp. 55-124. Young, Kate. (1997) "El potencial transformador en las necesidades prácticas:

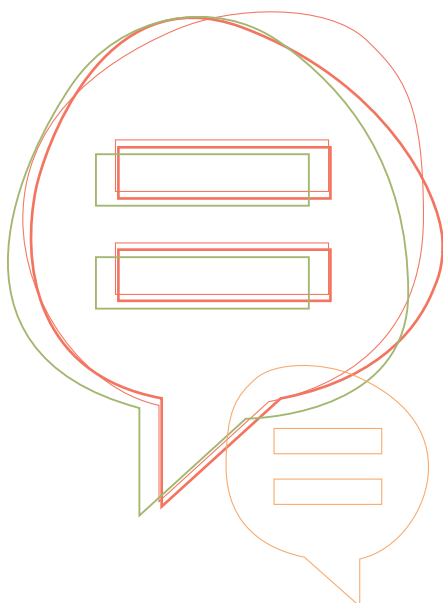




women in all their diversity at the centre of public policies and urban planning; in the way they live, move, use and enjoy the public goods of cities and territories. Therefore, in lies a **constitutive link between the political agenda set up by the Feminist Municipalist Movement and Women’s Right to the City**, the latter stemming from the observation that cities are not neutral spaces guaranteeing equal opportunities for women; this is related to the differentiated modalities of access to the conditions and qualities of public infrastructures and services, transport, safety and care, among others. The Right to the City thus envisages an accessible, safe, inclusive and friendly city for women and historically excluded groups, including migrant and displaced populations.

A Women’s Right to the City encompasses not only tangible rights, i.e. those of the materiality of the territory, or the set of civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights already claimed and demanded by women before the political and technical authorities, but also includes those intangible rights that shape its symbolic character, that appear with relation to cultural practices and traditions, that will also add to the persistence of subordinations and constructed stereotypes — perhaps the most difficult to transform. The rights to territory, to its materiality, housing, infrastructure, services, etc., are fundamental to redistribute quality of life — and not only that — also citizens’ rights, mentioned in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Goals, which seek to “leave no one behind” (Falú, 2018). Cities and metropolises should thus be conceived as common goods that support the reproductive networks that sustain life.

- **Strengthen the diversity of women’s voices in local territories.** When women are included in public policies, actions or programmes, we generally find them to be the “vulnerable sector”. It must be clarified that women are not vulnerable: they have demonstrated their strengths and abilities to transform and contribute to the collective and social spheres. Good examples of resolute collective actions carried out by women are the demonstrations and the international strike of 8-M, the Women’s Wall in India, and the African women’s networks denouncing the genital mutilation of millions of girls, to mention just a few. We must recognize that women have different backgrounds, experiences and demands, and it is essential that they actively participate, developing proposals, occupying decision-making roles in key leadership positions

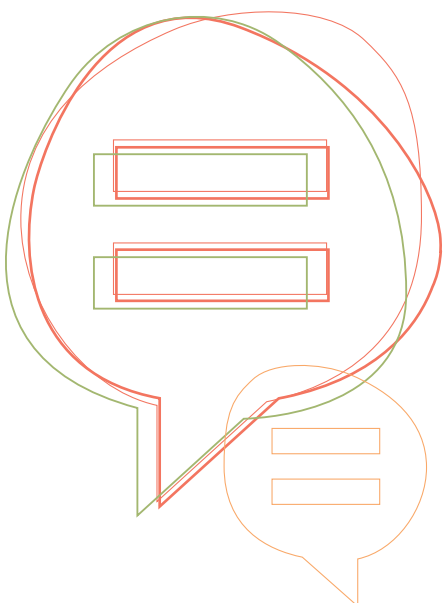


empoderamiento colectivo y el proceso de planificación” [“The transformative potential in practical needs: collective empowerment and the planning process”], Poder y Empoderamiento de las mujeres [Womens’ Power and Empowerment], Bogotá, Tercer Mundo [Third World], S.A.



— in short, executing Art. 7 of the CEDAW. It is necessary to activate methodologies and tools that promote the leading participation of women and recognize the diversity of citizens in public policy and local action (Mexico, UCLG, 2021). The aim here is to incorporate women's voices, polyphonic, all of them different, into the public policy cycle and into local decision-making processes.

- **Consolidate a movement that involves all.** The Feminist Municipal Movement not only refers to women, but to generating and consolidating contributions for a local society that requires urgent transformation to face these new contexts. Thus, contributing to imagining a municipalism with public interventions that aim to transform the stereotypes and traditions present in the local territories, with the inclusion of democratic men. Establishing bases for more participative local communities, based on collaboration and solidarity. In short, it is not about thinking about a city for women, but a city for coexistence that recognizes diversity and benefits the different social groups that constitute the population equally. From a gender perspective, we maintain that this path is fair and possible, provided, first of all, that contributions to the equality of opportunities for men and women recognize that each of them has different needs due to the social roles assigned to them.
- **Foster the necessary changes within the public administrations of local governments.** An issue to be reinforced relates to the construction of inclusive public administrations, with a gender perspective and a human rights approach. This implies profound transformations in organizational cultures anchored in principles such as participation, integrality, co-construction, inter-sectoriality and inter-sectionality. Crucially, it is therefore necessary to integrate not only the reflection on what is done, but also on how it is done, understanding the political component as inherent to the technical component. Other points to raise here are the means by which it is done; how resources and public budgets are planned, executed and collected; and the ability to define the positions and conditions of women within these bureaucratic bodies of local governments.
- **Encourage processes of development of opportunities for all in local urban territories,** exploring other possible plural economies, attentive to the preservation of the environment as the heritage of present and future life. This issue is crucial at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic is deepening the poverty gap, and the gender poverty gap in particular. In this way, people are placed at the centre of local governance.





- Drive and influence the objectives and themes of the political agenda and the public agenda of the Feminist Municipalist Movement within national, regional and global political agendas, with the conviction that it can act as a transformational tool, understanding the need for urgent transformations of the current institutions in order to navigate the complexity of the public problems of the 21st century. Thus, contributing to consolidating and giving a voice to networks, and facilitating social, territorial, regional and international cohesion.

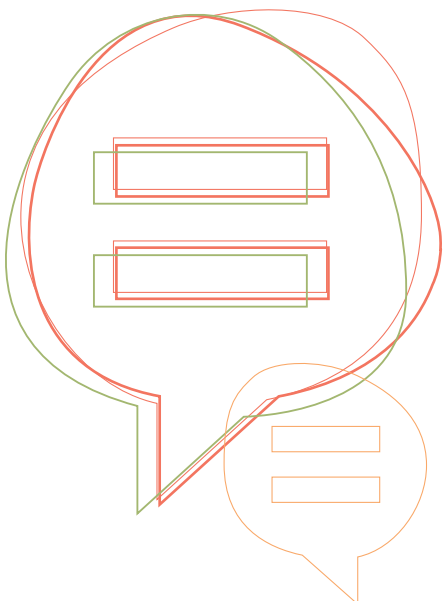


Fatimetou Abdel Malick, President of Nouakchott. 2nd Local and Regional Governments' Forum, 24 September 2019 SDG Summit. New York. @UCLG-CGLU/ Ege Okal for Joel Sheakoski Photography

“We have to exchange and help each other at the international level, to avoid going it alone. This is a lesson that Covid-19 has taught us. It is essential to advocate for better representation of women in decision-making to ensure their safety and meet their needs. We need an effective health system, and for that we need women’s participation.”

- Fatimetou Abdel Malick, President of Nouakchott.

We foresee and recognize the various challenges that these diverse issues raised pose when thinking about more inclusive, plural, democratic societies that leave no one behind. In this context, it is pertinent to highlight the fact that research supports the power of the political agendas promoted by the Feminist Municipalist Movement at the hands of women leaders.



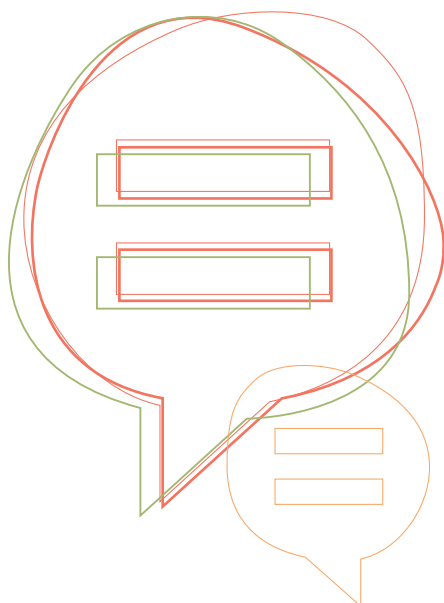


To mention just a few, studies in India demonstrate how women's access to spaces of political power lead to improvements, among others, in health, education and public infrastructure, and the provision of drinking water. Bhalotra, S. and Clots-Figueras (2014)¹⁴, draw from the premise that poor health costs fall disproportionately on women, and link women's political representation in state legislatures to the improved public provision of prenatal and child health services in the districts where they are elected. Data here concludes that women's political representation may be proving to be an effective tool to address health issues in developing countries, since a 10% increase in such representation results in a 2.1% reduction in neonatal mortality. Other publications (2007)¹⁵ refer to how villages headed by women Pradhan possess higher quality public goods, and children are better positioned in the dimensions of drinking water, immunization, and school attendance. In the same study, data shows that in one of India's poorest states, Rajasthan, villages governed by women leaders show better levels of vaccination among children as well as attendance at government day care centres.

