

WOMEN LEADING DEMOCRATIC CHANGE

Impact, Results and Lessons from ICLD's
programme Women's Political Leadership



Foreword

“Real democratic change begins locally. It begins when leaders choose to work with equity, participation, transparency and accountability—not as ideals, but as everyday practices that invite more people to shape their communities.”

Anne Scheffer Leander, Programme Manager Wopen Political Leadership programme, ICLD

This anthology brings together reflections, lessons, and stories from women politicians who have sought to create change in their communities. While political leadership is often described through policies, institutions, and election results, less attention is given to its everyday realities: building trust, navigating resistance, forging alliances, and maintaining commitment through setbacks. The contributions offer insights into these realities from women elected to local and regional government in diverse political and cultural contexts.

The International Training Programme on Women’s Political Leadership, WPL, has provided a space for exchange, reflection, and mutual learning among women leaders from around the world through 12 cohorts between 2013 and 2026. Over the years, participants have built lasting professional relationships and shared experiences extending far beyond the programme itself. This publication is one expression of that collective learning.

The stories do not present a single model of leadership or simple solutions to complex challenges. Instead, they offer perspectives rooted in lived experience, with the hope of inspiring reflection and dialogue among elected representatives, public officials, development practitioners, and others committed to strengthening local democracy.

As the programme concludes with its final cohort in 2026, this publication captures more than a decade of learning from women leaders, mentors, partners, and municipalities. It reflects what made the programme meaningful: political leadership, local democratic practice, peer learning, mentorship, and locally anchored change.

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1. ABOUT THE PROGRAMME



Participants from WPL cohort 10 and 11, 2025.

The international training programme Women's Political Leadership runs for 12-months each cohort and focuses on developing political leadership skills. It is open to women who had an elected seat in a local or regional government in any of the OECD-DAC listed ODA countries.

All parts of the training are based on equity, participation, transparency and accountability, the goal is to strengthen democracy in the organisations taking part in the training primarily by strengthening the politician herself, as well as capacitating women politicians in general to be good role models and to get a higher involvement of underrepresented groups in decision making.

The training is implemented by The Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy, ICLD, in cooperation with the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, SALAR. The programme includes mentorship from Swedish women politicians, who offers insights into Swedish local governance in practice to the participants.

The Programme is based on Agenda 2030 and the 17 sustainable development goals. A special focus is placed on goal #5 – gender equality.

Every politician participating in the Programme is expected to carry out a change process or project during the programme. During the training the participants meets three times, out of which one takes place in Sweden.

FACTS AND FIGURES 2013-2026

12 COHORTS - 275 WOMEN POLITICIANS - 26 COUNTRIES



Each of the 12 cohorts of the WPL programme has included between 18 and 24 participants. In total, 275 women politicians have been trained. Behind these numbers are hundreds of local change initiatives. Together, they demonstrate the thematic breadth of women's political leadership: from menstrual health and girls' education to gender-responsive budgeting, disability inclusion, water governance, youth participation, transparency and citizen dialogue.

Over the years, participants from 26 countries across three continents have taken part in the programme. These countries are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Cameroon, The Gambia, Ghana, Georgia, Indonesia, Kenya, Kosovo, Malawi, Moldova, Namibia, Nigeria, North Macedonia, the Philippines, Rwanda, Serbia, South Africa, Tanzania, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, Vietnam, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

2. WOMEN'S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP & LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

Local governments are at the forefront of many of today's development challenges. Municipal leaders are expected to respond to issues such as climate adaptation, public service delivery, social inclusion, economic development, and citizen participation, often under conditions of limited resources and growing public expectations. The quality of local political leadership therefore matters greatly for both democratic governance and development outcomes.

Over recent decades, women have attained increasing access to political leadership positions around the world, yet women remain underrepresented in political decision-making at all levels of government. During the same timeframe, research and practical experience have shifted attention from just focusing on representation towards the broader question of how women's leadership can contribute to more inclusive and effective local governance.

Evidence from a range of countries suggests that women leaders bring valuable perspectives and priorities into public decision-making. Studies of local government have found that women leaders often place strong emphasis on issues that directly affect citizens' everyday lives, including public services, community wellbeing, accountability, and citizen engagement¹.

