

Towards caring territories for women victims of violence

Newsletter co-written by the **Observatory on Violence against Women** of Seine Saint Denis (France) and the **Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights of UCLG (UCLG-CSIPDHR)** within the framework of the international program "**Caring Territories for Women Victims of Violence**".
The program is funded by the French Development Agency.

8 March 2024, International Women's Day

Interview with Hon. Rohey Malick Lowe, Mayor of Banjul

In January 2024, the OVF, the City of Banjul and UCLG CSIPDHR co-organized the international training "**Towards Caring Territories for Women Victims of Violence**", which took place in Banjul. In this interview, the Mayor of Banjul shares her views on the results of this important event.

What is the contribution of the international training titled "Towards Caring Territories for women victims of violence" that you hosted recently in Banjul for the fight against violence against women and for international solidarity?

The international training contributed to this essential fight in several ways. Firstly, participants benefited from sharing good practices **thanks to the voices of the mayors and elected women who came from 12 different regions of Africa and who were able to give concrete example of the approaches they have developed to fight violence against women.**

Secondly, it fostered **collaboration between various stakeholders** who were represented at the training; as well as enhanced the skills of participants.

Thirdly, **it has promoted a unified approach to supporting women affected by violence; by encouraging knowledge exchange and international solidarity in addressing this critical issue.** In addition, **the training has empowered communities and professionals to reflect on how to create safer environments for women and enhance global efforts to combat violence against women.**



Rohey Malick Lowe was born in Banjul in 1971. She started her professional career in the hospitality and tourism sector, before resuming her studies in International Relations at the University of Dalarna (Sweden) in 2012.

Rohey Malick Lowe returned to The Gambia in 2017 and became the first woman elected Mayor of Banjul in 2018 for UDP and made of **good governance, women and children's rights and local economic dynamism** her priorities. She was re-elected in May 2023, reiterating her commitment to youth and women's emancipation.

Why local and regional governments should be involved in the fight against violence against women?

Local and regional governments play a crucial role in the fight against violence against women for several reasons.

They are the level of government that are closest to the people: their proximity to communities necessitates that they get involved where the women are, enabling them to better understand and address the unique challenges faced by women at the grassroots level.

Local and regional governments can develop tailored solutions to issues confronting women; as well as **targeted and culturally sensitive initiatives that address specific needs within their jurisdiction**, ensuring that interventions are relevant and effective.

Cities can coordinate the provision of different services, including law enforcement, healthcare, and support programs, to create a comprehensive and integrated approach to combating violence against women.

They can implement sensitization and awareness raising campaigns, educational programs, and preventive measures within their communities to promote gender equality and prevent violence against women.

Also, local governments can work to ensure that legal measures against perpetrators of violence are implemented effectively, providing justice and protection for victims of violence. Involving local governments encourages community participation and collaboration, fostering a sense of shared responsibility in addressing violence against women.

Local and regional governments are better positioned to respond promptly to emerging issues, adapt policies to local contexts, and continuously assess and improve their efforts in the fight against violence against women. **When local and regional governments are properly involved into decision making, a more holistic and community-focused approach can be established, contributing to a safer and more supportive environment for women.**



The message of Ernestine Ronai, Head of the Observatory on Violence against Women of the Department of Seine Saint Denis



How can we talk about democracy, human development and social justice if we do not combat violence against women?

The aggressor often says to his victim: *"You are mine, stay home, don't participate in this meeting, take care of the house and the children. I am the one who decides whether or not you participate in the life of the city, whether or not you participate in the life of the local government."*

Violence against women affects one in three women, and that's a huge number! Three minutes of rape shatters a whole life.