“The common denominator among women politicians is the fact that they are highly committed to promoting national and local policies that address the socio-economic needs of their people. They have the ability to tolerate and respect diversity, leading to better conflict resolution, as well as the ability to develop and build strong local communities. And importantly, women politicians fight for positive developments in education, infrastructure and health standards at the local level, leaving no one behind.”

- Madelaine Y. Alfelcor-Gazman, Mayor of Iriga and Treasurer of UCLG

Finally, motivated and in many cases, supported by the feminist revolution of our times, the leadership of women politicians at the local level is characterized by new perspectives and voices that resonate among those who fight for social justice and egalitarian development. Groundbreaking narratives that challenge the status quo are part of the new discourses. More inclusive approaches are incorporated into their proposals. Humanist innovation is part of this feminist discourse that invites people to rethink cities and



¹⁴ Bhalotra, S. and Clots-Figueras, I. (2014). Health and the political agency of women. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 6(2), 164–97.

¹⁵ Beaman, L., Duflo, E., Pande, R., and Topalova, P. (2007). [Women politicians, gender bias, and policy-making in rural India](#). Working Paper, UNICEF. Consulted on: 23/05/2021



Madelaine Y. Alfelor-Gazman,
Mayor of Iriga and Treasurer of
UCLG at the UCLG World Congress
in Durban, South Africa 2019

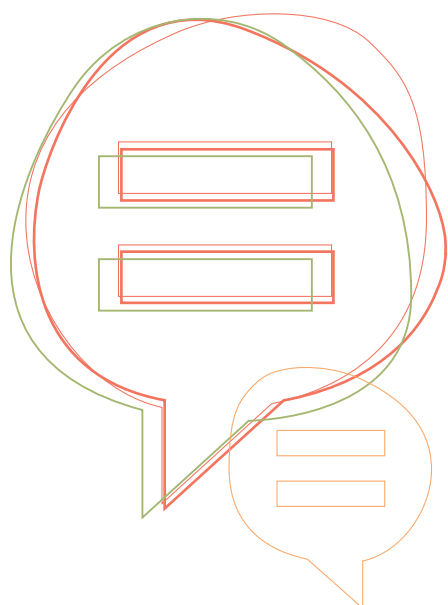
territories and their services. Women who do not identify with the hegemonic power, with distinct political proposals, that may even provoke radical transformations.

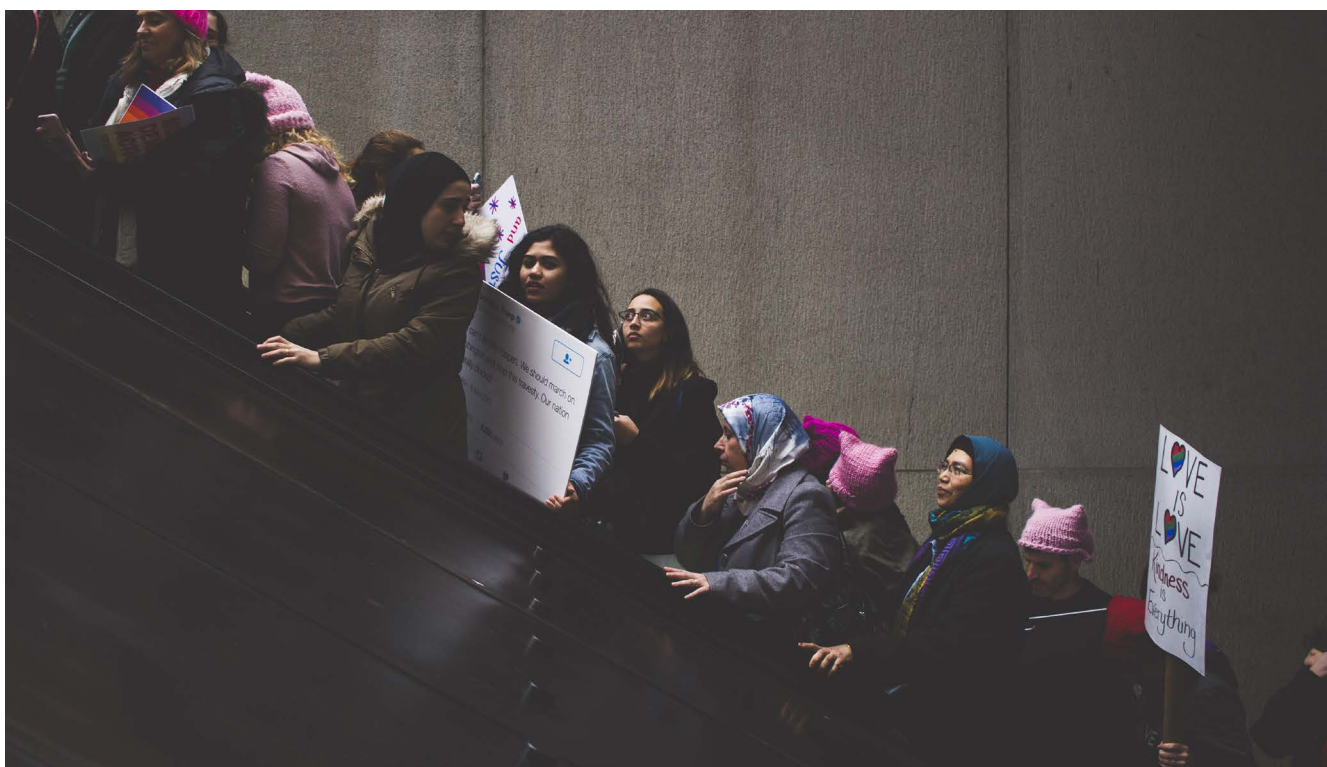
3.2. Cities and territories that care and sustain the fabric of life: The public issues at the heart of the political agenda.

The global contexts under which the leaderships of these women emerge and are exercised are extremely complex. On one hand, some women are in cities that are centres of economic, financial and cultural power, where diverse temporalities coexist in tension, intertwining pre-modern formats and a modernity resulting from the global society, within the framework of the communication revolution, technology, and the globalized market.

On the other hand, the current situation of the global pandemic has expanded and amplified pre-existing inequalities in local urban territories, and women are among the poorest and most affected. Approximately 90% of all reported cases of COVID-19 have occurred cities (UN, 2020),¹⁶ and we know that the diverse

¹⁶ UN (2020) Policy Brief: [COVID-19 in an Urban World](#) Consulted on: 5/6/2021



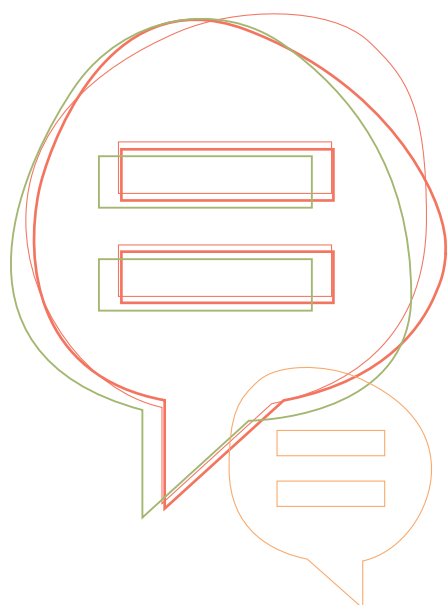


Washington D.C., United States - January 21, 2017 - Demonstrators hold signs at the Women's March on Washington Editorial Credit: Alejandro_Munoz / Shutterstock.com

impacts on women's subjectivities and corporealities according to their diverse intersections are directly related to the pre-existing conditions of the cities they inhabit, to planning, the accessibility of public services and infrastructure, and housing conditions.

Within this context, the construction of an owned and forceful political agenda by the group of actresses and actors that constitute this Feminist Municipal Movement requires joint processes devised from the collective sphere, nourished by leadership practices and policies, drawing on the lessons and learning experiences obtained. However, we can outline some of the dimensions that have already been agreed upon, some more dense than others, based on which it is necessary to progress. It is about the construction and consensus of a common agenda of critical points, beyond the different scopes that each of these points may have according to the specificities of the socio-historical, cultural, political and economic contexts of the local territories. Bearing in mind that the order expressed does not imply the prevalence of one over the other, rather they should be understood in terms of an integral vision.