Research also highlights the importance of leadership approaches that build trust, foster collaboration, and strengthen relationships between local government and citizens². It is however important to emphasize that leadership outcomes cannot be explained by gender alone. Women leaders operate within diverse political, institutional, and cultural contexts that shape their opportunities to influence policy and drive change. Access to resources, institutional support, political networks, and decision-making authority often matters as much as individual leadership qualities³.

These insights are particularly relevant for countries eligible for Official Development Assistance (ODA), where local governments play a critical role in advancing sustainable development. Across Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East, municipalities face very different challenges and operate within different governance systems. There is no single model of effective women's political leadership yet experience from many contexts points to the importance of strengthening leaders' skills, confidence, professional networks, and opportunities for peer learning.

¹ Chattopadhyay & Duflo, 2004; Htun & Weldon, 2018

² Pierre, 2014

³ Celis & Childs, 2012

2.1 Contemporary barriers to Women's Political Leadership and Inclusion

Women in politics continue to face significant barriers. Unequal access to political networks and resources, gender stereotypes, harassment, and political violence remain common challenges in many settings. These obstacles can limit not only women's access to leadership positions but also their ability to exercise leadership effectively once elected. Women's Political Leadership participants have described resistance from political opponents, limited access to informal networks, expectations linked to gender roles, online harassment, threats, and the challenge of being held to higher standards than male colleagues. These realities make leadership development more than a question of skills. It is also about resilience, solidarity, political legitimacy and the ability to build alliances for democratic change.

4 V-Dem Institute, 2025

Recent global trends add further urgency to these issues. While women's political participation and empowerment have improved over time, progress remains uneven. The V-Dem Democracy Report 2025 highlights continuing democratic decline in many parts of the world, creating new pressures on inclusive governance and political participation⁴. Strengthening democratic leadership at the local level is therefore increasingly important.

The significance of women's political leadership lies not in the assumption that women govern in fundamentally different ways from men. Rather, it lies in the recognition that more inclusive leadership expands the range of experiences, perspectives, and voices that inform public decision-making. For local governments confronting complex development challenges, such diversity represents a potential resource for more responsive, legitimate, and effective governance.



Participants from WPL cohort 11 and 12 with mentors and partners in Nairobi.

3. THE METHODOLOGY

The ICLD's Women's Political Leadership programme combines leadership training, mentorship, peer learning, and applied change management. Throughout the year, participants work on a locally anchored change initiative linked to a challenge or opportunity within their own municipality, region, or political context.

This enables participants to apply new knowledge and leadership tools directly in practice while reflecting on their experiences together with peers and mentors. The programme connects individual leadership development with institutional and community-level change. The change initiative is the bridge between learning and practice.

Learning takes place through a combination of workshops, coaching, structured reflection, and international exchange. A central component of the programme is mentorship by experienced Swedish women politicians, providing opportunities for dialogue, professional support, and comparative learning between different local government contexts.

The programme follows a learner-centred and practice-oriented approach, encouraging participants to draw on their own experiences, test new methods, and learn from one another. By combining individual leadership development with practical change processes, the programme seeks to strengthen participants' capacity to lead and manage change within complex local governance environments.

The programme is in this way built on a simple but demanding theory of change: when women local leaders strengthen their confidence, analytical tools, networks and ability to lead change, they are better equipped to influence institutions, policies and practices in ways that make local democracy more inclusive, accountable and responsive.

3.1 Programme evaluation

The evaluation of ICLD's 2023–2026 strategy identifies the Women's Political Leadership (WPL) programme as one of the organisation's most valued and transformative interventions. Its focus on strengthening women's political participation directly addresses persistent barriers to gender equality and is closely linked to broader development challenges, including gender-based violence, girls' education, and teenage pregnancy. The programme's underlying premise—that increasing women's leadership can contribute to wider institutional and societal change—is well aligned with contemporary approaches to transformative development.

Participants consistently rated the programme as highly relevant to their political roles and local contexts. Beyond formal training, mentoring and peer exchange emerged as particularly valuable components, fostering lasting networks of support among women leaders. Through locally driven change initiatives, participants have addressed issues such as menstrual health, youth participation, disability inclusion, water governance, and gender-responsive budgeting, often with a particular focus on amplifying marginalised voices.

The evaluation also found strong evidence of change at the individual level. Participants reported increased confidence, stronger leadership skills, greater accountability to citizens, and a more strategic approach to their political work.

