

ICLD CROSS-POLLINATION DIGITAL SEMINAR SERIES March 10, 2022

KEY EMERGING ISSUES FOR LOCAL DEMOCRACIES

GET WOMEN MORE INVOLVED! Strengthening Effective Participation and Equitable Representation of Women in Local Democracy
SEMINAR REPORT



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Background

In terms of broad geopolitical sentiment, there is a strong commitment to improving gender equality in political decision-making through the adoption and domestication of multiple international instruments and protocols. The most significant of these is Sustainable Development Goal Number Five on gender equality.

The global strategic intent is to ensure equitable representation and meaningful participation of women in democratic processes by 2030 because it is widely acknowledged that the under-representation and compromised participation of women at any level of governance hinders democratic gains.

With only eight years left to achieve this, there is a sense of urgency that must be reflected in the prioritization of political will towards the interrogation and changing of policies, practices and systems that definitively enhance the quality of women's influence over the political and development trajectory of their communities.

Whereas the successes in terms of advancing women's collective voice and leadership at various levels of political activity are celebrated, critical gaps still exist and must be addressed, at the local democracy stage. Right from the grassroots, both the catalysts and barriers impacting women's political spaces that are evident at the systemic, structural, and societal levels need to be unpacked and deliberately managed for more desirable outcomes.

This progressive change momentum must be sustained and accelerated as a matter of common global importance. Therefore, as force multipliers for equitable and inclusive local democracy, it is imperative that all ICLD ITP stakeholders engage in mutually enriching dialogue that enables them to turn the spotlight onto the gaps, ask the hard questions, share winning approaches, and adopt proactive measures to realign local democracies with the aspirations of SDG 5.

The main objective of the seminar series

To facilitate continuous structured learning, knowledge-sharing, and exchange of practical experience among ICLD ITPs, alumni, and partners across the world in a deliberate effort to strengthen institutional mechanisms for the mainstreaming of gender in local democracies.

The panelists, experts, and moderators



Key definitions

SDG Number 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Women and girls, everywhere, must have equal rights and opportunities and live free of violence and discrimination. SDG 5 is integral to all dimensions of inclusive and sustainable development. In short, all the SDGs depend on the achievement of Goal 5.

Gender equality by 2030 requires urgent action to eliminate the many root causes of discrimination that still curtail women's rights in private and public spheres.

Effective Participation: A value system that promotes the right and competence of women to engage in decision-making and facilitates their access to power at all levels without having to face undue prejudice rooted in gender inequality, the abuse of power or harmful norms.

Equitable Representation: The assurance that all voices are given a fair hearing at the relevant decision-making levels that is commensurate to, and reflective of, their qualitative and quantitative contribution to community development.

The rationale for effective participation and equitable representation of women in local democracy

The balanced engagement of both women and men in decision-making at all levels is a fundamental building block for any viable democracy. It is vital for the enhanced functioning of society as it reinforces the respect for human rights and creates harmony in the distribution of power and social responsibilities between women and men.

Unfortunately, there is widespread evidence across the globe to show that the adoption of legislative and policy frameworks to ensure equal opportunities between women and men has an inadequate translation into any real increase in women's ability to constructively influence the decision-making processes.

There are several countries with a weak political will to mainstream gender equality and therefore, the perpetuation of discrimination against women, even where expressly prohibited by law, receives wide social acceptance. This results in reversals in democratic credentials and lopsided development models which are fragile, exclusive, and unsustainable. It is therefore prudent that women must be allowed the space, voice, and power to enable an ecosystem of equal influence over decisions at all levels to precipitate an inclusive, equitable and resilient development trajectory for their communities.

Session I: Introductions and Seminar Overview

Anne Scheffer Leander opened the third Cross-Pollination seminar and greeted everyone welcomes. The first seminar, on the topic of "Gender-responsive budgeting as a response to the economic distress connected to COVID19", took place in June 2021. And the second seminar took place on October 20th, 2021, with the topic "Advancing women's economic empowerment to curb gender-based violence"

This seminar reflection topic was on "GET WOMEN MORE INVOLVED! Strengthening Effective Participation and Equitable Representation of Women in Local Democracy". 75 participants registered to attend the seminar and 55 participants from 15 countries attended by joining the seminar online.