The public problems contained in these political agendas promoted by women leaders across the world, despite differences in intensity and even management modalities, are central and urgent; public problems that primarily refer to care as a right, to violence against women and girls in public and private spaces; women's economic autonomy and the creation of ties of proximity and solidarity in neighbourhoods and nearby places.





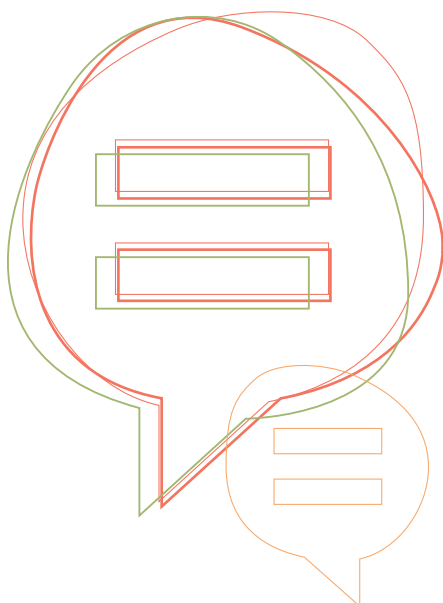
- **Care as a right.** Rooted in the sexual division of work, care as a right is a key issue that feminists have put at the centre of the political agenda, valuing women’s time – one of their scarcest assets – and their contributions in cities. The world’s women and girls spend 12,500 hours on care work, equivalent to US\$10.8 trillion annually¹⁷. It is necessary to reduce the impact of the sexual division of labour on women’s lives, as well as the consequences of the precariousness of their living conditions and the invisibilization of their daily and unpaid tasks to sustain life, carried out in the name of love.

Women use time and space in a way that is different than men. They are largely responsible for reproductive and care work, which is neither visible nor recognized in terms of monetary value, and therefore in its contribution to development. Surveys on time use in Latin America show that 77% of unpaid work is performed by women (CEPAL, 2019)¹⁸. Women are the caregivers of children, of adults, of the sick, of the disabled: the caregivers par excellence of humanity.

Not only that, but women also take care of the most arduous household chores: in Ethiopia, women are twice as likely to spend their time collecting water and firewood for their homes. In Tanzania, women spend up to five times the number of hours looking after the household as their male partners spend at home; and in Uganda, women spend 32 hours a week taking care of the household and doing domestic chores, compared to two hours a week for their male partners.

On the other hand, women have been – and continue to be – on the front lines of this pandemic: they make up the majority of staff in healthcare roles, in nursing homes for the elderly, in supermarkets, undertaking maintenance and service tasks in cities and neighbourhoods.

“The pandemic has impacted us in many ways. First of all, if we want to highlight services, we see that the pandemic has put them across the whole front line, and most of them are women: they are in the health services, they are also in the



17 OXFAM. 5 shocking facts about extreme global inequality and how to even it up. Consulted on: 4/6/2021 at: <https://www.oxfam.org/en/5-shocking-facts-about-extreme-global-inequality-and-how-even-it>

18 Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL) [Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC]. (2019) Panorama Social de América Latina 2018. [Social Panorama of Latin America 2018]. Consulted on: 5/6/2021 at: <https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/44395-panorama-social-america-latina-2018>

administrative services; but during this time they need to be available 24 hours a day, who is taking care of their families? So, this generates another need: society that takes care of society, especially if women are the breadwinners. They have to take care of two things: society and their families; but do we as a society think about taking care of them? They can't go home and touch their children straight away because they are in their full protective gear and they have to clean themselves of the viruses they may be bringing home. If mothers are on the front lines, does society take care of their families?"

- Noraini Roslan, Mayor of Subang Jaya.



“

It is essential to put people's lives (dignity, meeting basic needs) and the importance of care at the center. [...] Let us rebuild our communities with a feminine mentality. Let us promote other jobs for women. We must redistribute domestic and care tasks [...] and empower men so that they realize the importance of care.

Pilar Díaz Romero

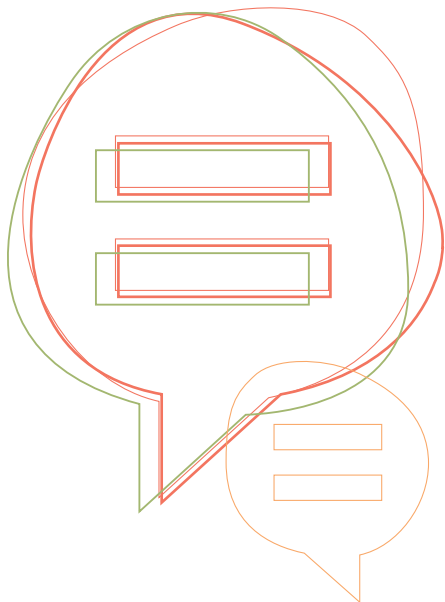
Mayor of Esplugues de Llobregat, deputy to the Presidency and delegate for International Affairs of the Barcelona Provincial Council



I'm talking to you from the 21st century, from Latin America, a region in which more than half of the economy is informal; in which there is no social security system developed by workers and employers and the State to guarantee pensions in old age, care in sickness. What is the social security system in Latin America, including in my city? The non-remunerated work of women. This is the social security system of informality. Creating a new social contract implies relieving women of this burden of unpaid care and institutionalizing it in the public and private sectors, so that women can then free up time to take care of ourselves, not necessarily others, to have educational opportunities that will allow us to enter the labour market, to gain economic autonomy, and thus to gain political autonomy and political representation. That is the essence of the new social contract that a region like Latin America needs.

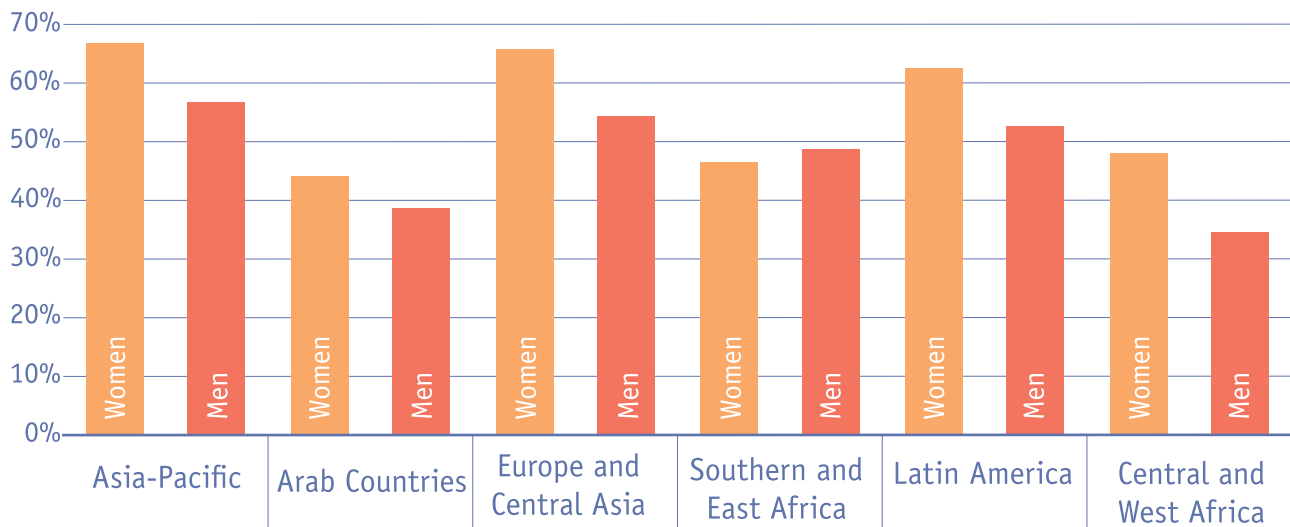
Claudia López

Mayor of Bogotá



"I'm overwhelmed", "I can't take it anymore", women say. The confinement and isolation measures have meant that they have had to assume the role of providing emotional support in the face of uncertainty; educational support for online learning; many of them working from home at the same time. In addition to this, they have been facilitators of collective social and community activities to mitigate the needs of their communities. A study of 38 countries carried out by UN Women concluded that the percentage of women that reported an increase in the time they dedicate to non-remunerated domestic work is greater than the proportion of men who declared the same. This happens despite the existing gaps in the use of time mentioned earlier. The following graph helps to better appreciate these results:

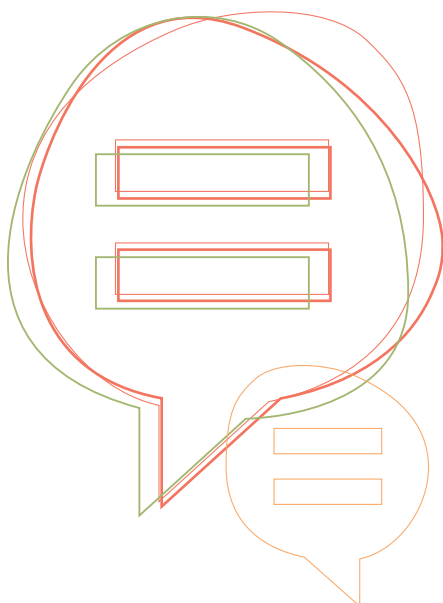
Graphic 4: Percentage of people reporting an increase in time dedicated to unpaid care work since COVID-19, by sex, according to region



Source: UN Women, 2020, *Whose time to care? Unpaid care and domestic work during COVID-19*.
Developed by the author

If prior to the crisis, the “crisis of care” had already been highlighted, during this pandemic the unsustainability of the current social organization of care has become more visible. Therefore, recognizing care, including co-responsibility, valuing domestic work, care as a right, as a social good, is a priority.

