



Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF)
Commonwealth Women in Local Government Network

A Review of Mentoring Programmes for Women's Political Advancement and Leadership



Commonwealth
Local Government
Forum



PLATFORMA
LOCAL & REGIONAL INTERNATIONAL ACTION

This project is cofunded by the European Union



Women in
Local Government
Network



Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF)

The Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) was founded in 1995, as a focus for action on local democracy in the Commonwealth. It works to promote and strengthen democratic local government across the Commonwealth and to encourage the exchange of best practice. It has some 200 members in 45 Commonwealth countries including national ministries of local government, local councils and local government associations

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PLATFORMA is the pan-European coalition of local and regional governments, and their associations representing them at the national, European and global level. It is one of the five local government network signatories of Framework Partnership Agreements with the European Commission. PLATFORMA provides advocacy and knowledge products with a particular focus on ensuring local government is reflected in European development policy. Since its creation in 2008, PLATFORMA has been representing more than 100,000 local and regional governments. All are key players in international cooperation for sustainable development.

www.platforma-dev.eu

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Acknowledgements

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Published by the Commonwealth Local Government Forum

Design by Rob Norridge - norridgewalker.com



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Foreword

Lucy Slack, Acting Secretary General, CLGF

The Commonwealth Local Government Forum is committed to working towards gender equality and to tackling the inequalities across our societies which often result in increasing discrimination, particularly towards women and girls. Ensuring that local government leaders are representative of the communities that they serve is critical, and that means increasing the number of women leaders at the local level.

But gender equality is about more than numbers. It is also about leaders being empowered to contribute fully to local decisions about the services and resources that support and impact their communities. Gender equality can have a truly transformative effect. Local government is stronger when the voices of men and women are heard around the table.

Gender equality is also central to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the global plan agreed by leaders of all countries to meet our global challenges. Sustainable Development Goal 5 calls specifically for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and target 5.5.1b relates specifically to women in local government. SDG5 is critical to the achievement of all 17 of the SDGs.

Mentoring is one approach which can be used to bridge the gap between numbers and impact, but it can also play an important role in ensuring that women leaders feel supported and can grow and develop in their role, and have the confidence and skills to consult with and represent their communities effectively.

In this paper our author has interviewed representatives from local government associations, mentors, mentees and other stakeholders from across the Commonwealth and in Europe, to understand what we mean by mentoring at the local government level; what makes a good mentoring programme; and why is mentoring often a better approach for women leaders' continuous learning and development.

It is clear from the research that mentoring can take many forms but there are definite and tangible benefits which suggest that we should put more of an emphasis on this kind of practitioner-led support: namely, increased knowledge and confidence; assistance in building contacts and networks; development of a more strategic approach to running for office and in delivering duties as a councillor, mayor or chair of committee; and increased visibility, which can play an important role in addressing economic disadvantages in comparison to male counterparts.

CLGF will be exploring ways in which the Commonwealth Local Government Network can be mobilised to respond practically to the recommendations made in the paper, through preparation of tools and guidelines and also by using the network to build links between leaders. We have held two webinars to discuss the recommendations in more detail, and August 2021 saw CLGF's Month of Mentoring Campaign go live, shining a light on why and how mentoring can be, and indeed is proven to be, a valuable tool to support women leaders. We will continue to use our policy events and programme work with our members to mainstream gender equality

I would like to thank our author Ms Myn Garcia; practitioners from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Pacific and Europe who gave so generously of their time and their rich experiences; our partners at PLATFORMA who supported the publication and the team at CLGF – Claire Frost, Regional Programmes Manager and Janine Xavier-Cross, Networks Officer, for their invaluable coordination.

We look forward to your ideas and feedback and I hope that in your own city, local council, or local government association you might look to using mentoring as a way to support women leaders or indeed prospective leaders.



Foreword

Kenisha Gordon, Vice Chairperson,
Commonwealth Women in Local Government Network

Women in Local Government have a significant role to play in centering women's interests and designing a new world where both women and men understand the importance and value of women in leadership across all essential service areas, especially in politics. There is value and need for mentorship, sponsorship, and the formation of alliances to help both women and young people to prepare for the social and emotional obstacles associated with public service.

COVID 19 has disrupted several projects, programmes, financial resources and support systems that were dedicated to the empowerment and inclusion of women across critical sectors. As a result, scores of women have plunged into poverty. Data from the United Nations also revealed an increase in the percentage of domestic violence and online harassment against women, since the Global COVID 19 Pandemic. To combat inequalities and injustices, governments, political parties, NGOs and influencers must accelerate actions to support and recruit more women for leadership. The social and economic landscapes of the Commonwealth and the rest of the world require women and people with lived experiences at the decision-making table.

In this new social and economic climate, women must increase their support for other women. Women councillors should offer themselves for municipal leadership, and other women councillors and political parties must support women for municipal leadership.

Mentorship provides an opportunity to build on that support, develop women's skills and confidence and provide a tailored support base for women councillors. Through mentoring, networking and capacity building, women leaders can eliminate some of the historical barriers that often face women in leadership.

I reflect on my own journey as a municipal councillor in Jamaica. At twenty-three years of age,

I entered the world of representational politics. Then [and even now], many people were of the view that men make better leaders than women. This added to the age stereotyping and gender biased challenges that I experienced. Consequently, I had to work twice as hard to prove my capability and belonging in politics. Mentoring and networking were instrumental in helping me to significantly transform lives, communities and excel as a municipal leader. Mentorship is a social investment that provides personalised, one on one training for personal and professional development and provides a means to protect the mental health and wellbeing of women in leadership.

Through the Commonwealth Women in Local Government Network, there are opportunities to continue to provide important platforms to pave the way for more women across the Commonwealth in Local Government, create safe spaces for women to share their stories, be supported, build capacity, disrupt the status quo, eliminate barriers that are hindering the full participation of women in leadership and provide mentoring support to prepare women to be high quality leaders.

I am pleased to see Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) supporting mentoring and investing in women's political inclusion and capacity building initiatives. I look forward to implementing and sharing the lessons from this paper, to benefit and position women in Jamaica, across the Caribbean, Canada and wider Commonwealth, for leadership roles. I hope that through this work, we can continue to build strong relationships and partnerships to advance women decision-makers, break stereotypes that hinder the success of SDG5 and women's inclusion in politics. We all have a role to play to end the gender discrimination and localise the SDGs to create just, equitable, diverse and inclusive societies.



Introduction

Women's Leadership in Local Government: Global and the Commonwealth Context

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all the United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a blueprint and a plan of action for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At the heart of the Agenda are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). One of the goals, **SDG 5**, is *an urgent call for action to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*.

Gender equality is defined as: "Equality between men and women means securing the equal rights and opportunities of women and men in laws and policies, as well as ensuring equal access to resources and services within families, communities and society. This includes equal rights to participate in all spheres and at all levels of political and public life."¹

One of the sub-goals of SDG 5 refers to the target *to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life (SDG 5.5)*. Indeed, equal rights of women, men and people in all their diversity to participate at all levels of political and public life are critical in ensuring a sustainable, inclusive and prosperous future of the global community.

Recent global and country assessments of SDG 5 raise the scarcity of opportunities for political participation, leadership and advancement for most women. In 2020, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) reported that in spite improvements, the goal to achieve full gender equality (SDG 5) remains unreachd. Many challenges such as the continued underrepresentation of women at all levels of political leadership has not been fully addressed.

Gender inequalities rooted in structural and well-entrenched power imbalances reinforce patterns of disempowerment and different types of

exclusion and marginalisation of women. A person's intersecting and overlapping social and political identities- including but not limited to gender, caste, race, sexuality, religion, disability, physical appearance, citizenship- create different modes of discrimination and privilege. Women who are older, indigenous, belonging to a lower or lowest caste, living with disability, illiterate, earning low income, LGBT+, racialised, new and aspiring and an immigrant navigate a more difficult terrain in seeking political office for the first time or running for re-election.

The effects of the COVID 19 pandemic is another one of these challenges and could in fact reverse the limited progress achieved on gender equality and women's rights. With the pandemic unfolding when the world marked the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action on women's rights and gender equality, the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres warned in April 2020 that limited gains in gender equality and women's rights made over the decades are in danger of being rolled back due to COVID 19 and urged governments to put women and girls at the centre of recovery efforts.² Undeniably, the crisis has laid bare and exacerbated existing inequalities for women and girls globally across every aspect- health, economy, social protection, security and leadership. There continues to be a need for women and women's organisations to be at the heart of the COVID 19 response and to be fairly represented in pandemic-related leadership roles globally and in country or region- specific efforts.

UN Women developed a rapid and targeted response to mitigate the impact of the COVID 19 crisis on women and girls. One of its five priorities is for women and girls to lead and participate in COVID

- 1 ODIHR and Gender Equality Fact Sheet", OSCE/ODIHR, <<http://www.osce.org/odihr/103449>> as cited in Handbook o Promoting Women's Participation in Political Parties, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions (ODIHR), Poland, 2014, page 26.
- 2 <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/04/1061452>.



19 response planning and decision-making.³ And in the midst of a global crisis, UNDESA reports that women's representation in national parliaments is at 25% and 36% in local governments.⁴

It is imperative more than at any other time to address existing inequalities and contribute to transforming women's political participation and leadership to be more robust. One of the ways that is gaining traction in engendering more active participation of women in political life is mentoring. The purpose of this paper is to look into practices and experiences of women who are in and / or aspiring to be in political office and engaged in a mentoring relationship and programme.

The Commonwealth, the EU and Gender Equality

The Commonwealth supports the adoption of SDG5. It is committed to a target of no less than 30 % of women in decision-making in public life – both in elected leadership positions and administration – including at the local level in keeping with the target set by the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.⁵ A key focus is developing strategies to increase women's participation in decision making and in all aspects of political and public life. **Annex A** shows women councillors as a percentage of total councillors across the Commonwealth.

In November 2015, the Commonwealth launched the Women's Forum as part of the Commonwealth Summit in Malta. The meeting was a contribution in finding ways to accelerate the advancement of gender equality for sustainable development, prosperity and peace for all women and girls in the Commonwealth.

The second Women's Forum was held in London, UK in April 2018. One of the themes that was highlighted in the forum was women in leadership; highlighting that women's power and decision-making in the political, public and private sectors are essential to achieving gender equality, and is therefore crucial for successful implementation of the SDGs. Women across the Commonwealth "called on Heads of Government to increase women's access to leadership from grassroots to national, to enable meaningful political leadership by women and to increase the proportion of women candidates. The forum also called for access to training, sponsorship, mentoring programmes and

"Speak the truth always... What worked well for me is the privilege of being a trustworthy advisor or friend... The important ingredient in nurturing a mentor-mentee relationship is the gift of listening."

