

ANNUAL REPORT

# International Centre for Local Democracy

And associated Directors' Report



# CONTENTS

CHAIRMAN AND SECRETARY GENERAL	3
THE ICLD BOARD OF DIRECTORS	4
ICLD'S LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT AND MANDATE	5
ICLD'S CORE VALUES	6
AGENDA 2030	7
ICLD IN FIGURES	8
MUNICIPAL PARTNERSHIPS	10
INTERNATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMMES	13
RESEARCH	16
LOCAL DEMOCRACY ACADEMY	18

# COVID 19 HAS CHALLENGED SYSTEMS, METHODS AND LOCAL DEMOCRACY

**In a time when there is a real need for local democracy, the whole world has suffered a pandemic unparalleled in terms of infection and distribution. The Corona virus has shown, with all the clarity one could desire, that we are all part of a shared, global world. It has also shown that combatting infection is as much a local matter as a global one.**

The pandemic has had a tangible effect on ICLD's operations in 2020, resulting in a transition from analogue to digital. ICLD has been impressed by the willingness to change and the levels of innovation shown by local authorities and regions in adapting so quickly to prevailing conditions and transitioning to online methodologies and solutions. One of the results of this will be enhanced and lasting quality management for both municipal partnerships and international training programmes.

Democratic systems have been under considerable pressure for a long time now, and the Corona pandemic has made the situation even worse.

Research reports and independent institutions alike have shown how the world's democratic scope is shrinking and how authoritarian forces are using the pandemic to further restrict it.

In a time when society's endurance is being tested by massive, global challenges, it is important to note the ability of local democracy to identify solutions at a practical and concrete level. Human rights and citizen's opportunities can only be guaranteed in a strongly institutionalised local democracy.

But silver linings can be found amidst the dark clouds we face. ICLD is grateful for the willingness of Swedish local authorities and regions to help strengthen local democracy and to act as an important counter to antidemocratic forces, even during this challenging period. Swedish local authorities' and regions' know-how and experience of international partnerships have proven to be an increasingly important component in promoting the positive global development of democracy and achieving the goals of Agenda 2030. And as a result, ICLD looks to the future with confidence and looks forward to a continued strong partnership with all interested parties and changemakers, both in Sweden and internationally.



Johan Lilja,  
Secretary General

Lena Langlet,  
Chairman of the Board

# THE ICLD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**ANNA DERWINGER HALLBERG**

DEMOCRACY STRATEGIST

Gotland Region

MEMBER OF THE BOARD

**LENA LANGLET**

DIRECTOR, DEMOCRACY SECTION

The Swedish Association of Local  
Authorities and Regions

CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

**TOMAS BERGSTRÖM**

SENIOR LECTURER

Lund University

MEMBER OF THE BOARD

**MARCUS HOLMBERG**

DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL SECTION

The Swedish Association of Local  
Authorities and Regions

MEMBER OF THE BOARD

Photos: SIDA and ICLD

ICLD is a non-profit organisation. The Board of Directors of ICLD comprises the organisation's members and representatives of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, Gotland Region, and Lund University. ICLD's operations are financed by SIDA (The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) and its operations are regulated by national and international policy documents and by agreements between ICLD and SIDA.



LUND'S UNIVERSITET





ICLD IS A  
NON-PROFIT  
ORGANISATION

# ICLD'S LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT AND MANDATE

**ICLD's operations shall be governed by the overall objective of generating the conditions in which people who live in poverty can improve their living conditions from a human rights perspective. The long-term focus is on using know-how and experience to strengthen local democracy, and the ambition is to help bring about an equal and sustainable world.**

The mandate shall be achieved through activities that promote local democracy in economically and democratically weak countries by building on the know-how and expertise of Swedish local authorities/regions and on research and knowledge development regarding decentralisation and local democracy from an international perspective.

within the framework of the municipal partnerships, and projects that ICLD supports through the international training programmes, have primarily been identified by operators in the partnership countries, or by these operators in collaboration with their Swedish equivalents. Equally, when it comes to research, we encourage projects that are driven by, or in cooperation with, researchers in the partnership countries.

## ICLD'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES IN RELATION TO ITS MANDATE

### MUTUALITY

Mutuality in the partnership is a prerequisite of long-term, lasting results. Democratic development is stimulated by the exchange of experiences between equal partners, working in collaboration, where both parties give and receive know-how and experiences.

