



61st UN Commission on Women - #CSW61



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Standing Committee on Gender Equality, UCLG-Women

UCLG statement to the 61st meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women

Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work

As the spheres of governance closest to the people, local and regional authorities are best placed to lead the paradigm shift necessary to combat the persistence and reproduction of inequalities, and to achieve women's empowerment in the workplace and other areas of public and private life.

Local and regional governments and members of UCLG can make a significant contribution to "**Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work**":

- 1. Local and regional governments have an important role as employers;** they employ millions of people across the planet and, as such, have a direct impact on their working conditions, economic empowerment and prospects.
- 2. Local and regional governments are important purchasers.** Local and regional administrations can have a significant impact on the local employment market through public procurement and contracting processes with the private and third sectors.
- 3. Local and regional governments are service providers.** They can have a significant role in creating the right enabling environment and knock-on effect on women's economic and employment prospects when delivering service in the areas of education, health, care and transport.

The benchmarks for local and regional governments in terms of policies to guarantee women's economic empowerment are the **Paris Local and Regional Government Global Agenda for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life**, signed by hundreds of local elected women and men in 2013 and in the 2006 **European Charter on Equality of Women and Men in Local Life**. The Charter sets out **a number of areas in which local and regional administrations can have a decisive impact on women's employment prospects and economic empowerment**, many of which are also reflected in the Paris Agenda.

In the follow up of the Millennium Development Goals and the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, the following issues will need special attention to ensure women's economic empowerment:

I. PROMOTION OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AS EMPLOYERS AND CONTRACTORS

- Local and regional governments should promote the economic empowerment of women through human resource practices that **monitor equal opportunities** to employment and promotion, ensure equal pay for work of equal value, and tackle sexual harassment in the workplace. They should put in place **Equality**

Action Plans, arrangements for reviewing pay, remuneration, pay systems and pensions, and measures to ensure fair and transparent promotion and career development opportunities.

- Local and regional governments should support a balance between **professional and private life** through flexible work, childcare, and entitlement leave for men.
- Furthermore, local and regional governments should stipulate that their service providers and sub-contractors meet the same standards of gender equality in employment as the administration itself, thereby **exerting a positive influence on local employment conditions for women**. In this regard, there is a need for **public, democratic control and leadership over all externalized local services**.¹

II. PROMOTION OF EQUALITY THROUGH SERVICE PROVISION

- **Local government care services can provide significant relief to the burden of unpaid care and domestic work shouldered by women.** Particular emphasis should be put on **good quality, affordable childcare**, available to all parents and carers. This can be a significant contribution to the economic and social life and fabric of the local community and of society at large, as well as care services for other dependents.
- **Cultural services and awareness-raising** should focus on breaking down stereotypes and allowing women access to employment in the cultural sector.
- **Local safety and security services** are vital to tackle gender-based violence and ensuring women's freedom to move about the city and participate in the economy and public life.
- **Urban planning, mobility and local economic development** policies also have a clear gender impact in terms of economic and employment opportunities for women, particularly those in the informal sector. Mobility and access to public transport are essential conditions for women and men to be able to exercise many of their rights, tasks and activities, including access to work, education, culture and essential services.
- Local and regional governments must work to ensure that **transport** services meet the specific as well as common needs of women and men.
- In the area of **local economic development**, local and regional governments can provide assistance to women entrepreneurs; ensure that financial and other support to enterprises promote gender equality and encourage to employers to recruit women apprentices and trainees in relation to skills, qualifications and positions traditionally seen as "male", and vice versa.

All of these service areas speak to the need for a **holistic, integrated approach to employment equality**, recognizing the impact of basic services and long-term training on women's capacity to compete in the labour market. It is at the local level where such a holistic approach can be achieved most effectively, with resources targeted where they have most impact.

¹ UCLG, Basic Services for All in an Urbanizing World (GOLD III), p.398

III. CALL ON NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS

Local and regional governments call on national governments to provide them with support in all the above mentioned areas to ensure successful policies for the economic empowerment of women:

- National governments must provide local and regional governments with adequate **financing and capacity building**, particularly in the use of new technologies
- National governments should also strengthen the capacity of local and regional governments to set appropriate **legal guidelines and exercise oversight over their private partners**.
- National governments must recognize **the vital role of public space and mobility** in female empowerment and provide the necessary **investments in public transport infrastructure** in particular.
- Local and regional governments must be supported to **mainstream** gender throughout their policy development and be given the **competences and financing** necessary to improve opportunities for women in their communities.
- National governments and multilateral organizations should continue to **support regional and international networks of local governments to facilitate knowledge exchange** between their members.
- **International cooperation and peer-learning** can be a powerful tool to replicate and multiply the use of effective local policies. Local and regional governments are using their international networks and partnerships as a platform for exchange of experience and mutual learning on issues relating to equality of women and men.