

Local Economic Development with a gender perspective: dialogues for a sustainable and inclusive recovery

Learning and advocacy
document



Edits and coordinates

UCLG Committee on Local Economic and Social Development, Andalusian Fund of Municipalities for International Solidarity (FAMSI)

Editing

Likadi, UCLG Committee on Local Economic and Social Development

Design

BPS Aldiseño SLL

The document is available online at <https://desl.uclg.org/>
For more information, please contact del.cglu@andaluciasolidaria.org

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PRESENTATION

On Wednesday, April 28, 2021, the International Seminar Local Economic Development with a Gender Perspective: Dialogues for a Sustainable and Inclusive Recovery, jointly organized by the Committee on Local Economic and Social Development of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and the Andalusian Municipalities Fund for International Solidarity (FAMSI), was held. The Seminar was aimed at promoting reflection and dialogue on gender mainstreaming in local development, as a preparatory activity for the V World Forum on Local Economic Development (to be held in May 2021). It made approaches, proposals, and very valuable experiences visible when addressing local strategies in terms of equality or, as one of the speakers said, the transformation towards a feminist municipalist agenda.

It is now of great interest to recover this experience and to extract, systematize and disseminate the lessons learned. This is the main **OBJETIVE** of the elaboration of a learning and advocacy document, as an instrument from which to share and socialize the main ideas generated collectively in this seminar.

The document is mainly addressed to **LOCAL LEADERS**, but also to organizations, professionals and activists working in this field and, by extension, to all those people and entities interested in making progress, from a feminist municipalist approach, in the collective construction of an egalitarian future and, only then, sustainable and fair one, from the local level.

For this purpose, it is **STRUCTURED** in four content blocks together with this presentation:

- ▶ The first one, ***a bit of context***, is oriented to situating the topic at hand, equality in local development, and to frame it in the important impulse that the World Organization of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), together with FAMSI, is giving to the gender approach within the framework of its commitment to transform cities and territories, in which the seminar and this document that reports on its lessons learned are inscribed.
- ▶ The second block, ***approaches in dialogue***, synthesizes the main ideas of the main approaches or perspectives (feminist, municipalist), and above all their intersections, identified in the voices of the participants, which provide the backbone of where they speak from and where they orient their goals.
- ▶ The third section, ***experiences that leave lessons learned***, systematizes significant experiences or practices regarding the integration of the gender equality approach in local development.
- ▶ Finally, and in accordance with its applied purpose, the document closes with a chapter dedicated to gathering the ***proposals that guide future action***, arising from the different approaches and contexts that were discussed in the seminar.

1. A BIT OF CONTEXT

In recent decades, the progress made by women's and feminist movements and their growing impact on the political agenda and institutions at all levels of government (the international level in many cases as a driving force in others, but also in a large part of the nation states) have also had a strong impact on local political strategies and agendas.

It is true that this force was multiplied since the Beijing World Women's Conference (1995), when the **GENDER MAINSTREAMING APPROACH** emerged as the most effective strategy for achieving the objectives of equality between women and men. Since then, it has been gaining ground, not only theoretically or methodologically, but with important examples of application to the organisation, procedures and practices of local entities and institutions.

While celebrating the enormous progress that has been made in this area, more than 25 years after its formulation, there are many challenges ahead. Some of them are linked to the very logic of transversality, which challenges the traditional way of thinking and organising our advocacy activities (by themes, plots, areas, topics). Additionally, it should not be forgotten, because it is about transforming practically all the dimensions of our personal and collective lives, affecting dynamics, relations and social structures of organisation and power that are still very strong, with great capacity to resist change and we would even say, indeed, resilience in the negative sense. That is to say: of inverting and reinvesting themselves over and over again to continue reproducing the inequalities between women and men that they seek to eradicate.

New **CHALLENGES** are now being added to the traditional ones; the pandemic of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has hit our societies across the board, in a context of low economic growth, increased poverty and inequalities which, as is already becoming visible, has a much more negative and direct impact on women: economic precariousness, increased burden of care, lack of public services to cover new needs (in addition to the "usual" ones), violence in the private, digital and public spheres, etc. All of these phenomena are unfortunately not new to us but are now presenting themselves with unusual gravity and urgency.

None of this stops us. **FEMINIST MUNICIPALISM** has decades of advocacy and learning. The challenge of fully integrating equality between women and men in local development is great and ambitious; fortunately, there are more and more of us, we have a consolidated trajectory, and we have an increasing number of successful strategies and practical experiences of community intervention from the already global municipalist feminism. We hope that this document is a small sample of this.

2. APPROACHES IN DIALOGUE

Any meeting place, such as the seminar described in this document, implies the reaffirmation of approaches that share common assumptions, goals, and ways of understanding, and of points of view (although, a priori, are not always entirely shared) that dialogue in this space in order to enrich each other. Without wishing to be exhaustive, but with the intention of giving some basic outlines, the following are their main ideas and strengths, in order to situate the proposals that are then presented from these frameworks.