### LOCALLY SUPPORTED, EXPERIENCE- AND RESEARCH-BASED

Socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable development requires decisions to be made and actions taken at both international, national, and local level. And while what happens locally can be both impeded and promoted by national decisions, ICLD regards local ownership of both problem definitions and solutions as a prerequisite of goal achievement.

ICLD accordingly supports initiatives taken by those directly affected. This means, in practice, that projects

### THEORETICAL KNOW-HOW AND SYSTEMATIC EXPERIENCE

ICLD regards both theoretical know-how and systematised, practical experience as vital to local development. ICLD's operations are based on using this know-how and experience in both municipal partnerships and the training programmes. These programmes bring together practical experiences from different contexts, and the delegates are confronted with research-based know-how. A considerable body of research exists in the broad field of decentralisation, local democracy, and development, and ICLD's established links with reputable researchers, and its support for research into issues within its operating sphere, enables the latest research to be integrated naturally into the organisation's work.

ICLD proceeds from the belief that learning and experience on the part of individuals within delimited projects has the ability to have a long-term effect. It is particularly important that projects and individual learning can be transformed into organisational learning and long-term change by the institution.

# ICLD'S CORE VALUES

**Democracy's foundations are based on freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom of association, universal and equal suffrage and voting rights, equality before the law, and the principle of non-discrimination. ICLD's core values are based on the foundation of a sound local democracy and are expressed by the following headlines: equality, participation, transparency, and accountability.**

Photo: ICLD



## EQUALITY

Citizens should be treated inclusively and fairly. All citizens shall have an equal opportunity to express their needs and be paid attention to in line with their different requirements. Measures to ensure the absence of discrimination and harassment, and which show consideration for vulnerable groups' needs, with a special focus on the position of women, are all examples of measures that should be regarded as factors for success.

**Clarity in power and responsibility relationships is a prerequisite of a well-functioning democracy. The potential for sanctions and accountability must exist.**

## PARTICIPATION

Local and regional politically run organisations have a responsibility to actively promote a high level of participation in local decision-making processes that relate to the structuring of public sector activities and services. Different ways of increasing participation in the decision-making processes is key, but identifying ways of exerting influence on important substantive issues is equally critical. Steps in the right direction include the development of instruments that increase dialogue and responsiveness, and improve adaptation in line with citizens' needs.

## TRANSPARENCY

Openness in decision-making, in decision-making processes, in planning, and in policy formulation in public sector operations are all of key importance in enabling people to participate in local issues in an informed way, and are, therefore, another key area of a socially sustainable, local democracy. For citizens, increased transparency means that politicians and administrative personnel act openly and predictably. Measures that ensure increased insight, openness and predictability are, therefore, desirable in strengthening local democracy.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

Clarity in power and responsibility relationships is a prerequisite of a well-functioning democracy. The potential for sanctions and accountability must exist. It is not always possible for citizens to play a direct role in decision-making and responsibility must, therefore, be made visible so that it can be demanded during ongoing processes and not just in conjunction with elections. Providing information that shows how decisions are taken, who is responsible, how citizens can appeal decisions, and which gives them the opportunity to find out what the consequences are when mistakes are made is, for ICLD, a sign that the organisations are enhancing the citizens' ability to demand accountability.

# THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

**ICLD views its mandate to support local democracy as clearly linked to several of the SDG's.**

Research shows that there is a clear link between promoting and creating better conditions for local democracy, and improved livelihoods, good health care, education, increased equality, and the creation of tools by institutionalised local democracy to address climate and environmental issues. This improvement in quality of life helps, in turn, reduce the risk of conflict and war. ICLD has collaborated with the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) in 2020, using research to link the operations' developmental activities to the SDG's.

ICLD's goal, in all of the municipal partnerships, is to highlight the SDG's which are affected, directly or indirectly, by the activity, such that the aspect of the global goals is stressed more clearly than others in the partnership. Goals 5, 6, and 17 are, for example, affected if the particular partnership project works with participation and rights issues in connection with water quality. All local authorities relate to the SDG's as a whole, and municipal partnerships' link to increased participation,

equality, transparency and accountability consequently impacts all of the sustainability goals, whether directly or indirectly.

ICLD's equality core value and follow-up area are directly linked to goal 5, amongst others, with equality permeating all of our development work. In concrete terms, this means working actively and systematically to ensure that both women and men enjoy a full range of human rights. ICLD also believes an the SDG's module should be added to existing international training programmes, and that both the ways in which the activity affects the SDG's and the ways in which the various activities relate to the goals should be mapped even more clearly than before.