Welcome remarks by Anne Scheffer Leander, ITP Officer, ICLD



Anne Scheffer Leander welcomed everyone to the seminar and then highlighted the intention of the seminar, which is to give input and share insights on how to get more women involved in local democracy. To cross-pollinate among peers and colleagues to find new solutions to move forward.

“A democratic, inclusive and gender equal society gives everyone the best opportunity to achieve their full potential and to contribute to and participate in a developing society. There is no chance we will achieve the Global Agenda by 2030 if we do not do this together. Women AND Men. I believe that Goal no 5 and Gender Equality is the most important goal of all SDG: s, since it cuts across everything that we want to achieve together. But at the core we need to fix a system that is wrong from the beginning. Women account for half the population, and that means that it is not more than right that also leadership positions should be shared equally. This is part of a structural problem and need to be addressed as a structural problem.”

Anne Scheffer Leander also expressed that ICLD is deeply concerned with the conflict in Ukraine and that not an hour or a day goes by in these worrisome times, and that ICLD do not carry out a single activity without thinking of friends and partners in Ukraine and the struggle for democracy and freedom that they are in the midst of right now. And especially how it affects women and children, and the most vulnerable in society. Therefore, maybe it is as important as ever to carry out this Cross-Pollination seminar today.

The practical experiences and inputs from all participants are important in finding the solutions to the challenges of democracy to “GET WOMEN MORE INVOLVED!”

Presentation of the moderators of the seminar



Anna Kebabze is a national mentor of Georgia in the ICLD Human Rights-Based Approach programme. She is also a development expert at UNDP in Georgia, where Anna works with ensuring that local governments have inclusive and accountable institutions and that civil servants are empowered and trained to deliver high-quality services. Anna brings over 10 years of experience to the agency.



Joseph Ossiya is a national mentor of Uganda in the ICLD Gender Mainstreaming Programme. He is a gender, governance, and communications expert with over 25 years of experience in the field of providing leadership and support to civil society and the development sector. Joseph has been at the forefront of critical private sector support to Uganda's national COVID-19 early response system.

Session II: Panel Discussion

The panel discussion was done by allowing the four panellists to discuss sharing their skills and knowledge based on the questions posed under the theme to ***“GET WOMEN MORE INVOLVED!”*** **More Urgency, More Agency:** Building inclusive, equitable and resilient local democracies.

Presentation of the panelists.



Ms Rajka Vujovic is a Member of the Social Democratic Party (SDPS), Assembly of Vojvodina Province, Serbia. Rajka is the president of the Provincial Women's Forum and the Vice president of the City Board of SDPS Novi Sad.

In her political activism, she advocates for the improvement of the legal position of women in the countryside, quality education of young girls in the countryside, the needs of older people living in the countryside by highlighting their needs in public and advocating for sustainable solutions for these vulnerable groups, and awareness among men and boys on the importance of gender equality.

Rajka is currently at her at the Faculty of Law for Commerce and Judiciary for her Doctoral Studies and as an academic lecturer and as a part of the project team for International Cooperation and Partnership.



Ms Nereah Amondi Oketch is a Member of the County Assembly, Homa Bay County, Kenya. Based on Nereah's strong record championing gender and youth matters at the grassroots level, she was nominated to the County Assembly of Homa Bay to advance gender equality under Kenya's two-thirds gender rule.

She has legislated gender mainstreaming and child welfare and protection and implemented gender response projects under the

NAO Foundation, and is an alumnus of international leadership training programs, working towards preparing women for leadership.

She was the winner of the European Union-funded 'Ms President' Reality show in 2020 and was selected to participate in the Africa Liberal Network's Women Leadership Program. Nereah has addressed the EU Parliament's Committee on Human Rights and Gender Equality, Status of Women Conference. Nereah is running for the office of Member of National Assembly, Karachuonyo Constituency, Kenya in 2022.



Dr Victoria Lihiru is an Academician and Women's Political Participation and Leadership Expert, Tanzania. Victoria Lihiru teaches law at the Open University of Tanzania and serves as the Secretariat for Development Partners Group (DPG)-Governance. Her areas of specialization are Regional Integration, Human Rights and Constitutional Law with great interest in Women's Political Participation and Inclusive Elections. In 2019, Victoria obtained her PhD in Public Law from the Faculty of Law of the University of Cape Town,

South Africa.

