



Women-led Cities

**Commission on the Status of Women Events
(CSW67)**



Collaborative Action to unleash the potential of cities to accelerate sustainable development and improve quality of life for all

ellaimpacta co-creation journey

Executive Summary

More than 50% of the world's population are women but only 5% of the world's cities are led by women. The Women-led Cities window of the SDG Cities Global Initiative will address gender inequality and increase opportunities for women by improving safety for women in the city and access to basic services, while supporting women entrepreneurship, equal work rights, and political empowerment as women engage equally in local decision making. Uniquely, Women-led Cities is a partnership between women business leaders globally and women mayors worldwide. It will foster the growth and development of women in positions of authority and result in establishing new generations of women business leaders and women political leaders. Working together, women leaders of cities and businesses will advocate at all levels of government for transformative change in support of human rights, gender rights and equality.

Women-led Cities Breakfast Event

Zoom Recording:

https://undp.zoom.us/rec/play/j71Inaes1hIXFVZE3KBs9s9a1uqeZgud_xlucxvMak8qU1My5rB-E1XWkFoTAAuoMtrfEpcljLtmYRXo.ihS6ksT3cm5KGEM4?continueMode=true&_x_zm_rtaid=J1ox21qdSHmwl_nP0DQQ4Q.1678427511622.1ef076f868ee3b06e7ed39797f0866e1&_x_zm_rhtaid=846

The Women-led Cities Breakfast Event took place on March 8, 2023, in New York and was co-sponsored by UNCDF and UN-Habitat in partnership with EllaImpacta: Instituto Mulheres do Brasil, Luiza Helena Trajano and BlendGroup. The event served as an opportunity to discuss the role and impact of women in decision-making to accelerate the achievement of SDGs in cities, and directly tackle gender inequality.

The event began with an introduction from Mr. Mourad Wahba, Officer in Charge at UNCDF. Mr. Wahba introduced the International Municipal Investment Fund, a unique investment fund initiated by UNCDF to support cities and local

governments in achieving the SDGs and the Paris Agreement. He also spoke about the Guarantee Facility for Sustainable Cities which promotes global policy goals necessary to unlock finance for cities in the developing world. Mr. Wahba hopes to work with key partners at the event to ensure these instruments prioritize and support the role of women in leading sustainable cities.

Mr. Dyfed Aubrey, SubProgramme Coordinator at UN-Habitat, introduced the SDG Cities Initiative and explained that women leaders will be supported through a process of data, strategic planning, spatial planning, project development, and project financing. He passed the floor to Ms. Angela Mwai, Chief of the Human Rights and Social Inclusion Unit at UN-Habitat, who stated that we need to bring young women into spaces for decision making as well as entrepreneurship, education, and health. She explained that the objectives of Women-led Cities include women's political empowerment, economic empowerment, and better places to live. Ms. Liane Freire, EllaImpacta Alliance Founder and Founder and CEO of BLENDGroup, continued the conversation by emphasizing that with a transformative collaboration between women in the private sector, government, and communities we need instruments for mobilization, including investment and financing. She mentioned that Women-led Cities is a call for women leaders to localize the SDGs and finance sustainable investments.

The Executive Director of UN-Habitat, Ms. Maimunah Modd Sharif, joined the event virtually and started off by wishing all the women in the room a happy international women's day. She highlighted that women continue to face structural and systematic barriers that prevent them from taking leadership roles and result in unequal access to rights. If we continue on this current trajectory, the political gender gap is expected to take more than 145 years to close and the economic gender gap will take 265 years. She stressed that we cannot wait this long, we must act now. Earlier in the week, she spoke with Luiza Trajano, an inspiring business leader and member of EllaImpacta Alliance, and they agreed

that one of their main objectives is to move the needle from 5% of cities being led by women to 50% and eradicate violence against women. The ED emphasized that “women in leadership is key to making cities more equal, inclusive, just, safe, and green.” She stated that Women-led Cities will address gender inequality and increase opportunity for women by improving safety for women in cities and equal access to basic services.

Following the ED, Ms. Luiza Helena Trajano, CEO of Magazine Luiza and associated companies, joined virtually and made remarks regarding the importance of putting more women in decision making positions. She stressed the need to work against violence, ensuring a peaceful environment for women and children to thrive in. Luiza spoke about piloting the Women-led Cities initiative in three countries, which will allow for the development of learning actions before the initiative goes to scale.

After the introduction of the initiative, the event proceeded with a dialogue session moderated by Mr. Vinicio Stort, the Head of Investments at IDB-Invest. Ms. Carmen de Paula from the International Finance Corporation (IFC) began by stating that gender inequality persists, specifically within the health and education sectors. In collaboration with the World Bank, IFC has created an advisory platform to help companies in healthcare and education narrow the gender gap. Ms. Kristona Lockhart from the Islamic Development Bank (ISDB) stated that they are in the process of reinventing their urban policy, and this event serves as an opportunity to see how they can align the objectives of Women-led Cities to how they address urban development. ISDB is looking towards leveraging blended finance with partners who have flexibility to engage in soft areas, including women’s empowerment. Mr. Emil Anczewicz from the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO) stated that they are working on updating their urban policy, therefore they will consider how to embed the Women-led Cities objectives into their policies. Following this

dialogue, a video was played with a variety of individuals from development banks who gave their testimonies on how women's empowerment is key to our future.