- **Violence in cities, both lived and perceived, continues to occupy a central place in the political agenda of the Feminist Municipal Movement.** UN Women figures show that 243 million women and girls (aged 15 to 49) suffered physical or sexual violence throughout the world in the year prior to the pandemic¹⁹. In the context of COVID-19, this body and feminist organizations have been warning about another pandemic that occurs in the shadows, exacerbated by the measures imposed to prevent the spread of the virus: violence against women. The confinement and the call to “stay at home” has forced women to live 24 hours a day with their aggressors, and there has been an increase in gender-based femicides as well as sexual violence against women and girls.



Yet it is not only the violence that occurs in the private sphere that matters, but also the violence that takes place on the streets, in squares, and within basic urban services, such as on public transport. In other words, the violence that occurs in the public sphere, as sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence are a daily problem faced by women and girls. Here, we need comprehensive planning that places women’s demands at the

¹⁹ Statement by Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women. (2020) [Violence against women: the shadow pandemic](#). Consulted on: 5/6/2021



centre: for example, that transportation be accessible and safe, not only considering and planning around tasks and times of care, but fundamentally around the violence that women suffer on a daily basis, the sexual harassment they experience on public transport, which conditions accessibility for the use and enjoyment of cities.

“The fight for the rights of girls and women, the eradication of the different forms of gender-based violence, as well as equality between men and women, are undoubtedly a priority issue, an urgent and legitimate demand to guarantee life in democracy.”

- Dr. Diana Alarcón González, General coordinator of advisors and international affairs of the Mexico City government.



Noraini Roslan, Mayor of Subang Jaya and Rohey Malick Lowe, Mayor of Banjul, The Gambia, WUF World Urban Forum, Abu Dhabi, 2020

- **Women’s economic autonomy as a priority matter.** In accordance with the annual Women in Work Index by PwC²⁰, which measures female economic empowerment in 33 countries belonging to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the progress of women in the workplace could return to 2017 levels by the end of 2021 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In Europe, for example, it is estimated that between March 2020 and February 2021, the number of

²⁰ COVID-19 is reversing the important gains made over the last decade for women in the workforce according to the [PwC Index Women in Work](#). Consulted on: 5/6/2021



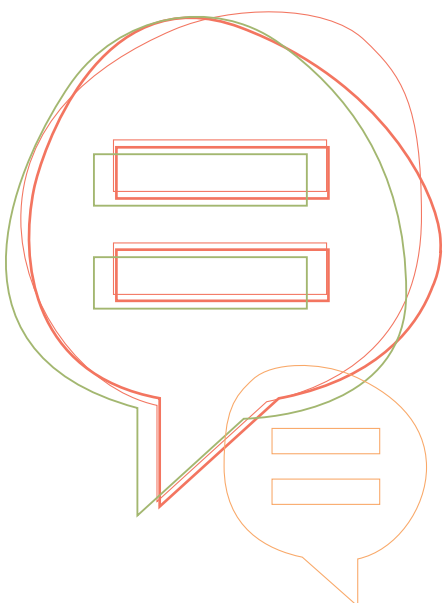
unemployed people increased by approximately 2.4 million, of which 1.3 million were women. In proportional terms, unemployment among women increased by 20.4%, while unemployment among men increased by 16.3%. Impoverished by economic systems that drive them out, their scarcest asset is time. Many women have been forced to leave the labour market themselves or have stopped seeking employment in order to support caregiving almost exclusively during the pandemic.

“So, these are the things that the pandemic has taught us. It made us think about food security, something that before we took for granted. At the beginning of the pandemic, food couldn’t arrive quickly enough due to the mobility restriction orders; before this, we thought about urban agriculture as a hobby, as something we have to do for show, but when crisis comes, when the food can’t come, then we understand that local resources, local creativity, local food shops, supply chains, burning fossil fuels, imported food, become very, very important. So, that’s why a policy designed to encourage urban agriculture, encourage the local economy and empower local communities becomes very important.”

- Noraini Roslan, Mayor of Subang Jaya.

- **It is necessary to strengthen local processes in the territories that lead to innovative actions based on relationships of proximity, neighbourhood links, solidarity and the community**, that are expressed for example, in allotments, libraries, small businesses in the neighbourhood, care. Other possible forms of work, linked to the “crisis of care”, became visible in this pandemic, which highlighted the unsustainability of the current social organization of care.

This critical issue is linked to at least two questions — on the one hand, the location of the place where one resides, and on the other, the proximity of services, of urban infrastructures — in order to be able to reflect on the economic autonomy of women and the social recognition of care. In this sense, it is in the distribution of services and “common” urban goods in unequal territories that city management committed to equality and development can be verified.





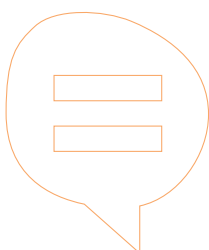
This set of key public problems that make up the political agenda of the Feminist Municipal Movement makes it possible to establish a set of priority lines of work, many of which are being carried out by the women mayors leading this movement. Among others, they are:

BEAWAR, INDIA - APRIL 10, 2019: Jaipur MP and Princess Diya Kumari interacts with women during a visit to Beawar, Rajasthan, India. Editorial credit: Sumit Saraswat / Shutterstock.com

- Thinking about social and urban policy in terms of care, urban services of proximity (Jane Jacobs, 1961)²¹. Defining care as a social and collective issue that cannot be relegated to the individual role of one person or household proposes a transformation in the policy approach, subverting categories in urban planning.



- Thinking in terms of gender and diversity is thinking collectively; about the safety of all, safe streets, squares and transport, about prioritizing public space over privatized space. Location is central to the quality of life, the proximity of schools, health centres, child care centres, care for older people, since they are generally cared for and visited by women. Walking distances to facilitate reproductive and care tasks and to be able to take care of themselves and produce and contribute to development.
- Understanding socio-demographic transformations, which refer to the type of households, number of dependents, according

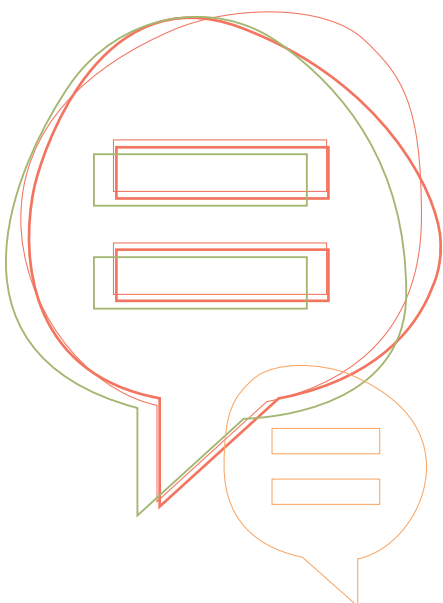


²¹ Jacobs, Jane (2011) [Muerte y Vida en las grandes ciudades](#) [The Death and Life of Great American Cities]. Consulted on: 5/6/2021



to the income scale in each territorial situation or where the population lives, together with indexes of overcrowding, income, services, etc. Women are not all the same; they are traversed by diverse differences: economic, social, ethnic, racial, sexual, age, territorial circumstances, the places where they live, income conditions, and others. Yet, all have an equal need and demand for public and community care. Carrying out a mapping exercise of women in territories should be a priority. Identifying the diversity of women and their specific problems and needs in order to offer inclusive and coherent responses to address the realities of each group, each neighbourhood and each social class. In particular within the context of the current pandemic, which has impacted people very differently, local responses and public policies cannot be neutral.