In this meeting of approaches, the basis that articulates all the others are the contributions of **FEMINISM** to our way of understanding the world, demanding equality between women and men in all spheres of life and exposing (with data, studies, methodologies, etc.) that in many cases, under the veil of formal equality, real equality is far from being effective for the majority of women throughout the world.

In its growth and expansion, the feminist and equality movement has been proposing various strategies to advance in this direction from political, economic, and social institutions and organisations. Among them, since its formulation at the IV International Women's Conference (Beijing, 1995), *Mainstreaming* or **TRANSVERSAL INTEGRATION OF THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE** has been configured as the most appropriate for this progress. Although this is a complex strategy, it may be useful to recall its **key elements**¹ here, in order to situate the shared assumptions in this meeting of approaches:

- First, a common understanding of **gender inequalities and their origin**: inequalities between women and men are recurrent, present in all spheres of life, rooted in social structures and dynamics, and tend to reproduce themselves. Therefore, "any strategy to eradicate them can only be effective if a comprehensive approach is adopted, which addresses the structural aspects of these inequalities"². This brings us to the second point:
- A **comprehensive strategy**: aimed at placing men and women at the forefront of the intervention, systematically considering their needs and priorities and their specific situation, in all phases of the planning cycle of our actions (from the design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of their results), and not only in policies specifically oriented by the objective of equality between women and men but in all areas in which we intervene: education, health, urban planning, culture, etc.
- A systematic **methodology** for its implementation, with specific lines of action in at least two dimensions from which it must be approached: changes in *procedures* or "ways of doing" (which affects all procedures: information, communication and dissemination, personnel management, participation and representation, etc.), and transformations in the *structure* or forms of organisation of the entities (with the establishment of mechanisms for coordination, articulation and execution, monitoring and control of the implementation of the mainstreaming strategy).

¹ We follow here the bases identified in *Gender Mainstreaming: methods and techniques*, Andalusian Women's Institute (Natalia Biencinto López, 2010).

² Biencinto López, N. (2010: 16)

This approach has a long history since its enunciation, and there are countless experiences available - in every imaginable field, including local development, as will be seen in some of the experiences selected in the following chapter - that exemplify not only that its application is possible, but also the effectiveness of its results.

From this integral and multidimensional perspective that is proposed for tackling inequalities between women and men, the encounter with other approaches is not only probable but essential. Among them, there is a particularly relevant one that articulates the proposals that were made in the seminar and that are included in this document; the **ENCOUNTER BETWEEN MUNICIPALISM AND FEMINISM**. This encounter between municipalist political and citizens' platforms and feminist movements has been going on for decades. It is worth remembering that, since its origins, the local level has been a catalyst for women's active participation and the seed of initiatives that have sought to go beyond their representation in local authorities to permeate all politics in their territories. Against this background, over the last twenty years a very fruitful alliance has been forming between the two movements, promoting interventions for local development that integrate gender equality as a cross-cutting objective and criterion for action.

As stated in one of the most important documents in this field³ **FEMINIST MUNICIPALISM** "is not about women's rights, but about a new kind of society that is built from the bottom up with equality as the only way forward".

On this path of generating new alliances that allow for the construction and strengthening of a global feminist municipal movement, the impulse given by international instruments and institutions is unquestionable: the aforementioned Global Platform for Action emanating from the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing 1995), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)⁴, or the New Urban Agenda (NUA)⁵, constitute the basis on which an international agenda of its own is being consolidated. In this agenda, the **2006 European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life**⁶ and the 2013 Paris Global Agenda for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life of Local and Regional Governments are real turning points in the definition of a feminist local political and action agenda.

This is also the framework for the work of the **COMMITTEE ON LOCAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNITED CITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS (UCLG)**, established in 2017 as a voluntary community of local authorities, representatives of local governments and associations of local and regional governments, to promote new models of economic and social development. Among its activities, it is worth highlighting the firm commitment to gender mainstreaming in this development.

The International Seminar, from which the main lessons learned are presented in this document, is an excellent guide on how to progress on this path towards an egalitarian and sustainable recovery, with proposals on how the equality approach should be incorporated into local policies and strategies. All of this with the aim of promoting structural approaches *that contribute to reducing the social and gender gap in our territories and compensate for the effects of the crisis*⁷.

³ One of the main references for our approach to feminist municipalism in these lines is the document *The transformative commitment of cities and territories towards the generation of equality (UCLG 2021, at <https://www.uclg.org/es/recursos/publicaciones>)*, to which we will refer in several sections of this document.

⁴ The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs list the goals that must guide local public policies in coordination with regional and national policies. Specifically, SDG 5 calls on local governments to strengthen their commitments to equality between women and men. Precisely, the UN has dedicated the year 2021 to making visible and promoting goal 5.5, which refers to the empowerment of women.

⁵ An excellent review of these instruments and their relevance for feminist municipalism can be found in the aforementioned document.

⁶ European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life (2006) is the result of a participatory process articulated through the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR). In it, signatory local and regional governments commit themselves to respect the principle of equality between women and men and to implement local gender equality policies.