With 10 years of experience, Victoria consults with local and international organizations on issues of Governance, Policy Influencing, Gender and Disability Inclusion. Victoria also founded the Her-Ability Foundation, a non-profit organization working to advance the unique potentials of girls with disabilities in universities. She strives to see a world where women and men can equally participate in democratic decision-making processes and platforms.



Hon. Romina Kuko is a Deputy Interior Minister & Chair of Tirana Municipal Council, Albania. As the Deputy Minister of Interior of Albania and Chair of Tirana Municipal Council, Romina is the Security Sector Expert and a Gender Equality Champion, with a long experience in Public Administration and International Organizations.

She has worked at the Ministry of Defense, Euro-Atlantic Integration and Defense Policy Directorate, and with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. By combining research findings with practical work on the ground, Romina achieved to apply the multi-agency approach to providing security both at the central and local levels.

She is also a Chair member of the National Gender Equality Council and the initiator of the 1325UNSCR National Action Plan. She has designed various policies, training and

campaigns for a multi-stakeholder approach focusing on mainstreaming, participation and genderization.

The panellist started the discussion by opening the thought on general reflections about to GET WOMEN MORE INVOLVED! And then answer the questions posed by the participants.

In all matters the women are more affected and yet they are not sitting at the table when their challenges are being discussed or even discussing various challenges which make women more susceptible. For instance, in the current invasion of Ukraine by Russia, despite evidence and some studies showing that women perform better in crisis, yet still women are in minority in participation. This could be to the fact that people respect and tend to listen to the one with resources and make them have influence visible accepted elected especially during elections period as well as the existence of institutional inequality.

Panellists' responses to the reflection's questions

Question 1: What are the suggestions to GET WOMEN MORE INVOLVED! Strengthening Effective Participation and Equitable Representation of Women in Local Democracy?

The following reflections were discussed by panellists based on their knowledge and experiences on how they can be uptaken in practical for the lasting outcome to GET WOMEN MORE INVOLVED.

- Actualize the women's participation through investing resources not by talks, As mentioned before people tend to respect and listen to the one with resources. Therefore, true investing in infrastructures that support women's participation which will make them be selected not only in conference hotels or even on documents.
- Campaign and activism to GET WOMEN MORE INVOLVED are vital but cannot succeed without legalizing it in different aspects including laws, strategic plans but a matter of implementing it starts with the legislature.
- Working and utilizing women already inside political organizations as ambassadors.
- Emphasizing women's participation in rural areas because the rural institutional structure undermines women's participation by making women feel like the participation was not meant for them but for men.
- Women access to the electoral position by governments applying electoral system along with adopting proportional election system. This in return reduces biases, increases their chances to be elected, helps even to reduce the violence against women and increases the chances for inclusion of marginalized groups like People with Disability (PWDs).

- Political parties must be given numbers not only frameworks, for instance, but 50% must also be women. It doesn't take so long to reach numbers; it is just a matter of will.
- Putting more efforts into women's participation in the same way as other interventions.
- Truly empowering women not just showcasing in events and other activities.
- Gender Quotas participation and positive discrimination.
- Embracing the minimal achievement and results and using it as a start for achieving being results for instance a result of 10% can be used as a lesson learnt to do more because it shows something have been achieved.
- Women ensure persistence and not resting or staying in their comfort zone during activism to GET WOMEN MORE INVOLVED.
- Pay attention to disability for instance in Kenya there is a law that automatically kicks off the contesters or any part that confirmed to do violence during the election.

Question 2: How can we deal with the women with no power to protect their votes? How do we give them power in the resource's constraints aspect? Money presents people as better, how can this be addressed?

The following reflections were discussed by panellists based on their knowledge and experiences on how to deal with the women with no power to protect their votes, how to give them power in the resource's constraints aspect and on the situation where money presents people as better.

- Criminalize the vote sell or buy.
- No resources will be enough, so creativity is needed for strengthening participation at low cost, for instance, use of journalists to highlight contesters' profiles, regulate political parties, women and men's laws and authority justice.
- People are very much attracted to ideas, so women must ensure they sharpen with good ideas.
- Women ensure that they are becoming role models when they get an opportunity for being involved for lasting trust by performing well and effectively.
- Political will, awareness provision to the community to change their mindset.
- Robing, as women we need to look for chances for change by ourselves since eg. From families, they are left from the grassroots.