*Vernice Bellony, Mentor
Councillor on the Vieille
Case Council
Dominica*



networks such as the Commonwealth Women in Local Government Network."⁶

In response, the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) 2018 held in London, UK reaffirmed the collective Commonwealth commitment to gender equality and empowerment of women and girls through legislation, policies and programmes.

In parallel, the European Union (EU), is also fully committed to achieving SDG5 both internally and with partner countries. As part of its external action it has been implementing a series of Action Plans on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Action since 2010: Gender Equality Action Plan (GAP) I (2010-2015), GAP II (2016-2020) and GAP III (2021-2025). GAP II provided a framework for the European Commission, the European External Action Services and the EU Member States in their approach to gender equality through external action. It had four thematic priorities:

- Ensuring girls' and women's physical and psychological integrity
- Promoting the economic and social rights / empowerment of girls and women
- Strengthening girls' and women's voice and participation
- Shifting the Commission and the EEAS' institutional culture to more effectively deliver on EU commitments.

³ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>

⁴ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>

⁵ The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women. Beijing, China- September 1995. Action for Equality, Development and Peace. Platform for Action," United Nations (UN)

⁶ Outcome Statement of the Commonwealth Women's Forum, 16-18 April 2018, London, United Kingdom, page 3



GAP III aims to accelerate progress on empowering women and girls, and safeguard gains made on gender equality, and provides the EU with a policy framework with five pillars of action:

- 1 Making gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment a cross-cutting priority of EU external action. By 2025, 85% of new EU actions should contribute to achieving this objective, with more actions including it as a main objective
- 2 Working together with EU Member States as Team Europe at multilateral, regional and country level, and fostering partnership with stakeholders, CSOs, women's organisations
- 3 Accelerating progress by focusing on key areas of engagement: Ending gender-based violence; Sexual and reproductive health and rights; Economic and social rights and empowerment; Equal participation and leadership; Women, peace and security; Green and digital transformations
- 4 Leading by example, by striving for a gender-responsive and balanced leadership, more capacity and expertise and a reinforced network of gender focal points
- 5 Putting the focus on results, accountability and transparency through qualitative, quantitative and inclusive monitoring.

CLGF and Platforma: Working to advance gender equality in local and regional governance

The Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF), as the designated Commonwealth agency for local government, has been working in support of democratic values and good governance across the Commonwealth. In 2005, CLGF and its members drafted the *Aberdeen Agenda: Commonwealth Principles on Good Practice for Local Democracy and Good Governance*. As an international declaration, the agenda was formally adopted as part of the Commonwealth's values and principles in 2005 and incorporated in the Charter of the Commonwealth 2013, which all member states signed up to as their commitment to shared values and principles of the Commonwealth.

One of the 12 principles of the *Aberdeen Agenda* is **inclusiveness**, giving importance to a process

"Women have learnt to put personal issues aside and support caucus interests. For example, it does not matter whether one councillor drives herself or is more educated than me, what matters is the issue of concern for both of us as women."



Anon
Woman Councillor from
Iganga District, Uganda

of decision-making that ensures the needs of the whole community, including women, persons with disabilities and groups in the margins, are met. Inclusion underpins the core values and principles of the Commonwealth as articulated in the Commonwealth Charter.

CLGF supports the SDG5 target of gender parity in political representation, as well as the Commonwealth target of no less than 30 % women in decision-making in public life. It has also been an active participant in the Commonwealth Women's Forum since its inception in 2015 in Malta. In 2017 CLGF launched its Commonwealth Women in Local Government Network (ComWLG) as part of its commitment to actively support women to enter and advance in local government.

In 2018, CLGF was part of the Commonwealth Women's Forum organising committee and jointly led a session on *Women's Political Participation at All Levels* with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). It was also present in the other 2018 forums which includes the Business and the People's Forums and contributed in increasing the recognition of the role of local government across the board in the Commonwealth dialogue.

CLGF has been actively implementing programmes and projects since 2017, which work to support women in local government and local decision making. These have included:

- *Empowering Local Authorities in partner countries for enhanced governance and more effective development outcomes (2015-2021)*
- *Connecting the Dots: Local Actions for Women Political and Economic Empowerment in Southern Africa* project, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Eswatini and Lesotho (2019-2021)



- *Women as Local Legislators (WALL)* project, Maharashtra, India (2019-2020)
- *Markets for Change (M4C)* project in the Pacific, Fiji and the Solomon Islands (2014-2019)
- *Funding leadership opportunities for Women (FLOW)* in the Pacific, Fiji, Solomon Islands and Bougainville, Papua New Guinea (2012-2015)

PLATFORMA is the pan-European **coalition of towns and regions** and their national, EU and global associations. It is active in city-to-city and region-to-region development cooperation and a hub of expertise on European local and regional governments' international action.

PLATFORMA was established in November 2008 to monitor the implementation of the first ever European Commission communication on local and regional governments in development cooperation. Since then, the coalition advocates to mainstream the uptake of local and regional governments' perspective in European development policies and implementation. It's mission includes shaping EU development policy and international agendas, raising awareness of and promoting international cooperation between cities and regions across the world and providing a forum for knowledge exchange, peer to peer learning and innovative approaches between towns and regions and their associations. Gender is a cross cutting focal area in all of the work undertaken by PLATFORMA, and a specific focus of the coalition's work stream on localising the SDGs. PLATFORMA has been active in ensuring the voice of local and regional governments is reflected in the upcoming EU action plan on gender equality and women empowerment in external relations for 2021-2025 (GAP III).

In 2015, both CLGF and PLATFORMA signed the Framework Partnership Agreements (FPAs) with the European Commission, through the Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO). Other FPAs were signed with the United Cities and Local Governments world-secretariat (UCLG), United Cities and Local Governments – Africa (UCLG-A), and the Association Internationale des Maires Francophones (AIMF). These FPAs committed the partners to actions based on common values and objectives to tackle global poverty and

inequalities, while promoting local democracy and sustainable development.

The work of this paper as well as elements of both CLGF's and PLATFORMA's gender empowerment and inclusion programmes are supported by the EU through the FPAs and their associated grants. Specifically, this paper has been produced in the framework of *Working together towards empowering local and regional governments for enhanced governance and more effective development outcomes in EU partner countries*.

For more information on CLGF and Platforma, visit <https://www.clgf.org.uk/> and <https://platforma-dev.eu/>

The Commonwealth Women in Local Government Network (ComWLG Network): In support of gender equality and women's political participation, leadership and advancement

In keeping with its commitment to women's political empowerment and in support of contributing to achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 5, CLGF launched the Commonwealth Women in Local Government Network (ComWLG Network) in November 2017. The four priorities of the Network are:

- **Working with existing elected women** - to build the capacity of existing women leaders and help them overcome barriers within local government systems to be more effective as leaders, representatives and decision-makers.
- **Working with prospective elected women** - at the community level to increase understanding of the roles and responsibilities of local elected leaders and encourage women (with a focus on young women) to run for council;

"Ratnamalatai is (my) Friend, Philosopher and Guide. Though Ratnamalatai is much senior and experienced, there is mutual trust and respect in (our) relationship, Ratnamalatai remained present for support."

*Rita Sukhdeve
Mentee*

*Panchayat: Manegaon Bazzar
(Block and District Bhandara), India*





“We have learned a lot of things from the Yumbe women’s caucus. We shall sit together and identify various sources of funding for the caucus and implement the actions that need to be taken to mobilize funds. We shall also write proposals to mobilize resources to advance the rights of women and girls. We have also seen the importance of networking with various stakeholders in the public and private sector in order to advance the caucus agenda....”

Anon

One of the executive members of the women caucus of Nebbi, Uganda



- **Working with political parties and Local Government Associations (LGAs)** - to remove barriers to women within political systems, work with all members to increase awareness and ability of elected leaders to include a gender perspective in all aspects of their work (legislation, oversight and representation); improve gender sensitivity in Local Governments and LGAs;
- **Working at the Commonwealth and International level** - to gather best practice and share and replicate successes; advocate towards Commonwealth bodies to increase women’s representation and strengthen systems of inclusion and gender mainstreaming; monitor levels of elected women across the Commonwealth and feed into the SDG 5.5.1 monitoring process, ensuring CLGF meets its commitments on gender and inclusion.

Across the Commonwealth, the CLGF seeks to guide the development of appropriate supporting structures to enhance and strengthen women in local government in their efforts to execute their legal and institutional mandate for transparent and accountable decision-making and service delivery at the local level; and to become active development actors in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Purpose, methodology and limitations of the review

The purpose of this paper is to review existing mentoring programmes for women’s political

participation, leadership and advancement with focus on those supported by partners of CLGF, the ComWLG Network and Platforma in the Commonwealth and beyond. The review is designed to offer a snapshot of select programmes, their salient features and lessons learned in the implementation. The paper’s purpose is to serve as a resource for learning discussions and a reference in assessing on-going mentoring programmes, expanding current ones and / or starting a new mentoring programme.

The review is limited to qualitative data and utilised desk research, interviews and surveys. A total of 24 interviews and surveys were undertaken with both individuals and organisations. **See Annex B** for the list. **See Annex C** for the survey questionnaire. Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, all interviews were conducted online. No face to face interactions were possible due to the unprecedented circumstances brought about by the crisis. Access to and reliability of technology has been uneven with some potential participants unable to be interviewed as a result.

Target readership and structure of the paper

This review was undertaken with three distinct groups in mind: 1) members of the ComWLG Network, 2) political parties and local government associations, and 3) women, men and people in all their diversity interested in supporting the advancement of women in political and public life, particularly at the local government terrain.

On the basis that “good practices” are context-specific, readers are encouraged to tailor the application of the principles and strategies featured in this review as relevant and appropriate in their own contexts.



A Word on Mentoring

One working definition of mentoring as offered by Eric Parsloe: *to support and encourage people to manage their own learning in order that they may maximize their potential, develop their skills, improve their performance and become the person they want to be*⁷

Beyond the traditional view of mentoring is a transformative model. This “involves establishing learning alliances for professional development and a commitment to social and organizational change.”⁸ Transformative feminist mentorship is a long-term process that builds reciprocal relationships of solidarity, mutual learning and support.⁹ It aims to enable transformation at the personal, professional and social contexts. Transformative feminist mentoring acknowledges that learning is a continuous journey and involves:

- 1 Building trust
- 2 Sustaining connectedness
- 3 Intergenerational dialogues and conversations
- 4 Allowing the mentee to journey at her own pace
- 5 Helping the mentee navigate difficult spaces
- 6 Facilitating learning and unlearning¹⁰

Although there are some skills, strategies and approaches that may overlap such as empathy and

dialogue, it is important to differentiate mentoring from coaching and counselling. For instance, mentoring as opposed to coaching is non-directive, less formalized and not covered by a professional accreditation or certification.