⁷ Concept note and programme of the International Seminar.

3. LEARNING EXPERIENCES

After a quick review of the approaches that intersect to form a comprehensive and integrated perspective of what gender equality in local development is and implies, this section aims to demonstrate, with several experiences implemented at this level, that it is not only possible to put it into practice, but that doing so multiplies the positive effects of any initiative implemented in this field. In the International Seminar, several experiences or practices were narrated, in the voice of those who were in charge or close to its implementation, some of which we have rescued here to account for the variety of angles, contexts, levels of intervention, participating agents, goals, etc. from which they can be approached.

These experiences are presented below⁸, first locating them spatio-temporally, describing their fundamental elements, and briefly assessing their results, the progress achieved and the challenges that have been identified in their implementation.

METHODOLOGY FOR THE IDENTIFICATION OF GENDER ELEMENTS IN SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT SERVICES	
INTRODUCTION	Location: City of Bijeljina, Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Entity in charge: Secretariat of NALAS (Network of Associations of Local Authorities South-East Europe). Programme or strategy: UN Women.
DESCRIPTION	The Mayor of the City of Bijeljina and the PUC management committed to apply the methodology to identify gender aspects in the provision of solid waste services. Based on the assessment, an action plan was developed based on the views on gender mainstreaming in this local service of more than 600 citizens, through online and face-to-face questionnaires and focus groups to verify data and clarify findings. The survey will result in a report with concrete measures for the incorporation of water management services in Bijeljina.
LEARNINGS	Expand learning opportunities for local staff and practitioners on gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive budgeting. Ensure political commitment of local elected women officials in SEE to the promotion of gender mainstreaming.
FURTHER INFORMATION: http://nalas.eu/services/E-academy	
SOCIAL CATERING SERVICE “EL AVÍO”	
INTRODUCTION	Entity in charge: “El Despertar” women’s associations federation in Campo de Gibraltar Rural Area (Spain). Period of implementation. 2020 - Present.
DESCRIPTION	This is a catering service that emerged as a project of seven women's associations in rural villages in Campo de Gibraltar. Among its objectives are the promotion of equality for rural women through social and labour insertion programmes, the community development of our villages and the creation of social economy enterprises for the provision of local services.
LEARNINGS	An essential service is offered to the community (nurseries, senior citizens' centres, etc.), and to women, relieving the domestic burden, to be able to devote themselves to employment and become more autonomous. New sources of sustainable employment are created for women.
FURTHER INFORMATION: http://federacioneldespartar.blogspot.com/	

⁸ In order to ensure that the information was homogeneous, it was provided on a sheet with the three fields indicated.

COMMON GENDER AGENDA: WOMEN LEADERS FOR CAPE VERDE'S 2030 AGENDA	
INTRODUCTION	<p>Location: municipalities on Fogo Island (Cape Verde).</p> <p>Entities in charge: Cape Verdean Institute for Gender Equality, National Association of Cape Verdean Municipalities.</p>
DESCRIPTION	<p>Project designed in the aim of establishing an advocacy platform with women leaders that integrates a set of demands regarding the promotion of equality between women and men in local politics.</p> <p>It is not an agenda of political parties, but one of taking a position on fundamental issues for territorial development and public policies for gender equality.</p>
LEARNINGS	<p>El proyecto tuvo un impacto muy significativo en las mujeres beneficiarias, de empoderamiento y concienciación respecto a las desigualdades de género.</p> <p>A su término, las participantes elaboraron un plan de trabajo para multiplicar su incidencia y participar activamente en las cuestiones sociopolíticas y económicas de la región.</p> <p>Se ha logrado hacer de la igualdad entre mujeres y hombres en la esfera política, económica y social, uno de los objetivos de los municipios participantes.</p>
FURTHER INFORMATION: https://www.facebook.com/iciegcv/	
EQUALITY MONITORING IN TURKISH MUNICIPALITIES	
INTRODUCTION	<p>Location: 8 municipalities in Turkey: Beylikdüzü, Ordu, Kütahya, Estambul, İzmir, Eyyübiye, Çukurova and Mersin.</p> <p>Entities in charge: Women Candidates Support Association (KA.DER) in cooperation with the Middle East and West Asia Section of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG-MEWA). Project funded by the Norwegian Embassy in Ankara.</p> <p>Period of implementation: September 2020 - December 2021.</p>
DESCRIPTION	<p>The project builds on KA.DER's commitments. Women Friendly Cities, to institutionalise equality through the design, implementation and monitoring of an egalitarian and inclusive policy at the local level, in cooperation with non-governmental organisations. As well as, from the UCLG-MEWA Committee on Gender Equality, making progress on SDG 5.</p> <p>With the main objective of strengthening the capacities of municipalities to implement equality mechanisms, specific targets were set:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Monitor KA.DER and UCLG-MEWA commitments in the member municipalities. II. Promote municipal policies for the institutionalisation of gender equality. III. Promote women's active participation in policy and decision-making. <p>This ongoing project is meeting its objectives through the following activities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analysis of the <i>current situation</i> in the municipalities, by reviewing relevant documentation and through primary sources, to learn about their work on violence against women and the promotion of women's participation in political and economic life. 2. <i>Monitoring of commitments</i> and reporting on their results. 3. Organisation of an awareness-raising campaign on social media and a closing event, with the participation of municipal representatives, NGOs, experts, academics, and the press
LEARNINGS	<p>The level of awareness of municipal staff on gender equality is very uneven. Also, not all of them have a specific department or commission for gender equality.</p> <p>Moreover, social participation in the preparation of the strategic plan has not been entirely satisfactory.</p> <p>Better coordination is needed to bridge the lack of information and awareness on the issue and to promote women's participation in society.</p>
FURTHER INFORMATION: http://uclg-mewa.org/committee-on-gender-equality/	

