



||| Policy paper

# Municipal Feminism:

Towards the Political Participation  
of Women in all their Diversity

 22nd IOPD  
Conference



July 2023

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**Rio de Janeiro was the first city in Brazil to have a Secretariat for Women's Policies and Promotion. This shows our commitment to achieving the enhanced local policies we need, building new narratives, and designing a future for Rio de Janeiro with the participation of women in all their diversity at the centre of the discussion, the economy, and the political debate.**

Participation of women is a strategy in politics and policy-making because only then will we break the cycle of poverty. In Brazil, as in many contexts worldwide, gender is linked to poverty. When we see people experiencing hunger, need, and vulnerability, most are women, especially mothers. So, if we don't debate democracy and local policies with the words "gender," "child," and "motherhood," unfortunately, we won't debate.

We also need to bring the word "intersectionality" into the debate. I am a young black woman from the periphery of Rio de Janeiro, so when we talk about the participation of women in democracy, it is fundamental to consider differences. These four words should define our work as feminist local leaders: race, class, gender, and territory. Women are diverse and plural: black, white, indigenous, with disabilities, LGBTQIAPN+, and from diverse territories with different problems. Thus, if we don't debate these differences, unfortunately, we will replicate inequalities.

For a long time, politics was demarcated by the body and the mentality of men, especially white men. Now we are redesigning democracy and local policies from a feminist approach because what was implemented before didn't work. Poverty, hunger, inequalities, and femicides are still declared in very high numbers. Therefore, our traditional form of society is not succeeding.

The moment has come for us, diverse women, to declare a new concept of society, democracy, and political participation. There is a phrase we say a lot in Rio de Janeiro: if we live through the challenges and the problems, then it is fundamental that we think about the solutions because we have the knowledge based on our experiences.

I salute and congratulate the women local leaders who joined this debate, organised jointly by the City of Rio de Janeiro and the International Observatory on Participatory Democracy. We know that the challenge for us is to place ourselves in spaces of power and that constructing enhanced policies with women's perspectives takes work. We must support each other to continue designing a world where our participation is effective and concrete.

**I also encourage all local and regional governments to continue sharing your experiences and knowledge, as we did through this space of solidarity, get inspired by other territories, and take action with this policy document as a companion and catalyst for participatory democracy. Only in this way more women can start new dreams by conceiving themselves in power positions and**

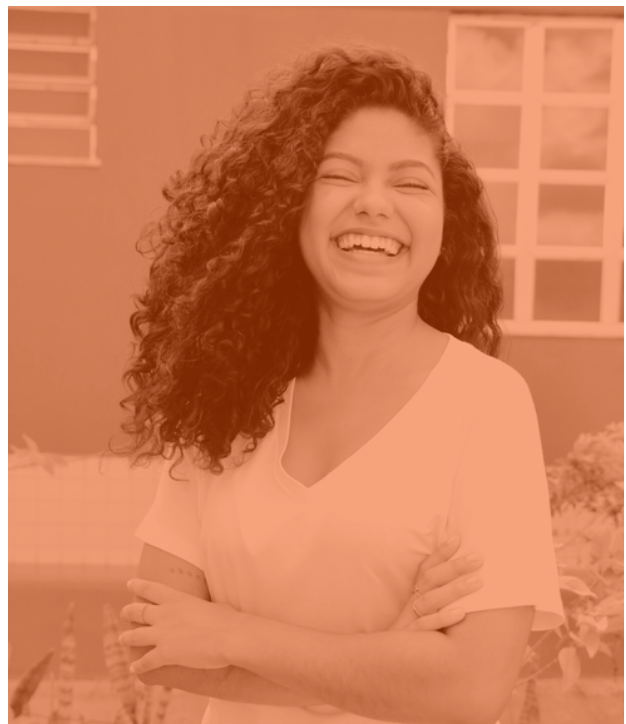




spaces. Power is a feminine and feminist word with which all local and regional governments will design the future with our presence, participation, and legacy.

Let's go, women! Let's go, men! We count on you to join our struggle. Men are our allies in constructing a feminist local democracy: we need you to redesign our society!

The practice of collectivity is our female ancestors' greatest strategy and legacy. We need to make collectivity a political strategy today as well. **Let's continue our conversation together on how to support the full social and political inclusion of women in all their diversity in our municipalities in the next 22nd IOPD Conference, "Participatory Democracy for Diverse, Inclusive and Transparent Cities."** It will be an honour for me to welcome all of you here in my city from November 6-8 so that we can celebrate our local democracies and think about strategies to defend them.



**Joyce Trindade**

**Municipal Secretary for Women's Policies and  
Promotion in the City Hall of Rio de Janeiro**



On March 31 2023, the International Observatory of Participatory Democracy (IOPD), with the support of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) through UCLG Women and the city of Rio de Janeiro, organised the virtual session **“Municipal Feminism: Towards the Political Participation of Women in all their Diversity.”**

This is the first in a series of three virtual sessions leading up as preparatory actions to the **22nd IOPD Conference** under the theme **“Participatory Democracy for Diverse, Inclusive and Transparent Cities,”** occurring from November 6-8, 2023, in the city of Rio de Janeiro.