A mentoring arrangement involves a combination of the following elements:

- 1 Establishing and nurturing a relationship between the mentor and mentee
- 2 Focus on the future and may or may not be time-bound
- 3 Emphasis on mutual knowledge sharing and learning
- 4 Building of confidence to enable mentee to set their own learning goals and manage their own development
- 5 The characteristics of identity, dignity, self-respect and core values form part of mentoring goals and interactions

“It is not about being perfect... what is key is collaboration, truth telling, shadowing-taking mentees to events and conferences- and reaching out to connect and build a strong community of women and allies among male politicians. (What would I do differently?) I would spend more time (with the person) before formalizing the mentoring relationship.”



*Bev Esslinger
Councillor, Ward 2
City of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada*

7 Author and Chair of The Oxford School of Coaching and Mentoring; <https://www.reading.ac.uk/engageinmentoring/what-is-mentoring/eim-definitions.aspx>

8 Geber, H. M. (2003). Fostering career development for Black academics in the new South Africa, in F. Kochan and J. Pascarella, Global perspectives of reconstructing context, learning communities, and cultures through mentoring. Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing. pp 107–28.

9 Emma Mogaka, Building Female Leadership Requires Feminist Mentoring, <https://akilidada.org/building-feminist-leadership/>

10 Ibid



Mentoring Programmes: Voices and Stories from the Commonwealth and Beyond

The brief profiles of the mentoring programmes that are part of the review are featured in this section. The list of programmes is not exhaustive but represents the diversity of the contexts, content and location across the Commonwealth and Europe. The name of the programme is identified followed by the implementing / proponent organisation, the country and the region. *Annex D* provides fuller details including the results of the formal evaluations of some of the programmes and information on the implementing and partner organisations. This section also includes a summary of common outcomes of the various programmes.

Mentoring Programme

The Dominica Association of Local Community Authorities (DALCA)

Dominica, Caribbean

The Dominica Association of Local Community Authorities (DALCA) is the national association of local authorities mandated to provide training to District Council Associations and Local Village Councils. DALCA delivers trainings and mentoring programmes for women’s political leadership and advancement in governance. The training and mentoring programmes focus on technical knowledge and skills such as role of local authorities for effective governance, fiscal management, advocacy and lobbying, public speaking and conflict resolution among others.

“Assurance, encouragement and confidence building in service to the public are the most important benefits to me of the mentoring programme.... (The other benefit include) the opportunity to learn soft skills and people interactive skills”



*Mentee
CEO of the Urban Council
Dominica*

Enhancing Women’s Leadership Role in Influencing Decision Making (2012)

Strengthening Women’s Influence in Leadership and Decision Making Processes for Gender Responsiveness and Political Accountability (2014 – 2016)

Women’s Democracy Group (WDG) Uganda, East Africa

The two projects were implemented by the Women’s Democracy Group (WDG) in 2012 and in 2014-2016 with funding support from the Democratic Governance Facility (DGF). The overall objective of both projects was to strengthen women’s influence in leadership and decision-making processes for gender responsiveness and political accountability. In 2012 and 2016, women’s caucuses were formed and action plans drawn to enable councillors to focus and begin their work as a result of the trainings. A total of 258 executive committee members of the caucuses received mentoring and support supervision on areas that require strengthening. The project evaluation in 2016 established that the project had been key in resolving the major challenges that hinder women’s participation and thus paved a way for their effectiveness both in campaigning and decision-making processes. The evaluation also pointed to the need for continuous mentoring of women politicians.

Women as Local Legislator (WALL) Programme

Resource and Support Centre for Development (RSCD)

State of Maharashtra, India, South Asia

The WALL programme which started in January 2019 was supported by CLGF as part of the Commonwealth partnership for Democracy (CP4D), a wider Commonwealth programme to strengthen inclusion and diversity. It was a pilot initiative of Mahila Rajsatta Andolan (MRA), a campaign with women in governance, initiated by Resource & Support Centre for Development



“Mentoring is guidance to self-identity, self care, to offer different paradigms and to challenge ways of thinking. Transformative mentoring is about building community and solidarity. It is important for mentors to walk the talk... (and) both mentors and mentees to agree on the parameters.”



*Hazel Brown
Mentor
Coordinator, Network of NGOs
for the Advancement of Women,
Trinidad and Tobago*

(RSCD) in collaboration with regional networks of civil societies in Maharashtra. The mission of MRA is to strengthen Elected Women Representatives (EWR) of the Gram Panchayat (Village Council) and contribute to enhancing panchayat processes. This is in response to the landmark move in April 1993 with the 73rd amendment to the constitution of India which legislated that one-third of the total number of seats in all Panchayats be reserved for women. The outcomes of WALL in its two phases include voices of women amplified, improved confidence of women to stand for elections and increased number of women contesting elections with 70% of the trained Elected Women Representatives (EWR) gaining more confidence and enhanced capacity to exercise their responsibilities.

Toward Parity in Municipal Politics

Demonstration Projects:

The Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM) supports opportunities for Cape Breton/Unami'ki /Strait women to lead in local government

Cape Breton/ Unami'ki /Strait, Nova Scotia, Canada

The City of St. Catharines and Women in Niagara Council build equity and inclusiveness in the community

St Catherines, Ontario, Canada

Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Canada

The *Toward Parity in Municipal Politics* project was in partnership between the Canadian municipal sector and WAGE with a vision for a Canada in

which gender parity in municipal government from coast to coast becomes the new norm. It aims for women of all identities, ages and backgrounds to **run for municipal office, win their campaigns and lead on issues of importance to their constituents**. The project supported 20 demonstration initiatives. Two of the 20 are included in this review. The project contributed to reducing barriers and increasing leadership skills and confidence for a more diverse political leadership and representation by women in Cape Breton/Unami'ki/Strait communities. On the other hand, City of St. Catherines Seat at the Table demonstrated a positive example for Niagara's 11 other local municipalities and Regional Council on how cities and elected officials can have an impact on increasing gender parity and council diversity.

The Bidelagun Basqueskola Mentoring Programme

**Virginia Woolf BASQUESKOLA
Basqueskola Sarea, EUDEL and EMAKUNDE
Basque Country (Euskal Herria)**

Virginia Woolf BASQUESKOLA is a network of all for all. The initiative started in 2012 as a result of the collaboration between EUDEL (The Association of Basque Municipalities) and Emakunde (the Basque Institute for Women). The general objectives of Virginia Woolf Basqueskola are to 1) strengthen the participation of women in local politics and 2) increase the incidence of women elected in promoting equality policies at the local level. In 2018, with the next municipal elections in 2019 on the horizon, the pilot mentoring programme was designed and implemented to welcome and accompany newly elected women. The programme was inspired by the good practices of other mentoring networks that operate in the Basque Country and Europe. The pilot project's assessment pointed to the appreciation by the mentees of the concept of accompaniment. They consider having someone to count on and be open to helpful in giving them a sense of security. Mentors, on the other hand, find it encouraging to know that mentees are finding their space more comfortably than others. The evaluation concluded that mentoring is a learning process that requires commitment from both parties and investment of time and energy.



“Ignore people who make fun and laugh... people think ‘these women can’t do anything, this is a fad and it will end after a while.’ And if disturbance increases collect women in big number to show the strength... Mentoring leads to creating a chain action - the mentees are eager to become mentors and they are convinced that it is their responsibility to create future leadership.”



*Sarika Gudaghe
Panchayat Sakhi (Local Mentor)
Chinchargavhan (block-Varud,
District- Amravati), India*

Market for Change (M4C) Project

Partnership between the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) and the UN Women Fiji Multi-Country Office

Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu; Pacific Islands

UN Women’s Markets for Change (M4C) project was a six-year initiative promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment that focuses on marketplaces in rural and urban areas in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. In 2015-2017, M4C entered into a partnership with the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) to conduct a comprehensive capacity and training needs assessments of market management and to design and roll out training to local governments. One of the specific methodologies that was designed as part of the training for market vendors (MVs) / market vendor associations (MVAs) is mentoring women in leadership.

Local Government Association (LGA) UK

As part of a refocused leadership offer during the COVID 19 pandemic, the LGA’s Leadership Academy team provided one-to-one sessions to help councillors, both women and men, develop their leadership potential through coaching. The LGA also offers a two-day residential programme specifically for women councillors to hone their political skills and to build lasting professional networks.

Outcomes

The following are the outcomes that were common across the programmes that were evaluated

and reiterated during the interviews with select mentors and mentees:

- Women mentored / being mentored reported increased in knowledge and confidence
- Women valued the relationships made and networks developed
- Women mentored / being mentored reported improved capacity to think about the potential obstacles in running for office and strategies to be able to address them
- Women mentored performed better in their roles as elected officials (Councillors, Members of Parliament, Speakers, Mayors).
- Increased visibility facilitated by mentors, through TV and radio exposures for instance, contributed to the success of a candidate. Visibility of women candidates addresses their economic disadvantage in comparison to their male counterparts.



Transformative Mentoring: Principles, Lessons and Insights

This section discusses the principles, methodologies, approaches and lessons learned in mentoring women for political participation and advancement in local governance. Specifically, it will look at the following questions:

- What principles are fundamental in guiding mentoring relationships?
- What factors facilitate and what are some of the barriers and constraints?
- What methodologies and approaches worked and why?
- What lessons were learned and what can be done differently?

Principles and Enabling Factors

Mutual Learning and Trust

Mentoring is a symbiotic learning relationship. Both mentor and mentee must mutually invest in the relationship for it to work and recognise that the process is iterative. When this is in place, both mentor and mentee mutually gain, including mentors learning from the experience as well.

Mentoring is a relationship that works when both parties have secured mutual trust. Building and cultivating trust is foundational for a relationship to be reciprocal and one characterised by mutual learning and support. The facilitating factors for cultivating a trusting relationship are: open and honest communications and respect for one's own and the other person's dignity. Truth telling is vital in facilitating a relationship of trust. It is important for mentors to model that it is not about being perfect more than it is about being true to yourself and others.

Listening, Empathy and Embracing Vulnerability

Risking vulnerability underpins trust-building. A relationship based on trust involves taking the risk of being vulnerable to be able to engage deeply. Mentors who openly share their own stories of struggle and victory in both the personal and public spheres in their political journey are able

to establish a common ground and empathy, key factors that facilitate an open and trusting relationship. The willingness to share one's personal journey encourages women to build from each other's experiences.

Hazel Brown, Founder of the Network of NGOs for the Advancement of Women (Trinidad and Tobago) likened mentors to guides for self-discovery and self care. She offers the view that mentoring is an accompaniment for mentees to value their own story and to build their confidence to share it, to facilitate a life-changing process of learning more about oneself.

Ruth Ochieng, Co-Founder of Women Regional Network in Peace Building (Uganda), highlights the importance of conveying to and reassuring mentees that they are heard and seen. Pursuing political office can be daunting, particularly for those who are engaging and investing in the process for the first time. The words, "I hear you" and "I see you," bring much encouragement. Listening is a key facilitating factor to cultivate and nurture empathy.