GENDER BREAKDOWN OF NALAS SURVEY DATA IN SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE	
INTRODUCTION	<p>Entities in charge: Secretariat of NALAS (Network of Associations of Local Authorities South-East Europe).</p> <p>Period of implementation: 2021.</p> <p>Strategy: Strategic Objective 02: Resilient Communities (Principle of Inclusion).</p>
DESCRIPTION	<p>Infographic: The data collected by the NALAS network of Knowledge Management Assistants in the framework of the Gender Survey 2021 resulted in a Report and Infographic on the representation of women and men in local governments, Local Government Associations and the governance bodies and structures of the NALAS Network.</p> <p>NALAS survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 affects women and men differently and during this crisis the existing gaps are widening. Women have been disproportionately affected, as they are more likely to lose income and less likely to have access to social protection measures. • Almost 60% of SEE local governments in post-COVID-19 socio-economic recovery have taken gender-specific needs into account when designing and implementing response measures. Local authorities have supported women as a vulnerable group and have particularly prioritised single mothers at risk of poverty, the expansion of domestic violence prevention systems and the provision of essential services for survivors of violence, accompanied by awareness-raising campaigns.
LEARNINGS	<p>The dramatic impact of the crisis on local finances</p> <p>The need for consultation and coordination of intergovernmental policies.</p> <p>The importance of cross-border cooperation in tackling the crisis in order to find the best solutions.</p>
<p>FURTHER INFORMATION:http://www.nalas.eu/News/Gender_info; http://nalas.eu/News/GA2021_3; http://www.nalas.eu/News/Survey_Covid19y</p>	

4. PROPOSALS GUIDING FUTURE ACTION

In coherence with the objective that guides the document on learning and initiation, this last chapter is dedicated to compiling the main proposals that emerged from the different approaches and contexts discussed in the seminar. It is worth noting the difficulty of systematising and organising diverse proposals arising from contexts as diverse as Palestine or Canada, Andalusia or Burkina Faso. Added to this is a socio-historical moment of great inter- and intra-territorial **complexity**, in which pre-modern and contemporary structures and dynamics typical of globalised societies intertwine and coexist, not without tensions. This complexity is further compounded by the transformations and new challenges posed by a pandemic that, on the evidence of research, appears to have expanded and amplified pre-existing inequalities between women and men.

However, diversity and complexity do not prevent but rather challenge us even more strongly to find a **COMMON MINIMUM**; it is not, of course, a question of putting forward proposals for all, but rather of identifying those that unite us in the construction of egalitarian local environments. As will be seen, these are not new issues, but they should be put in order and valued in order to, firstly, systematise and expose the issues that have defined the agenda of global feminist municipalism for some time and, secondly, as a basis for the co-construction of this common minimum that will guide the future of our actions.

To this end, the proposals have been grouped into **three blocks**, corresponding to the three essential dimensions from which to approach the transformations proposed:



4.1. LEADERSHIP, EMPOWERMENT, AND REPRESENTATION

In this first dimension, it is a question of addressing the WHO of the proposed changes, a dimension that refers to leadership, empowerment, and the representation of women in local development. As Sawsan Istephan, councillor of the city of Beit Jala and member of the UCLG MEWA Gender Committee and participant in the Seminar recalls, one of the most obvious challenges is to achieve a balanced representation of women in local decision-making spaces.

While there has been much progress in this regard, it is still **VERY UNEVEN AND ALSO EXTREMELY FRAGILE**. This is demonstrated by the available data⁹ on the differences in participation between regions (between countries but also between regions within the same country), between the different areas of local government due to the effect of horizontal segregation (more women in areas of local government traditionally linked to the sphere of care: social, health, education, etc.) , and even between levels of the local hierarchy (more permeable in positions of popular representation, in plenary sessions and government teams, but much less so in single-person bodies of maximum responsibility). Moreover, as crisis situations such as the one we are currently experiencing as a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic show, the progress made is also very *fragile*.

The demand for the right of women to participate in this sphere, as in all other spheres of social, cultural and economic life, has been one of the first, and in many cases the driving force behind others, on the political agenda of feminist municipalism. This demand is not (as tends to be interpreted in a somewhat reductionist way) only numerical: it is not *only* – but, of course, also - a question of balancing the numbers of women’s participation in the decision-making sphere, but of **ENSURING THAT THEIR NEEDS AND INTERESTS ARE PRESENT** in local policies.

