



**4th World Forum Cities and Territories of Peace
27 - 28 June 2023 (Bogotá)**

Co-Learning Laboratory n. 1 – Tuesday 27 June 2023

***Towards Feminist Municipalism:
institutionalization of women's rights and eradication of
gender-based violence***

**Report of the Consultation with the UN Rapporteur on violence against
women and girls - organized by the UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion,
Participatory Democracy and Human Rights**

Background:

At the global level, 1 in 3 women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from their intimate partner. In Latin America, nearly 20 million women and girls suffer from sexual and physical violence.

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is universal and represents the most predominant violation of human rights in the world. It takes different forms and is perpetrated in both public and private spaces, with devastating consequences on individuals' lives as well as community and territorial peace and social cohesion.

Several Local and Regional Governments (LRGs) worldwide are already acting **to build “*caring territories*” for peace and democracy, where women and girls can contribute fully and equally to their societies, which is indispensable for them to prosper**. This local action translates into improved **local gender-sensitive data collection; public policies and advocacy** for violence prevention and women's protection; as well as to support women's full-recovery and empowerment.

As the closest level of governments to the inhabitants, the role of LRGs is essential to address the systemic roots of patriarchal violence and to fight structural inequalities through human rights-based approaches and politics rooted in **trust, dialogue, and accountability**. **Scaling up the efforts of LRGs to place the fight against VAWG at the centre of local agenda is essential to lay the ground for transformational change at all levels of government to advance gender equality worldwide.**

UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments) has a historic commitment to gender equality and local democracy towards the consolidation of global feminist municipalism that supports and empowers women's leadership. In this framework, UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights and the Department of Seine-Saint-Denis (France) launched the international program **“Towards caring territories for women victims of violence”** with the support of the French Agency for Development (AFD). The program aims at recognizing and unpacking the role of local and regional governments in the eradication of violence against women through local public policies. It has enabled the development of a collaborative work at the international level on issues such as the fight against femicides, intimate-partner violence, violence in public spaces, or the fight against sexual violence and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

In this context, during the UCLG Congress (October 2022), **the Committee initiated an exchange with Ms. Reem Alsalem, UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls (VAWG)**. UN Special Rapporteurs are independent experts appointed by the Human Rights Council with a global mandate of reporting on the status of specific issues to develop recommendations in cooperation with different national and local actors. The appointment of the Special Rapporteur on VAWG has existed since 1994, which testifies the importance of the topic in the multilateral system, but also the challenges in achieving women's rights worldwide. The objective of the exchange was **to foster a more structural dialogue with local governments at the international level on the fight against VAWG, with a focus on feminist leadership**

and municipalism. The outcomes of this fruitful meeting led to the elaboration of eight areas for concerted action on local governments and VAWG, presented by the UN Special Rapporteur (see annex).

The consultation in the framework of the *Forum of Cities and Territories of Peace* in Bogotá aimed at expanding this conversation between women leaders of local governments and the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and Girls with a focus on **the eradication of VAWG and its linkages with peacebuilding and social justice**, which represented the main axes of the Forum of Bogotá.

The consultation was led by Ms. Reem Alsalem, UN Special Rapporteur on VAWG, around the following questions:

- 1) What are the opportunities and challenges that LRGs continue to confront in the design and implementation of effective, relevant prevention and response strategies for ending VAWG?
- 2) What needs to happen for LRGs to be able to improve their prevention, assistance and response policies regarding VAWG?
- 3) What follow up does the forum wish to give collectively to the issues discussed and the area for support of the LRGs that have been identified?