Question 3: How can gender mainstreaming be ensured in political parties' structure and organization change?

The following reflections were discussed by panellists based on their knowledge and experiences on how can gender mainstreaming be ensured in political parties' structure and organisational change.

- A Holistic mindset gender from home to the community about the women's participation along with other aspects. This should start from home by changing the stereotypes for instance, how boys and girls are taught, restrictive, occupation dreams.
- But also legalizing, laws and frameworks should be in place.

Session III: Expert Presentations and Cross-Pollination

Two experts presented in this seminar, that is Dr Victoria Lihiru and Mr Sangulukani Isaac Zulu/ Gender Focal Point, Local Government Association of Zambia.

Effective Participation in Local Democracies: What must be done to get there?



The first expert in Women's Political Participation and Leadership, **Dr Victoria Lihiru** presented the aspect of Effective Participation in Local Democracies: What must be done to get there? The [presentation](#) touched on:

Situation Analysis of WiLD: The Numbers/ The statistical culture

Dr Lihiru highlighted the situation that women's participation is overlooked, and no data is known but also there is no statistical culture. So, the information gap is a forgotten agenda in women's participation for instance among the 53 countries in Africa only 19 (most in SA) has data on WiLD, women make up 21% of the Local Government Authority (LGAs), 79% are men. Councillors mayors come from Political Parties, but women make up 12% of the political parties' leaders, 88% are men.

Situation Analysis of Women in Local Democracy (WiLD): The aspect of Quality

Dr Lihiru highlighted that local governance structures do not have the capacity, resources, political will, autonomy and or implementable plans to promote WiLD. Inactive citizenry especially from women leads to less inclusive and gender irresponsible local authorities. In real life, women are not head for instance head of department or head of states women are then sometimes considered in deputy positions. But also, the plans, regulations and projects and strategies are not gender-sensitive and representative, especially in these areas.

- The quality of WiLD is debatable, which women and how do they get in local democracies.

- The influence of WiLD is contentious How are the WiLD being regarded by their male counterparts, do their voice and contributions matter?
- The impact of WiLD is questionable How are the WiLD leveraging their positions to influence gender-transformative plans, programs, budgets, policies, and laws?

Strategies for increasing qualitative and substantive participation of WiLD

The presenter highlighted insights on how to increase the qualitative and substantive participation of WiLD nations should invest in:

1. Data through local and national level surveys/assessments.
2. Making the concern of women's participation a holistic cycle of change starting from the transformation of families, the education system, and religious institutions.
3. Men/boys Engagement including addressing the care economy. This should start from home by changing the stereotypes for instance, how boys and girls are taught, restrictive, occupation dreams.
4. Change electoral and political laws including
 - Change FPTP to PR
 - Evaluate and reposition quotas, extend them to appointed positions
 - Clear guidance to PP on leadership, resources, candidates and party documents
 - Allow Independence Candidate
 - Independence and gender responsive EMBs.
 - Address VAWEP
5. Gender-responsive EMBs
 - Gender and Social Inclusion Policies and Strategies incl Code of conduct to curb VAWPE.
 - Inclusive and gender-responsive guidelines to media, voter educators, election monitors and other electoral stakeholders.
 - Desegregate the electoral information
 - Engage with WROs
6. Enhance the capacity of LGA on gender equality mainstreaming and programming including providing resources for designing implementation, monitoring, and evaluation (Gvt or CSOs).

7. Leverage LGA routine activities to promote, raise awareness, change mindsets, and promote active citizenry. Use of CDOs, SWO etc. For instance, utilize the power of social media to profile candidates.
8. Run mentorship programs, identify and train aspirants which women leaders in LGAs and other experts mentor/train women aspirants early on before the elections.

Cross-cutting strategies for increasing qualitative and substantive participation of WiLD

The presenter highlighted the Cross-cutting strategies for increasing qualitative and substantive participation of WiLD.