After centuries of demand and experience in this regard, it can be said that while this presence at the local level has been a “cradle of feminist leadership and an enabler for empowering women in public office and as active leaders of our communities”¹⁰, representation of their diverse interests, while not always guaranteed, is more likely. This is recalled by Laurence Kwark, Secretary General of the World Social Economy Forum (GSEF), referring to a recent study carried out in India which shows that in territories led by women, issues related to equality between women and men, such as defending the pension system, care services, the fight against gender violence, or electoral reforms towards more participatory democracies, among others, are more frequently included in the local political agenda.

This is a step forward in the approach to women’s leadership and balanced representation in decision-making, an approach based on a vision of women as *drivers* and leaders of transformation and not as *victims* “not to be left behind”. To materialise it, in the words of Sara Hoeflich, Director of the UCLG World Secretariat Learning Team, it is necessary **to go beyond the inclusion of women’s voices and representation in local development, it is to make local politics feminist**. This brings us to the second point of these proposals.

⁹ UN Women and UCLG have established a new indicator to measure progress at the municipal level with respect to SDG 5.5, regarding the proportion of seats held by women in local government. According to the latest available data (2020), women hold 36% of these seats, but only 15% of the 133 countries that provided data have exceeded 40%, and only 2 reached 50% representation (UCLG, 2021: 12).

¹⁰ (CGLU, 2021: 3)

4.2. A WAY OF DOING LOCAL POLITICS

In this section we deal with another dimension of mainstreaming gender equality in local development, namely the HOW of transformations. That is, the approach that should permeate global political action. The aim is to show that this integration does not only imply incorporating more women into decision-making, but, as the title says, a whole way of doing politics from this level. This “way” of doing politics constitutes the “how” of the mainstreaming strategy, a complex and integral “how” whose approach goes beyond this space, but of which it is important to recall some of the key points, pointed out in the seminar.

One of these first key points is related to another of the great contributions of the feminist approach to public policy, which consists of exposing and demonstrating that local space and politics **ARE NOT NEUTRAL**: they have different consequences for women and men because their starting points are not only different, but also unequal. According to this assumption, local public policies can contribute to overcoming these inequalities, by taking them into consideration and by adopting active strategies to eradicate them. If they are not taken into consideration and we continue to “pretend they do not exist”, **their reproduction, by action but above all by omission, is favoured**. This must be the basic assumption of any strategy for mainstreaming equality in local development.

In order to ensure that local development policies do indeed actively contribute to equality between women and men, another of the bases of the proposed approach is worth mentioning here. In this case it is about insisting that feminist municipalism **IS NOT ONLY A “WOMEN’S THING” BUT A TRANSVERSAL APPROACH** that brings a way of understanding and explaining societies and local development, specific needs and demands, and objectives and procedures that involve women but also the **whole of society and local politics**. This is another of the bases that gender mainstreaming strategies in local development must observe.

Thirdly, as one of the seminar’s participants recalled, such integration **IS NOT ONLY ABOUT WHAT IS DONE BUT ALSO ABOUT HOW IT IS DONE**. What will be dealt with in the next section. It is important to note here, as indicated at the beginning of this document, that gender mainstreaming is not just about “adding” new issues to the political agenda, but also about transforming the **procedures** or ways in which politics is usually done. This is a critical point of the proposed approach that is not always visible in our interventions, and which involves everything from the way we *communicate* with citizens - with written and visual language that does not make women invisible, and channels that ensure that it reaches them equally -, the way we manage *information* - ensuring that we have data disaggregated by sex at all levels, which is analysed from a gender perspective -, and how we promote citizen participation - ensuring that we use methodologies and participation mechanisms that ensure the participation of those who, like women and especially those from certain social groups, have traditionally been excluded from the public space and local decision-making forums. These are just a few examples of how almost all forms of local policy-making are affected by the integration of a gender equality approach.

Finally, decades of work and advocacy have taught us that the possibilities of transforming our territories are **multiplied** if we also influence **global political agendas**. A double movement towards equality between women and men is therefore necessary: from the local to the global, but which also recognises the international pacts as fundamental driving forces for the adoption of feminist demands at state, regional and local levels. Thus, the advocacy and promotion of the objectives, issues, and ways of doing politics of feminist municipalism must not be limited to local territories, but must **PERMEATE ALL REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND GLOBAL POLITICAL PRACTICE**. For this reason, in this feminist municipalist political agenda, agreements, pacts, networks, coordination and meetings between people, entities and institutions that work for these objectives and with these forms of action in the regional, state or international spheres are of fundamental importance.

4.3. A FEMINIST MUNICIPALIST AGENDA

Finally, this last dimension addresses the WHAT of these changes or the essential issues to be included in the feminist municipalist agenda. The integration of the gender equality approach in local development also implies a political agenda of its own, with issues that have traditionally been absent from public policies, made invisible by the androcentrism that permeates our socio-political, economic, and cultural structures and dynamics, but which are strategic for feminist municipalism and must be addressed urgently. It should be clarified that they are not exhausted in the following list, although we understand that together with the participants in the seminar, they are the fundamental ones at this socio-historical moment.