## Methodology

The objective of the session was **to explore the notion of feminist participatory democracy**, such as ensuring gender equity in local public policies and leadership and meaningful transformations guaranteeing the full inclusion of women in all their diversity, as well as gender-diverse identities and structurally marginalised groups, such as children, youth, older persons, indigenous persons, and persons with disabilities.

In this sense, **the IOPD opened and facilitated a virtual space for dialogue, exchange and solidarity to share municipal and regional experiences, as well as to deepen knowledge of practices of gender-sensitive and feminist approaches and participatory democracy policies from local and regional governments.** A further purpose was to put on the agenda the intersection of feminisms and participatory democracy, exploring how feminist practices expand democratic participation and enhance policies at the local and regional levels. For this reason, a number of local leaders were brought together whose experience in the subject can enrich the conversation, ensuring representativeness and diversity of contexts and regions.

The virtual session was organised into two panels. In the first panel on **“Gender equity in public policies and leadership,”** the speakers were:

- **Diana Marcela Ortiz**, Manager of Women and Gender from the District Institute of Participation and Community Action (Instituto Distrital de Participación y Acción Comunal, IDPAC) of Bogotá.
- **Anthony Berthelot**, Councillor of Nantes Métropole, responsible for international cooperation, Mayor of Indre.
- **Maria Helena Jose Carreira Langa**, Mayor of Mandlakazi and Vice-President of REFELA (Réseau des Femmes Elues Locales d'Afrique, African Network of Locally Elected Women).



- **Iryna Yarmolenko**, Advisor to the Mayor of Irpin, Councilor of Bucha.
- **Noraini Roslan**, President of the Municipal Council of Klang.
- **Laura Pfister**, Deputy Mayor for Equal Rights and Fight against Discrimination, Grenoble.

In the second panel: **“Best Practices Towards Local Feminist Participatory Democracies,”** the speakers were:

- **Heloisa Gomes Aquino**, Coordination of Policies for Women, São Paulo City Council and **Luan Santos Araújo**, Coordination of Open Government, São Paulo City Council.
- **Gladys Otae Addo Osei**, Municipal Assembly of Adenta, President of Ghana Women Caucus (REFELA).
- **Louise Jean-Albert**, Institute for Dialogue and Citizen Participation (ICPC) of France.
- **Zenaida Pérez Gutiérrez**, National Political Assembly of Indigenous Women (Asamblea Nacional Política de Mujeres Indígenas, ANPMI),
- **Anders Nordh**, Senior adviser, Finance and Governance Division, Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR).
- **Yande Kalengo**, Director of Power Shifting, Restless Development.

**This policy paper analyses and compiles these local leaders' experiences and knowledge.** The audiovisual recording of the session can be found on the [IOPD YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vtt_FqGJaaw) channel: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vtt\\_FqGJaaw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vtt_FqGJaaw)



## A need for innovation in participatory democracy

**Safeguarding local democracy is one of the pillars of the Pact for the Future of Humanity of UCLG and for delivering a systemic transformation in this urban era.** The Pact is organised into three parts: *People, Planet, and Government*. The Pact for Government stresses the importance of representation, participation, inclusivity and empowerment in decision-making instances. **Participatory democracy stands out as a political practice in which citizens are directly involved in decision-making processes affecting their lives.** However, classic mechanisms of participatory democracy—like assemblies, debates, consultations and other forms of public expression—can reproduce existing structural inequalities in society, excluding historically marginalised communities, such as women and other diverse identities.

Despite the efforts undertaken in recent decades by local and regional governments, **there is still a long way to go to achieve the full inclusion of women in all their diversity in public policies, plans and programs.** According to a report by UCLG Women to the High-Level Political Forum (2022)\* of the 127 Voluntary Local Reports (VLRs) to monitor progress in localising the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), only 62% disaggregated data by gender and just over half (53%) mentioned initiatives specifically focused on girls and women and on achieving gender equity.

Moreover, the report shows that the VLRs addressing gender equity in depth mainly rely on a binary lens comparing men to women. In general, data and efforts still fall short when using non-binary and diverse lenses to achieve gender equality, as they are rarely in dialogue with diverse identities and taking into account aspects such as race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, language, disability, age, migrant status etc. **"If these differences are not debated, unfortunately, inequality is replicated and reproduced,"** drawing from the words of the Municipal Secretary for Women's Policies and Promotion in the City Hall of Rio de Janeiro, Joyce Trindade.

**Even though women and gender-diverse groups comprise more than half of the world's population, their political representation is still very low.** Women represented just 20% of the world's mayors in 2018. From Ghana to Sweden, the representation of women in political chambers at the local level is very low, as shared by the participants of the webinar. Anders Nordh, Senior adviser of the Finance and Governance Division of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR), expressed that **the challenge is even steeper for young female politicians.** "We have to be aware of this to defend democracy in the future better," he said.