Many described coaching, peer learning, and structured reflection as instrumental in helping them translate community needs into concrete action. While several participants reported career progression and enhanced influence following the programme, the evaluation also highlights a continuing challenge: translating individual leadership development into broader organisational and institutional change, particularly where resistance to new approaches remains strong.

3.2 From individual leadership to institutional change

One of the most important lessons from WPL is that individual leadership development matters, but it is not sufficient on its own. Women leaders often return to political and institutional environments marked by limited resources, resistance, party hierarchies, social norms or weak administrative systems. The strongest results have emerged when participants have been able to translate their personal leadership growth into organisational routines, policy processes, budget decisions, citizen engagement mechanisms or new forms of collaboration. This movement, from individual agency to institutional practice, is central to understanding the long-term value of the programme.



Participant of cohort 12 together with their mentors visiting Stockholm and SALARS' office

4. THE MENTORING MODEL

– POLITICAL SISTERHOOD IN PRACTICE

Mentorship has been one of the defining features of the WPL programme. Through the involvement of experienced Swedish women politicians, participants have had access to a unique space for political reflection, comparative learning and professional support.

The mentor relationship has not been designed as expert advice from one context to another, but as a dialogue between elected political leaders facing different, yet often recognisable, democratic challenges.

During study visits to Swedish municipalities, participants have explored how political leadership is exercised in practice: through committee work, coalition-building, citizen dialogue, local planning, accountability mechanisms and everyday democratic negotiation and practical gender equality work.

Many participants describe the mentor relationship as a turning point in the programme. It has offered both practical inspiration and personal encouragement. For mentors, the exchange has also been reciprocal, deepening their understanding of local democracy, gendered leadership conditions and political realities in other parts of the world.

On the following pages, you will explore what this mentorship has meant to both the mentee and the mentor.

4.1 Two women, two worlds – one shared leadership journey

When Zambia's youngest woman mayor joined ICLD's Women's Political Leadership Programme, she expected to learn. What she didn't expect was how deeply the programme – and her Swedish mentor – would transform her outlook, her leadership, and her community.

Kanungwe Chota Kanyanyamina was elected mayor of Kanchibiya at the age of 27, becoming the youngest woman mayor in Zambia. Her journey began in the classroom as a teacher and continued through advocacy work for gender equality at the national level.



Kanungwe Chota Kanyanyamina. Photo: Erik-B-Engren

— Leadership can be overwhelming, especially as a young woman in a man-dominated space, she says. I joined ICLD to grow, to gain exposure, and to learn from others.

Her decision paid off. The programme didn't just meet expectations – it exceeded them!

While participating in the programme, Kanungwe ran for Vice President of the Local Government Association of Zambia – and won. She is now the only woman among twelve national leaders in the association.

She credits ICLD with helping her gain the confidence and strategic tools to succeed. Through the programme, she learned how to communicate effectively, build alliances, and bring stakeholders together. But perhaps most importantly, she adopted a leadership style rooted in inclusivity and service over politics. Back home in Kanchibiya, this translated into real change. With her team, she formalised town hall meetings, and

passed a bylaw mandating equal representation in public discussions – ensuring voices from women and youth are always heard.

— What I saw in Sweden – the collaboration across political lines – inspired me. I've tried to bring that spirit of cooperation and inclusivity into everything I do, says Kanungwe

On the other side of the world, Kanungwe's mentor, Matilda Wärenfalk, a Swedish mayor and former language teacher, found the experience just as enriching. She has previously mentored participants from Rwanda, South Africa and Zambia within the programme.

— To follow the participants' journeys closely has been like a dream come true, says Matilda. Despite our different contexts, we face many of the same challenges as women in politics. Being a mentor has given me perspective on my own life as a politician, a woman, and a mother in Sweden.



Matilda Wärenfalk and Kanungwe Chota Kanyanyamina

Her upbringing, shaped by African heritage and global solidarity movements, laid the foundation for her passion for international democracy work. Although she is stepping back from active politics, she hopes to stay involved in development projects in Africa and continue building on the valuable network she's gained through ICLD.

For Kanungwe, the next step is clear: national parliament. In Zambia, mayors lack executive powers and depend heavily on members of parliament for local funding. To drive real change, she wants – and now feels ready – to be at the national decision-making table.

– Thanks to ICLD, I've grown as a leader, an advocate, and a strategist. I'm not done yet – the work continues.