A closer partnership with the Glokala Sverige ["Glocal" Sweden] information project in 2020 has resulted in ICLD becoming a project partner, as of 2021. This partnership will enable Swedish local authorities and regions to take their involvement in Agenda 2030 to the next level.

## GLOKALA SVERIGE INFORMATION



From the left: Johan Lilja (ICLD Secretary General), Carin Jämtnin (SIDA Director General), Annelie Börjesson (Chairman of the UN Association of Sweden), and Staffan Isling (CEO of SKR).

Photo: the UN Association of Sweden



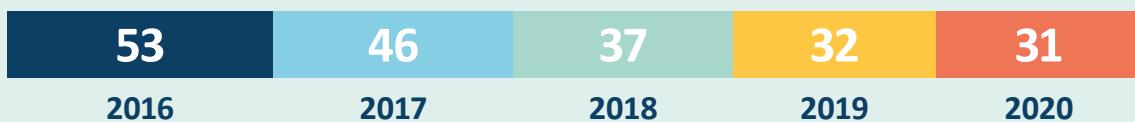
Glokala Sverige is a communication and training project designed to build knowledge of and commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals amongst politicians and administrators in local authorities and regions. The project is a partnership between the UN Association of Sweden, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKR), and ICLD, as of January 2021.

# ICLD IN FIGURES

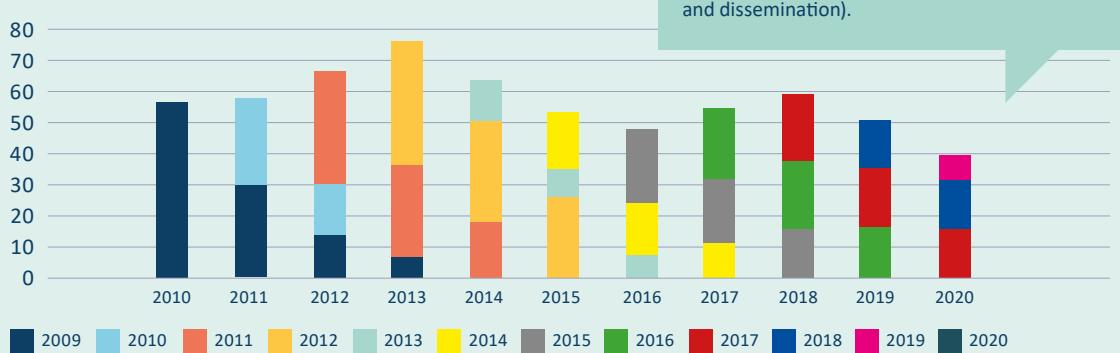
ICLD achieves strong results in both the local democratic and Agenda 2030 spheres.

## MUNICIPAL PARTNERSHIPS

APPLICATIONS APPROVED, 2016-2020



ONGOING PARTNERSHIPS, 2010-2020

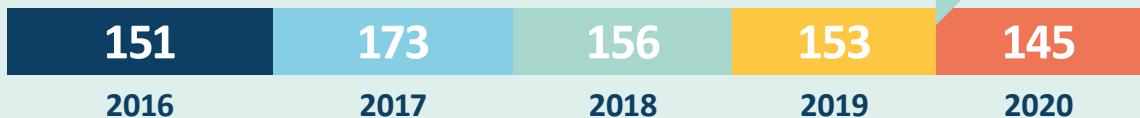


Over 86% of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions members feel that Municipal Partnerships help with operational Development.\*



## INTERNATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMMES

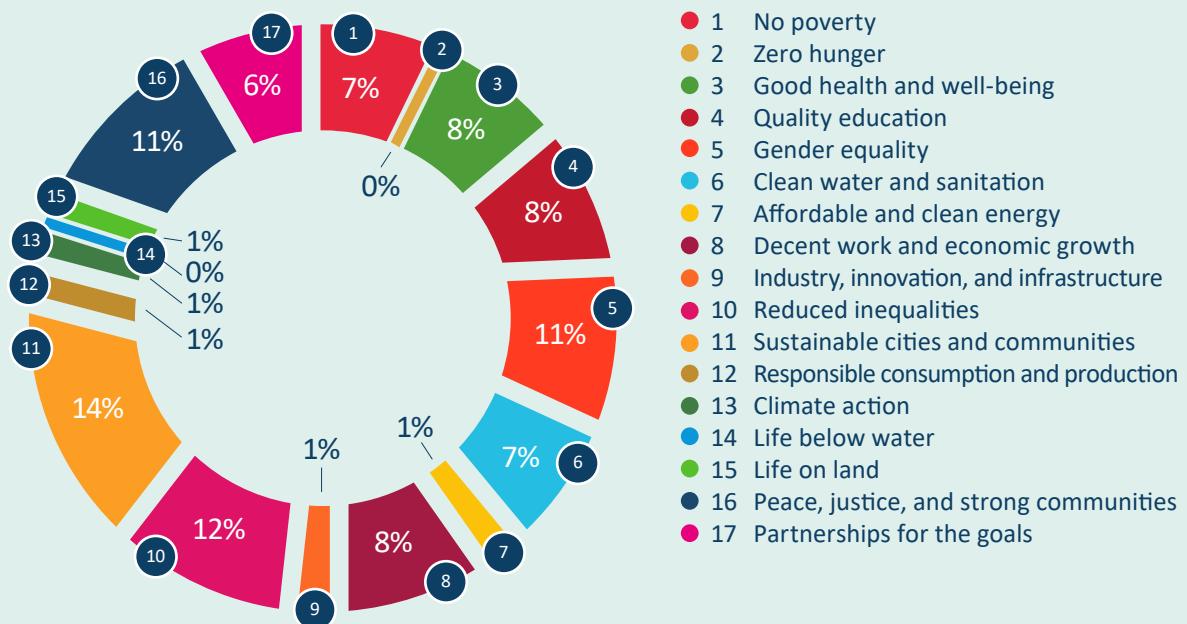
NUMBER OF WOMEN SUPPORTED, 2016-2020



Between 2016 and 2020, ICLD supported 1,250 local and regional administrative personnel and politicians, 778 of whom were women.

## HOW ICLD'S PROJECTS HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO AGENDA 2030

PERCENTAGE OF PROJECTS PER GOAL, 2016-2020



Many of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions' members are keen to contribute to Agenda 2030 through Municipal Partnerships.\*

\*SveMa survey

In the autumn/winter of 2020, ICLD conducted an awareness survey of Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions members, to which approximately 180 local authorities and 9 regions responded. A total of 746 responses were received. The response frequency for the two surveys was just over 26%.



# MUNICIPAL PARTNERSHIPS

**Swedish municipalities and regions have valuable knowledge to share with their international equivalents worldwide.**

**Sweden has a long tradition of local self-governance and experience of local level responsibility for a wide range of societal services. And it is upon precisely this experience and know-how that the international collaborative format, municipal partnerships, is based.**

In a municipal partnership, two seemingly completely different parties take on a similar local challenge at home and together, by exchanging know-how and experience, strengthen democracy at a local level for both partners.

The challenge and the theme of the partnership can, in principle, involve anything that falls under the heading of municipal/regional responsibility. Projects characterised by mutuality achieve better results and strengthen the organisation, e.g. through new or developed methodologies, policies, political statements of intent, or strategies. All partnerships contribute in some way to achieving the Agenda 2030 goals, most commonly with the parties working with issues relating to civic dialogue and/or equality and the inclusion of different groups. The partnership enables both the municipalities and regions to improve operationally while simultaneously contributing both to international development partnerships and helping achieve the global goals.

Once the parties have found each other, they apply for financing from ICLD. The financing is designed to enable the exchange of know-how and to facilitate joint capacity-enhancing activities.



Photo: iStock.com

The following pages provide some examples of municipal partnerships, the approach they have taken, and some of the results achieved.

## A FEW FACTS ABOUT MUNICIPAL PARTNERSHIPS IN 2020

- 31 financing applications approved
- 7 Swedish and 7 international municipalities in Kenya, Serbia, Uganda, and Zambia took part in partnership training courses.

### Conferences held (before restrictions):

- *The International Municipal Partnership Workshop for Botswanan, Namibian, and Swedish local politicians* (delegates from Botswana, Moldavia, Namibia, and Sweden)
- *Organisational learning, result dissemination, and communication from the partnerships* (delegates from 6 municipalities in Sweden and 6 from Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda)

### Digital workshops held

- Organisational Learning for Swedish project managers and coordinators
- Organisational Learning for project managers and coordinators in Zambia, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Botswana.



## STRÄNGNÄS AND DAR ES-SALAAM SECURE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

The partnership between Strängnäs and Dar es-Salaam has been working to secure young people's engagement and participation in politics. The partnership, which has enabled the testing of new methods of interactions between children and young people and the municipalities' politicians and managers, provides a clear example of how the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child can be implemented locally through enriching international exchanges.