1. Care, from the periphery to the centre of socio-economic development

If there is one issue on which the global feminist municipalist movement is most in agreement, it is undoubtedly this one: the need to put care at the heart of local development. Quoting Olga Segovia (Red Mujer y Hábitat de América Latina y el Caribe, SUR Corporación Chile), one of the speakers in the seminar, it is worth beginning by saying that the starting point here is a concept of care in a broad sense, as what it is: that it not only covers the material sphere - ensuring that the physical needs of the people being cared for and the spaces in which life is produced and reproduced are met - but also the affective sphere; it is not only about doing, but also about “foreseeing and preventing something negative from happening” (M. Ángeles Durán, 2020).

With this concept, gender mainstreaming implies recognising care as an intrinsic element of local development, indispensable for sustaining life and society as a whole. This, beyond a theoretical statement, has important implications in local political practice: from urban design, active employment policies, protection against precariousness and poverty, and even, as seen in one of the experiences presented, urban waste management. All of them are affected by this consideration of care as the centre and, above all, of the visibility of those who carry it out: mostly women¹¹.

Poner los cuidados en el centro tiene, decíamos, infinitas implicaciones en la práctica política local; agrupando éstas, podemos decir que dibuja, al menos, la necesidad de realizar un doble movimiento:

- On the one hand, the design of *all local development policies* based on **co-responsibility**. But not (only) as a private agreement within the couple, but, in coherence with this conception of care as the centre of local development, as a social pact in which all social agents are involved. The challenge that gender mainstreaming therefore poses for local governments in this respect is “**to create towns and cities that care**”¹². How? With co-responsibility policies, public services and resources that truly cover the care needs of dependent persons, or with urban planning designs that make this co-responsibility possible, among many other lines of action that can be addressed.
- On the other hand, we must consider - in order to minimise them - the impacts that the unequal distribution of care work have on *women’s* lives: invisibility, precarious material conditions, difficulties of access and permanence and worse working conditions, health problems and a long etcetera that must be eradicated, once again, from the public sphere: with positive actions that place **women on an equal footing** in the distribution of time, wealth and the benefits of development.

This need is even more urgent and strategic given the challenges posed by the so-called “new normality”, with a profound reorganisation of productive and care work that requires, in parallel, new sustainable local development responses that do not continue to reproduce the unequal distribution of this work and, on the contrary, and from the two dimensions mentioned above, actively contribute to equality between women and men.

¹¹ The latest international studies indicate that women and girls worldwide spend approximately 12,500 hours on care work, equivalent to 10.8 trillion dollars per year (OXFAM, 2021).

¹² UNDP; UCLG, UNCDF (2021): COVID-19 Gender-Responsive Local Economic Recovery Handbook, United Nations Development Programme.

2. Defending public services and local accessibility

One of the driving forces that has historically proven to be the most powerful in enabling the transformations required for equality between women and men is the establishment of a network of accessible, quality public services and resources that meets the needs of all citizens, but especially those of the most vulnerable groups. The strengthening of these public services and resources must also be done from this double dimension: firstly, by ensuring that they are designed, provided, and evaluated considering their contribution to equality between women and men; and secondly, by tending specifically to the needs of women, their opportunities and difficulties of access, their interests, etc. This does not only apply to care services, which usually have a direct impact on women's opportunities for equal access to other areas, but also to educational, health and social services, among others, which must be accessible and of high quality at the local level.

It is also important, as Laurence Kwark, Secretary General of the World Social Economy Forum (GSEF) recalls in reference to the situation in Asia, not to link access to these services and resources only to participation in formal employment, because women make up the majority of the population in situations of "inactivity", unemployment or employment in the informal sector and also in precarious jobs, which makes it difficult or even impossible for them to access basic services and compensatory social benefits. This is all the more important in the face of employment crises such as the one caused by the pandemic.

Finally, in these times in which we are witnessing serious setbacks in the quantity and quality of public services assumed by national states, it is necessary to pay special attention to the need to **decommodify basic services**, to quote Olga Segovia once again. The policy, unfortunately so widespread globally and especially in the territories with the highest rates of gender inequality, of "whoever can pay, can have access", is one of the most effective producers of social inequalities that we know of. These include gender inequalities in particular. As we have mentioned, this is due to the poor quality or lack of local public services - and we insist that it does not only regard care services, but also education, health, transport and even street lighting - has a much more negative impact on women's lives and opportunities.

In the face of setbacks or their threat, feminist municipalism must insist on the need to **prioritise public space over privatised space**, an important condition not only for women to be able to effectively exercise their citizenship rights, but also a fundamental driving force for the development of the territories as a whole.

