



Local Governance key to achieving gender equality and social equity,

OWG 8 – February 2014

Prepared by United Cities and Local Governments

Communities where all citizens are empowered to participate in social, economic and political opportunities are instrumental in the eradication of poverty.

The future SDGs will need to specifically address the needs and the capacities of women to implement sustainable development.

The role of women in the advancement of communities, which is broadly recognized by practitioners working in the field, is not sufficiently reflected in international and national policies. By working on the advancement of women, the whole community will be impacted, to the benefit of all men women and children.

It is with this in mind that hundred of local elected women and men signed in February 2013 the "Paris Local and Regional Governments' Global Agenda for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life" building on the Charter launched in May 2006 by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions and signed by 1300 of them.

The following issues will need to be addressed if a successful Post 201 agenda is to be achieved.

I. Increasing participation of women in local decision-making, in order to guarantee equal representation and to achieve a successful development agenda Post-2015

The promotion of women's participation in local decision-making processes must play a pivotal role in the global development strategy.

The equal representation of women and men in elected posts at all levels of government is a priority objective, due to the impact this has on other spheres of activity. Increased participation of women in political life contributes to women friendly services, greater employment of women and policy development based on the specific needs of women and girls.

Strong partnerships with grassroots women associations are also essential to increase participation in politics but also to support elected women while in office.

II. Equality between women and men to be on the top of the agenda of local public policy making and for adequate service provision that will contribute to improve the condition of women and their empowerment

Local governments, through the responsibilities they assume as public services provider have a key role to play in empowering women. The lack of drinking water, electricity or sanitation infrastructures are expressions of poverty and are areas where local governments have a direct responsibility.

Specific attention needs to be given to women and girls in cities and urban areas, where they do generally live in more vulnerable conditions. Urban planning and slum upgrading

have direct impact on the living conditions of women, who form the majority of the poor, and are often the first to be negatively impacted by lack of services.

Water points in slum areas, public toilets and even family hospitals are the responsibility of local governments. It is therefore essential to ensure that local governments have the financial, technical and legal capacities to provide **universal basic services** including adequate water supply, sewage systems, toilets that are sufficient for the community's needs, accessible and safe for women to utilize, garbage disposal and provision of electricity. Access to universal and quality **healthcare and health services** including sexual and reproductive health services should also be a key target of the Post-2015 agenda.

A high number of slum dwellers are women and many of them are the head of their households. While they are more likely to be employed informally and earn less than men. The Post-2015 agenda should **guarantee socioeconomic equality and economic justice for women and girls**: It requires legislative and social changes to ensure that women have equal rights and equal access to wealth, services and resources such as education, technology; women's human rights to own land and property; and their access to, and control of economic, productive and natural resources.

Inclusive governance structures can promote respect for human rights and facilitate the kind of positive social change necessary to support the advancement of women. For instance, local legal frameworks and municipal policies have provided encouraging reports of increased employment opportunities and more equal conditions.

III. A safe world in particular for women, who are traditionally the most vulnerable to all types of violence

As the UN Technical Support Team (TST) expressed in their issue brief "gender inequality is the most pervasive form of inequality around the world and a pressing human rights concern."

Parliament should legislate to prevent and eliminate ending all forms of violence including sexual and gender based violence

Education programme should be displayed to boys and girls at school, to relevant staff such as teachers and police forces and to the media to tackle gender violence and eliminate stereotypical attitudes and behaviour leading to physical, psychological and sexual violence and abuse

A number of urban specific factors can lead to greater incidence of violence in cities, including more fragmented social relations that erode support or the most vulnerable. Indeed fear for personal safety is an essential and pervasive element of urban life for women. Local public policies sensitive, accessible, and effective should ensure safe mobility. Providing safe public transport and public street lighting are among those policies.

Local governments have vast experience in developing services for the protection of women such as municipal centers for women victims of domestic violence. Millions of women around the world have started a better life, with their children, with the support of these centers, which offer them refuge until they can support themselves.

The situation of women in countries in times of conflict and post-conflict should be specifically acknowledged.