1. Women are not a homogeneous group, pay attention to women with disabilities and those from peripherals.
2. Expose women in Local Democracy to innovation and technological tools to advance their political careers.
3. Access to information, evidence-based engagement.
4. The girl-child.

Participant Breakout rooms

Two questions were addressed for further discussion in the breakout rooms and the reflections were provided based on each question as follows:

Question 1: Given the current situation of women's participation in local democracies in the world/your country, how feasible it is for the world/your country to attain equal participation of men and women in local democracies by 2030?

This is the reflection that came from the breakout on how feasible it is for the world/countries to attain equal participation of men and women in local democracies by 2030.

- Policies and laws A lot of policies not implemented touch cultural tradition, so policies need to be reviewed and implemented
- Lower the money for contesting
- Quoters system by solving the causes and hindrance
- Availability of gender clubs in schools
- Women are nowadays taking the chance, but more efforts still are needed especially by reformation and laws
- Addressing other challenges and barriers that make women spend time on solving them instead of participating in opportunities for their voice up. Such challenges are water accessibility,

- Women need to be good role models from family to the community but also women already in politics need to be change agents for women's participation.

Question 2: Given that only 8 years are left before 2030, what is your advice in terms of what nations should prioritize to attain equal participation of men and women in local elections?

This is the reflection that came from the breakout in terms of what nations should prioritize to attain equal participation of men and women in local elections for the 8 years left before 2030.

- Legal laws to be in place to support bringing more women into local democracy.
- Proportional participation in political parties and institutions must be given numbers of women to be on the table.
- A holistic mindset change starting from home or family to level of community and then to national because if it starts from home through capacity building their ability and confidence to articulate their ideas and influence other people at community level is easy.
- Educating women so that they can compete with their counterpart
- Bringing on board boys and girls so that they can understand what it takes to be not included and gain confidence.
- Sensitization and awareness so that women can defend themselves.
- Review laws and nominations fees
- Special funds to women to promote participation.
- Community or civic education for instance it can be done 3 years before the election not during the election.
- Remove commercialization of politics.

Equitable Representation: Who is not at the table and how can we get them there?



The second expert **Mr Sangulukani Isaac Zulu**/ Gender Focal Point, Local Government Association of Zambia presented the aspect of Equitable Representation: Who is not at the table and how can we get them there?

The [presentation](#) aimed to provide insights into who is not at the table of decision making of equitable representation who are the women and how their presence can be uplifted. Mr Sangulukani Isaac Zulu provided insights and reflections by touching on the global and sub-Saharan African overview, barriers, and suggested ways of bringing Women to the table of decision-making of equitable representation as follows:

Global Overview of Equitable Representation

Dimension	Where are women?	Data Source
Highest positions of State and/or Government	Women heads of state (HS) and/or government (HG) = 23 out of 193	
Speakers of parliament*	Women speakers of parliament* (57/278 = 20.5%)	UN Women, as of Sept. 2021
National Cabinet	13 out of 193 UN member states have at least 50% women in the national cabinet	Women's Power Index Council on Foreign Relations (CFRs)
National Parliament/ Legislature	3 out of 193 UN member states have at least 50% women in the national legislature	
Local Government	Women constitute 2.19 million (that is 36%) of elected members of local governments. (Data from 133 countries) Only 2 countries have reached 50 per cent additional 18 countries have more than 40 per cent women in local government.	UN Women
Highest positions of	Women heads of state (HS) and/or government (HG) = 23 out of 193	

State and/or Government		
Speakers of parliament*	Women speakers of parliament* (57/278 = 20.5%)	
National Cabinet	13 out of 193 UN member states have at least 50% women in the national cabinet	

Sub Saharan Overview of Equitable Representation.

Dimension	Where are the women	Data Source
Highest positions of State and/or Government	4 out of 45 (8%) Heads of State &/or Govt are female. <i>Togo & Gabon (Prime Ministers) & Ethiopia & Tanzania (Presidents)</i>	Women's Power Index (WPI)
National Cabinet	25% of ministerial positions are held by Women * Worth noting to say women are often appointed to roles that are often perceived as soft. e.g., Gender, Child Development, labour, education.	WPI
National Parliament/ Legislature	24 % of elected seats in national parliaments are held by Women	Women's Political participation: African Barometer 2021
Local Government	21% of elected seats in local govt. are held by women	

Who is not at the table?