Key elements emerging from the consultation:

In her introductory remarks, the UN Special Rapporteur stated that **LRGs are the main theater of human rights violation; but they are also key agents to the fight against violence**. She recalled the eight areas for Intervention by LRGs to better prevent VAWG and ensure better protection and assistance of victims of that violence that she had identified and which demonstrate the potential and impact of LRGs role to prevent and respond to VAW (see annex 1). She further underlined the importance of reviewing the priorities that LRGs have identified and presented during the UCLG Congress in Daejeon, and to analyze the wealth of concrete experiences that local governments have made in response to the specific situation on the ground with the purpose of identifying opportunities for an improved engagement by LRGs on the prevention and response axis.

Ms. Alsalem also recalled the importance **of this dialogue to share the achievements and challenges in relation to VAWG with the national level**, especially in terms of protection gaps for women, including women politicians. Lastly, the UN SR highlighted the need to **foster dialogue with state or non-state actors** to spotlight the continuum of violence that women and girls face - which begins at an early age – and change narratives and visions around the gendered expectations societies have of women and men to change the negative aspects of these norms and expectations.

Ms. Emilia Saiz, Secretary General of UCLG, recalled the previous work between UCLG constituency and other Special Rapporteurs, which has deeply contributed to identify priorities at local level in relation to delicate issues and in complex multilateral systems; while also allowing LRGs to be heard in key global discussions. Ms. Saiz also stressed the importance of the articulation between the feminist municipalism and international advisory mechanisms such as

those implemented by the UN SR to make tangible the notion of “care” and translate into new finance models and new services.

Indeed, feminist municipalism was highlighted as a means to put people and care at the center, but also to question the inequalities of the current governance and development models and switch paradigm. In this sense, **the need to set a new and shared agenda for LRGs on VAWG is essential to outline a local vision**, which can also be brought into the UN system by the UN Special Rapporteur. In this sense, equality is essential but is not the only objective: it entails a complex process which requires the **involvement of men and new forms of masculinities; quality education; respect for diversity** - both of women’s diversity and of different geographical and social context contexts -, as well as more **human approaches to interweave alliances**.

During the open exchange, several participants highlighted that notions of “care” should be better leveraged to conceive **safe public spaces for women**; or to use technologies such as A.I; digital inclusion or participatory mapping to improve access to services; proximity; as well as to create safety nets for women and across services. Regarding “care”, some LRGs such as Municipio B and Esplugas de Llobregat, highlighted the need to bridge the care of people to care of the environment, seeing it as a common good and not as a resource. This implies to foster a “*care for life*”, ranging from the fight against social isolation, to care of public spaces and waste management through **ecofeminist approaches which align the planet’s and peoples’ wellbeing**.

The local elected leaders present in the consultation also stressed the importance of providing visibility to domestic and unpaid care work of women, by recognizing and remunerating it. In this sense, LRGs called for a collective reflection on how to finance this type of work, by bolstering **local economies and public systems based on care**. This has to translate into national and local public procurement and budgeting - as emphasized by Quilmes - as well as into legal frameworks, as in the case of Iztapalapa. This district of Mexico City managed to institutionalize a *public system of care* owing to a constitutional mandate adopted at the city-level. This has enabled both spheres of government to build public infrastructures for care and to provide visibility to caregivers, by financing their activities; by promoting women’s entrepreneurship and job opportunities; and by fostering coordination among local and national levels to ensure universal access to services.

Most of the participants also highlighted that women mayors and elected women consistently and regularly face political violence, which translates to media attacks, insults, threats, family harassment, defamation, mobbing or even femicide. **Even while women are gaining more access to the political arena and to decision-making (which still remains low) political violence increases**. Since more gender equality and political representation of women tends to be associated with higher levels of violence against women, institutionalizing care and feminist principles should also contribute to address this specific form of violence, which represents a threat to full inclusion, participation and democracy. Women face a multi-faceted discrimination as persons, as mothers, as ‘politicians, which should be addressed in a comprehensive manner. Cities and territories such as Pichincha set-up legal mechanisms to prevent discrimination against women discrimination in local governments. However, in several countries in Latin America and