Helena Edvinsson, the partnership's coordinator and the local Child Ombudsman in Strängnäs, emphasises the importance both of including children and young people in a way that attracts them and is in line with their needs, and of the work aimed at including children and young people yielding results. Helena talked about the partnership in an ICLD interview with her in the summer of 2020.

*"As the local Child Ombudsman, I'm very keen to make it possible for children and young people to participate in the democratic process and to get answers from politicians. One issue we were keen to address in Strängnäs was the fact that our youth congresses with local politicians seldom resulted in face to face answers for the children on the day. The politicians took the questions away with them, but it was rare for anything to happen after that. We have worked, through ICLD and our municipal partnership, on how we can improve our interactions with young people."*

**Helena Edvinsson**, Local Child Ombudsman in Strängnäs municipality

## MALMÖ AND SWAKOPMUND'S WORK WITH AGENDA 2030

The City of Malmö's involvement in sustainability issues began long before the global goals were adopted by the UN's General Council. The collaborative partnership with Swakopmund in Namibia started way back in 2008, and over the years, it has generated several interesting projects on the theme of sustainability.

The City of Malmö and Swakopmund municipality's "Awareness III Local Sustainable Marine Food" & "Awareness III Urban Gardening" projects have seen the partners working towards the fulfilment Goal 14 of Agenda 2030 on the sustainable use of marine resources and locally cultivated food.

A number of training activities within the framework of the project have increased awareness of the preconditions necessary for urban cultivation. In Swakopmund, for example, efforts have been made to boost capacity by breaking gender stereotypical fishing patterns, offering fishing courses for women.

In Malmö, they worked actively to enhance marine know-how on the part of both the municipality's personnel and its citizens.



Project members from Växjö and An Giang meet

Photo: Bo Hjälmefjord, Växjö Municipality

## VÄXJÖ ENHANCES DEMOCRATIC PROCESS THROUGH WATER PROJECT WITH AN GIANG

The municipal partnership between Växjö Municipality and An Giang provides another example of a partnership project on water-related issues where the partners have inspired each other to develop new solutions. Their partnership has resulted in the development of the democratic processes in relation to technical issues, and improved citizens' ability to see the contribution they, themselves, can make to the democratic process.

The Vietnamese province of An Giang and Växjö Municipality have conducted a number of partnership projects in the environmental sphere since 2010. Some years ago, the partners realised that they shared a challenge: they both had plenty of surface water, but they both also faced some deficient quality-related challenges in respect of this water. They accordingly drew up a new project that would see the municipalities improve their capacity to provide access to clean water while simultaneously enhancing the democratic process by improving the inclusion of key stakeholders in their planning.

Water and sewage management by municipalities' technical administrations is seldom directly associated with democracy issues, but these areas

have a considerable impact on the inhabitants' everyday lives, and the ways in which citizens are included and participate in the projects is, therefore, important. The ICLD-financed project gave Växjö's technical management staff the opportunity to think about their democratic processes in relation to local citizens.

*"As technical management teams, we seldom evaluate ourselves in terms of local inhabitants' participation and inclusion, but ICLD gave us the chance to reflect on our own contribution to the municipality's democratic process. In what way have citizens been able to influence the decision-making processes, is the information we send out accessible to all, and does the general public have an insight into the projects we are working on? Working with these issues enabled us to enhance our own democratic process."*

**Ingrid Palmlöd Örlander:** Project Coordinator and Investigative Engineer in Växjö Municipality

Växjö's and An Giang's partnership has demonstrated how processes that promote an open and inclusive democracy are important, even when it comes to technical issues such as water and sewage. They have also shown how municipalities, whose specific technical solutions are far removed from one another, can learn from and be inspired by each other's approaches in municipal partnerships, to the benefit of both partners.

# INTERNATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMMES

**ICLD's international training programmes (ITP), are primarily designed to enhance municipalities' and regions' ability to develop their local democracy by means of a specific training theme or through a special focus group. The participants work with a project description they have developed and which is designed to strengthen and institutionalise the local democratic process.**

ICLD offers six international and two country-specific training programmes. It also offers an Alumni programme that acts as a network for previous programme participants. The programmes are important tools in helping to achieve ICLD's overall goal of promoting the development of sustainable local democracy in our selected partnership countries within the framework of the Swedish development partnership.