3. Women's empowerment

The third goal to which our proposals must be oriented is to achieve women's autonomy, especially **economic autonomy**. Though it is quite enough, it is not only a basic condition for the full exercise of citizenship rights and access to resources and services, but a fundamental element in reducing social inequalities in general. As Laurence Kwark argues, investing in women's economic empowerment establishes a direct path to gender equality, poverty eradication and inclusive economic growth.

Again, the pandemic has profoundly affected the field of employment, in both the formal and informal sectors, where the majority of women work throughout the world. To the extent that they were already the ones whose opportunities to access and permanence of paid work were reduced, the current situation doubles the challenge for gender-sensitive local development. This is obviously a challenge that *does not affect all local economies equally*, but even in the most advanced countries in terms of equality between women and men, such as Canada, the pandemic has highlighted the **pre-existing inequalities** more starkly. As stated by Bev Esslinger, Councillor of Edmonton (Canada), Member of the Standing Committee on International Relations of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), another of the participants in the seminar, one of the biggest challenges facing the territory in terms of recovery is how to incorporate and reincorporate all those women expelled by the COVID-19 crisis into employment.

This means, once again, promoting co-responsibility in the exercise of care work, which, as the data and studies to this effect show by demonstrating the **vicious circle** established for women between *time poverty and income poverty*, is still the main obstacle to women's access to this autonomy¹³. Although it may seem obvious, it is worth stressing once again that the responsibility for breaking this cycle lies with **society**. From this approach, it is not *only* a matter of working with women and improving their opportunities for access, quality and working conditions, but also, and above all, of changing the structures in which inequalities are based, involving the public sector - we have already seen how - and the business sector. Regarding the latter, beyond legal obligations and the inspection of compliance, the local sphere has a very valuable instrument for making the business sector an active agent in the achievement of equality between women and men: incorporating equality clauses in calls for incentives, subsidies, aid, and public contracts. This is another practical example of gender mainstreaming in local development by using all the instruments available to local policy for this purpose. It is also an example of the need to create and exploit synergies between social, economic and health policies, integrating this approach in all of them.

¹³ A recent study by Olga Segovia for ECLAC (*Who cares in the city?*) provides compelling data on this issue in the region.

4. Commitment to ecological transformation

To quote Laurence Kwark again, it is worth noting that the progress of gender equality must go hand in hand with the reversal of the **negative effects** of unbridled economic development on the environment. This is crucial at a time when these effects, which threaten to reverse fundamental development breakthroughs, are beginning to be felt more clearly. To make these effects visible, various international organisations have already begun to work with what have come to be known as “climate displaced persons” and to put them into figures. According to UNHCR (2021)¹⁴ more than 20 million people must leave their homes every year due to the dangers caused by the increasing intensity and frequency of extreme weather events (rainfall, drought, desertification, environmental degradation, cyclones or rising sea levels). Beyond what is already a reality, and returning to Laurence Kwark’s contributions to the seminar, the threat looms for more than 500 million people living in poverty in areas with a high risk of disasters.

Again, this threat does not affect the entire population of the territories at risk equally. The ecological crisis is also intersected by social **inequalities**, with gender inequalities intersecting all of them. Thus, environmental imbalances disproportionately affect those who depend most on their equilibrium, women and especially women from vulnerable social groups, hindering the benefits of social development from reaching all.

For this to happen, it is necessary once again to make the global environmental agenda a feminist one, exposing the unequal effects of the climate crisis on women and proposing alternatives for global economic development that are not only sustainable but also egalitarian. On the other hand, it is essential for feminist municipalism to pay attention to this issue and to give it an important place in its agenda, fighting for the inclusion of women in economic development and its benefits, but also exploring **other possible plural and environmentally friendly economies**. The seminar provided some examples of these **alternative forms** of production in which women take centre stage. This is the case, for example, for the promotion of cooperatives of farmers and producers and consumers, in fair trade, which provides access to a regular and fair income and improves their living conditions in economic, health and social terms, as well as ecological development. Also, in general, of the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) entities, whose impact on gender inequalities was also discussed in the session. Thus, according to a study in Korea¹⁵, SSEs seem to be more likely to consider inclusion and social cohesion, which provides a basis for empowering people from social groups with fewer opportunities, particularly women. Furthermore, through alliances with social movements, the SSE has the potential to engage in forms of active citizenship, including the demands and interests of women’s and feminist organisations.

The above are examples of the **synergies** that can be created by incorporating a gender equality approach into environmentally friendly local economic development policies.

¹⁴ Data available at <https://www.acnur.org/cambio-climatico-y-desplazamiento-por-desastres.html>

¹⁵ Research on the impact and contributions of the SSE in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in the city of Seoul, conducted by GSEF, in collaboration with UNRISD, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, and mentioned by Laurence Kwark..

5. Deepening local democracy and strengthening the “community”

One of the main opportunities that the local space has traditionally provided is that it has been - without ignoring the great inequalities in representation that affect all spheres of decision-making - more permeable to women’s **participation and self-organisation**. Feminist municipalism takes up this tradition of participation in the local space and thus converges with the demands of other social movements for the construction of a renewed, more participatory democracy, which in some contexts – such as civil society organisations in Africa, Latin America and Asia have claimed - has even led to the coining of the term community democracy.