beyond, the judicial or semi-judicial system is still deeply sexist and it requires a cultural change and more competences at local level to ensure that the victims are heard; that investigations take place and that VAWG is considered as a crime. Ms. Ana Grace, Gender Specialist for UN Women, highlighted the need **to learn from transformative justice**, including through innovative forms of reparation (such as the remuneration of carework) and through the effective application of sentences which not only promote institutional credibility, but which also prevents the “false sense of equality”, i.e. new ways of violence against women such as financial exclusion or the management of property rights, which maintain women in subjugated roles. Ms. Grace also suggested the use of the “Do-No-Harm approach” - usually applied in conflicts - to fight violence against women, in order to identify unintended negative or positive impacts of local action in settings where there is conflict or risk of conflict; reflecting how action will affect the relationships within specific contexts.

Another key element highlighted in the consultation – in particular by the representatives of Quilmes, SALAR and Bogotá - was the need for disaggregated **data, indicators and more action to address the problem of violence in the public sphere, but also intimate violence**. In general, local public policy of LRGs on VAWG is focused on planning and on public space; while it is in the private sphere where violence mostly takes place. Participants agreed on the fact that **the private space should be more political, and the separation between public and private spheres prevents both from overcoming dangerous social norms and from denouncing and acting when violence takes place within the family and in intimate relationships**. In this sense, the *Siemprevivas* programme of Iztapalapa aims at fighting intimate-partner violence, by going directly to the households (100,000 since 2019) with women victims of violence and calling family meetings with all the members to promote healthier and violence-free relationships among them.

Education and communication on data; on specific challenges and priorities for women in all their diversity were also identified as key to foster access to services and equality. The experience of Ciudad Bolívar – a district of Bogotá – testifies to how cities can adapt services to the specific needs of trans women to promote equal access to rights. Similarly, through the *Care Blocks / Manzanas de Cuidado*, Bogotá managed to create an agglomeration of services that was not explicitly demanded by citizens, but that *became needed* after women perceived its wide range of benefits, which lightened their daily not-remunerated tasks as mum or/and caregivers. This was possible thanks to the data collected by the local government about the economic weight of women’s carework and through exchanges with local women about their needs (for example the necessity of childcare when women need to use health services) and aspirations (i.e. pursue a career, leisure activities).

Several LRGs such as Quilmes, Guatemala City and Bogotá also emphasized the challenges of “institutionalizing feminism”, which requires **multi-level dialogue, new pedagogies and awareness-raising** activities to ensure women are protected and empowered through effective intersectoral and multi-level collaboration mechanisms, especially with social movements. Institutionalization of feminist agendas and values also enables innovative partnerships with the private sector to create more job opportunities for women or with local bodies and stakeholders working on peacebuilding; and promotes broader cultural changes in the entire society, largely to the benefit of all people. This contribute to giving impulse to deep institutional changes based on

feminist approaches addressing the structural causes violence against women; to ensuring quality of services and effective **monitoring and evaluation**.

Niteroi, Iztapalapa and Quilmes also emphasized the need to strengthen the action in schools and to organize trainings and learning activities with other local and regional governments (such as the regional training held in Iztapalapa “[Fighting violence against women in public and private spaces](#)”). and to ensure that **solidarity and sorority** among local female leaders become a political praxis.

Economic empowerment and financial inclusion of women victims of violence were identified as key elements for social justice; as they catalyze access to other services and rights which prevents recidivism of intimate violence such as right to **work, health and housing**. Indeed, health insurance, for example, is often connected to the person’s financial situation in several countries; while access to housing is often connected to employment, which requires the active involvement of the private sector on its turn to foster women’s access to labor. Financial inclusion also helps to prevent the involvement of women in other dangerous illegal activities, such as narcotraffic. In this sense, collecting disaggregated data on different variables such as access to labor and housing also contribute to better understanding the interrelation between state violence, criminal groups and violence in the private sphere and act accordingly. However, several participants stressed the need for financial support and the lack of public investments in this sense, which represents another form of patriarchal power and control and which contributes to deepening the *feminization of poverty*. In particular, this reemphasized the need for a greater ownership, on the part of men, for the issue of women’s financial exclusion, as men are predominantly the decision-makers in this field.