- Promoting campaigns for the prevention of gender-based violence and offering effective protection resources to victims. Zero tolerance with relation to the aggressions against women that we have become used to, such as street harassment and gender stereotypes within local public administrations.
- Opening up spaces to enable the consultation and participation of women. If local space has one advantage, it is that it makes social participation more feasible. It is a highly valuable opportunity to bring different views and voices to the construction of public policies, and women cannot be absent. Women make up more than half of the population, therefore their interests and contributions need to be part of the decision-making process. Even more so in the context of this profound crisis. We will not recover from this crisis without women.
- Economic recovery is, together with overcoming the health emergency, the greatest challenge at present. But in order for us to aspire to local economic development, it is key to create jobs for women and young people. In this sense, municipal governments have a great opportunity to bring the business sector to the table and determine permits, tenders and tax incentives, creating sources of employment and quotas that ensure women are hired. Training and financing opportunities to support women's entrepreneurship could also be provided. In terms of economic recovery with a gender-responsive approach, UNDP, jointly with UCLG and UNCDF have launched a guide with tools and recommendations for assessing and reversing the impacts of the pandemic on women at the local level²².

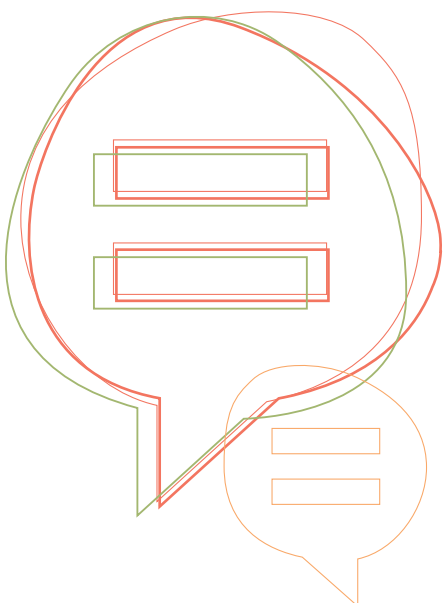


²² 2021, UNDP; UCLG, UNCDF: [COVID-19 Gender-Responsive Local Economic Recovery Handbook](#) | [United Nations Development Programme](#)



- The return to a “new normality” must be an opportunity to rebuild more liveable and human cities where territorial planning and public services facilitate the spatio-temporal organization of work and the domestic and social life of individuals and families. Public transportation, lighting, public safety, green and recreational spaces, and services of proximity, among others, are essential to the quality of access to and the enjoyment of the Right to the City, as well as key themes such as the Feminist Municipal Movement.
- One lesson learnt from this pandemic is the value of care. But, we cannot place this responsibility on the shoulders of women alone -- it must be a shared co-responsibility. And this goes beyond domestic pacts. Co-responsibility in care must be a social pact, a pact in which all stakeholders take responsibility. Local governments, within their competencies, are challenged to create cities that care. And they can do so through the expansion and extension of services such as childcare facilities, nursing homes, programmes for dependent persons. Also by caring for those who care; creating employment programmes for the care of dependent persons, offering relief to support rest and leisure time for those who care, promoting campaigns for co-responsibility in the home.
- It is important to recognize the leadership of local governments in driving forward gender equality which, in the context of recovery from this crisis, can play a decisive role for a “new normality” in which women are invited to the decision-making table on an equal footing, recognizing their diversity and intersectionality, so that their specific needs and interests as women can finally be included in local agendas and public policies.

Local governments are responsible for managing the complex cities of the urban millennium. And it is essential that they orient their actions towards planning the city from a gender approach; which in no way means to think and build cities for women, but for the whole of society in its diversity and complexity, through the inclusion of all people of different genders that inhabit it, with equal rights. This would transform cities into territories of opportunities for the whole of society. A shared city (María Ángeles Durán, 2008) with gender equality therefore responds effectively to the needs of both women and men. It is these differences that must be reflected in the democratic agenda of local governments, the democratic agenda of UCLG.

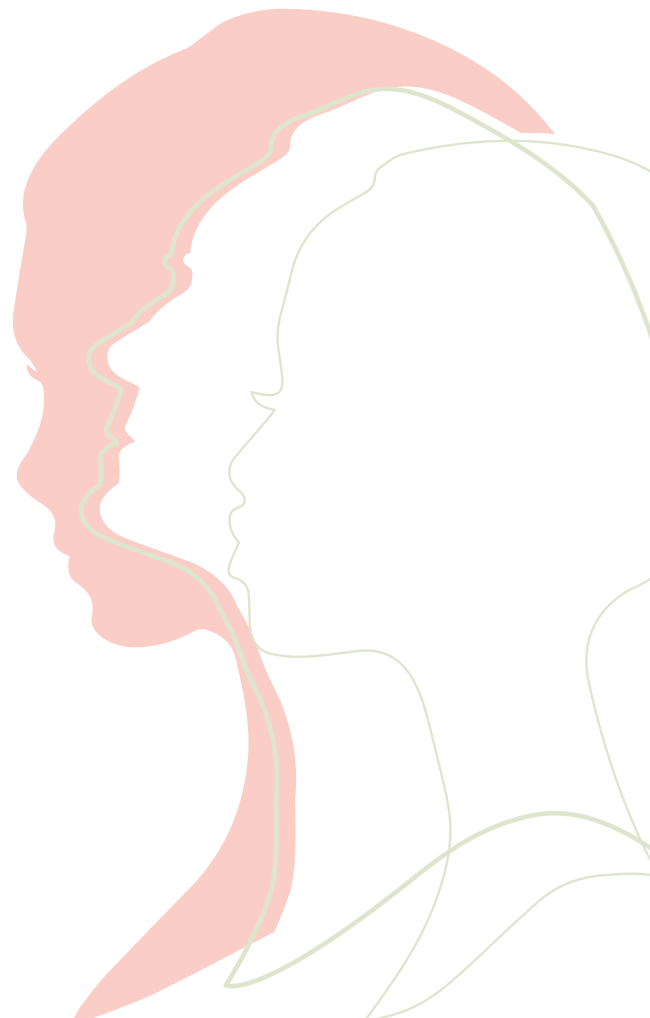
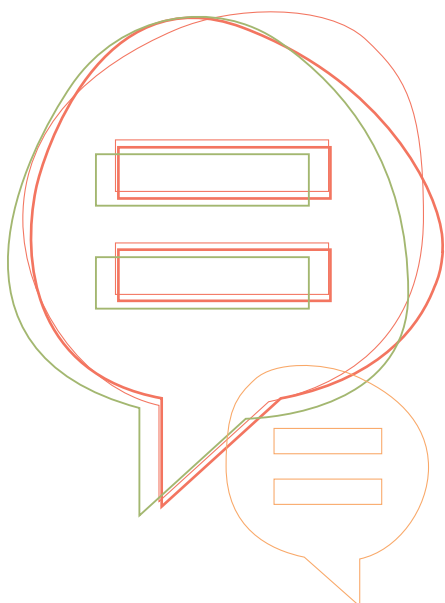




We need to think about cities:

- That are safe for women;
- With urban mobility with a gender focus;
- With urban services and facilities that respond to the daily lives of women, as in the case of care;
- That encourage economic autonomy for women;
- With policies and housing that follow a gender approach;
- That strengthen political participation and women's leadership;
- That socially integrate women, migrants and displaced peoples

Joining efforts to reverse the stereotypical conception of a city that seems to deepen inequalities, expressed in fragmented and increasingly violent territories. As Hannah Arendt expressed, the challenge is to build "the right to have rights". We have the instruments, the conceptual and methodological tools to do so, many of them developed by women's organizations and networks.



