

# ICLEI – LOCAL GOVERNMENTS FOR SUSTAINABILITY GENDER DECLARATION



*While sustainability efforts often aim to be gender-neutral, it is imperative to recognize that gender is not a monolithic concept, and women, in particular, face distinct challenges within environmental and social contexts. This underscores the need for cities to adopt gender-responsive approaches and for endeavors to be gender-transformative, ensuring equitable outcomes for all.*



## By 2050,

Two-thirds of the world's population is projected to reside in urban areas, but half of them will experience it differently. The most vulnerable and marginalized populations, notably, women, have long felt their needs neglected and their voices excluded from the decision-making processes that shape their living environments. The fact that only 35.5% of local government positions worldwide are held by women highlights the underrepresentation and lack of inclusive governance. This disparity is further evidenced by the uneven access to educational and economic opportunities, resources, power relations and structures, safety concerns, and urban planning that does not adequately address their specific needs.

Without gender responsiveness, the very foundation of a fair and just future remains incomplete. These, along with women's empowerment, are key to economic growth, poverty reduction, and a resilient future that all global citizens can benefit from.

## Our Vision

With a global network made up of 2500 local and regional governments spanning over 125 countries, ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability's dedication to amplifying equity, inclusivity, and fairness cannot be understated. This Gender Declaration responds to the ICLEI Malmö Commitment and Strategic Vision 2021-2027 and cuts across the Five ICLEI Pathways, with special attention on the Equitable and People-Centered Development pathway. This pathway is pivotal for ensuring that gender equity and inclusivity are central to all aspects of sustainable development initiatives, recognizing the integral role that women and marginalized communities play in building resilient and thriving communities. While we understand gender as a cross-cutting component across all five of our pathways, we also see the Equitable and People-Centered Development pathway as crucial for uplifting and protecting the lives of the most vulnerable, especially from the severe impacts of climate change that disproportionately impact them.

Contextual vulnerabilities and cumulative intersectional disadvantages also pose unique challenges for women on a global scale, and we acknowledge that experiences may vary across different regions, emphasizing the need for tailored interventions that do not compound existing inequalities. Therefore, for climate action in local and regional governments to be truly effective, it must be gender-responsive, if not gender transformative, and at an intersection that considers factors such as **race, ethnicity, age, disability, economic status, sexual orientation, and gender identity**. At the same time, it is also important to recognize that women are not merely victims needing assistance but also agents of change who are already driving action and leading by example. For this reason, cities that elevate women's active participation not only strengthen urban resilience but also ensure that they work effectively for all.

# Our Commitment

Through this Gender Declaration, ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability strives to implement the following initiatives in our endeavors:

- 1. Empowering** women in the work that we do, recognizing that sustainable development cannot be just or fair without gender equity at its core, while being mindful of the challenges that hinder their inclusion, and finding appropriate solutions to reduce and ultimately remove barriers.
- 2. Elevating** women's empowerment through economic emancipation that catalyzes female-led innovation, entrepreneurship, and financial inclusion.
- 3. Promoting** women's leadership and participation in decision-making, planning, and implementation processes related to sustainability at all levels of governance.
- 4. Addressing** gender-based violence and disparities that are exacerbated during times of crisis, while applying Build-Back-Better principles (BBB) that are gender-sensitive, gender-responsive, and gender transformative.
- 5. Redefining** the physical urban landscape with a gender-transformative approach that takes into account the specific needs of women, promoting equal access to urban services, opportunities, and improving the socio-economic outlook.
- 6. Advocating** for quality gender-disaggregated data that informs evidence-based interventions and reveals need-based services for women.
- 7. Fostering** partnerships and joining concrete initiatives that work to advance gender equity for sustainable change, acknowledging that concerted efforts are needed in order to strengthen capacity-building and gender-responsive climate action.
- 8. Transforming** women's lives for the better, amplifying their voices, and equipping them with the tools, resources, and opportunities needed to thrive and lead in sustainable, inclusive communities.