Furthermore, once in leadership positions and after overcoming the political barriers against them, local elected women officials still face challenges, such as political violence and threats

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\* UCLG Women. (2022). From Making Commitments to Realizing Change: Local and Regional Governments' Progress on Gender Equality. [https://women.uclg.org/sites/default/files/2022-07/Local%20and%20Regional%20Governments%20Progress%20on%20Gender%20Equality\\_Report%20on%20SDG%20to%20the%20HLPF2022.pdf](https://women.uclg.org/sites/default/files/2022-07/Local%20and%20Regional%20Governments%20Progress%20on%20Gender%20Equality_Report%20on%20SDG%20to%20the%20HLPF2022.pdf)

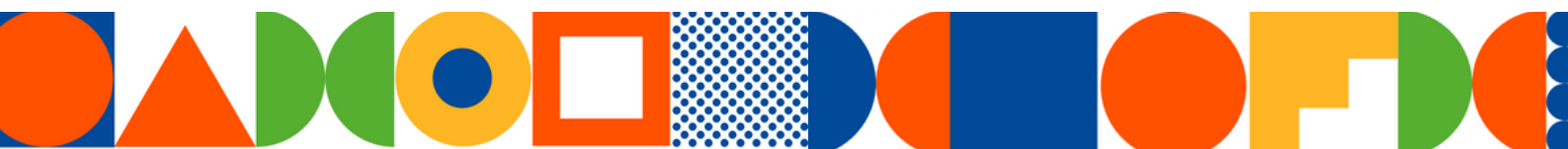
^ UCLG & UCLG Women. The transformative Commitment of Cities and Territories to Generation Equality. [https://www.uclg-cglu.org/sites/default/files/the\\_transformative\\_commitment\\_of\\_cities\\_and\\_territories\\_to\\_generation\\_equality.pdf](https://www.uclg-cglu.org/sites/default/files/the_transformative_commitment_of_cities_and_territories_to_generation_equality.pdf)





rooted in patriarchal and misogynist beliefs. As Joyce Trindade stated: **“the challenge for us women is to place ourselves in the space of power and the construction of public policies.”**

In addition to the obstacles locally elected women face in getting to office and once in power, there are also significant barriers for women and gender-diverse groups to exercise their democratic rights as citizens fully. For example, talking about political rights, women's voting is a more recently granted right than male suffrage. Similarly, in their daily lives, women experience limitations to their participation in political life because a large part of the daily chores still falls on their shoulders. **Maria Helena Jose Carreira Langa, Mayor of Mandlakazi, Mozambique and Vice President of REFELA Southern Africa, could not have summed it up better. Regarding participatory democracy: “women’s participation is a major challenge for our members.”**



## Feminist Municipalism to ensure the democratic participation of women in all their diversity

Given the challenges inherent to traditional mechanisms of participatory democracy, **it is essential to incorporate a gender perspective in designing and implementing innovative practices in this field. The Feminist Municipal Movement is a great catalyst for participatory democracy, as its mission is to increase the political participation and decision-making power of all people**, especially groups that have been historically, culturally and systematically excluded.

The Feminist Municipal Movement sustains and exercises action on three pillars of the architecture of governance: the promotion of **global institutional frameworks** to recognise and ensure the rights of all living beings, a shift and an enhancement in the form of **political leadership** based on empathy and solidarity, and the flagship of **an innovative agenda** to recognise, include and care for a diversity of voices.

When discussing about including women in political participation and spaces of power, it is fundamental to remember that we are not talking about just one woman but all women. **“Women can be young, indigenous, black, with disabilities, inhabitants of the periphery, LGBTQIAPN+,”** as Joyce Trindade urged not to forget. **“Territories and languages are also key when looking at women in all their diversity with an intersectionality lens,”** says Zenaida Perez Gutiérrez of the National Political Assembly of Indigenous Women (Asamblea Nacional Política de Mujeres Indígenas, ANPMI), of Oaxaca, Mexico.

In this sense, **the Feminist Municipal Movement brings the lens of intersectionality and sprinkles it like salt on the plate of political participation so that women and people in all their diversity can come and take a seat at the decision-making table.** Diana Marcela Ortiz, Manager of Women and Gender from the District Institute of Participation and Community Action of Bogota, summarised: **“To guarantee the inclusion of women in the processes of political participation is a determining condition for democracy and to eradicate their exclusion from society in general.”**

And why is it important to bring women and people in all their diversity to the decision-making table? Because **“when women are placed at the centre of decision-making, communities are also”** (UCLG Women 2022). The ultimate objective of the Feminist Municipal Movement is to place care for communities, all living beings, ecological systems and the planet at the centre of policy and action.

At the same time, **the Feminist Municipal Movement expands the democratic horizons by allowing for innovative participation practices based on collective intelligence, co-creation and deliberation with diverse people**, especially the most marginalised communities, ensuring their full representation and inclusion in public policy, planning and programs. To assure democratic participation for all, it is vital to remain loyal to gender equity values and principles.