As highlighted by the UN SR and by LRGs such as Ciudad Bolivar, violence against women in both public and private spaces needs **quality gender-disaggregated data, but also disaggregated by other variables** (ethnicity, economic status, disability, sex, sexual orientation, etc), in order to better identify the structural inequalities related to gender-based violence and their intersection with other situations of vulnerability and marginalization. This is the case of Indigenous and migrants, girls; trans women; and others which experience particular challenges in accessing essential rights and services, such as the access to labor and health.

In the same line, **participants highlighted that statistics often do not reflect all forms of violence** (economic, physical, digital, psychological, etc.), jeopardizing the design and implementation of laws or adequate (and early) prevention efforts. In this regard, the Department of Seine Saint Denis recalled the importance of **local observatories on violence against women** to build those data at local level and share them among LRGs to identify the key challenges and practices to address them; but also to make them accessible. This allows to influence political decisions and push national governments to assume responsibilities; to reinforce local governments’ capacities to address VAWG; and to empower local governments through joint international advocacy actions.

Violence in public transport remains another key challenge for LRGs, which have responded to it by organizing awareness-raising activities with local communities and trainings with drivers. Several LRG representatives also emphasized the need to **reinforce training with the justice system and the police; as well as with the health system**: indeed, the first place where women victims of violence go is the hospital; and LRGs must ensure that women that are attended at the hospital are equipped to denounce violence afterwards. This entails a reactive follow-up for the protection and care of women victims of violence and intersectoral and multi-stakeholder

coordination, in particular with psychologists, doctors and lawyers to create a “local culture” against VAWG.

Lastly, **mental and physical health; as well as sexual and reproductive rights** were also identified by some participants - such as Pichincha, - as very important topics which lack political support and consensus, and on which LRGs need more integration with the national governments (e.g. by carrying out programs on sexual education, or by providing contraception), despite the numerous religious and cultural barriers. In this sense, the **role of the media** is critical to reinforce or break stereotypes in this regard, and it should be seen as another kind of “public service provider” which needs to be regulated.

Follow-up:

UCLG and its Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights and the UN Special Rapporteur will expand and deepen the conversation on VAWG at the local level. This will consist of better identifying some specific thematic issues related to violence against women (such as *freedom of expression* and on *common goods*, which are key issues linked to women’s rights and care)that were raised during the consultation by Local and Regional Governments and to leverage them for other key UN upcoming events. In this sense, participants agreed [SDG 5](#) is not sufficient to transform and enrich global agendas; and that common areas of work should be further explored to be translated into a common agenda and into international policies.

The objective of this joint work is to **scale up local action to demand human capital, financial and social investments that are necessary to address VAWG from a cross-cutting perspective**, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Furthermore, another consultation will be organized in the context of one of upcoming sessions of the Human Rights Council. The objective of the consultation is to enhance dialogue between local and regional governments with other UN Special Rapporteurs on different domains, in order to foster awareness on the linkages between VAWG and other Human Rights, and tackling VAWG from an intersectoral and rights-based approach. This additional consultation will build on the outcomes of the consultation in Bogotá; while also **including UN Member States** to promote multi-level dialogue, coordination and cooperation at different levels of governments.

LRGs are also welcome to contact the UNSR VAWG bilaterally to inquire about her work; to contribute to the annual thematic reports; or to ask for support according to her mandate.