The programme has also strengthened her commitment to gender equality and inclusion, including for persons with disabilities. Inspired by study visits in Sweden and Albania, she's exploring innovative tax models that fund better social services for vulnerable groups.

“The programme has really been life-changing. I now see leadership not just as a position, but as a platform to empower others!”, says Kanungwe Chota Kanyanyamina.”

4.2 Meet the programme managers

The Women's political Leadership Programme Manager Anne Scheffer-Leander has been engaged in the programme since its inception in 2013. Beginning as Communications Manager and Leadership Development Facilitator, she has led the programme as Programme Manager for the past five years, building on more than a decade of experience in developing its methodology,

partnerships and learning approach.

Local democracy grows stronger when women are given the opportunity, the confidence and the networks to lead where it matters most – in their own communities, says Anne Scheffer-Leander.

– Throughout twelve cohorts we have seen that meaningful change rarely starts with large reforms. It often begins with one leader asking a different question, inviting new voices into the conversation and taking the first courageous step. I have seen women leaders return home with renewed confidence, new networks and new ways of working. But above all, I have seen how equity, participation, transparency and accountability become living principles that shape everyday political leadership.

The greatest strength of the programme has never been the workshops themselves, but what participants have gone home and done afterwards.

– Leadership is not about having all the answers, says Anne. It is about creating the conditions where more people can contribute to democratic change.

Lena Lindgren, Head of Political leadership, Department of Democracy and Leadership, SALAR, has been involved in the Women's Political Leadership programme from the very beginning. In addition to contributing to the programme design, she has recruited and supported the Swedish women politicians whose mentorship has become one of the programme's defining features.

– “Political leadership is about governing through democratic processes for the benefit of citizens, bringing people together to tackle challenges and identify opportunities. The programme offers valuable learning and a strong opportunity to support one another,” says Lena Lindgren.

– Good political leadership is built on trust and collaboration – between elected representatives and citizens, across majority and opposition, among colleagues, and between women leaders who support and learn from one another across borders. The mentor relationship is not about transferring ready-made solutions. It is about sharing experienc-

es, asking questions and discovering that many leadership challenges are surprisingly similar across countries. Across cultures and political systems, we have discovered something remarkable: women in political leadership recognise each other's challenges immediately, Lena Lindgren concludes.



“Over twelve years, we have learned that sustainable democratic change grows through courageous local leadership, trusted relationships and persistence. The strength of WPL has been to bring women in political leadership together across borders – not to provide ready-made answers, but to learn from and challenge one another, and turn shared values into meaningful change in their communities.”

Lena Lindgren, SALAR & Anne Scheffer Leander, ICLD

5. WHAT CHANGED?

RESULTS FROM 12 COHORTS

Although participants have worked in very different political systems and local contexts, clear patterns emerge across the programme. The change initiatives differ in topic and scale, but many of the outcomes are remarkably similar. Together they illustrate how leadership development, mentoring and locally anchored change processes contribute to stronger local democracy.

Across cohorts and contexts, WPL results can be understood in six broad areas: strengthened individual leadership; increased use of participatory and inclusive methods; improved ability to analyse and manage change; stronger accountability to citizens; development of policies, routines or organisational practices; and lasting networks between women political leaders..

5.1 Stronger leadership and confidence

How participants developed as political leaders.

One of the most consistent outcomes of the programme has been participants' strengthened confidence in their political leadership. Many describe becoming more strategic, more reflective and more confident in leading change, engaging stakeholders and navigating resistance. Rather than simply increasing knowledge, the programme appears to strengthen participants' ability to act.

Across the programme, participants describe:

- increased confidence in their political leadership
- greater legitimacy and visibility as elected leaders
- stronger strategic thinking and planning
- increased courage to initiate and lead change
- improved communication and public speaking
- greater resilience when facing political resistance and setbacks

5.2 New methods for democratic leadership

How participants strengthened their leadership through practical tools and approaches.

Participants consistently report that WPL has provided practical methods that they continue to use in their everyday political work. Rather than introducing abstract leadership theories, the programme focuses on tools that help leaders analyse challenges, engage stakeholders and lead change in complex local contexts.

Examples include:

- stakeholder analysis
- structured change management
- citizen dialogue and participatory approaches
- strategic communication
- gender- and equity analysis
- reflective leadership practices
- coaching and peer learning
- planning, monitoring and evaluation of change initiatives

5.3 More inclusive local democracy

How change initiatives increased participation, equity and accountability.