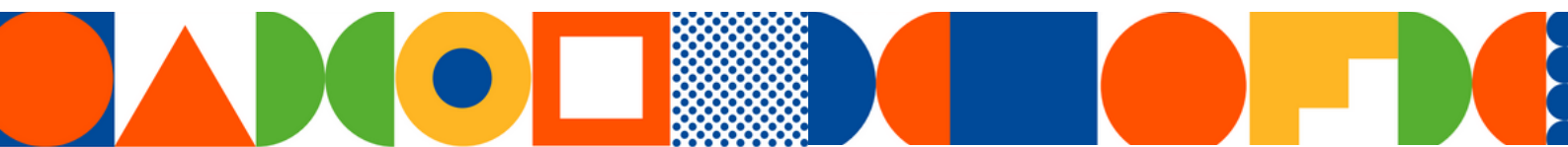


**Bringing the Feminist Municipal Movement into participatory democracy ensures moving beyond a binary understanding of gender towards a diverse lens for providing effective and concrete participation of all women.** As UCLG Secretary General Emilia Saiz said, “The feminist fight is also a fight against all types of discrimination.” Talking about local leadership, the Feminist Municipal Movement drives female empowerment for women and gender-diverse identities to reach the decision-making instances and support them once in office.

Ultimately, **having a diversity of women in positions of power guarantees the transformation in the type of leadership we want to promote towards solidarity, empathy and proximity with global perspectives while ensuring that care becomes the compass of policy-making and planning.** Feminist and caring approaches in participatory local democracy lead to a virtuous circle towards diverse identities' political and social inclusion.

As we get closer to the 2030 Agenda goals, we must remember that **the right to political participation is fundamental to realise Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5**, which calls for achieving gender equality. Specifically, **SDG Target 5.5 highlights women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life.** Overall, “the SDGs need to be feminised,” as Emilia Saiz, UCLG Secretary General.

For present and future generations to enjoy the benefits of putting local democracy at the centre of sustainable development, **local and regional governments are promoting and forging ahead the Feminist Municipal Movement to deliver enhanced policies with a women's perspective.**





## Best practices of gender equity in participatory democracy by local and regional governments

The following section will explore the public policy innovations that local and regional governments participating in the session are implementing to include women in all their diversity, embracing care and wellbeing as the building blocks of policy-making whilst empowering women to promote a shift towards a more feminist and caring local leadership.



### São Paulo, Brazil

The Feminist Municipal Movement is rooted in social movements driven by women claiming the full exercise and enjoyment of their political and social rights. Heloisa Gomes Aquino, from the Coordination of Policies for Women of the Sao Paulo City Council, recounts that their work is inspired by and has arisen from the work of civil organisations on violence against women. Precisely, **the first Women's Action Plan of São Paulo is the result of processes of participation and open government with women.** To nurture its strategy, the São Paulo City Council has opened institutional spaces for women's citizen participation **to guarantee public facilities and integral attention to women** in the areas of health, justice and employment. **Legislation is one of the pillars for promoting women's political participation in São Paulo**, where parity in municipal councils is regulated by decree.





## Oaxaca, Mexico

Located in a pluricultural country such as Mexico, **the challenge in the Oaxaca region is to achieve the inclusion of indigenous women in political participation**, as shared by Zenaida Pérez Gutiérrez from the National Political Assembly of Indigenous Women (Asamblea Nacional Política de Mujeres Indígenas, ANPMI). To address this problem, **ANPMI promotes using intersectional lenses to recognise and encourage the participation of indigenous women, putting their recognition of subjects of political rights and a fundamental part of decision-making spaces at the forefront**. These same intersectional lenses shed light on the fact that women are left out of public and social life because the burden of care falls heavily on their shoulders. **As our webinar, ANPMI also draws on the exchange of knowledge and experiences to learn from other contexts how to achieve the gender quota** and, in general, to favour the political participation and social inclusion of women in all their diversity.



## Irpın, Ukraine

Even more so in challenging contexts, as in the face of war, it is necessary to put women at the centre of decision-making and public policies. **Women play a fundamental role in urban reconstruction processes, as they stand up for their rights and those of all.** Women also build resilience, as Iryna Yarmolenko, Consultant to the Mayor of Irpin and Councilor of Bucha, Ukraine, has borne witness. Irpin is the capital of reconstruction in the context of the war, where 200 volunteers from all over the world have gathered, most of whom are women designers, architects, and project managers.

As recalled by Emilia Saiz, Secretary General of UCLG, **humanitarian responses often fail to consider the specific needs of women and girls from an integral perspective of health, hygiene and safety.** For this reason, to achieve enhanced public policies with a women's perspective at the local level, their political participation at the forefront of reconstruction processes is vital in war contexts and natural catastrophes, such as the recent earthquake in Turkey.



## Adenta, Ghana

Gladys Otae Addo Osei, of the Adentan Municipal Assembly and President of Ghana Women Caucus, shares the **challenge of women's under-representation in politics at the local level**. In this context, REFELA, the network of locally-elected women in Africa, **has set a cross-cutting agenda to encourage women to contest and secure their presence in political leadership**. This starts with **taking care of women's daily needs**. In Adenta's economy, many women are running small businesses, meaning they also have to juggle their caregiving responsibilities. Thus, **to prevent their double workload as providers and caregivers excludes them from participating in politics, the municipality facilitates child care for them**. At the same time, to reinforce their political empowerment, the municipality offers training and sensitisation programs specially catered for them. This cross-cutting agenda also includes an **accessibility fund for people with disabilities**.