Transformation versus Transaction

Mentoring designed to be transformative is about self-identification (learning about yourself) and building community and solidarity. The experience of the Women as Local Legislators (WALL) project in India shows how mentoring can be a positive force to organise and coalesce a "sisterhood," a coming together to embark collectively on a change agenda. For example, Elected Women Representatives (EWR) in India, consisting both the mentors and mentees, came together and embarked on a project called, *Slogans on WALL*. The women collectively developed advocacy messages as part of their campaign championing women's political participation and advancement in local governance and disrupting male-centred systems through chalking up slogans on accountability



and women's leadership on walls in their local communities. See Annex C.

Transformative mentoring is less about a “contract” and more about engendering solidarity, amplifying voice, and a kind of accompaniment that encourages belonging, “telling one’s story” and exploring “new” or alternative paradigms. This kind of mentoring inspires women and builds in them not only confidence but courage to break patterns, challenge patriarchal mindset, disrupt the status quo and face what can be both a rewarding and challenging journey.

Although mentors are expected to have technical expertise, it was pointed out that it is equally important for mentors to have a breadth and depth in knowing and understanding the socio-political context, the power dynamics and nuances of the political terrain. Being able to guide and accompany mentees in navigating the power imbalances women in their diversity face is an added value beyond the technical know-how.

One Size Does Not Fit All: Intersectionality and Specificity

Contextual specificity is fundamental in designing and undertaking a mentoring programme. It is an important principle to be mindful of the cultural specificity, gender and its intersectionality and to harness ownership by the mentee. For example, the pace of the mentoring process must be in step with that of the mentee's political journey. On the basis of the personal nature of a mentoring relationship, mentors must be mindful not to impose methodologies and approaches that are not aligned with the political and cultural context. It is also important to test one's assumptions and seriously consider a mentee's social, political identities and backgrounds in starting and nurturing the relationship.

The principle of confidentiality

It is crucial to respect and maintain confidentiality. The complexity of a mentoring relationship involves engaging at both the professional and personal levels. Mentors and mentees find themselves becoming friends when the relationship grows beyond the professional or at times starts at the personal level. In any case, keeping confidence is crucial in nurturing a mutually trusting relationship.

“Mentoring is a symbiotic relationship that is about building each other, nurturing mutual trust and expanding networks. Both mentor and mentee must invest in the relationship.”

*Hon. Flavia Kalule
MP Elect, 11th Parliament of
Uganda, Kasanda District, Uganda*



Promoting self and community care

Embarking on a political journey and sustaining a political career is a demanding endeavour. Women are faced with multiple and competing burdens and have to balance professional and domestic responsibilities. Transformative mentoring encourages women in politics to care for themselves. Achieving work-life balance may be more difficult for women who do not have the support system that others do. When mentors model self-care and open community spaces where women encourage each other to care for themselves, solidarity and collective care is enhanced.

Clear Goals and Accountability

Mentoring can be demanding and time consuming. There are a number of facilitating factors that when established at the outset can help frame commitment and expectations. It is important to clarify expectations of both mentors and mentees at the start of the process. Developing a plan together, with goals that are responsive to the mentee's needs, whether new in the political sphere or one that is advancing as a political leader is key. What the mentor and mentee set to achieve together influences the nature of the mentoring relationship and its sustainability. This process should also include agreeing the parameters of the relationship and respecting healthy boundaries. Finally, mutual accountability and transparency should be cultivated. The mentor's commitment to and consistency in “walking the talk” for example enhances credibility.

Accompaniment: Up Close and Personal

The track record, expertise and reputation of a mentor are all crucial. Be that as it may, the technical and political background, although



important, must be complemented by personalised support gained from years of experience. The programme, Virginia Woolf Basqueskola¹¹ describes mentors as mirrors:

“Women generally lack mirrors in which to recognise themselves and also reach a playing field where the rules are already set and in which their voices and experiences have not played any role. Being a mentor means offering that mirror to which to look at yourself.”

Mentees look for someone who is able to offer professional support in a personalised way. It is important for mentees to know they have an ally, one who has a passion to facilitate learning and offers the mentee opportunities to review her strengths, assess areas for improvement and take a well-informed course of action within an enabling environment instead of solving the mentee’s problem.

It’s Not Hit and Run: Non-negotiable commitment to a long term process

Mentoring is an iterative, organic learning process, which evolves over time. Unlike coaching, which is time bound and covered by an agreement or contract, mentoring takes a couple of years or longer to develop. Depending on the goals set, mentoring will have to adjust to the pace of the mentee’s political journey. Interviewees have emphasised that they have benefitted from a mentoring relationship that was nurtured and grew over time.

The principle of accompaniment raises the importance of matching. The review has found that matching individuals by values, personality and expertise has worked well. However, what has been

highlighted is the critical need for commitment to learn and grow. Mentoring as a learning process requires commitment from both parties to invest time and energy. What has proven successful is when the matching is less structured and more organic, flexible with an element of spontaneity. This kind of matching practice, however, is anchored on the premise that commitment has been established at the beginning of the process and sustained. Commitment is most difficult yet a game changer for a successful mentoring programme. Questions such as how to build the mentoring relationship and how and when to let go are negotiated effectively when commitment is in place.

Strength in numbers

Women in politics across the Commonwealth and beyond who have been interviewed all agree that it is important to organise a collective voice in the intersections of religion, class, age, race, gender, caste, disability, sexuality and physical appearance, among others. Women in politics and those who are supportive of them recognise the importance of amplifying individual and collective voices.

Although mentoring often starts with imparting technical knowledge, it expands to awareness raising of larger interests and issues such as health, peace, education and other “soft issues.” And this requires mapping of power or identifying the few decision makers with the aim of collectively engaging with the few. There is strength in numbers. Women coming together and engaging as a collective in the community or municipality or at the national level leads to powerful advocacies. The projects implemented by WDG in Uganda organised women caucuses, which demonstrated that the strength in numbers can’t be underestimated. The caucuses were used as a platform to advance the women’s agenda and hold joint campaigns of women candidates.

Furthermore, connecting and building a strong network and community of women and allies among male politicians are strategies that address the “invisibility” of women in the political sphere.

“The most important benefits of a mentoring programme for me (are) learning about politics from a women’s perspective, how to get involved in politics and access to a political figure (especially a woman) for one-to-one mentoring and first-hand experience.”



*Christina Thomas
Mentee, Seat at the Table
Mentorship Programme,
St Catharines Ontario, Canada*

¹¹ A collaborative initiative started in 2012 by EUDEL (Association of Basque Municipalities) and Emakunde- Basque Institute for Women.



Methodologies and Approaches

One to one mentoring

Face to face, one to one mentoring has proven to work best. This methodology is most conducive in establishing a relationship of trust, which requires a personal approach built over time. There is no substitute for face to face and one to one mentoring. It is where most, if not all, of the principles described in the previous section are nurtured and negotiated best towards mutual learning. Apart from face to face, one to one mentoring may also involve spontaneous or planned phone conversations. Through time, mentees gain the freedom to call their mentors for a quick consultation.

Ways of knowing and learning: Beyond desk conversations

The approaches that worked well in mentoring programmes that were part of the review include the following:

1 Learning by Doing

Mentees benefit a lot from mentors who take them on campaign trails, give them a seat to observe actual legislative or executive meetings, share opportunities for shadowing and allow them to speak and be recognised in public engagements. This approach allows mentees to witness mentors in action, gain a first hand experience in navigating difficult political spaces and affords them a reality check to political life.

2 Peer to peer learning

Learning by doing alongside peers builds confidence particularly when complemented with a reflection and assessment sessions with their mentors. Mutual learning is facilitated well among peers. The spirit of collegiality, openness and empathy are just some of the ingredients that make learning with peers beneficial.

3 Formal and Informal Processes

Local governments, local government associations and political parties design and deliver official training programmes that offer a range of technical knowledge and skills such as roles and responsibilities of local authorities, structures and committee protocol in local governance, policy development, advocacy and lobbying, campaigning, fundraising, media

training, confidence building, community organising, financial management, record keeping, dealing with sexual harassment and project proposal writing to name some.

These trainings and formal courses are often entry points for establishing mentoring relationships or complement existing mentoring relationships.

On the other hand, informal and organic mentoring relationships may take place without necessarily a companion formal training course. The consensus established by the review points to the effectiveness of the informal nature of mentoring, particularly those that are face to face, one to one and personal.

4 Collaborative Learning

Apart from one to one sessions, collaborative group learning has facilitated both skills training and confidence building. Bringing together mentees- from 3 to 5 women- and their mentor (if it's common) or respective mentors to share their experiences, tackle a project and learn together has proven to be beneficial. RSCD in India and WDG in Uganda have harnessed collaborative ways of learning which includes women telling their stories and co-creating solutions. This methodology has worked well and led to women's networks and alliances.

Wear Pearls, Wear Jeans: Mapping of and Speaking to Power

Mapping of power and guiding mentees to identify the political and economic elites, gate-keepers and the decision makers is vital in enabling constructive engagement in the political sphere.

"Trust underpins a mentoring relationship. And how can you be trusted if you would not be vulnerable. There is power in sharing one's personal story. It builds empathy...What would I do differently? I would listen more actively to women, to 'their knowing.'"



Ruth Ochieng
Co-Founder
Women Regional Network in
Peace Building- East Africa



“Supporting our new colleagues in their first steps in their new positions in the municipalities, in a personalized way and from accumulated experience, is the bridge that unites individual and collective empowerment.”

Anon

Virginia Woolf Basqueskola
Basque Country



One mentor described the importance of “knowing how to engage with whom and when.” She describes the “art” of knowing when to “wear pearls or jeans” as part of sending the right messages. Knowing your audience and what you want to say are both strategic and tactical. Timing is everything in terms of lobbying and influencing a policy or a change agenda.

Multi-disciplinary and Inclusive

Bringing in other disciplines beyond the rigid focus on politics and government allows the mentees to have a more holistic perspective about the world. This approach avoids a narrow and isolated focus, engages the women to think outside of the box and challenges mainstream paradigms. A multi-disciplinary approach is harnessed when women from diverse backgrounds and disciplines are convened in group learning and / or organised in collectives, caucuses, networks and alliances.

The Government FOCUS (Female Objectives Cape Breton/Unama'ki/Strait) in Cape Breton/Unami'ki includes both the First Nations and municipal local government system in their programming. Such an inclusive approach is an example of bringing diverse representation, providing an enabling environment for harnessing indigenous and local knowledge, amplifying women's voices in their diversity and fostering municipal cooperation across communities.

Exposure and Visibility

Exposure is key, particularly for those who are starting their political life and who need to be visible. The range of approaches includes personal introductions and endorsements of mentees by mentors to the political milieu, mainstream and social media exposures and facilitating connections with networks,

among others. These various ways allow women in politics to reach a wider section of their constituency and a wider audience in general, contributing to the delivery of core messages and election success. As indicated by the assessment of one of the programmes, visibility of women candidates is a way to mitigate the economic disadvantage in comparison to their male counterparts.