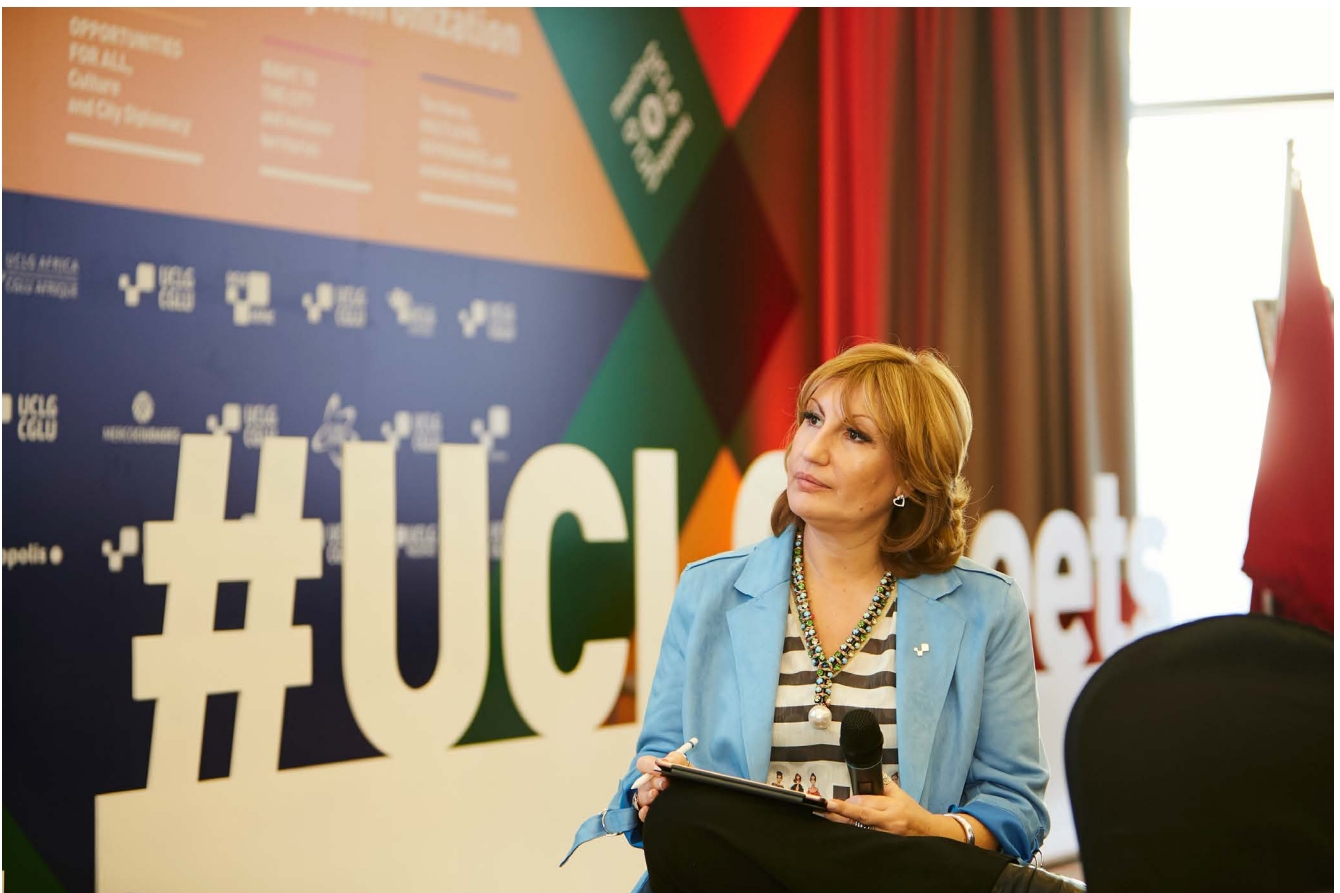
SECTION 4.

The advance of the Feminist Municipal Movement at the global scale: The table is set.

“Ensuring that global agendas are built on local priorities and that international action by local governments is understood as an indispensable role in achieving global solidarity and justice.”

- Emilia Saiz, Secretary General of UCLG.

It is within the framework of the construction of global justice that women have been working systematically on the task of dismantling the situations of subordination experienced, promoting agreements, consensus and sanctions that states, at different levels, have received. Many of these instruments of progress can be placed within the context of the 20th century – the so-called “century of rights” – which gave rise to significant advances in the recognition and expansion of rights for women.



Emilia Saiz Secretary General of UCLG, 2021, UCLG Retreat and Campus, Tangier, Morocco 2020

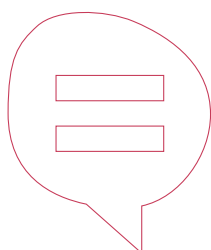


2013 PARIS LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENT GLOBAL AGENDA FOR EQUALITY OF WOMEN AND MEN IN LOCAL LIFE

The Global Feminist Municipal Movement draws from several years of advocacy and work by the constituency of local and regional governments regarding equality in cities and territories. It is fundamental to highlight how the spaces and relevance acquired by the constituency at the global level and in international agendas on gender equality derive from the historical movement to enhance local efforts and commitment to equality.

In 2013, during the Global Conference of Local Elected Women, the constituency adopted the [Paris Local and Regional Government Global Agenda for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life](#). This Agenda is inspired by the Worldwide Declaration on Women in Local Government adopted by the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) in 1998, which has set principles for the constituency's engagement and protection of women's rights.

2013. Paris. World Conference of Local Elected Women



The Paris Global Agenda aims to be a strategic tool to increase equality between women and men in all spheres of decision-making. Additionally, it emphasizes the persistent inequalities and violence against women and girls. Among others, the agenda called for strengthening public service provision, enhancing the



participation of women and girls, and to mainstreaming gender across urban and territorial policies, plans and budgets.

The document also stressed the importance of placing equality as a fundamental piece to achieve the global agendas at the local level. Therefore, it provided an important basis for the later campaign on #BeCounted, reclaiming additional recognition of women in local governments, as necessary for achieving SDG5 and the 2030 Agenda.

“We cannot exclude half of humanity from political decision-making. We know equality can bring added value to our policy development, and we are determined to bring about the change of mentality needed to achieve this.”

- Anne Hidalgo, Mayor of Paris and President of the UCLG Standing Committee of Gender Equality and Co-president of UCLG ²³

The Feminist Municipal Movement makes reference to new constructions around state power, its administrations and public



UCLG World Summit of Local and Regional Leaders, Bogota, October 2016

²³ See: https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/women_paris_2015-eng-web_0.pdf

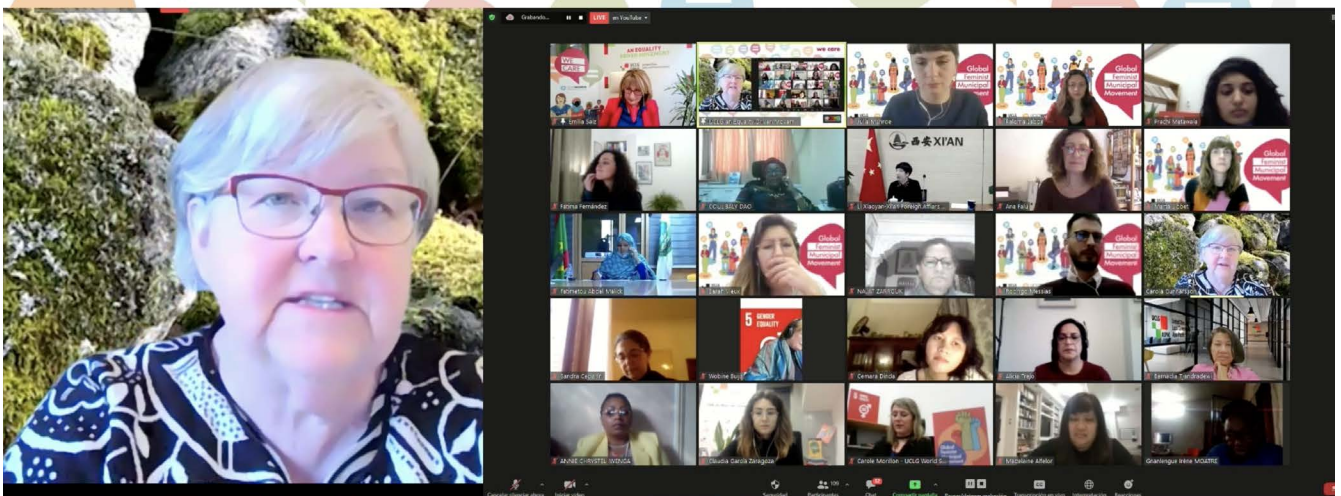


policies that are being led, on the one hand, by women politicians, and on the other hand, in bottom-up processes in local territories, by women's and feminist networks and organizations. This has the potential to become a privileged path from which to face the contexts of the global health and economic crises we are experiencing, as well as the current rise of conservatism and fundamentalism. These are processes that challenge traditional political, social, cultural and economic collective imagination and practices in local territories.

“Everyone benefits from greater gender equality, because it is a matter of democracy and human rights. Because winning rights for women is more than providing opportunities for any particular woman or girl. It’s about changing the way countries and communities function; it involves changing laws and policies and investing in strong women’s organizations and movements. This will lead to the sustainable development of society as a whole. And I believe that when we work in UCLG, we have a great opportunity to take advantage of the creativity, capabilities, commitment and power of all women.”