Gladys Otae Addo Osei recognises that there is still a long way to go to achieve full inclusion of underserved communities and groups. For this reason, from her leadership she is exploring **how to leverage technology for ensuring access to information in any place, whether rural or urban**. Going a step further, she is also paying attention to bridging the digital divide, which is mostly suffered by women, by providing a specific training program for them.

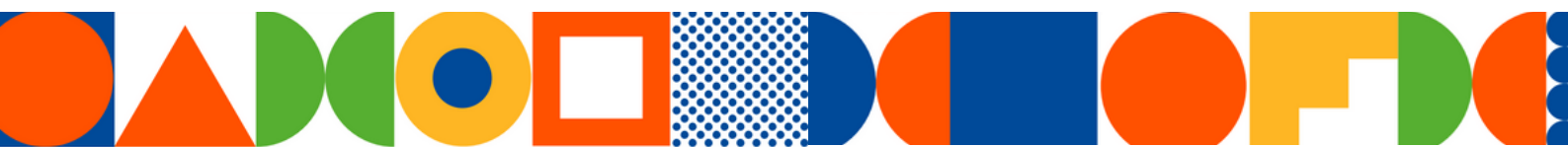




## Mandlakazi, Mozambique

Maria Helena Jose Carreira Langa, Mayor of Mandlakazi and Vice-President of REFELA knows firsthand the importance of including women in all their diversity in democratic participation. To achieve this in her city, she has flagged the **set up of a participatory forum especially for women to give them a space of their own for expressing their concerns and engaging in municipal planning**. This gender inclusive approach to political participation takes care to include women in the different stages of the municipal planning process, as well as to include female participants of different ages, with **special attention to youth**. Using a gender equity approach in local democratic participation mechanisms in Mandlakazi has resulted in the mayor's office **paying attention to community-related aspects that were previously overlooked**. For example, **due to their perceptions of insecurity, women have contributed and succeeded in improving security in public markets**.

The mayor of Mandlakazi has also adopted a solidarity and collaboration approach to her local leadership, encouraging other municipalities and levels of government to improve their legislation to increase women's political participation. Her steps are firm and her mandate is clear: **"We have to work harder to ensure more women reach leadership and decision-making roles."**





## Grenoble, France

Laura Pfister, deputy mayor for Equal Rights and the Fight against Discrimination of Grenoble, is flagging an integral strategy to advance women's political and social inclusion in all their diversity. **"The Grenoble Action Plan" gives women access to training and empowerment opportunities to occupy power positions.** This plan goes in hand with participatory budgeting processes with an awareness-raising component for citizens to reflect on parity and the place of women in public policy. **Grenoble's gender-sensitive public policy strategies aim to ensure the full social inclusion of women by paying attention to the different aspects of their lives,** such as their physical health, their specific urban mobility needs, and their right to enjoy urban nightlife in a safe and secure environment.



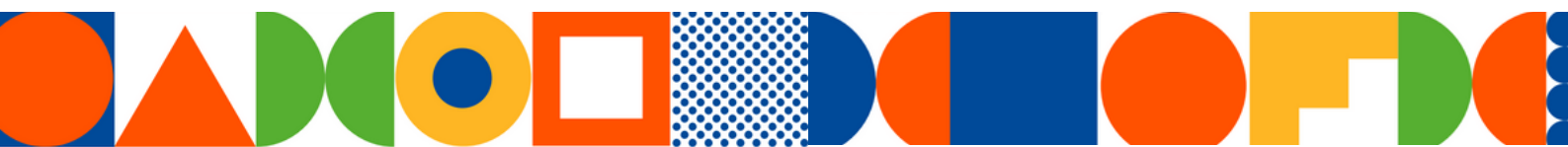
- **Free menstrual hygiene product distribution:** Grenoble has partnered with the national level to alleviate the vulnerability and fragility in which many women find themselves due to their lack of access to them. Menstrual precariousness is still a significant challenge in this city.
- **A bicycle school project** to achieve the emancipation of women by teaching them to ride a bicycle.
- **A plan to prevent male violence:** to provide pedagogical training to men on sexist and sexual violence issues to allow women to regain their space at night. Grenoble wants women to feel as safe as possible in the city during nighttime so they can go out to parties or do their night activities without fear of being assaulted.

## Bogota, Colombia

For the first time in history, Bogota has a woman mayor: Claudia López. Entering her role, the mayor committed **to bringing the city up to date with the debts it has historically owed to women**. Her priority and the fundamental pillar of her work are women in all their diversity through **enhanced local policies with a feminist and caring approach**, as shared by Diana Marcela Ortiz, Manager of Women and Gender from the District Institute of Participation and Community Action (Instituto Distrital de Participación y Acción Comunal, IDPAC) of Bogota.