Face to face versus “technology-mediated communication”

The COVID 19 crisis has compelled the world to resort to a “technology driven, no touch future.” On the one hand, technology has filled in the gaps in communications brought about by the global crises. However, in cases where it has failed to enable processes, technology has exacerbated inequalities and divides.

Undeniably, technology has worked as an enabler of dialogue, information sharing and learning. The Basqueskola Mentoring Programme incorporated telephone communications as part of the mentoring design to respond to the COVID crisis. In the WALL project in India, women who have not used a phone learned how in order to facilitate processes. For example, mobile phones have been used by mentors to conduct group conversations through WhatsApp or Zoom. Seven to 10 women gather for a Zoom meeting using a single mobile device. Online literacy has been incorporated by RSCD in training and mentoring sessions in response to the crisis.

There is however an intergenerational aspect to the use of digital technology. Social media for example works very well with the younger women in Uganda while face to face conversations are preferred by older women and women in the villages. Moreover, there is a prevailing inequity in the area of access to technology. Grassroots communities do not necessarily have access to mobile phone and the internet. It was also argued that technology is never able to replace one to one, culturally situated interactions.

Lessons Learned

In issuing the *Resolution on Women and Political Participation*, the UN General Assembly urged all States Parties to: “[S]trongly encourage political parties to remove all barriers that directly or



indirectly discriminate against the participation of women, to develop their capacity to analyse issues from a gender perspective, and to adopt policies to promote the ability of women to participate fully at all levels of decision-making within those political parties.”¹²

The **barriers** to women’s political participation and advancement in local governance that were cited in the evaluations of some of the programmes and interviews include:

- 1 Lack of information about the intricacies of local / municipal governance and lack of understanding of the political milieu
- 2 Limited access to strategies and good practices for engaging women in local / municipal government
- 3 Lack of resources, lack of knowledge in fundraising and the pressure coming from the incessant commercialisation of campaigns and elections
- 4 Multiple and competing burdens in terms of time and personal/family commitments of both mentors and mentees
- 5 Lack of practical support for women running or continuing in office in terms of childcare, transportation, time and location of meetings
- 6 Systemic discrimination, stereotyping, economic discrimination, racism, sexism, ageism, hatred, homophobia and intimidation
- 7 Escalation of gender-based violence
- 8 Lack of self confidence
- 9 Lack of connections
- 10 The perception of politics as a “boys’ club” and the prevalence of institutional gender-based violence, sexual harassment and intimidation of women in office or running for one.

“What you set to achieve influences the nature of the mentoring relationship.... Passion is at the heart (of the process.)”

*Perry Aritua
Executive Director
Women’s Democracy Network
Uganda*



11 Failure to pass constitutional or legislative reform in support of women’s political advancement and leadership

12 The COVID 19 global crisis

Given these constraints, this section covers the individual and programmatic reflections on what can be done differently for continuous improvement

- 1 It was cited that **short-term mentoring arrangements** do not work. When the process is abbreviated and “projectised,” the chances of success is minimal. Mentoring relationships that are personalised and based on mutual commitment to learn have proven to grow over time.
- 2 Although establishing the **right match is essential** in mentoring, programmes must **not rely heavily and solely on structured matching criteria**, which tends to be mechanical more than organic and responsive. A matching process that takes into account values, personality, expertise and goals have proven to work better. For example, matching that is based on geographical proximity has not necessarily facilitated an enduring mentoring relationship. On the other hand, political affiliations do not automatically guarantee success of a mentoring programme. Mentors also do not have to necessarily be a politician themselves.
- 3 **Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL)** is a vital aspect in sustaining mentoring programmes. Systematic monitoring and documenting of the process and outcomes are helpful in promoting learning and systemic improvement. Both mentors and mentees raised the need to enhance the capacity to systematically include MEL in mentoring programmes.
- 4 It has also been highlighted by mentors that there is a need for a more **intentional and organised way to follow up** mentees. This insight speaks to the importance of managing expectations and agreeing a plan together to ensure a more robust learning process.

12 UN Resolution of the General Assembly 66/130 on Women and Political Participation, 2012, p16



5 The **question of volunteerism** was raised. In most cases, mentoring programmes are designed to be entirely voluntary. There are, however, programmes where mentees receive an honorarium or reimbursed for all their expenses. A couple of programmes reimbursed and provided mentors and mentees allowances for food, transportation and other essential expenses such as child care in the spirit of respecting the dignity of the women and mitigating any perception of exploitation.

On the other hand, there were a few cases where mentors raised that mentoring involves not only giving their time but also spending from their personal resources, which they are not able to necessarily recover.

6 Resourcing and Supportive Environment

Formalising and sustaining a mentoring programme requires dedicated resources. During the review, political parties and local government associations were called to put in place mechanisms and structures to support mentoring. For instance, having a technical secretariat to take charge of coordinating the programme is advantageous. The other important aspect of a supportive environment is partnerships. Working together with other like-minded organisations- women's rights and feminist organisations- have proven to be successful and must be considered seriously in designing and implementing mentoring programmes.

The projects in Uganda raised the point about the caucuses being effective where they operated within a supportive and enabling environment. For example, the support of the District Council, technical officers and male councillors who were identified as gender champions was critical to successes registered by the women caucuses

7 Political allegiances

Party affiliation impacts on duration and nature of mentoring. For example, when a mentor switches political affiliation and crosses to the other side, the mentoring arrangement breaks down. Even if the personal aspect of the relationship remains unaffected, the mentoring arrangement is interrupted and at times becomes difficult to resume. Mentors who are independent mitigate this risk.

"My mentor, Panchafulatai, has changed the life of the entire community for good.... I learnt that as a leader one has to convince people from different backgrounds and different opinions to reach an agreement to implement any program, if there is consensus then the program becomes successful."

Tulsabai Sankwad
Mentee
Panchayat: Arjapur (Block Biloli,
District Nanded), India



8 Investing on the right match

Securing commitment is foundational and the hardest aspect in establishing and sustaining a mentoring relationship. Investing in the "right match" is worthwhile. For example, spending more time with a potential mentee before "formalising" the mentoring relationship is important and allows one to be more targeted.

9 Addressing trauma

Embarking on and staying on course in a political journey can be challenging. The issue of trauma and the importance of addressing it were raised in the course of the review. It was suggested that whether women lose or win they need support to process what they have gone through, particularly since trauma is an embodied experience. One consideration is to design a group sharing on trauma as part of the mentorship with the support of a trauma counsellor. Mentors should not be expected to undertake counselling sessions but may be in a position to organise a meeting or workshop to speak to the issue of trauma.

10 Engaging the men

Identifying male allies and the need to work with men in delivering mentoring programmes were raised during the interviews. Engaging men who are champions of inclusive local governance and supportive of women's political participation and advancement is an important consideration in designing and delivering mentoring programmes.



Conclusion/ A Way Forward (CLGF)

CLGF understands mentoring as an important tool that can support the Commonwealth Women in Local Government (ComWLG) Network in its dual objective of increasing the number of women in local government and supporting women who are serving in local government to advance and excel in their leadership roles.

In August 2021 CLGF launched a month long campaign called the “Month of Mentoring.” The campaign drew on the research, lessons and principles in this report to encourage members of CLGF to reflect on mentoring for women in local government and the needs within their institutions and local government systems. The reflections coming out of these national, regional and cross-Commonwealth dialogues will help shape the future activities of the ComWLG Network in support of mentoring women for political advancement and leadership.

To advance this work, CLGF has identified the following specific target actions to be advanced through the ComWLG Network:

- 1 Disseminate this paper widely
- 2 Produce an operational guideline for setting up mentoring programmes
- 3 Develop simple tools for mentoring programmes and for guiding mentor-mentee relationships
- 4 Link LGAs across the Commonwealth to support mentoring
- 5 Bring more elected and prospective women into the ComWLG network
- 6 Harness major policy dialogues including through the EU and the Commonwealth Women’s Forum to continue to advocate for gender equity and to champion good practices in mentoring



Annex A: Proportion of Women Councillors Across the Commonwealth

Country	% women councillors	election year (latest available)	Elected/ Appointed/ Reserved
Average across Commonwealth*	22.3	* average across latest known year for the 46 countries with available data	
Lesotho	49.0	2011	reserved 1/3
Antigua & Barbuda	45.4	2017	elected
Saint Lucia	45.3	2016	appointed
Namibia	44.2	2015	elected
South Africa	41.2	2016	elected
Barbados	40.7	2010	appointed
Rwanda	~40.0	2015	reserved 30%
India	37.1	2013	reserved 1/3 or 1/2
Dominica	35.0	2016	elected
Kenya	35.0	2017	reserved 1/3
Tanzania	~34.0	2015	elected
New Zealand	32.5	2016	elected
Australia	32.2	2017	elected
Trinidad & Tobago	30.4	2016	elected
Uganda	30.0	2015	reserved 30%
Sri Lanka	29.1	2018	reserved 25%
United Kingdom	28.2	2017	elected
Cameroon	~28.0	2013	elected
Canada	~27.0	2014	elected
The Bahamas	26.0	2017	elected
Mauritius	25.4	2012	elected
Bangladesh	25.2	2013	reserved 1/4 & 1/3
Belize	24.1	2015	elected
Mozambique	22.0	2003	elected
Pakistan	~19.6	2015	reserved 15, 22, 33%
Jamaica	19.3	2016	elected
Sierra Leone	19.1	2012	elected
Malta	19.0	2013	elected

Country	% women councillors	election year (latest available)	Elected/ Appointed/ Reserved
Botswana	18.1	2014	elected
Swaziland	14.4	2012	elected
Fiji	13.2	2005	no local government
Malaysia	13.1	2011	appointed
Saint Kitts & Nevis	12.5	2017	elected
Malawi	12.1	2014	elected
Cyprus	11.9	2011	elected
Nigeria	9.8	2015	elected
Zambia	8.1	2016	elected
Ghana	6.7	2010	elected
Vanuatu	6.5	2016	elected
Guyana	5.0	2008	elected
Tuvalu	4.2	2011	elected
Kiribati	3.4	2013	elected
Solomon Islands	2.4	2015	elected
Papua New Guinea	1.4	2013	elected
Tonga	1.1	2016	elected
Samoa	0.0	2015	elected
Seychelles	not available		appointed
Saint Vincent & the Grenadines	not available		appointed
Singapore	not available		appointed
Brunei Darussalam	NLG		no local government
Nauru	NLG		no local government
Grenada	NLG		no local government

Of the 52 Commonwealth countries listed above: 42 have elected local government including eight with quota/reservations. Six have appointed local councillors and four have no local government. Key: ~ = approximate from latest available data