Many change initiatives have focused on making local democracy more inclusive by ensuring that more voices are heard in political decision-making. Participants have strengthened opportunities for citizens, particularly groups that are often underrepresented, to participate in local governance.

Examples include:

- increased participation of women in local decision-making
- stronger engagement of young people
- improved inclusion of persons with disabilities
- greater attention to marginalised communities
- expanded citizen dialogue and consultation
- improved transparency and accountability towards citizens
- more equitable access to public services

5.4 From Individual Leadership to Institutional Change

How personal leadership translated into policies, routines, organisational practices and systems.

While personal leadership development is important, many participants have also succeeded in translating new knowledge into lasting organisational change. Rather than remaining individual initiatives, several change processes have resulted in new policies, routines and institutional practices that continue beyond the programme itself.

Examples include:

- adoption of new local policies
- revised organisational procedures
- establishment of new committees or working groups
- integration of gender perspectives into planning

and budgeting

- improved cooperation across departments and sectors
- strengthened partnerships with civil society and community organisations
- new mechanisms for participation and accountability

5.5 Networks that Continue Beyond the Programme

How mentoring, peer learning and international relationships created lasting professional networks. One of the programme's most enduring results is the international network of women political leaders that continues long after each cohort has ended. Participants describe how peer learning, mentoring and continued exchanges provide inspiration, practical advice and professional solidarity across countries and regions.

The programme has contributed to:

- lasting international professional networks
- continued collaboration between participants
- ongoing exchanges of methods and experiences
- strong mentor relationships
- new partnerships between municipalities
- mutual support during political challenges
- a growing global community of women local leaders

5.6 Democratic Resilience and Courage

How participants strengthened their capacity to lead under challenging political conditions and continue promoting democratic values.

Women political leaders often operate in environments characterised by gender stereotypes, unequal access to power, political resistance and, in some cases, harassment or threats. Many participants describe that the programme has strength-

ened not only their professional skills, but also their confidence to remain in political leadership despite these challenges.

Participants describe increased capacity to:

- navigate resistance and political opposition
- build alliances across political divides

- handle conflict constructively
- advocate for gender equality and inclusion
- remain committed during setbacks
- inspire and mentor other women leaders
- promote democratic values in challenging political environments

Voices from the participants:

**”Leadership is not about having no fear
It is about choosing to act despite the fear, because
your community depends on you.**

Christine Kilalo, Deputy Governor, Taita Taveta County, Kenya



**”The programme gave me the confidence to stand my
ground, even when I was the only woman in the room.
Today I speak with greater clarity, and people listen differently.**

Fazira Kawuma, Deputy Mayor, Jinja City, Uganda

**”Real change requires courage, patience and allies.
WPL reminded me that I am not standing alone – I am part
of a network of women changing local democracy together.**

Tiny Nosisa Jojozi, Councillor, Harry Gwala District Municipality, South Africa

**”Resistance is inevitable when you challenge old norms.
What has changed is that I now see resistance as a sign
that change is happening, not as a reason to stop.**

Jane Gamba, Councillor, Entebbe Division, Uganda

6. CHAMPIONS OF LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND WOMEN'S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

Here you will meet some of the programme's participants over the years:

6.1 Ketil Luarasi: Empowering Communities Through Inclusive Leadership

Ketil Luarasi is Deputy Mayor of the City of Tirana, Albania. As a participant in the cohort 10 of the WPL programme, she strengthened her leadership skills and gained new perspectives on inclusive and accountable governance.

One important outcome of her work has been increased representation of women in local decision-making. Ketil has also worked to strengthen transparency and accountability within her organ-

isation, contributing to a more open and collaborative working environment. The programme gave Ketil the opportunity to learn from other women leaders and build a supportive international network. A study visit to a Swedish municipality broadened her understanding of local governance and introduced her to approaches she has since applied to local challenges.

For Ketil, women's political leadership is closely connected to gender equality and inclusive governance. She believes that ensuring women have a meaningful role in political decision-making is essential for creating more equitable communities.



Ketil Luarasi. Photo: Violaine Martin.