Bogota also shares the challenge of including more women in decision-making instances. **To enable more women to occupy spaces of political representation, the IDPAC is working on a structural strategy based on three pillars:**

- Offer **capacity-building courses** for women leaders.
- Facilitate **accompaniment in the instances of political participation to change patriarchal thinking and ideology** through education and awareness that all people can have equal opportunities and healthy conviviality. To consolidate their public policy strategy with a feminist and caring approach, Bogota has created a Non-Violence Against Women Pact to prevent, reduce and eliminate violence against women in the spaces of citizen participation.
- **Deploy and implement two national laws to guarantee parity in the instances of democratic participation**, with particular attention to the inclusion of women in conditions of vulnerability: Law 581 of 2000 and Law 1475 of 2011 mandate a minimum of 30% of women's participation in the public power instances, in the lists of popularly elected positions, in public corporations and all of those where at least five seats will be elected.



In addition to achieving gender equity in decision-making, participation mechanisms and the exercise of power, **Bogota ensures that women also have social representation.** Having a local woman leader in power has ensured that care is incorporated as the backbone of the public policies promoted by Mayor Claudia López.



**The Caring Blocks (Manzanas del Cuidado) are the leading initiative of this innovative approach to public policy, as it places special attention on women caregivers to offer them opportunities for capacity building and employment.** In Bogota, they are addressing the fact that women caregivers are an economically and educationally neglected group, since they do not receive any economic retribution for their work and suffer from the lack of time for them. This situation leaves women caregivers out of access to employment, education, political life and city opportunities.

Thus, **the Caring Blocks initiative addresses structural inequalities and asymmetries by offering training to women caregivers, while their dependents are cared for by specialized caregivers.** So far, the Caring Blocks cover 17 of Bogota's 20 localities, and there are plans to open three additional ones to achieve total coverage throughout the city.

**The initiative has two mobile units to reach women living in rural areas, who receive the same training opportunities and free health, education, entrepreneurship and employment services.** The Manzanas del Cuidado stand out as an innovative initiative in Latin America because it focuses on women caregivers. **Mayor Claudia Lopez's mission is clear: "Care has to be institutionalized and funded."**



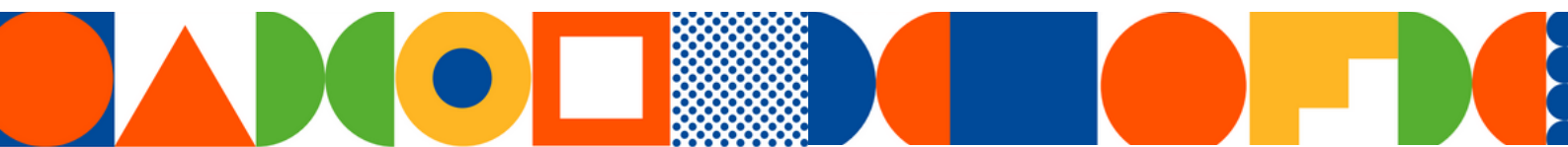


## Klang, Malaysia

Noraini Roslan is the first female President of the Municipal Council of Klang. **Klang municipality recently participated in a knowledge-sharing collaboration with UCLG and UCLG Asia Pacific to train gender-focused teams in the city hall to ensure gender equality in democratic participation processes. Klang learned from Penang, another city in Malaysia, to have gender-appointed offices in each municipal department. In this way, each project the municipality implements now goes through a process of equal representation in all stages.** Gender-focused teams ensure that, from the design, each project is equally representative. Once a project is implemented, the teams return to the field to ask the public how they use the projects and their impact on their lives and families, with particular attention to commonly underrepresented groups.

This process of equal representation in municipal projects goes hand in hand with **community empowerment of commonly marginalised groups, often women caregivers, to exercise their right to participation.** This strategy acknowledges that entitlement does not come automatically. In this way, **gender-focused teams go to the field to meet with women caregivers to achieve their full inclusion and representation in Klang's municipality's programs, plans, and public policies.** Mayor Noraini Roslan's female local leadership has stamped an innovative footprint on her public policy-making by integrating a **long-term approach with a five-year strategic plan.**

Klang's is Noraini Roslan's fifth term as mayor in Malaysia. In her 11 years as a locally elected woman, she has always been the first female mayor in the cities she has led. Therefore, she knows firsthand that there is a need to have more women in local leadership. **Currently, women head 71% of Klang's departments. It is no coincidence that Klang has been chosen as one of the 10 happiest cities in Malaysia. By having women at the forefront of decision-making and democratic participation, the agenda has been transformed into one that puts its inhabitants' health care and the city's cleanliness at the forefront.**





## Subang Jaya, Malaysia

Previously, Noirani Roslan was mayor of Subang Jaya, a Malaysian town just over 20 kilometres from Klang, where she pushed for **women-friendly urban planning to ensure women's equal access to urban opportunities in education, health, transportation, and mobility**. She did this in response to the fact that design commonly fails to address the specific needs of women or other groups in conditions of vulnerability, such as older people. As for the particular needs of women, for example, they use public restrooms longer than men, so they require more cubicles. Another aspect considered was the design of sidewalks to cater to the needs of women who wear high heels or people with reduced mobility.