## ICLD'S INTERNATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMMES

- Gender Mainstreaming
- Women's Political Leadership
- Public Financial Management and Local Economic Development
- SymbioCity – Inclusive Urban Development
- Leadership in Local Governance
- Human Rights-Based Approach

### Country-specific programmes:

- Leadership programme – Zimbabwe
- Collaboration – Russia & Sweden

### Networking

- Alumni programme

in the participants' home municipalities and regions. Considerable scope is provided for reflection, during the different phases of the programme rounds, along with the tools that teams can use when disseminating know-how, awareness, and experience. Every participating team has, for some time now, been tasked with holding a seminar in their home municipality after the first workshop, in order to discuss their change management project and identify tools that can be used to promote increased institutionalisation and dissemination, and which are conveyed via interactive workshop sections.

## A FEW FACTS ABOUT INTERNATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMMES IN 2020

- 9 ongoing programme rounds
- 240 people took part in the programmes (145 women and 95 men)
- 14 countries represented in the programmes (7 in Africa and 7 in eastern Europe)
- 83\* teams worked with change management projects in their respective municipalities
- 28 change management projects submitted final reports during the year
- 2 municipalities hosted municipal visits
- 1 Sweden phase was arranged.

\*Individual change management projects, known as Strategic issues, are included in this figure.

ICLD's aim, via these programmes, is to bring about democratic change in municipal and regional administration and decision-making processes. ICLD accepts teams made up of several people from every participating municipality/region onto the courses, in order to increase the impact

The following two pages provide examples of the results achieved by some of ICLD's international training programmes.

## INCREASED YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND INFLUENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

ICLD's Public *Financial Management and Local Economic Development* programme is conducted in close partnership with UNCDF. The programme works with local democracy issues from a budgetary and financing perspective, and enables the participating teams to run projects in a development area that they have, themselves, identified. The Cape Agulhas municipality in South Africa took part in the programme in 2019-2020, generating a number of concrete results that substantially increased youth engagement.

These include the creation of a youth council tasked with working actively to promote youth influence in municipal decision-making. The youth council has drawn up steering statutes, a youth policy, and a youth strategy that has been adopted by the municipal council and which formed part of the planning and budget process for 2021.

The project also resulted in the development of a business portal where 20 young people were trained and helped build a process and data gathering tool that will be used after the project comes to an end. An art project employed seven young people for a period of three months, partly to enable them to learn the "Mosaic" artistic technique, and then to use their art form to address the problem of violence against women in intimate relationships.

Ten young people were given the opportunity, in partnership with the ABSA bank, to take up positions within the municipal administration in order to enhance their work life experience. The aim was to make them more attractive and employable in the labour market.

To summarise, it is clear that it is not lack of interest that results in young people avoiding engagement: rather it is a lack of knowledge about how local democracy works and of the platforms that can enable them to influence decisions and future focus.

The project has given them an understanding of how a unified youth voice can make a genuine difference. The project has created a collaborative interface for ongoing dialogue and information, and a place where young people can make suggestions and initiate further development. This is a real local democracy success! ICLD has helped enable a now ongoing municipal partnership between Ekerö Municipality and Cape Agulhas as a natural continuation of the local democracy work and thus enable further development of this engagement.

## STRONG FEMALE POLITICIANS

ICLD's programme, "*Women's Political Leadership*", is aimed at female politicians and is designed to help enable them to exercise their full potential in their political leadership in order to improve social wellbeing in their local communities. All of the participants are politically appointed. The programme increases the participants' know-how, and gives them the methods and tools that result in the development of their personal political leadership skills. This results in them playing a bigger role in the political debate and enables them to stand for more heavyweight political positions. Many of the participants have also shared the knowledge they have gained not only with their respective committee or administration, but with women's groups at grassroot level.



Rajka Vujovic (left) is a former participant in the Women's Political Leadership programme, and is now the Chairwoman of the Social Democratic Party of Serbia's Women's Forum.

The programme gives participants access to an international network of similarly minded women that they previously lacked. The network is a place where they can discuss challenges in any area, from power structures and harassment both from the political opposition and male colleagues, to positive results. The programme is conducted in partnership with the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKR), who also ensure that all of the participants have access to a Swedish mentor who is also a leading politician, and all of whom are women. The 2020 participants also had the opportunity to plan for and work to counter the effects of the pandemic. All of the participants said that the training had given them a greater knowledge and understanding of their mandate and role as elected politicians – they now play a greater role in the political debate and are standing for more heavyweight political positions than was previously the case, and they are braving new boundaries in the context both of democratic challenges and their leadership.

