



**EMPOWERING  
WOMEN LEADERS  
IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE:  
STRATEGIES FROM  
THE INNOVATION CORNER**

The “Innovation Corner-Women’s Leaders and Innovators in Local Governments” advocacy event was organised on 15 Nov 2023 on the occasion of the 9<sup>th</sup> UCLG ASPAC Congress held from 13 to 15 November 2023 in Yiwu, China. The representatives of UCLG ASPAC members (local governments and local governments associations) from Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, India and Philippines participated in the event.

The objectives of the event were two-fold: to promote gender equality and active participation of women in decision-making roles within local governance, and to encourage commitments and recommendations from local governments and stakeholders to support and promote women’s participation and leadership.

The Innovation Corner underscored recommendations towards the commitment of local governments to drive positive change in women’s leadership in the Asia Pacific. By raising awareness, showcasing concrete efforts, influencing policies, and fostering collaboration, the Innovation Corner has played a pivotal role in advancing the cause of gender equality and empowering women in local governance across the Asia Pacific region.

UCLG ASPAC members shared initiatives and opportunities on gender equality through posters. Catbalogan ensured women representation in its various local councils, raised awareness on violence against women, and amended its local Gender and Development Code. Makati created the Gender and Development Council and guaranteed gender-responsive case management for children. The All India Institute of Local Self-Government (AIIILSG) initiated the Girl Power Project that aims to empower women in becoming social entrepreneurs. The National Association of Rural Municipalities in Nepal (NARMIN) implemented targeted gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) programmes, empowerment programmes, advocacy and awareness campaign, and inclusive planning and budgeting for the women and marginalised groups in Hupsekot Rural Municipality. The Federation of Sri Lankan Local Government Authorities (FSLGA) highlighted the passage of a national law mandating 25% representation of women in every local council. The National League of Councils of the Kingdom of Cambodia (NLC) implemented specific trainings for the NLC board, women candidates, women councillors, and local government administrators and political parties, and developed a capacity development plan for the NLC Women and Children’s Affairs Committee.

The data and evidence collected by Federation of Canadian Municipalities in PMI-WILL project regarding the barriers and challenges women face related to running for election and to playing leadership role as administrators in local government were also showcased through posters for the audience awareness.

Ms. Mary Heather White, Director PMI WILL Project, Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) presented research findings of Barriers to Women Candidates and Women Administrators in Local Governments in Five Countries i.e., Benin Ghana, Zambia, Cambodia, Sri Lanka. The data fell into four categories; policy and legal barriers, social and cultural barriers, institutional barriers, and personal barriers. At the end of her presentation, she shared with the audience that in September 2023, the United Nations conducted a midterm review of all the Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 5, which is for gender equality. They found that globally, women hold 35% of seats in local government, which is a 4% increase since 2015. At this rate, it will take 30 years to achieve gender equality in local government.

Representatives of local governments and associations presented their best practices and experience to respond to gender equality and address these barriers which women continue to face and to take urgent action to close the gender leadership gap in local government. The presenters of the session included Mr. Datuk Seri Mahadi Che Ngah, Mayor of Kuala Lumpur (2020 – March 2023), Malaysia, Ms. Chadini Akushla Ramanayake, National Project Coordinator (PMI-WILL), Federation of Sri Lankan Government Authorities, Ms. Khan Sovy, Mayor of the Ou Chum Commune, Ratanakiri Province, Cambodia, Prof. Dr. Genius Umar, Mayor of Pariaman City (2018-2023), Indonesia and Ms. Agnès Charlotte Bickart, Head of Institutional Relations of Metropolis.

Link of posters: <https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/1n8nVk5FoW0obQXh16dNTgEvEBws8jlx4>

The Innovation Corner also brought together insightful recommendations for local governments and other stakeholders from speakers and participants of the event, emphasizing key strategies to promote women's leadership and gender equality in local governments. The following recommendations emerged from the discussions.