Source: Commonwealth Local Government Forum Handbook 2017/18



Annex B: List of individuals and organisations interviewed

	Name	Position	Organisation	Country/Region
1.	Bhim Raskar	Director	Resource and Support Centre for Development (RSCD)	India
2.	Anuya Kuwar	Programme Officer Asia Region	Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF)	India
3.	Karibaiti Taoaba	Regional Director	Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF)	Pacific
4.	Gertrude Rose Gamwera	Secretary General	Uganda Local Government Association	Uganda
5.	Perry Aritua	Executive Director; Mentor	Women's Democracy Network- Uganda	Uganda
6.	Vincienne George	Admin/Technical Officer	DALCA	Dominica
7.	Elena Pierce	Governance, Policy and Networks Advisor, FCM Programs	Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)	Canada
8.	Hazel Brown	Coordinator; Mentor	Network of NGOs for the Advancement of Women	Trinidad and Tobago
9.	Hon. Flavia Kalule	MP elect; Mentee / Mentor	11th Parliament of Uganda	Kasanda District, Uganda
10.	Ruth Ochieng	Co-Founder; Board Member; Member; Mentor	Women Regional Network in Peace Building Association for Women's Rights and Development (AWID) Woman Situation Room for the peaceful elections 2020/2021 in Uganda	Uganda
11.	Hon Annet Nakyanja	District Councillor; Mentee / Mentor		Wakiso District, Uganda
12.	Brenda Chisholm Beaton	Mayor		Town of Hawkesbury, Nova Scotia, Canada
13.	Eukene de Miguel Landabaso	Berdintasun Teknikari Arduraduna/ Responsable Técnica de Igualdad/ Equality Officer	EUDEL	Basque Country (Euskal Herria)
14.	Hon. Lori Littleton	Councillor; Mentor	Seat at the Table Mentorship Programme	Merritton Ward 1, City of St. Catharines, Canada
15.	Bev Eslinger	Councillor; Mentor		Ward 2, City of Edmonton, Canada
16.	Pamela Thompson	Author; Life Coach; Mentor	Certified, International Coach Federation	Canada
17.	Vernice Bellony	Councillor, Vieille Case Council; Teacher; Assistant Local Government Commissioner; Parliamentary Representative for Vieille Case Constituency, 1995-2000; Mentor		Dominica
18.		CEO Urban Council; Mentee		Dominica
19.	Ratnamala Vaidya	Panchayat Sakhi (Local Mentor); Regional Representative, Nagpur Region; Trainer, "Krantijyoti" Training for Elected Women Representatives	MRA	Panchayat: Manegaon Bazaar (Block and District Bhandara), India
20.	Rita Sukhdeve	Mentee; Sarpanch (2017-2020); Member of Gram Panchayat (1995)		Manegaon Bazaar, Block and District Bhandara, India
21.	Panchafula Vadde	Panchayat Sakhi (Local Mentor); Deputy Sarpanch Village Dhuppa,	MRA	Panchayat: Arjapur (Block Biloli, District Nanded), India
22.	Tulsabai Shankwad	Mentee; Elected Sarpanch, Arjapur, Block Biloli District Nanded		Panchayat: Arjapur (Block Biloli, District Nanded), India
23.	Sarika Gudaghe	Panchayat Sakhi (Local Mentor)	MRA	Chinchargavhan, Block Varud, District Amravati, India
24.	Christina Thomas	Mentee; Author, "Can't Hold Me Down, I'm Wearing My Crown"	Seat at the Table Mentorship Programme	City of St. Catherines, Canada



Annex C: Survey Questionnaire¹³

A. Questions for Mentors

- 1 What do you think worked very well as a mentor and why? What are the important ingredients in nurturing a mentor-mentee relationship?
- 2 What would you do differently?
- 3 In mentoring women for political office, how did you tackle the systemic issues and power imbalances such as discrimination, vote-buying, culturally-biased practices, multiple burden of women in family settings, among others- what approaches or strategies worked?
- 3.1 And did your position of privilege or power influence the way you tackled this in mentoring women?

B. Questions for Mentees

- 1 What do you consider the most important benefits (maximum three benefits) to you of a mentoring programme?
- 1.1 Specify the area or areas in your political journey that benefitted most from mentoring?
- 2 Describe your relationship with your mentor? Would you characterise it as among equals?
- 3 What would you do differently?

¹³ These questions were sent to mentors and mentees who preferred to submit written responses instead of being interviewed or on the phone. These questions served as the basis of the online and phone interviews which were more involved and interactive.



Annex D: Profiles of mentoring programmes

The Dominica Association of Local Community Authorities (DALCA)

Dominica, Caribbean

The Dominica Association of Local Community Authorities (DALCA) is the national association of local authorities mandated to provide training to District Council Associations and Local Village Councils. Currently there are seven District Council Associations and 43 Village Councils. These trainings are done on a quarterly basis and annually at the national level during the Local Government Month in May.

Strengthening women's participation in municipal and local government is a "fundamental democratic issue" in the island. In response to this, DALCA delivers trainings and mentoring programmes for women's political leadership and advancement in governance. The training and mentoring programmes focus on technical knowledge and skills such as role of local authorities for effective governance, fiscal management, advocacy and lobbying, public speaking and conflict resolution among others. DALCA also collaborate to provide mentoring support to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), the youth and other local leaders who show interest. Institutions such as the Dominica State Collage, University of the West Indies, Bureau of Gender Affairs, Dominica Red Cross, Office of Disaster Management, Department of Local Government and the private sector work in partnership with DALCA.

14 Mulindwa, Beatrice and Namuli-Lubega, Lydia, Strengthening Women's Influence in Leadership and Decision Making Processes for Gender Responsiveness and Political Accountability: Final Evaluation, p3 July 2016

15 Ibid, p29, The caucus members were mentored on resource mobilization including effective use and management of seed money to enhance the work of the caucus, leadership, coalition building, lobbying, networking and creating visibility for a women's caucus. The sessions were also used to reflect on actions taken by the caucus members to mainstream gender in local council sessions.

In August 2017, DALCA held its first national consultation on "Localising the SDGs for Effective Local Authorities with support from CLGF.

Enhancing Women's Leadership Role in Influencing Decision Making (2012)

Strengthening Women's Influence in Leadership and Decision Making Processes for Gender Responsiveness and Political Accountability (2014 – 2016)

Women's Democracy Group (WDG) Uganda, East Africa

The two projects were implemented by the Women's Democracy Group (WDG) in 2012 and in 2014-2016 with funding support from the Democratic Governance Facility (DGF). The overall objective of both projects was to strengthen women's influence in leadership and decision making processes for gender responsiveness and political accountability. The second of the two projects which ran from 2014-2016 had two specific objectives namely: (i) to influence national electoral and at least 4 selected political party legislations, guidelines and procedures for gender responsiveness by 2017 and (ii) to increase representation, participation and influence of women in political processes and leadership in 50 districts and at national level by 2017.¹⁴

In 2012, women caucuses were formed in all targeted 50 districts. In 2016, a total of 780 district leaders were trained. During the trainings, women's caucuses were formed and action plans drawn to enable councilors focus and begin their work. A total of 258 (of the planned 250) executive committee members of the caucuses received mentoring and support supervision on gaps identified in a prior monitoring mission conducted by the consortium.¹⁵

The caucusing has strengthened women councillors' capacity to mainstream gender in district budgets and plans. For example in the districts of Bugiri, Sironko, Butaleja, Katakwi



women caucuses successfully lobbied for funds to improve maternal health services while the caucus in Bushenyi district successfully lobbied for funds to respond to GBV. In the districts of Arua, Kiboga, Moroto, Koboko, Mayuge budget allocations to improve the quality of education within the districts were attributed to the efforts of the caucuses.¹⁶ The mentoring and support supervision also extended to the review of the performance of the caucuses. The caucuses have also been used as a launching pad for higher elective positions such as Woman MP and Constituency MP. The good performance of the caucuses has been affirmed by the local government score-card initiative implemented by Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE).

The project evaluation in 2016 established that the project interventions which included aside from trainings, development of key documents like the women's manifesto, engagement with political parties and key players like Electoral Commission, Parliament and District technocrats had been key in resolving the major challenges that hinder women's participation and thus paved a way for their effectiveness both in the campaign and decision making processes, an exercise that has been termed as empowering, energizing, self-finding and resolving. The evaluation also pointed to the need for continuous mentoring of women politicians. The key enabling factors cited by the evaluation that needs to be pursued in the future included: the women caucus which provides a platform for identification, analysis and packaging of women's issues for advocacy within the District Local Government Committees, involving and building a good working relationship with male counterparts and district technocrats, identification and collaboration with gender champions and fostering good working relationships with government entities particularly Electoral Commission and Security Agencies, political parties and the media.¹⁷

The **Women's Democracy Group (WDG)** was formed in 2009 with a focus to enhance women's participation and influence in leadership and decision-making processes and spaces. WDG is a consortium of five women organisation: Action for Development (ACFODE), Center for Women in Governance (CEWIGO), Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE), Women's Democracy

Network- Uganda Chapter (WDN-U) and the Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) as the coordinating agency. The consortium work in 50 districts in Uganda.

The **Uganda Local Governments' Association (ULGA)** was established as Uganda Local Authorities Association (ULAA) in 1994 when the Ugandan government had started the Decentralization Policy, becoming the Local Government Act in 1997 and was in the process of drawing up the new Constitution of 1995. ULGA's mandate is to unite Local Governments, and provide them with Association member services, as well as a forum through which to come together and give each other support and guidance to make common positions on key issues that affect Local Governance. ULGA carries out this mandate through lobbying, advocacy and representation of Local Governments at local, national and international fora. In April 2006, ULGA developed a Gender Policy for Local Governments in Uganda. ULGA is in the process of organising and launching its Women in Local Government Network. It intends to work on project to support women in politics. ULGA considers WDG as a collaborative partner, engaging the group to consult and generate ideas for initiatives under the broad theme of women's leadership, including the area of political participation and advancement.

Women as Local Legislator (WALL) Programme Resource and Support Centre for Development (RSCD)

State of Maharashtra, India, South Asia

The WALL programme which started in January 2019 was supported by CLGF as part of the Commonwealth partnership for Democracy (CP4D), a wider Commonwealth programme to strengthen inclusion and diversity. It was a pilot initiative of Mahila Rajsatta Andolan (MRA), a campaign with women in governance, initiated by Resource & Support Centre for Development (RSCD) in collaboration with regional networks of civil societies in Maharashtra.

The mission of MRA is to strengthen Elected Women Representatives (EWR) of the Gram Panchayat (Village Council) and contribute to

¹⁶ Ibid, DGF Activity Progress Report, July – September 2014

¹⁷ Ibid, p4



enhancing panchayat processes. This is in response to the landmark move in April 1993 with the 73rd amendment to the constitution of India which legislated that one-third of the total number of seats in all Panchayats be reserved for women.