In this line of vindication, feminist municipalism must go beyond the mere representation of women in local politics to demand changes in the very forms of representation and participation in democratic systems. These demands are, if possible, even more necessary and urgent in a socio-political context such as the one we are currently experiencing, with the rise of neo-fascist, authoritarian and fundamentalist movements, which **threaten** - now explicitly - to roll back the progress achieved so far in terms of equality between women and men. In the face of this threat, feminist municipalism must make itself visible as a global actor with a clear agenda to stop any regression and aim for a greater broadening of citizens’ participation, especially that of those who have traditionally been excluded from local public space.

This leads us to think of another line of action related to the previous one, which has to do with strengthening the “community”, not in the traditional sense of a social control mechanism. This opens up another line for feminist municipalism, aimed at exploiting all those potentialities that the social relations of proximity of the village, the neighbourhood, and neighbourliness offer when it comes to overcoming structural inequalities or mitigating their effects. In this sense, there are two dimensions towards which our actions should be oriented:

- On the one hand, the need to promote these ways of life and relationships by integrating a gender equality approach into **territorial planning and management policies**. Feminist urbanism has provided us with very clear proposals in this sense, showing how it can be favoured from the very design of our cities, opening enormous possibilities for economic development - for example, through efficiency in the use of time - and also favouring other aspects such as mental health - through proximity in social and affective relationships - and even personal safety and integrity - by preventing or hindering the expression of certain forms of violence against women.
- On the other hand, empowering **women’s self-organisation** from the community. This self-organisation not only makes it possible to resolve urgent or immediate practical needs, but also increases the possibilities of moving towards forms of organisation oriented towards the defence of their strategic interests.

The seminar highlighted numerous experiences of women-led community responses to the pandemic to ensure, for example, food security, collective education, or community care. But there is also abundant evidence of the latter. In this sense, Laurence Kwark insists on the importance of empowering women who do not necessarily have previous organisational experience, but who have a great capacity for self-organisation and, with it, a much more active participation in the local, national and global community through exchanges of knowledge and experiences of struggle, sharing resources and learning tools, connecting and becoming collectively aware of gender inequalities, debating and generating new strategies and, in short, networking and achieving greater advocacy for their eradication.

6. Fight against all forms of gender-based violence

Undoubtedly, another of the issues that must necessarily articulate the proposals of global feminist municipalism is the fight against all forms of violence against women and girls. Without neglecting the male violence that takes place in the sphere of intimate partner relationships, it is also important to make visible those that occur in the **public and political space**, those that take place in the streets, in squares, or on public transport, as well as all forms of **gender-based cyber-violence**, exacerbated by the intensive use of digital media during the pandemic.

It is also essential to always highlight the **structural** nature of these forms of violence against women, which are rooted in inequalities (political, social, economic, symbolic) between women and men. Furthermore, it is essential to insist on the way in which violence against women both rests on and contributes to perpetuating men's relations of power, domination, and control over women and, closing the circle, one of the most important factors in perpetuating it, being a consequence, but also a cause, of social inequalities between women and men.

With the above in mind, the **relevance** of this issue in the feminist municipalist agenda is understandable, and even more so in the current circumstances. Although the figures for the incidence of male violence were already alarming before the pandemic¹⁶, the results of studies carried out throughout the world are conclusive regarding its increase during the pandemic. This is what all the participants in the Seminar stated: from the data presented by Rasmata Compaoré, mayor of Section 12 Ouagadougou and president of the women's group of the Association of Municipalities of Burkina Faso (AMBF), to the figures provided by Sawsan Istephan (West Bank), all agree in identifying this as one of the fundamental issues to be addressed at the local level.

7. It is not equality if it is not equality for all

Finally, it is important to note the need to build and defend a political agenda in which we are all involved. Advocating for gender-equal local development implies thinking about the situation and position of women and the various intersections of gender with other dimensions such as national origin, socio-economic status, functional and age diversity, the situation of migrant women, LGBTI, and all the other systems of oppression that operate with gender to place women in positions of structural inequality. These intersections have direct implications for our agenda, which involve, first, identifying this diversity and analysing it from a gender perspective, and then co-constructing as complete a map as possible of common and diverse needs and interests, in order to work and demand local development that provides a coherent and comprehensive response to the global and specific inequalities that affect us.

We close this document with a call for the importance of **ADDRESSING AND REVERSING THE SETBACKS** we are witnessing regarding the place of gender equality on the global policy agenda: gender equality must remain increasingly central to sustainable development strategies going forward, and most especially to medium and long-term plans for economic recovery and resilience. This is the only way to move towards

“a better future, a more feminist future”¹⁷

¹⁶ UN Women reports that 243 million women and girls suffered physical or sexual violence worldwide in the year leading up to the pandemic

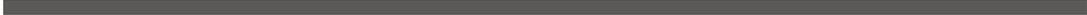
¹⁷ xtracted from the closing speech of the Seminar by Sara Hoeflich, UCLG World Secretariat.



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