The barriers to equitable representation

The presenter categorized the barriers to equitable representation in the five factors that are based on the Sub-Saharan Africa lens.

i. Socio-cultural

- Entrenched patriarchal social system
- Traditional beliefs and social norms
- Burden of Triple Roles (balancing reproductive, productive and community work)
- Customary law compounds inequality between women and men

ii. Economical (political financing)

- Huge costs involved in the electoral process
- Disproportionate negative effect of poverty on women hinders their entry into formal politics.

iii. Legal (*Eligibility criteria*)

- Education attainment/literacy as an eligibility criterion has unfairly excluded especially women with less education as they are legally ineligible to run for elected office.
- Nomination fees for candidates: Prescribed electoral fees exclude women and men with low income to contest as electoral candidates. (*Article 71 of the Zambia Constitution (Amendment) N o.2 of 2016*)

iv. Institutional (political party structures are gender-blind)

- Top leadership in political leadership across Africa is often male dominated.
- Political Party policies for adoption of electoral candidates are gender blind, causing contributing to the low proportion of female candidates

v. Political Violence

Political violence and Violence Against Women (VAW)

– physical or cyber (or the threat of it) is a feature in every country –

it prevents women from freely and equally participating in the public sphere and deters those who consider participating

vi. Electoral Systems

- Lack of Quota Systems
- Few countries have adopted Proportional Representation (PR)
- Countries like Zambia that apply First Past the Post (FPTP) have relatively poor female representation

vii. Personal and Psychological

Low self-esteem, lack of motivation Personal psychology eg. lack of motivation because the environment has affected women's ability to participate.

Suggested ways of bringing Women to the table of decision-making

The presenter shared the following Suggested ways of bringing Women to the table of decision-making.

- Human Rights-Based approach to the promotion of gender equality. Women's rights are the human right, and everyone is obligated and must ensure and should be included in agendas

- Awareness campaigns on women's right to participate in social, economic, and political spheres fully and effectively. Women are not asking for sympathy, but their space and it is their right.
- Lobby and advocate for electoral reforms and gender mainstreaming in political parties
- Engage Stakeholders at the national level
- Engage men and boys - Media campaigns against political violence and VAWP
- Lobby for Capacity building in resource mobilization and life skills.
- Lobby Government to operationalize the Gender Equity & Equality Act No. 22 of 2015.

Session IV: Keynote Address, Conclusion, Next Steps and closing remarks

Conclusively, all women have the same quality as same as any man. Statistical culture is needed, proportional must be put in place and gender quotas is needed to encourage them. Women and men have the same quality. So, the mindset of poor quality in delivery among women should be changed as there are also a lot of men with poor quality delivery even more than women who are considered to have poor quality and are still involved in politics. Women must be recognized in quantity and in quality to prove wrong the world the mindset women are not capable because they are women.

Therefore, four key areas nations should prioritize to attain equal participation of men and women and to GET WOMEN MORE INVOLVED in Local Democracy by 2030.

First, mindset transformation along with other aspects should be a holistic cycle. This should start from home by changing the stereotypes for instance, how boys and girls are taught, restrictive, occupation dreams. *Second*, institutional change by maximizing their belief and attitudes about women's participation and inclusion. *Third*, laws and legal, women's participation should be truly legalized, laws and frameworks should be in place in support by action. *Last*, money resources various resources are needed to truly support women's participation and inclusion same way other agendas are financed.

Closing remarks by Karin Melin, Program Director of ITP, ICLD



Karin Melin thanked the speakers and participants for taking part in the seminar and for being active in effective discussions, knowledge and experience sharing on how to build inclusive, equitable and resilient local democracies. She concluded that the goal and objective of the seminar have been realized with resounding success as the thoughts shared in the meeting are important in helping for informed decisions in respective municipalities and regions.

Also, Karin reminded everyone is responsible and it's not too late on meeting the SDGs. Those represent local authorities, are the first line of response to citizens' needs and bear the primary responsibility for the well-being of the communities how panelists and experts pointed out Women's equal participation and leadership in political and public life are essential to achieving Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Therefore, men and women need to work together to give women the space, voice, and power to influence decisions at all levels to create more just inclusive and resilient communities.