**Women-friendly urban planning promoted by Noraini Roslan in Subang Jaya also involved a gendered participatory budget to hear the specific needs of women in their voices.** It is usually men whose voice is represented in these exercises because they are the ones who attend them. In response to this challenge, Noraini Roslan designed a special session to invite a group of women and ask them what they wanted to include in the city budget, again opening up a political space of their own. In both democratic processes with a gender equity perspective, it was found that **knowing the needs of women benefits the whole community, as they point to basic needs in terms of public services and neglected aspects that need to be improved.**

## Nantes Métropole, France

"The question of equity is not just a women's fight; it's a fight for all of us, and one that we must bring to bear collectively," Anthony Berthelot is well aware of this in his work as Councillor of Nantes Métropole, responsible for international cooperation and Mayor of Indre. Bringing everyone on board to achieve gender equality is vital, **especially when women's political participation has been slower and later than men's**. In France, the right to vote for men dates back to the French Revolution in 1789, while women achieved this right in 1944. Eighty years after this significant progress, the low political participation of women remains a challenge in France and its municipalities.

In response to this patriarchal organisation of political life, **the Metropolis of Nantes, led by the first female mayor Johanna Rolland, is accelerating gender equality through a set of policies to catch up with the historical debt owed to women**. Participation at the core of decision-making processes and specific methodologies catered for specific groups are the drivers of this set of policies to ensure women's full political participation in all their diversity and achieve transformation towards systematic parity.



- **A law to institute parity:** passed in 2007 to ensure the representation and participation of women in municipal politics, offering them the visibility they were prevented from enjoying and thus being able to occupy a legitimate place in the public arena.
- **Citizen dialogues with an inclusive approach:** for the metropolitan government of Nantes, it is vital to include citizens in constructing public policies. Citizen dialogues have nurtured policies on essential issues such as the ecological transition and health. **The metropolis of Nantes is promoting an inclusive approach to ensure the full participation of women in citizen dialogues. To recruit participants, officers go to the places women frequent.** To face the obstacle that daily tasks still fall mostly on women's shoulders, **officials at the metropolis of Nantes have also paid**

**attention to the arrangements for the reception of public consultations, taking care of the time of the day and the spaces where they are held, bearing in mind to provide child care and to finance women's transportation to ensure their full presence at the decision-making table.**

- **Single-sex workshops:** the metropolis of Nantes is aware of the vital importance of **providing women with a space of their own for political participation to bring up issues that might not be discussed elsewhere**. In this sense, single-sex workshops have brought groups of women together or communities in precarious situations to allow specific issues to emerge more quickly. The local strategy has gone further by **conducting these workshops in digital format via videoconferencing, aiming to include more women who may have yet to participate**. Thanks to this digital participatory democracy initiative, the metropolis of Nantes was recognised as the **European Innovation Capital in 2019**.





## Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR)

Achieving political equality for women in all their diversity implies paying attention to young women. Anders Nordh, Senior adviser, Finance and Governance Division of SALAR, calls for **paying attention to the inclusion of young women, since they are actively mobilising to advance agendas on pressing issues, such as the climate emergency.** In the Swedish context, Greta Thunberg and her Fridays for the Future movement have inspired young women to become politically active. The political mobilisation of young women has focused on including different perspectives to solve localities' most pressing problems.



As has already been demanded, gender inclusion also involves **engaging men early in education to eradicate sexist and patriarchal thoughts and ideologies.** For this reason, SALAR is working to provide better education to children. SALAR is implementing the **“Mentors in Violence Prevention”** program. It is aimed at upper and lower secondary school students where, through a number of lectures, they learn to identify different forms of violence and are trained to intervene against mild violence to prevent and stop more serious violence. This program has been implemented in several Swedish municipalities.

## Conclusions & Recommendations

Through the contributions of the speakers and the debate that took place in the webinar, a series of policy recommendations are proposed and summarised for local and regional governments, as well as for advocating national governments and international organisations:



- **Place women in all their diversity at the centre of democratic participation processes and promote care as the building block of policy-making:** women's experience opens the field of vision to aspects of daily life previously neglected by local and regional governments, while strategies with a gender-sensitive perspective take care of the whole community.

- **Bring an intersectional lens to policy-making and participatory democracy practices:** to move beyond binary understandings of gender and thus pay attention to the specific needs of women

in all their diversity, taking into account differences of class, age, race, disability, language, culture, and territory.