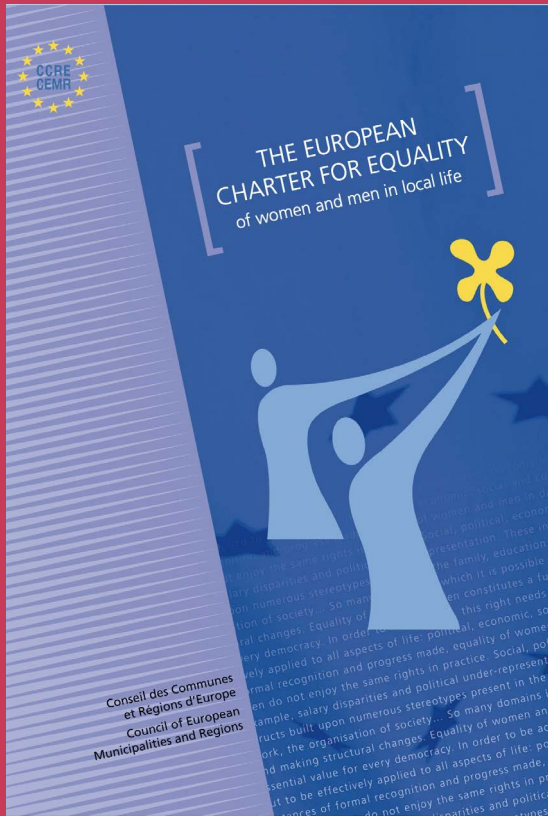
UCLG-Women session during CSW65, 17 March 2021. Carola Gunnarsson, Mayor of Sala, Vice President of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR), UCLG Vice President for Europe

- Carola Gunnarsson, Mayor of Sala, Vice-President of UCLG for Europe.



UCLG an Equality Driven Movement





THE EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR EQUALITY

In 2021, our movement celebrates 15 years since the launch of the [European Charter for Equality of women and men in local life](#), which reconciles different visions of equality in Europe and puts forward the proposals of all contributors. The charter was the result of a participatory process drawn up by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and published in 2006. Signatory local and regional governments commit to the principle of equality between women and men and to pursue local policies for gender equality.

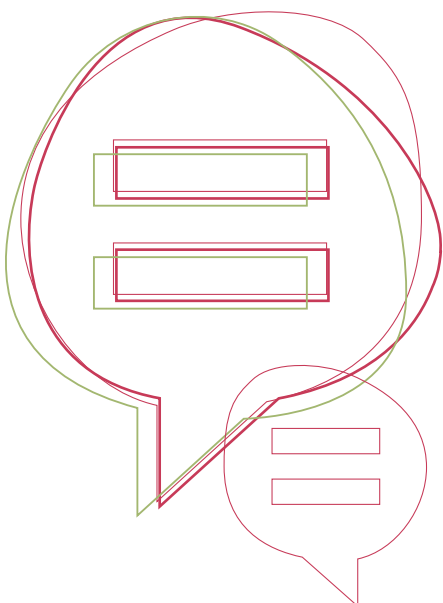
Fifteen years later, the Charter is celebrated and considered an important milestone on the commitment of the constituency of local and regional governments to gender equality. Workshops and debates are being organized to review the charter, in order to add new tools and further promote its connection with local, regional and national policy frameworks.

The European Charter is an interesting inspiration and model instrument to be applied in other regions of the world and its example is considered in the elaboration of others, such as an African charter.

We are thus witnessing a new phenomenon, typical of the 21st century, led by women, all women, and with a particular role for women leaders who occupy municipal state structures, in partnership with those found in party structures, in neighbourhoods, unions, human rights activists, in the intersections that traverse them. As expressed earlier, it is by no means a homogeneous, univocal construction, but rather the interweaving of diverse partnerships, where all generations of women — from the youngest to those with vast trajectories and experiences — are present; and progress is made on the basis of diverse strategies and methodologies, which must be made known, shared and reflected upon.

These are, then, women-led processes of institution-building that are progressively emerging in the local territories of the various continents of our planet. It is precisely in this connection between municipalist political platforms and women’s movements and organizations that groundbreaking configurations are provoked, debated and consolidated.

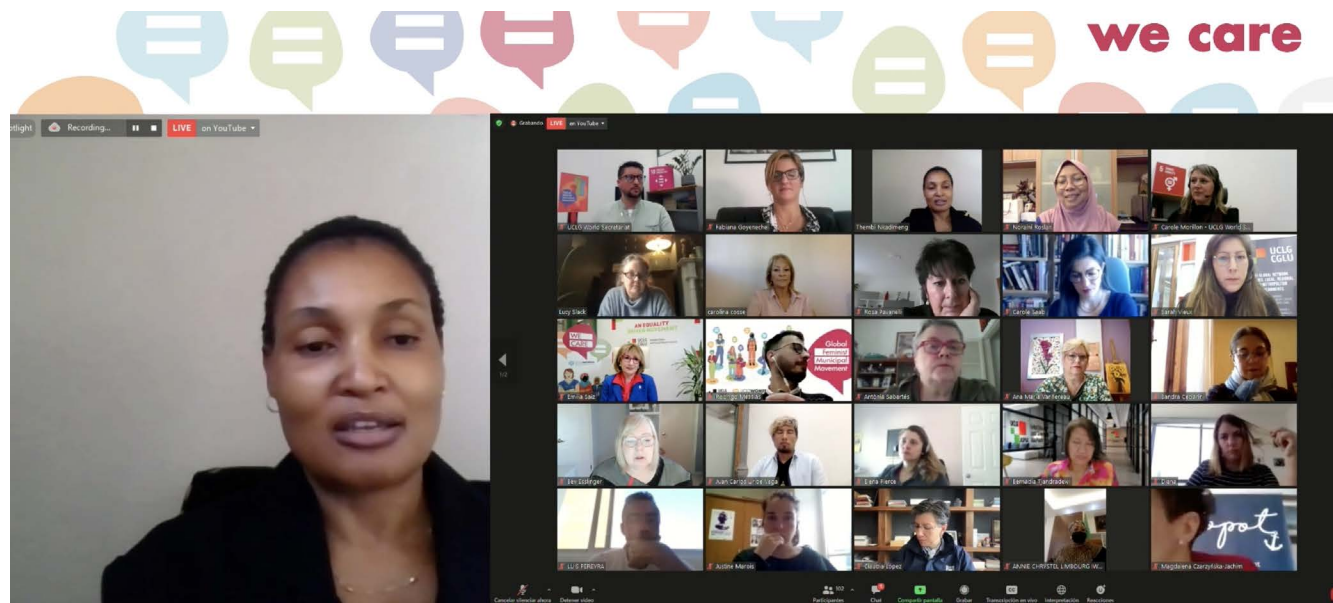
“For us women, the intention of the Global Feminist Municipal Movement is to ensure that there is a clear agenda that includes a framework for equality. We need measures



UCLG-Women session during CSW65, 19 March 2021. Thembisile Nkadimeng, Mayor of Polokwane, President of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), Co-President of UCLG

to be implemented to protect women from gender violence, discrimination and disinformation across the world.”

- Thembisile Nkadimeng, Mayor of Polokwane, President of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), Co-President of UCLG.



UCLG an Equality Driven Movement

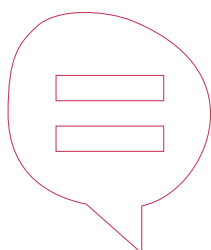


TOWARDS AN AFRICAN CHARTER FOR EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

The work on gender equality and women leadership at the local level is also a priority in Africa. The African Charter for Equality between Women and Men at the Local Level is under elaboration, led by a working group within UCLG Africa and REFELA (network of African Locally Elected Women), and with the support of the Africa-Europe committee. On the occasion of the 8th Africities Summit in 2018, an Africa-Europe Marrakesh Pact for Local Equality was signed by REFELA, UCLG Africa, CEMR/Platforma, and UCLG World Secretariat to support this process.

The elaboration of the Charter includes different consultation rounds, online and during in-person sessions organized between 2018 and 2021, particularly to identify specific topics and recommendations in the African context.

The process builds on several global development and equality agendas, including the Beijing Declaration and its Action Plan, the 2063 Vision of the African Union, the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations and the Paris Declaration of Local and Regional Governments for equality at the local level. The Charter will





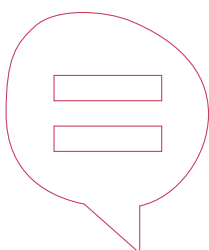
tackle key priorities for the achievement of equality in Africa, including women leadership and participation in local governance, women in urban planning and local sustainable development, fair distribution of wealth, goods and services, gender equality and women's economic empowerment, women regarding the promotion of peace and security, communication and awareness raising for gender equality and partnership and cooperation for gender equality.

II Forum of Local and Regional Governments, September 24, 2019
SDG Summit, New York. Maocura Dao Coulibaly, Mayor of Foubolo, President of REFELA Credit @UCLG-UCLG/Ege Okal

The African Charter is being redacted by an African expert and the final text is expected to be launched during the 9th Africities Summit in Kisumu in 2022, setting an important basis for the continued work on gender equality by local and regional governments, and their national associations in the region.