Many of the participants express considerable political ambition – they wish to stand in parliamentary elections or for the post of mayor/deputy mayor in their home communities, and ICLD notes that several of the former participants in the programme have achieved senior leadership positions.

## INCREASED FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN ZIMBABWE

ICLD often works with one or more partners in the context of the international training programmes. One example of a very successful partnership of this kind is the ongoing one with the Gender Links organisation within the Leadership Zimbabwe programme. The partnership with Gender Links began in 2014, with the help of the Swedish Embassy in Zimbabwe, and has grown in strength ever since. ICLD and Gender Links complement one another, in that both work with municipal administrative personnel and politicians with the aim of growing their capacity to integrate and implement the global goals at local level.

ICLD notes that municipal councils have adopted the programmes that the programme's various change management projects have carried out. The projects have, in turn, resulted in increased pressure for female participation and representation at local level.

At an individual level, there has been a change in the participants' attitudes and mindsets on gender issues, which has played a major part in local leaders increasing their efforts to increase equality at all levels.

In the autumn of 2020, Zimbabwe approved constitutional changes that will increase female representation in local authorities, which was partly the result of a campaign by Gender Links and previous participants in the programme. The result was the Zimbabwean government approved the constitutional change that gives women a 30% quota in all local authorities, thereby increasing the share of female representation at local level by almost 16% at the next election in Zimbabwe.



Photo: ICLD

Gender Links' National Director in Zimbabwe, Priscilla Maposa.

# RESEARCH

**ICLD initiates and supports research into local democracy, local self-governance, and decentralisation. ICLD shares in the latest research findings through its Advisory Group, which is made up of both Swedish and international researchers. ICLD functions as a hub where research and experience-based know-how meet and can be passed on.**

ICLD has financed a long list of research projects at both Swedish and international universities in the areas of local democracy, decentralisation, and the role of municipal self-governance in international development partnerships. One of ICLD's most important tasks involves making research more policy-relevant, e.g. by supporting research projects that can be clearly linked to issues in the partnerships or training programmes. ICLD endeavours to promote the dialogue between researchers and practitioners, and those researchers who are members of the organisation's network are systematically invited to take part in the training programmes or conferences on selected themes.

## BRINGING RESEARCHERS AND PRACTITIONERS TOGETHER

ICLD's combination of support for results-orientated, partnership-based change management projects and training programmes, coupled with the close cooperation with researchers in all parts of the operations, makes its operations unique. Theoretical know-how and systematised, practical experience are both key to local development. ICLD's links with reputable researchers and its support for research on issues relating to the operations enable the latest research to be integrated naturally into ICLD's work.

## RESEARCH MAKING A DIFFERENCE DURING THE PANDEMIC

In 2020, ICLD financed seven research projects in North Macedonia, Indonesia, Kenya/Lebanon, South Africa, Zimbabwe, the Ukraine, and Vietnam, highlighting problems in relation to local decision-making across the world.

The Corona pandemic has had a substantial impact on the research operations. Restrictions and lockdowns have limited travel and social contacts, which has, in turn, prevented researchers from conducting interviews, focus groups, workshops and meetings. At the same time, the pandemic has accelerated a digitalisation process that has created opportunities for gaining access to knowledge in new ways and stimulating a more global knowledge exchange. Several of the ICLD-financed research projects have made a difference during the Corona pandemic, one being the "Mobilising Assets to Bridge the Accountability Gap: applying asset-based and citizen-led development for social accountability and inclusive governance in Emfuleni, South Africa" project.

RESEARCH PROJECTS, 2020	COUNTRY
• Opening the black box of political will: Local public authorities and anti-corruption efforts in Ukraine.	Ukraine
• Interrogating the inclusion and participation of vulnerable groups in Zimbabwe's local democracy.	Zimbabwe
• Morality Policies and the Prospect for Inclusive Citizenship in Decentralized Indonesia: A Study of West Java.	Indonesia
• Whose voice matters for what? Local government inclusion and social accountability in post-conflict contexts.	Kenya and Lebanon
• Mobilising Assets to Bridge the Accountability Gap: Applying asset-based and citizen-led development for social accountability and inclusive governance in Emfuleni, South Africa.	South Africa
• Through inclusion and transparency, to equity and quality. Improvement of the local budget processes in North Macedonia.	North Macedonia
• The Role of Social Norms in Fighting Corruption in Local Governments	Vietnam

The project is investigating how a development process driven by citizens, and which takes into account existing resources, can contribute to inclusiveness, accountability, and local democracy. When South Africa's government launched a three-week-long strict lockdown in March, the project transitioned flexibly to using WhatsApp as a research method for tracking the effects of the political measures on the participants' lives. The new WhatsApp-based data gathering method showed that the participants maximised the use of their available resources during a strict lockdown.

