



Women's Leadership for the Post COVID-19 Era

*A call for action of Local and
Regional Governments*



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A call to action from Local and Regional Government Leaders

Our world will never be the same after COVID-19 and we need to make sure it is better. We, local and regional leaders, are fully committed to lead the transformation from the bottom up.

As identified in our UCLG Decalogue for the Post COVID-19 era, we know well that the sacrifices that are being asked from this and future generations need to lead to more just and equality-driven societies, where we take care of each other, care is valued and where everyone has the same rights and opportunities.

The close link between health and our territories has never been more visible. Overcoming the health challenges can only be achieved with strong sanitary measures supported by sound public service provision that underpins the role of our cities and territories as caring and responsive environments.

Gender equality was already taken up as a priority area for local and regional government networks and their members before the coronavirus crisis hit. In the current context, it remains as relevant as ever. We need to avoid any form of regression and make the connections between the equality of women and men in our societies and the stewardship of our communities and our planet. Instead of seeking to go "back to normal", it is time to be ambitious and see gender equality as an integral part of the solution to the many challenges we face in terms of health, climate, economy and fundamental human rights.

The already precarious livelihoods of women around the world are now worsening. Gender-based violence against women is increasing, often exacerbated by the precarious housing and confinement conditions, overburdening women with cooking, cleaning and care responsibilities. And yet; women represent the bulk of the often underpaid and undervalued health and care systems workforce, not to mention at the frontlines of other basic services, such as grocery stores, facing the unprecedented challenges head-on. They are also playing a critical role in neighborhoods' cohesion and solidarity efforts, keeping us together and safe.

Gender equality is not an ideal but a necessity which we, local and regional women elected officials, are committed to defend and promote for the benefit of our democracies and societies for everyone and everywhere.

It is clear that health emergencies do not impact men and women in the same way and this simple acknowledgment will be critical to overcoming this and future pandemics. Empowered and safer women and children will lead to resilient and safer societies.

Amplified women's voices of all generations can set the pathway towards Generation Equality where women's leadership is no longer an exception but the norm. This is why we call on the local, regional, national, and international institutions to:

- Step forward to ensure that we take decisive steps to protect and empower women and girls everywhere from gender-based violence, in particular in relation to domestic violence risk situations.
- Promote new governance models that allow for co-creation with all stakeholders and in particular women's leadership in all sectors of society. Women must be involved in leading the recovery after COVID and the response to future emergencies.
- Improve the working conditions of women, in particular in the care-related jobs which need to guarantee inclusion and hold our society together.
- Involve women in COVID-19 specialized groups or task forces, as well as in legislative, policy, and budgetary decision-making processes.
- Foster gender-sensitive universal health care, research, and local service provision to overcome this pandemic and support women and children beyond the outbreak.

- Provide support for out-of-school children and for children without access to care facilities and their parents, who are combining home working and childcare—a nearly impossible task that falls disproportionately on women.
- Push for gender-segregated data to help visualize women and girls in our societies and territories, and guide public policies.
- Promote women's and girls' access to information, knowledge and technologies, ensuring the fulfilment of their digital rights.
- Put gender equality policies at the forefront of the recovery plans by reinforcing mainstreaming and existing gender-sensitive policies.
- Facilitate a pathway towards a Generation Equality where women's leadership is no longer an exception but the new normal.

We further call men, in particular colleagues in local and regional governments all over the world to join us in making the above call a reality and share our quest for gender equality.

Our equality-driven movement is committed to working with the UN System, national governments, the international community, women groups and grassroots organizations, civil society and all stakeholders in taking decisive steps towards Generation Equality and building back better.

Join us! Inequality is no longer an option.

Sign our Call for Action and join women leaders around the world urging for a sustainable and gender-equal future.