The table is set for municipalism at the international level. Without a doubt, the achievement of the SDGs entails the implementation of local public policies in connection with regional and national policies. Along these lines, SDG 5 specifically calls on local governments to strengthen their commitment to the construction of inclusive administrations and policies that include a gender perspective, not only as an objective for the development of local territories, rather as a tool for sustainable development. In the Durban Political Declaration developed by the leaders of the world's cities, UCLG committed, in point 18, to gender equality:





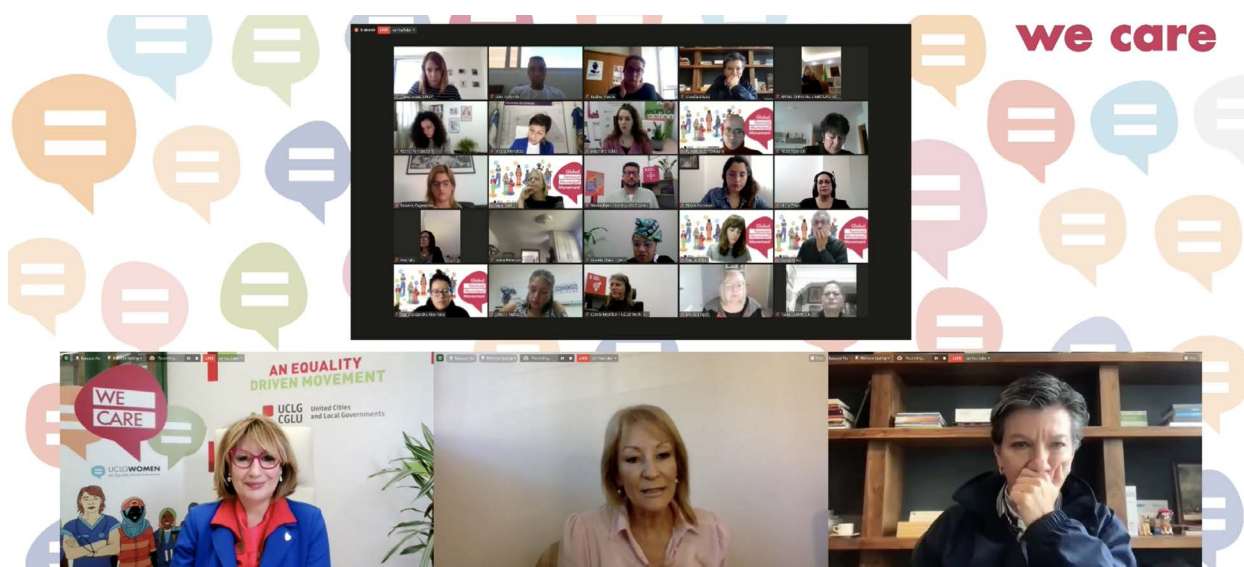
“Our movement unequivocally champions and will set in motion concrete actions to make the voice of women and girls heard in the localization process. The status of women, the specific needs and unique contribution to shape the future of humanity cannot remain invisible and unheard in the formulation and monitoring of public policies, particularly when they also belong to populations that have been historically discriminated against. Equality, and more specifically gender equality needs to be put at the heart of all development processes in order to guarantee that decision-making is done conscientiously, without forgetting half of the world’s population.”²⁴

Municipalism is a force at the international level, and is the territory that is closest to citizens: women, men and dissident groups, all traversed by a multiplicity of diversities. This publication has sought to give voices to women leaders, across the different continents of the world, amid diverse, changing realities, in these difficult times of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is for that reason that UCLG perceived how important it is to make this dimension of the public and the private known as a key aspect of the transformations demanded by the ensemble of democratic voices at the global level. UCLG wishes to accompany these women leaders, providing spaces, exchanges, learning

UCLG-Women session during CSW65, 19 March 2021. Exchange between Emilia Saiz, Secretary General of UCLG, Carolina Cosse, Mayor of Montevideo and Claudia Lopez, Mayor of Bogota

24 See: https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/en_theurbanpoliticaldeclaration_en.pdf





experiences and also support when necessary.

“Municipalism is the democratic politics par excellence; it is the politics of proximity, it is the politics of life, it is the politics that can generate alliances with citizens to help us improve, all together. Because the real changes are those made by citizens, not by institutions. Institutions accompany the changes of citizens. I also believe that municipalism is the spearhead of feminism in politics, and it needs to be valued and become more important in global governance.”

CSW65 Session Local Feminist Leadership: Care at the Center.
Mayor of Barcelona, UCLG Special Envoy to the United Nations

- Ada Colau, Mayor of Barcelona, UCLG Special Envoy to the United Nations.

Based on the above, and in view of the Generation Equality Forum



being held in Paris at the end of June and beginning of July 2021, during which we — the women of the world — will meet, both in person and virtually, in a bid to give these issues the place they deserve in our agendas (both given the current context and experiences long before the pandemic), we have chosen to contribute with the voices of women leaders, their experiences and trajectories.

In March of this year, during the Mexico forum, we also provided contributions from local governments, from UCLG, with all its global potential to articulate the leaderships of the world, to



bring to the fore the voices and experiences of women leaders coordinated within this confederation of united local governments of the world. As stated by the Mayor of Mexico City, led by Claudia Scheinbaum:

“In the current context, the agenda of feminist municipalism must be aligned with the themes being addressed by the Generation Equality Forum, organized by the Governments of Mexico and France, together with civil society organizations, which take stock of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 25 years after its adoption, reviewing its progress, setbacks and current challenges. Topics such as the role of women within the predominant economic system and development models at times of crisis, gender violence, access to health and sexual and reproductive rights, the relationship between gender and climate change, among many others.”

- Claudia Scheinbaum, Mayor of Mexico City.

Claudia Scheinbaum Mayor of Mexico City with Emilia Saiz, Secretary General of UCLG, UCLG World Secretariat, Barcelona, 2019

It is highly significant that Mexico City, as the first host of the Generation Equality Forum, contributed to the debate on the role of local governments and gender, having participated in the





event: 'Cities and territories at the forefront of inclusive recovery: Taking stock 25 years after Beijing' with the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) network.

All the evidence leads us to affirm that it is essential to incorporate the gender perspective into the context of post-COVID-19 economic recovery, in which we must reduce gender gaps within the world of work, and within the different productive sectors. We know that women, who make up the majority of the informal labour market, were the most affected by job losses and lower wages. We must ensure care, understanding it as part of the contribution to the care economy in our cities. Older women, who are major contributors to care at all levels, deserve to be recognized; as does the persistence of violence against women and girls.

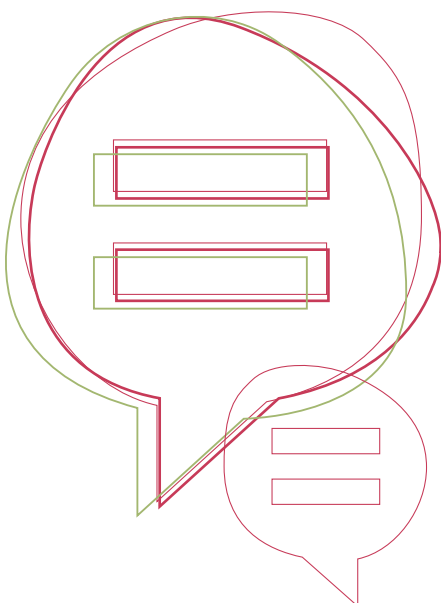
Reflecting on future post-pandemic scenarios, we believe in the powerful and complex concept of Women's Right to the City: that of the built city, of the services, infrastructure, housing and public spaces that women demand according to their priorities, that tangible and necessary right of materiality. Likewise, it is necessary to drive the inclusion of gender in the management of political and public affairs — as so many of the mayors included here have done — in order to advance equality agendas, equalization instruments, gender-responsive budgeting, care policies, and gender-responsive territorial planning, among many others. No less important is the need to tackle the mechanisms and forms of transfers, changes in the matrix of patriarchal society.

“Respect for differences, for diverse cultural communities, for equality between men and women, for sexual and gender diversity, will be part of the natural civility that generates solidarity and, therefore, reduces violence. We represent an emotional and relational revolution. We must teach our young people to live together in all the richness of our diversity.”

- Souad Ben Abderrahim, Mayor of Tunis.

We are taking stock of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 25 years after its adoption, reviewing its progress, setbacks and current challenges. Issues such as women's political participation are central to the transformation of the patriarchal frameworks that still persist.

UCLG is committed to supporting women's leadership and the democratic leadership of men and women that incorporate the gender perspective into their policies and actions, as well as in the





Live Learning Experience
Event on Women Leadership

context of post-COVID-19 economic recovery. In which, we must close the gender gaps and include the intersection of gender and territories, as well as the full range of civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights already claimed and demanded by women. Recognizing care as work, the right to a life free of violence, equal rights and opportunities for all, agreed upon in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Goals, in order to “leave no one behind”; and indeed, to not leave “women behind”.



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