The second dialogue involved women mayors and was moderated by Jacinta Gauda, Principal and Chief Strategy Officer at The Gauda Group. Mayor Rohey Lowe Malick from Banjul began by giving a testimony about her experience as the first female mayor in the Gambia. She brought light to the hardships she faced during her campaign, including bullying and stereotyping. She had to break through the cultural and societal norms that expect women to be placed in the kitchen. She is hopeful that through this initiative, we can encourage other women to break through the barriers and take their place at the table, where they belong. Mayor Justine Manga from Nyassa in Senegal joined virtually and mentioned that in Senegal, she hopes to form a network of women to empower women in the agricultural sector. She also hopes to support women in re-entering the community after incarceration, while providing them with the means to earn revenue and gain financial independence.

The third dialogue engaged institutions from civil society, including Women Corporate Directors (WCD), Instituto Mulheres do Brasil, Instituto Brasileiro de Governança Corporativa (IBGC), Sirio Libanês Hospital, and Latitud.

Representatives from these organizations reflected on the importance of the initiative in empowering women and achieving the SDGs. They highlighted the roles health, technology, education, and investment play in positively impacting women and society as a whole.

After a fruitful discussion of knowledge sharing, Ms. Liane Freire, closed the event by thanking all the participants and speakers for their involvement and input, and she looked forward to officially launching the initiative at the sixty seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women while continuing to make strides towards implementation.

CSW67 Women-led Cities Side Event

Zoom Recording:

https://undp.zoom.us/rec/play/Lp9kd6-37ePqtqT1SftNL-VLI9bsW2CiN4FiKL1NWDK-s1AdGx5WumKJK_NrW8lF3zkOnFY5Qtt4NnBl.HZaPzMA9ln1K6BdK?continueMode=true&_x_zm_rtaid=J1ox21qdSHmwl_nP0DQQ4Q.1678427511622.1ef076f868ee3b06e7ed39797f0866e1&_x_zm_rhtaid=846

The Women-led Cities Side Event took place on March 9, 2023, at the sixty seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67) in New York and was co-sponsored by UNCDF and UN-Habitat in partnership with Ellalmpacta: Instituto Mulheres do Brasil, Luiza Helena Trajano and BlendGroup. The event served as an opportunity to officially launch the Women-led Cities initiative while discussing inclusive urban finance and women's economic empowerment.

The event was kickstarted by a virtual intervention from the Executive Director of UN-Habitat, Ms. Maimunah Modd Sharif who stated that "Women can't wait 265 years to bridge the gender equality gap. We need to accelerate and support Women-led Cities to promote development and eradicate violence against women. Women in leadership are key to making cities more equal, more inclusive, just, safe and green. Accelerating the achievement of the SDGs, and particularly Goal 11, requires an urgent action to empower women to rise to the decision-making positions. Women city leaders and women businesses leaders working together in solidarity can drive the transformation needed to support human rights, gender rights and equality."

Following the ED, Ms. Luiza Helena Trajano, CEO of Magazine Luiza and associated companies, joined virtually and made remarks regarding the importance of women leaders. She highlighted two main objectives, with the first one being combatting violence against women. The second objective is titled

“Jump to 50” and aims to have 50% of political positions filled by women. She stated that “through the power of feminism we will bring the world and our countries together.”

The Mayor of Banjul, Honourable Rohey Lowe Malick, gave her testimony regarding the Women-led Cities initiative. She highlighted her achievement as the first woman mayor in the Gambia, and she hopes to increase the number of women in leadership positions. She stressed the importance of supporting women in the Gambia by providing them with access to water, sanitation facilities, and healthcare. She stated that she cannot sit back and watch women struggle as “women are called to support women, youth and children.” The Mayor of Narayanganj, Bangladesh, Honourable Selina Haya Ivy, joined virtually and brought light to the challenges faced by women in Bangladesh, including access to water and sanitation in slums. She emphasised the importance of empowering women and marginalized communities.

Natalia Dias from the Brazilian Development Bank (BNDES) talked about fostering women leadership in the public sector and making a greater impact within cities. BNDES is identifying ways to include diversity and inclusion into their business model, while offering products and services that cater towards the needs of women. Nora Libertun de Duren, a Senior Specialist in the Urban Development and Housing Sector at the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), highlighted that most basic urban services are not designed for women, including transport and public spaces, which undermines women’s opportunities to be integrated into the job market. She stressed the importance of working with the private sector for investments focused on women’s empowerment.

Ms. Liane Freire, ElaImpacta Alliance Founder and Founder and CEO of BLENDGroup, gave an overview of the Women-led Cities initiative. She explained that only 5% of mayors worldwide are women and only 8% of fortune 500

companies are led by women. She hopes to change this through women and through cities. She explained that the objectives of Women-led Cities include women's political empowerment, economic empowerment, and better places to live. She emphasized that we need women from both the private and public sector to come together to drive this initiative forward.

The session's closing remarks were given by Ms. Samina Anwar, lead of Inclusive Local Economic Development at UNCDF. Ms. Anwar stated that UNCDF is actively working on investments towards marginalised groups including women and youth. UNCDF is committed to working towards the objectives of the initiative and is ready to utilize their unique capital mandate by complementing traditional grant making and technical assistance with financing capabilities and instruments including loans, guarantees, and blended finance funds. She is looking forward to implementing Women-led Cities which offers a comprehensive solution to achieving gender equality in cities.