- **Prioritise gender as a cross-border and integral strategy from all areas of government:** to offer women attention in all aspects of their lives—physical and mental health, empowerment, education, training, capacity-building, mobility, access to culture, enjoyment of nightlife—and thus achieve their full social and political inclusion, especially in the context of processes of reconstruction.
- **Address violence against women:** by providing education to boys at early ages and pedagogical training to men on sexist and sexual violence issues. This goes hand in hand with special attention and support to women victims of gender violence and enhanced local policies from a gender perspective. The goal is to allow women to regain their space at night and any time of the day, and support them to achieve their full social and political inclusion.
- **Promoting and facilitating women's political empowerment:** offering capacity-building courses for women leaders and enforcing laws and rules to guarantee parity in the instances of democratic participation, with special attention to the inclusion of women in conditions of vulnerability. Having women in office guarantees the implementation of enhanced local policies with a gender perspective and placing care at the centre.



- **Integrate a gender-sensitive perspective in the design of participatory and deliberative democracy processes:** from opening participation spaces dedicated to them, paying attention to group dynamics, ensuring diverse representation and introducing innovative participation methodologies. It is essential to take care of the time of the day and the spaces where they are held, bearing in mind to provide child care and to finance women's transportation to ensure their full presence at the decision-making table. It is also important to prevent, reduce and eliminate violence against women by facilitating an accompaniment in the instances of political participation to change patriarchal thinking and ideology through education and awareness.
- **Providing women with “a space of their own” for political participation:** single-sex workshops, gender budgeting, participatory forums especially for women, as well as ensuring the inclusion of female perspectives in all stages of policy-making are some of the democratic innovations made possible by municipal feminisms.
- **Bringing participation directly to the places where women are frequently:** occasionally, some women may not feel entitled to exercise their right to participation. It is important that local officials bring democratic participation mechanisms closer to them, or facilitate their access to them by financing travel, ensuring that schedules fit with their daily activities, and even providing care for their dependents, such as children, older people, or people with disabilities. Information and Communications Technology (ICT) tools can be an ally in this matter, always providing education and training for women on how to use them. It is also essential to evaluate the gender bias that exists in this field, and to work to reverse it.
- **Counting on local female leadership to promote proximity with a global perspective, empathy, solidarity and collaboration for achieving SDG 17 “Partnerships for the goals:”** the Municipal promotes a shift in the type of leadership based on solidarity, empathy and collaboration to forge alliances with civil society organisations and social movements, while broadening the field of vision towards a perspective of global cooperation with international networks and organisations to champion a global feminist agenda together.



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## Know more

- **Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights of United Cities and Local Governments.** <https://www.uclg-cisdp.org/en>
- **International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (IOPD).** <https://oidp.net/en/>
- **UCLG Women.** <https://women.uclg.org/>

## Resources

- **Generalitat de Catalunya.** (2020). Guide to gender mainstreaming in participatory processes. [https://governobert.gencat.cat/web/.content/30\\_ParticipacioCiudadana/04\\_Difusio\\_i\\_recerca/guies\\_breus\\_de\\_participacio\\_ciudadana/Guia-transversalitat-genero/Guia\\_genero\\_28\\_10\\_20\\_ENGLISH\\_converted-ACC.pdf](https://governobert.gencat.cat/web/.content/30_ParticipacioCiudadana/04_Difusio_i_recerca/guies_breus_de_participacio_ciudadana/Guia-transversalitat-genero/Guia_genero_28_10_20_ENGLISH_converted-ACC.pdf)
- **OECD.** (2018). Bridging the Digital Gender Divide: Include, Upskill, Innovate. <https://www.oecd.org/digital/bridging-the-digital-gender-divide.pdf>
- **UCLG.** Pact for the Future of Humanity. The Daejeon Political Declaration. [https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/uclgpactforthe\\_future.pdf](https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/uclgpactforthe_future.pdf)
- **UCLG & UCLG Women.** The transformative Commitment of Cities and Territories to Generation Equality. [https://www.uclg-cglu.org/sites/default/files/the\\_transformative\\_commitment\\_of\\_cities\\_and\\_territories\\_to\\_generation\\_equality.pdf](https://www.uclg-cglu.org/sites/default/files/the_transformative_commitment_of_cities_and_territories_to_generation_equality.pdf)
- **UCLG & UCLG Women.** Towards a Global Feminist Municipal Movement. Key Contributions of the Local and Regional Governments Constituency to the Generation Equality Forum. [https://women.uclg.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/Report\\_%20Towards%20a%20global%20feminist%20municipal%20movement.pdf](https://women.uclg.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/Report_%20Towards%20a%20global%20feminist%20municipal%20movement.pdf)
- **UCLG Women.** (2022). From Making Commitments to Realizing Change: Local and Regional Governments' Progress on Gender Equality. [https://women.uclg.org/sites/default/files/2022-07/Local%20and%20Regional%20Governments%20Progress%20on%20Gender%20Equality\\_Report%20on%20SDG%205%20to%20the%20HLPF2022.pdf](https://women.uclg.org/sites/default/files/2022-07/Local%20and%20Regional%20Governments%20Progress%20on%20Gender%20Equality_Report%20on%20SDG%205%20to%20the%20HLPF2022.pdf)
- **UN Women.** (2020). Democratic Backsliding and the backlash against women's rights: Understanding the current challenges for feminist politics. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2020/Discussion-paper-Democratic-backsliding-and-the-backlash-against-womens-rights-en.pdf>