They were able to demonstrate that:

- Citizens have the desire and the capacity to participate more actively in planning and decision-making processes through a closer collaboration with the municipality.
- The municipality should change its methodology from doing things for the citizens to doing things with the citizens.
- The local community is sitting on an unutilised capacity to identify solutions, and that municipalities should cooperate and focus more on providing the support needed.

## ADVISORY GROUP

**A** group of leading researchers in the area of local democracy, the Advisory Group, is linked to ICLD. The purpose of the group is, amongst other things, to advise on strategic operational issues and research requirements, and the members also act as an excellent contact interface between ICLD and academic institutions. The unique thing about ICLD's model is that it links researchers and practitioners together in a way that enables them to inspire and uplift one another.

*"The thing that has impressed me most is how ICLD successfully integrates the advice the group gives into its ongoing work. It is truly rewarding to feel that your academic work can have effects in practice."*

**Tomila Lankina**, Professor from the UK and member of the ICLD Advisory Group.

*"As a researcher, I have learned that research must "travel" to the decision-makers' world to make the research socially and politically relevant. Understanding every country's context is an important step in this journey."*

**Amalinda Savirani**, Professor from Indonesia and member of the ICLD Advisory Group.



Photo: Malaika Mikaelsson

1. **Jesse C. Ribot** – Professor, School of International Service at American University, Washington, DC, USA.
2. **Anders Lidström** – Professor, Department of Political Science, Umeå University.
3. **Annika Björkdahl** – Professor, Department of Political Science, Lund University.
4. **Quinton Mayne** – Associate Professor, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, USA.
5. **Amalinda Savirani** – Professor of Political Science at Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia.
6. **Tomila Lankina** – Professor of International Relations, at London School of Economics, UK.
7. **Andreas Ladner** – Director of the Institute of Advanced Studies in Public Administration at University of Lausanne, Switzerland.
8. **Sten Hagberg** – Professor of Cultural Anthropology and director of the Forum for African Studies at Uppsala University, Sweden.
9. **Valeria Guarneros-Meza**, Reader in Public Policy and Politics, at De Montfort University, UK.

# LOCAL DEMOCRACY ACADEMY

**“Relevant know-how about local democracy must be generated and discussed collectively by researchers, administrators, politicians, and citizens. Only then can we generate solid policy recommendations.”** That was the thesis put forward by Staffan Smedby of SIDA in his introduction to ICLD’s 2020 Local Democracy Academy. His statement reflects the purpose of ICLD’s Local Democracy Academy very well: to make research more relevant for municipalities and politicians at a local level.



## KNOWLEDGE-BASED SOLUTIONS IN PRACTICE

ICLD’s Local Democracy Academy, LDA, shall function as an arena that facilitates decision-making and networking interaction between researchers and local decision-makers. Mentorship and thematic discussions, for example, give researchers feedback from practitioners with the goal of making the research more easily accessible and relevant for municipalities and regions worldwide.

The 2020 edition of LDA was, as with everything else, held online. The theme was “Global Disruptions and Local Democracy for a Post-Covid World”, and brought together 89 researchers (38 women and 51 men) from 28 countries.

As part of the Academy, ICLD organised a panel discussion on the theme of local democracy and lessons learned from the Corona pandemic. The panel is part of ICLD’s strategy of generating public debate on local democracy and developing solid policy recommendations. The panel was organised in cooperation with United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG).

Municipalities were also given the chance, during the 2020 Local Democracy Academy, to ask questions of and discuss their problems with researchers within the framework of the AIMday<sup>1</sup> event. The event gave the municipal representatives an insight into current theories, methods, and arguments in academia, while simultaneously improving researchers’ understanding of the problems faced by administrators and local politicians. The format, in which the academic and the practical meet in a seminar-like environment, is in line with ICLD’s goal of making research more relevant for the municipalities, and thereby helping generate knowledge-based solutions that strengthen local democracy.



<sup>1</sup> AIMday is a concept developed by Uppsala University in 2008 at which academia and industry meet to discuss industry’s issues. It should be noted that ICLD’s edition of AIMday was unique, in that it replaced representatives from “Industry” (in the traditional sense), with administrators and politicians.