The WALL programme worked initially with 100 villages that have upcoming elections in the state of Maharashtra. Five villages from twenty districts in the State were selected. The aim of WALL is to contribute to promoting transparency in elections with increased participation of women and local people. The programme implementation consists of two phases.

Phase One

In the first phase, a village Shakha/ GaonSakha (village branch of MRA) is established as a starting point and a women's collective - a platform for potential women leaders- is organised, building a strong local support for and base of women voters. The women's collective requires a minimum of 50 women coming together with the aim of having at least 20% of these women ready and trained to contest the Panchayat election in their respective areas.

Women in India are generally socialised to look at politics negatively. Even the most capable potential women leaders may want to engage in social service but prefer staying away from politics. One of the important objectives of the WALL programme therefore is to develop an interest in politics for public service among women.

The main tasks in phase one are the following: to lay the foundation of good and people-centred governance, instill an interest in learning more about legislation, power politics and its importance in their everyday lives, identify potential women leaders and conduct training on different thematic areas before the elections.

After the establishment of village council, each village undergoes training in two parts. The first training is on the theme of pre-election campaigning and the second is on the technical information needed to contest elections. A standard training programme covers several themes and concepts under these broad areas. For example, the training includes sessions to help potential women leaders in developing their political career and tips on how to handle sensitive issues such as patriarchy.

The training programme uses a combination of different methodologies like games, stories and songs to encourage participation. The most important way of encouraging women is the sharing of real examples and true stories of elected women representatives, their challenges, solutions and good practices. The trainers also take these women for exposure visits to Gram Panchayat, Block Panchayat and District Panchayat. One platform that helps women learn from each other is the Self Help Group (SHG). Women discuss frankly the political realities such as the practice of using money and alcohol during the election period in SHGs. RSCD is working with 100 villages conducting strategic training programmes on the 4 pillars of Panchayats: Budget, Orders, Services and Schemes (BOSS).

During the training process, trainers also identify women leaders who can potentially contest elections. These women are given special trainings to develop their perspective, skills and leadership, learn the art of drafting a village agenda and reaching out to voters, addressing day to day issues. They are also taught to accept defeat and encouraged not to compromise on their values or bow down to the pressures of their husband or opposition leaders.

Phase two

The focus of the second phase is two-fold: the election itself and enhancing the capacity of elected women. The trained elected women representatives contribute in strengthening the Gram Sabha (Village assembly), which is an important platform for decision-making.

Two publications that were and continue to be used are "Village Council Manual" and "Gram Panchayat Election Manual." The latter is a reference providing information on elections strategy, forming a women's panel, selection of candidate, campaigning and code of conduct. It also promotes good governance through the concept of *Bramhdanmuktmatadan* or Value Based Governance.

Trainers and Mentors

The role of Panchayat Sakhi (local mentors) and District Organizers are extremely crucial. They mobilise the women and adolescent girls in the community and raise awareness about their



rights and responsibilities along with importance of good governance. In the current setup, former Sarpanchs¹⁸, former elected representatives, District organisers and Panchayat Sakhi (mentors) take on the role of Panchayati Raj trainers. Each trainer has the responsibility of 5 villages. One of the important qualities of trainers is to build rapport and trusting relationships with the women participants.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

RSCD is committed to continuing learning, which includes monitoring the outcomes of the training and the impact of the support given to the EWR and keeping track of progress made by the villages.

The outcomes of Phase One in the period covering January to December 2019 include: 1) voices of women amplified, 2) improved confidence of women to stand for elections, demonstrating mental preparedness and willingness to stand independently or as part of a panel and contesting with a village agenda and 3) increased in number of women contesting elections, specifically, 20% of women who took part in the training contested the elections held.

The monitoring and evaluation of Phase Two showed the following results: 1) 70% of the trained Elected Women Representatives (EWR) gained more confidence and enhanced capacity to exercise their responsibilities as EWR and 2) 70% of villages with EWR had regular Gram Sabha (Village assembly) meetings.

The **Resource & Support Centre for Development (RSCD)** believes in people-led processes. It advocates for a model of sustainable development that gives priority to people's aspirations in meeting their basic & value-based needs. The organisation is committed to facilitating and enhance the capacities of voters and people in the margins to organise themselves and engage collectively as actors and not merely beneficiaries in governance and development. Ever since its conception in 1994, RSCD has been able to reach out to several voluntary groups and agencies in the States of Rajasthan & Maharashtra guided by its networking strategy. RSCD has been able to build a cadre of 150 core group members in five regional collectives.

Toward Parity in Municipal Politics

Demonstration Projects:

The Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM) supports opportunities for Cape Breton/ Unami'ki /Strait women to lead in local government

Cape Breton/ Unami'ki /Strait, Nova Scotia, Canada

The City of St. Catharines and Women in Niagara Council build equity and inclusiveness in the community

St Catherines, Ontario, Canada

Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Canada

In 2018, FCM implemented the project *Diverse Voices for Change and Toward Parity in Municipal Politics (2018–2020)*. The *Toward Parity in Municipal Politics* project was in partnership between the Canadian municipal sector and WAGE with a vision for a Canada in which gender parity in municipal government from coast to coast to coast becomes the new norm. It aims for women of all identities, ages and backgrounds to **run for municipal office, win their campaigns and lead on issues of importance to their constituents**. The project, with its implementing partners, Equal Voice and Canadian Women's Foundation, developed a pan- Canadian framework that outlines the strategies and actions that will ultimately help attain gender parity by making it more appealing for women to run for office, win seats at the table and thrive as elected officials.

The project has four pillars of intervention: (i) improved access to information; (ii) enhanced inclusion; (iii) increased support; and (iv) improved governance structures. These signify the broad themes that need to be addressed to achieve gender parity.

The pillar on **Increased Support** addresses the steps, mechanisms and processes that could be put in place to ensure that all women have support to overcome challenges or to balance out additional burdens that exist as a result of their gender. This includes

¹⁸ Sarpanch is decision-maker, the focal point of contact between government officers and the village community, elected by the village-level constitutional body of local self-government called the Gram Sabha (village government) in India and retains power for five years. The sarpanch, together with other elected panchayat members (referred to as commissioners or a panch) constitute the Gram Panchayat (Village Council).



familial support, **access to mentorship**, policies and workplace accommodations. The key themes under increasing support for access to mentorship are:

1. Provision and space for formalised mentoring and networking
 - Set up formal mentorship networks for and among women mayors, reeves, directors and councillors, etc.
 - Facilitate training and mentorship workshops and seminars for both mentors and mentees.
2. Peer and thematic mentoring and networking
 - Create peer mentor or thematic groups where women can connect (for example, councillors from rural agriculture-based communities or mining communities across different regions to share experiences from similar contexts to discuss potential solutions).
 - Promote members who are taking leadership roles or addressing diversity and inclusion in innovative and engaging manners.
3. Engagement of men
 - Engage male leaders who want to be mentors for women councillors or mayors.
 - Actively make space for women during council and committee meetings.
4. Creation of a pipeline of candidates and leaders
 - Support girls' learning from an early age. Encourage municipal actors to be available for and engage with schools (primary through secondary), youth councils or Girl Guides.
 - Celebrate successful women leaders, especially those of colour, religious or cultural minorities, Indigenous and other groups to highlight positive examples regionally and nationally.

Towards Parity in Municipal Politics project supported 20 demonstration initiatives. Two of the 20 were included in this review:

The Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM) supports opportunities for Cape Breton/Unami'ki/Strait women to lead in local government.

NSFM promotes gender parity in local government. Government FOCUS (Female Objectives Cape Breton/Unami'ki/Strait) with government and non-government leaders,

is implementing an education/engagement plan to improve women's representation on 16 First Nations Mi'kmaw and municipal Councils where women hold few or no elected positions - 24% of 132 positions and 19% of the top 16 leadership roles. NSFM and Government FOCUS are collaborating on two important activities to advance their shared objective of creating opportunities for women to engage in municipal/local leadership: the Women's Forum and the Leadership School.

NSFM created a *Women's Forum* at its annual Fall Conference. The Forum of female elected officials, which typically attracts 250 participants, is promoting networking and mentoring and supporting initiatives to help increase women's participation in municipal government. The partners also promoted and delivered a *Leadership School* in August 2020 that covers political structures, roles and functions of both municipal and First Nation local government systems on the curriculum and connect Nova Scotian women in leadership roles with up to 100 rural and First Nations women participants who aspire to hold such roles. Each of the 16 Cape Breton/Unami'ki/Strait communities were asked to join the partnership and sponsor/fund at least women to attend the school.

The project aims to reduce barriers and increase leadership skills and confidence for a more diverse political leadership and representation by women in Cape Breton/Unami'ki/Strait communities. An institutionalised Women's Forum is designed to augment NSFM's gender parity efforts. This project establishes a rather unique enabling environment for women with knowledge of both municipal and First Nations government systems to build strong working relationships and foster inter-municipal cooperation benefitting not just their own communities, but the region as a whole.

The City of St. Catharines and Women in Niagara Council build equity and inclusiveness in the community

The City of St. Catharines partnered with the Women in Niagara (WIN) Council of the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce (GNCC) to set a new precedent in municipal leadership



and political representation. Of the 123 elected municipal officials in the region, only 34 (25%) are women and only 2 of 12 mayors are women.

The partnership inspired the City of St Catherines' Seat at the Table Mentorship Programme. The programme has the support of three citizen advisory committees: *Equity and Inclusion*, *Anti-Racism and LGBTQ2S+*. Activities involve pairing politically interested/engaged community leaders with members of City Council and providing resources to learn about Council processes, electoral politics, community issues and running for election. Mentorship is offered not only for participants, but also for elected councilors to further develop their municipal leadership skills, through a series of workshops, a "mock council" and discussions with community leaders facilitated by WIN as well as participation in other WIN-sponsored events. Key lessons and recommendations drawn from running the programme include: engaging with municipal staff is vital, identifying allies and building relationships are important features of a mentorship programme, the importance of tailor fitting mentoring to individual and cultural contexts and exposure and visibility are fundamental needs that require support. The project has also demonstrated a positive example for Niagara's 11 other local municipalities and Regional Council on how cities and elected officials can have an impact on increasing gender parity and council diversity.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) has worked to increase women's participation in municipal government for nearly two decades. For the past 15 years, FCM and the Department for Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) of the Canadian Government have collaborated to address the gender gap of women's representation. In 2003, FCM launched its first Status of Women Canada (SWC) funded project, which led to our 2004 report, *Increasing Women's Participation in Municipal Decision Making: Strategies for More Inclusive Communities*. The report recommended a national strategy to strengthen women's involvement in public participation and to bridge the gender gap in Canadian municipal processes.