## Recommendations for Local Governments



**Public Education for Overcoming Patriarchal Barriers:** Public education on the impact of patriarchal norms on gender equality to garner support and promotion of women in local governments.

**Knowledge Sharing and Learning:** Encourage municipalities to share best practices with each other, fostering the exchange of knowledge and skills among women in politics.

**Awareness and Capacity Building for Effective Contribution:** Raise awareness and build the capacity of women leaders to effectively contribute to inclusive plans, decision-making processes and influence municipalities for funds and policy implementation with support from various stakeholders and organizations.

**Training and capacity-building programs:** Organize training and capacity-building programs specifically designed for women leaders. These programs can focus on leadership skills, public speaking, networking, and policy development to enhance women's confidence and abilities.

**Mentorship programs:** Establishing mentorship programs can help aspiring women leaders connect with experienced politicians or administrators. Mentors can provide guidance, support, and advice to help women navigate the challenges they may face in politics.

**Institutionalization of Gender:** Allocate an annual budget by the local governments for gender equality and gender-responsive development, institutionalizing a commitment to these principles.

**Strengthen gender-responsive policies:** Develop and implement gender-responsive policies at the local level, address issues that specifically affect women, such as healthcare, education, and economic empowerment, and ensure that women's perspectives are considered in decision-making processes.

**Effective Communication Strategies:** Effective communication is a cornerstone of successful leadership. Women leaders in politics should strengthen their communication skills by using different communication tools, enabling them to present themselves to the world and disseminate their messages effectively.

**Inclusive Decision-Making:** Ensure increased representation of women in councils and decision-making roles to accelerate the promotion of gender equality in society.

**Inclusive Planning and Budgeting:** Emphasize inclusive planning and budgeting processes to address the diverse needs of the community.

**Data Collection on Gender-Based Discrimination:** Collect and analyze data on gender-based discrimination and violence to inform remedial policies and planning.

**Social Inclusion Programs:** Implement social inclusion programs to ensure the involvement of marginalized groups in community initiatives.

**Awareness Campaigns for Marginalized Groups:** Conduct awareness campaigns specifically targeting marginalized groups to promote their inclusion and participation.

## Recommendations for other stakeholders



**Capacity Building for Local Government Associations (LGAs):** Strengthen LGAs through targeted capacity building on gender equality and women's leadership to better support and facilitate municipalities

**Voter Education:** Organisations/ LGAs to conduct educational campaigns to inform voters about the importance of women leaders in municipalities, fostering their participation and candidacy in elections, and promoting inclusive societal development.

**Education on Women's Rights:** Promote education on women's rights, empowering women leaders with the knowledge to advocate for themselves and their communities.

**Inclusion in Education Curriculum:** Integrate women's rights and political participation into the education curriculum, starting from grade 1, to enhance gender equality and women's leadership roles in decision-making.

**Financial Support for Women in Politics:** Encourage financial support from the government and political parties to women in politics to support women's campaigns, covering expenses such as advertising, campaign materials, and public engagement initiatives., help level the playing field and ensure that women candidates have equal opportunities to compete in local elections.

**Encourage political party support:** The government can encourage political parties to include in their manifesto the active support and promotion of women candidates. This can involve creating incentives for parties that nominate more women or penalizing those that do not prioritize gender diversity in their candidate selection.

***These recommendations serve as a comprehensive guide to advocate advancement of gender equality and women's leadership in local governments, fostering a more inclusive and equitable society. By implementing these strategies, an enabling environment can be created for women leaders in local government, promoting gender equality and inclusive governance in Indonesia.***

In summary, the Innovative Corner at the occasion of UCLG ASPAC Congress served as a strategic and interactive space to advocate for gender equality, women's political empowerment, and women's leadership roles in local governance.



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<https://www.fcm.ca/en/programs/international-programs/pmi-will/partnerships-municipal-innovation-women-in-local-leadership>