List of participants of the laboratory:

LRGs representatives, in alphabetical order:

- **Clara Brugada**, Mayor of Iztapalapa
- **Lily Carvantes**, Councilwoman of Guatemala City

- **Thamyris Machareth Elpídio**, Director of the Coordinatorship for Women's Policies & Rights of the City of Niterói
- **Pilar Diaz**, Mayor of Esplugas de Llobregat
- **Carola Gunnarson**, Vice-president of SALAR
- **Claudia López**, Mayor of Bogotá
- **Mayra Mendoza**, Mayor of Quilmes
- **Paola Pabón**, Prefect of Pichincha
- **Tatiana Piñeros**, Mayor of Ciudad Bolívar
- **Silvana Pissano**, Mayor of the Municipio B
- **Amelie Videau**, Officer of the Observatory of violence against women of the Seine-Saint-Denis Departement

Others:

United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG):

Emilia Saiz, Secretary General of UCLG
Amanda Fléty Martinez, UCLG-CISDPDH Coordinator

Government representatives

Nathalia Moreno, Representative of the Ministry of Equality
Diana Parra, Secretary of Women of Bogota

Networks and Civil Society Organizations of Colombia:

Marina Gallego, Ruta Pacifica Leader
Soraya Bayuelo, Leader of the Montes de María, National Peace Prize
Yuly Maiden, Moreno Zuleta, Community Process Leader, Colombia
Ana Falú, Human Rights activist and UCLG Ubuntu advisor on gender
Nini Johana Olavi, AMDELCA
María Eugenia Sánchez, Casa de la Mujer
Luz Piedad Salcedo, Corporación Humanas
Beatriz Quintero, Women's Network of Colombia
Lucy Cardona, Women's Network and Habitat Colombia
Susana Mejía González, Project Coordinator of the National Women's Network of Colombia
Amaury Núñez González, Technical Director of the Secretariat of Non-Violence of Medellin

International Organizations:

Ana Grace, Gender and Peace Specialist, UN Women

ANNEX 1

Eight Action Areas for Intervention by LRGs to better prevent VAWG and ensure better protection and assistance of victims of that violence

- 1. Committing a clear political will to ending violence against women and girls.** As the saying goes, where there is a will, there is a way. You can have as many elaborate laws as you want on ending violence, but without political will, they will not be implemented.
- 2. The importance of preserving the centrality of human rights standards and frameworks in fighting against violence against women and gender-based violence overall, and the importance of States taking up their duty to meet international obligations.**
- 3. Collecting better quality and up-to-date disaggregated data on violence against women and girls that are not only disaggregated by sex and gender but also detail the relationship and dynamics between the victim and the perpetrator.**
- 4. Allocating sufficient resources and ensuring gender-responsive budgeting throughout.** Gender responsive and transformative budgeting is one of the ways in which States translate and actualize their human rights obligations, including towards women and girls. The Beijing Declaration includes a commitment by signatories to allocate sufficient resources to achieve gender equality.
- 5. Adopting a truly intersectional approach to preventing and responding to violence.** Too many women and girls continue to face serious barriers to preventive measures, because we do not sufficiently consider the long-standing structural and discriminatory causes that contribute to the reduced access.
- 6. Strengthening attention to GBV in emergency response and contingency planning.** I have recently presented my first report to the 77th Session of the UN General Assembly on the intersection between climate change and violence against women. The gist of the report is that governments have not yet sufficiently factored in what it means to ensure that the incidents of violence against women and girls, which will be exacerbated by the climate crisis, are addressed.
- 7. Strengthening evidence-based monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of interventions** to evaluate the effectiveness of existing legal and administrative frameworks, to ensure meaningful gender-related budgeting, and to deepen the understanding of how different actors, particularly line ministries, coordinate and work together, as well as how we can accurately measure impact, and so on and so forth.
- 8. Investing in training and building the capacity of public officials on the issue of violence against women and enable authorities to attend to victims in a victim- centered manner.** It cannot become a box ticking exercise, particularly because some of the most difficult elements to change, namely gender stereotypes, are often deeply engrained and rendered invisible that they are particularly difficult to tackle, yet they have a significant influence on the quality of the reception and of the service provided.