The Bidelagun Basqueskola Mentoring Programme

Virginia Woolf BASQUESKOLA Basqueskola Sarea, EUDEL and EMAKUNDE *Basque Country (Euskal Herria)*

Virginia Woolf BASQUESKOLA is a network of all for all. The initiative started in 2012 as a result of the collaboration between EUDEL and Emakunde. The general objectives of Virginia Woolf Basqueskola are:

- 1 to strengthen the participation of women in local politics
- 2 to increase the incidence of women elected in promoting equality policies at the local level.

The initiative has been developed by Basqueskola Sarea, the network of councillors and mayors. The network aims to generate changes in the political environment by promoting equality of Basque elected women and challenging stereotypes and roles that hinder the equal socio-political participation of women and men. As recognised in the European Charter for Equality the equality of women and men remains a pending challenge despite of the significant progress made. Political, economic and cultural inequalities persist because they are based on deeply entrenched social structures. According to the study carried out by the Council of Municipalities and Regions of Europe (CMRE) in December 2019, the Basque Country is among the most advanced regions in terms of the level of representation of women in local governments. With a 46% percentage of women elected, the Basque Country is only behind Iceland (47%) on the list, and well above the European average (29%). The network is open to all the elected women of the City Councils, more than 1,200 women who work every day in local Basque politics- in the government or in the opposition; from political parties or citizen platforms; in small or large municipalities

The Bidelagun Basqueskola Mentoring Programme

In 2018, with the next municipal elections in 2019 on the horizon, Basqueskola Sarea implemented a pilot mentoring programme, designed to welcome and accompany newly elected women. The programme was inspired by the good practices of other mentoring networks that operate in the Basque Country and Europe.



The pilot mentoring programme was anchored on a relationship of trust and support between veteran mayors and councilors and newly elected ones, accompanying the latter at the beginning of their performance in public office, focusing on empowerment and leadership. For the initial run, the programme included representative mentors from the three territories (Álava (capital: Vitoria-Gasteiz) Biscay (capital: Bilbao) Gipuzkoa (capital: Donostia-San Sebastián) and from all political parties.

Specific Objectives

- To take advantage of the talent and knowledge of elected veterans in positions of local responsibility
- To accelerate the process of adaptation to the position of the newly elected local government
- To respond to the needs for guidance and support for the beginning of the legislature
- To offer personalised mentoring support

Guiding Principles

- Empowerment through sisterhood
- Mutual support
- Recognition of resource persons and experts among the members of the network
- Collective use of experience, knowledge, tips and resources

Key Methodologies

- Peer learning processes
- Development of the practice of applying the gender mainstreaming perspective to any area of municipal policy
- Creation of new knowledge from exchange of ideas and sharing of different experiences and points of view

Phases

The Virginia Woolf Basqueskola Mentoring programme lasts approximately one year. Its implementation was divided mainly into two phases, the first one refers to the work with the mentors identified in 2018, the second one refers to the work with the mentees and the final training of 15 groups of mentors- mentees. The programme started in November 2019 and ended in November 2020

2018: Design Phase

2019: Phase One

- Identification of Mentors: criteria and profile for the selection

- Training of Mentors: Keys and skills of mentoring for newly elected locals
- Design of the mentoring process-Basqueskola Bidelagun
- Design of tools for accompaniment

2019: Phase Two

- Configuration and presentation of the group of Mentors
- Public presentation of the Bidelagun program
- Recruitment of new elected women as mentees
- Matching Mentors- Mentees: matching criteria and configuration of mentor teams
- Training - accompaniment of mentors

2020: Phase Three / Four

- Start of the mentoring programme
- Contacts between mentors - mentees established
- Monitoring and support of mentors

2020: Phase Five

- Evaluation of the programme:
 - Assessment of the mentors
 - Assessment of the mentees
 - Assessment of the process
 - Assessment of results

Mentoring Selection Criteria:

The most important criteria for mentors are: Passion for local politics, a gender perspective, and assertive communication skills.

In addition, some qualities, skills and competencies have been identified as a general guide for mentoring newly elected local councillors:

- **Qualities:** Empathic listening, passion for local politics, self-confidence, being communicative and participatory, optimism
- **Skills:** Team management, transformative leadership, time management, assertive communication
- **Competencies:** Knowledge of local politics, equality policies and gender perspective

Matching Criteria

The criteria used to match the mentors and mentees are:

- Preference for the same political party to start from a common base, shared ideals and to build trust
- Geographic proximity to facilitate meetings



Methodology

The Mentor and Mentees established a one-year action plan with the general and specific objectives that the mentee wished to work on. The programme included at least three personalised meetings during the first semester and two during the second, in addition to telephone and email contact. The pair agreed the regularity of meetings and prepared them in advance.

Recommendations

- Make your mentoring work a high priority. Commit to spending time and enhancing communication with the mentee. Respond quickly to your calls and emails.
- Prepare a flexible mentoring process plan, which can be adapted to the needs of both mentor and mentee. Schedule the mentoring sessions in your agenda at the beginning of the process and try to respect the fixed dates.
- Define in advance the objectives and expectations of the process and evaluate its progress.
- Be spontaneous. Surprise mentees outside of the sessions with words of encouragement and affirmation or informally send some information that may be useful.
- Maintain the relationship with the rest of the mentors in order to exchange ideas and experiences. Reflect on the conduct of the mentoring process and seek outside input and help. A mentor is not expected to know everything and networking spaces are meant to jointly answer certain questions, offer solidarity and provide technical assistance.

Evaluation of the Pilot Project

- **Assessment of the mentors:** Five evaluations were submitted and the summary of the feedback was as follows:

What worked?

- **Face to face meetings:** It was cited that meetings were more positive when it was face to face. The feedback also conveyed that although mentors tried to maintain contact online, by phone or email, these means of communication were not conducive to establishing close relationships of trust that require personalised support built over time.
- **Accompaniment:** The concept of accompaniment was appreciated by the mentees. They consider having someone to count on and be open to

helpful in giving them a sense of security. Mentors, on the other hand, find it encouraging to know that mentees are finding their space more comfortably than others.

- The mentors also shared that the initial connections have been excellent and with good potential to continue the work. It is for this reason that they regret the difficulties encountered.

What did not work?

- **Competing demands:** The mentors also reported that the biggest challenge they face are the competing demands on time with family, work and council responsibilities
- **Communication:** The area of communications in their municipalities needs to be improved
- **COVID 19 crisis:** All five mentors pointed to the negative impact of the COVID 19 pandemic which made the building of a mentor-mentee relationship extremely difficult.

Assessment of the mentees

The positive elements cited by the mentees include:

- Teamwork and opportunity to reflection on problems
- Networking and contacts with other municipalities
- Support from mentor offers a source of security when working. It was cited that being able to share experience with someone who has experienced similar situations is helpful.

Difficulties:

- Ignorance of the political world in general
- Lack of knowledge when it comes to managing grants
- Inexperience and ignorance of operations and administration.

Process and results assessment

The process started in 2018, launched in 2019 after the municipal elections and interrupted in 2020 due to the COVID 19 pandemic. The two circumstances that negatively affected the implementation of the programme were:

- 1 The Technical Secretariat was not in place until 24 March 2020 and resulted in the lack of a coordinating mechanism for the programme. This did not help both mentors and mentees to communicate more seamlessly.
- 2 Once coordination of the Technical Secretariat was in place, the COVID 19 pandemic hit globally. This turned out to be the biggest obstacle to the



proper development of the programme as both Mentors and Mentees had many difficulties in maintaining contact.

The results of the evaluation highlighted the following lessons:

- Mentoring is a learning process that requires commitment from both parties, investment of time and energy.
- The support and monitoring tools and instruments put into operation are considered to have been valid to meet the planned objectives. However, they have not been implemented to their full potential.
- The consequences of the COVID 19 pandemic have influenced the experience so much that it is not considered that a measurement of results can be applied, obviating the difficulties encountered in the process in 2020.

EUDEL, The Association of Basque Municipalities, is governed by a General Assembly that meets at least annually. In it, all the municipalities that are members of the Association are represented, with their Mayor as spokesperson. After the effective constitution of the Local Corporations emanating from each electoral process, the General Assembly elects its executive bodies, which are the **Executive Commission** and the three **Territorial Commissions** (Álava, Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa).

Emakunde, the Basque Institute for Women, is an autonomous body of the Basque Government which designs, promotes, advises on, coordinates and evaluates equality policies and raises awareness within society in order to achieve the real and effective equality of women and men in the Basque Autonomous Community.

Market for Change (M4C) Project

Partnership between the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) and the UN Women Fiji Multi-Country Office

Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu; Pacific Islands

UN Women's Markets for Change (M4C) project was a six-year initiative promoting gender equality and women's empowerment that focuses on marketplaces in rural and urban areas in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Given that between

60-80% of market vendors are women, with many more women reliant on market produce, the project's goal is to ensure that marketplaces in rural and urban areas are safe, inclusive and non-discriminatory, promoting the gender, social and economic empowerment of market vendors, with specific attention to the needs and aspirations of women market vendors.

CLGF was selected as a partner due to its experience and positive reputation in the Pacific in working with local government in areas including: financial management, governance, planning and budgeting, gender, communications and leadership. CLGF has been operating in the Pacific since 2004 and brings to the project significant experience in training and supporting local governments as well as governance organisations. CLGF is currently the only organisation with experience in working with local government in all three countries.

In 2015-2016, M4C entered into a partnership with the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) to conduct a comprehensive capacity and training needs assessment of market management and local government staff involved in market management in all three project countries and then to design and roll out the identified training to local government. On the other hand, for the period of 2017-2019, there were two outcomes that CLGF focused on in the M4C project:

- 1 Inclusive, effective and representative marketplace groups are created and grow, contributing to gender, social and economic advancement, the elimination of gender-based discrimination and violence, and expanded economic opportunities for women.
- 2 Local Government and market management are gender responsive, effective and accountable to women market vendor needs.

The specific outputs under this second outcome area:

- 2.1. Strengthened capacity and commitment of local government and market management to draft, adopt and implement gender responsive market bylaws, policies, plans and budgets for the provision of safe and secure



market infrastructure, adequate amenities and services, and transparent revenue generation and expenditures

- 2.2. Increased levels of consultation and communication between local governments, market management and MVAs in everything regarding market governance and market life.

One of the specific methodologies that was designed as part of the training for market vendors (MVs) / market vendor associations (MVAs) is mentoring women in leadership. Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, the project completion was extended to December 2020. And the mentoring component was not implemented formally. It is certainly an area that is seen to be important for a next phase of the project.

Local Government Association (LGA) UK

As part of a refocused Leadership offer during the COVID 19 pandemic, the LGA's Leadership Academy team provided one-to-one sessions to help councillors develop their leadership potential through coaching. Offered to both men and women, this offer comprised three 60-minute coaching sessions over a 3-month period, offering councillors the chance to examine, explore and adapt their leadership styles and to improve personal resilience and confidence when dealing with the uncertainties COVID 19 presented. The LGA also offers a two-day residential programme specifically for women councillors to hone their political skills and to build lasting professional networks.