6.2 Trina Firmalo-Fabic: Pioneering Women's Leadership in Politics

Trina Firmalo-Fabic is Municipal Mayor of Odiongan, Romblon, Philippines. Since her election in 2016, she has worked to improve local government services and promote good governance, transparency, women's empowerment and opportunities for young people.

As a participant in cohort 9 of the WPL programme, Trina developed a stronger feminist perspective on governance and learned from women leaders around the world. She gained new insights into equity, participation, transparency and accountability, as well as problem-oriented planning and stakeholder analysis. As part of her change process, Trina chose to address solid waste management in Odiongan, focusing on changing citizens' attitudes and practices.



Trina Firmalo-Fabic, participant in cohort 9.

She has used what she learned through WPL to support this ongoing work. The programme also encouraged Trina to build international connections. Together with a mayor from Ukraine, she initiated online exchanges between youth leaders to share experiences and ideas about youth programmes. Trina hopes to continue contributing to democracy, equity and women's rights, both in her municipality and beyond.

6.3 Laurette Mushimiyimana: Political Leader in Post-Genocide Rwanda

Laurette Mushimiyimana is Vice President of the Gisagara District Council in Rwanda. Having experienced discrimination and lost her entire family during the 1994 genocide, she chose to enter politics with a strong commitment to justice and preventing others from experiencing the suffering she endured.

For Laurette, political leadership is about making people's lives fairer and preventing exclusion. She is particularly committed to empowering young people and girls, helping them develop the confidence and skills to become future leaders.

As a participant in the cohort 8 of the WPL programme, Laurette gained new perspectives on women's political representation and gender equality. She was particularly inspired by Sweden's experience of increasing women's participation in political and public life.

Laurette sees leadership development as a way of creating change beyond the individual. By strengthening her own capacity, she aims to empower others and contribute to a more just society.



Laurette Mushimiyimana, participant in cohort 8. Photo: Olga Shadura

Her personal experiences continue to shape her political leadership and her determination to ensure that people's rights are respected and that no one is left behind.

6.4 Charmaine Laubscher: Paving the Way for Sustainable Change

Charmaine Laubscher is Executive Deputy Mayor of Saldanha Bay Municipality, South Africa, responsible for infrastructure and urban planning. As a first-time politician, she has learned the importance of practical support and guidance for people entering local politics.

As a participant in the cohort 11 of the WPL programme, Charmaine has focused on how local leadership can create more inclusive communities. Her change process aims to empower

councillors to develop policies that support marginalised women and children, strengthen support systems and create more opportunities for participation. Charmaine is also committed to the inclusion of persons with disabilities, sustainable farming and food security, as well as transparency and accountability in local government. She sees leadership as a collaborative process and wants to work alongside people rather than simply direct them.

The partnership between Saldanha Bay, South Africa and Karlskrona in Sweden, has provided opportunities to exchange experiences and ideas. Charmaine hopes to use these connections to empower more women and young people to take part in local decision-making. For Charmaine, lasting change depends on working together. She believes that strong networks and collaboration are essential for creating more inclusive and sustainable communities.



Charmaine Laubscher, participant in cohort 11.

7. Lessons for the future

The WPL experience points to several lessons for future work on women's political leadership and local democracy.

First, leadership development is most powerful when connected to real political responsibility and locally anchored change.

Second, mentorship and peer learning create forms of support that technical training alone cannot provide.

Third, women leaders need not only skills, but networks, legitimacy, institutional space and protection from gendered resistance and violence.

Finally, the programme shows that democratic change often begins in practical, local work: a

new routine, a more inclusive meeting, a budget line, a citizen dialogue, a policy revision, a young woman invited into decision-making.

These changes may appear small in isolation, but together they form the everyday infrastructure of inclusive democracy. The WPL Impact Forum in South Africa in October 2026 marks both a conclusion and a continuation. Bringing together WPL participants, alumnae, mentors, South African local government actors and partners, the Forum creates a final space to reflect on results, methods and the future of women's political leadership.

It also underlines one of the programme's central insights: that leadership development becomes most meaningful when experiences are shared, adapted and carried forward by others.



Women's political leadership is not a project with an end date, it is an ongoing investment in stronger local democracy, more inclusive governance and communities where every voice has the opportunity to shape the future.

Anne Scheffer Leander, Programme Manager, Women's Political Leadership Programme, ICLD



The Swedish mentors in cohort 12.

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Participants in cohort 9, visiting the Swedish Parliament.