With our program "Towards Caring Territories for Women Victims of Violence", we see that local governments are implementing effective local public policies. **Combating violence against women is a social issue. If we want a society without violence, we must believe in and protect women and girls who are victims of violence.**

News of the international programme "Caring Territories for Women Victims of Violence"

From January 22-24, 2024, the OVF, the City of Banjul and UCLG CISDPDH co-organized the international training "Towards caring territories for women victims of violence" in Banjul, focusing on **female genital mutilation, forced marriages; violence against girls in situations of armed conflict.**

Read the article about the training course [HERE](#)



The event concluded with the **adoption of a Declaration of commitment** signed by the mayors and representatives of local and regional governments. Read the text of the Declaration below:

We, local and regional leaders from Africa, under the auspices of the World Organization of United Cities and Local Governments and the leadership of Seine-Saint-Denis Department, its Observatory on Violence against women, and the Local Elected Women of Africa (REFELA) met in Banjul, the capital city of The Gambia, from the 22-24 January, 2024 on the occasion of the African Training on the theme **"Towards caring territories for women victims of violence."**

The training took place under the distinguished patronage of the President of the Local Elected Women's Network of Africa (REFELA), Hon. Rohey Malick Lowe, Mayor of Banjul, The Gambia.

We, Honorable Mayors and representatives of local and regional governments:

- **Recognize the important role of female political leaders in the fight to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women**, especially female genital mutilation, forced marriages and sexual violence;
- **Discussed of the necessity to speed up actions at the global, continental, national as well as the local level to eradicate all forms of violence against women** especially female genital mutilation, forced marriages and sexual violence;
- **Examined the initiative of the Observatory of Violence against Women of the Seine-Saint-Denis Department in partnership with UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy, and Human Rights (UCLG-CSIPDHR);**
- **Endorse the Iztapalapa Statement** promoted by UCLG-CSIPDHR on behalf of the International Observatory on Violence against Women (OIVF), that commits to working together to strengthen Cities and Territories that Care for Women - in their plurality and diversity - victims of violence.
- **Call on other territories to join this effort in favor of feminist municipalism** in order that together, we collaborate to promote tools, public policies, and training sessions to advance towards an OIVF.

"We call on women and men from every corner of Africa in particular and all continents of the world in general to unite and combat violence against women - United Cities are United Women. Our cities are shaping the new generation of women and girls and their future should be free of violence, building on solidarity. Let us together embrace the notion of care to foster equality among us. We will strive in dignity to liberate ourselves from the shackles of all forms of violence. Our equality driven international municipal movement is committed to fostering societies where boys and girls, women and men, can define their future in dignity, justice, peace and in solidarity with all women worldwide "

News of the international programme "Caring Territories for Women Victims of Violence"

February 2024: on the occasion of the International Day against Female Genital Mutilation, the Observatoire de la Seine-Saint-Denis organized an **awareness day against female genital mutilation**. The program included the screening of two testimonies of participants in the Banjul seminar.

The importance of the Violence Against Women Observatory in Jenin in times of war



On this March 8, 2024, **our solidarity goes to all women and girls victims of violence in times of armed conflict**. Despite the war, the Jenin Violence Against Women Observatory continues its work, launching activities for women and children affected by the Israeli attacks.

To learn more about the work of the Jenin Observatory, the article is available [here](#).

February 2024: the Seine-Saint-Denis Violence Against Women Observatory participated in the **UCLG Retreat 2024** from February 19 to 23. To learn more about the Observatory's participation in this event, the article is available [here](#).



The words of Hon. Maria Helena Correia Langa, Mayor of Mandalkazi (Mozambique), about the international program "Caring territories for women victims of violence" and about the training in Banjul.



In Mandlakazi, we are aware that encouraging young people to prevent and combat violence against women is the key to a violence-free society in the future. We debate the issue of zero tolerance for intimate-partner violence in the Cities.

We have promoted more community awareness campaigns and expanded work to community, religious and traditional leaders on behalf of women.

Local and regional governments must get involved in the fight against violence against women. They must create the basic conditions for a better quality of life for women, creating multisectoral platforms in which the different actors in the fight against domestic violence, social affairs councils, the police, prosecutors and all agents who can participate. influence a better quality of life for women.

Local governments must encourage young people to lead a life of peace, solidarity and zero tolerance for violence. It is also important to mention the need to empower women, improve their self-esteem and prepare them for a better future and political participation, fighting against illiteracy and stigmatization. Laws are also very important: in Mozambique, for exemple, the government has prioritized several laws designed to highlight and help combat violence. We have the law against domestic violence, the law against early marriage, the national gender strategy, among other laws that prevent and combat violence against women.

Local and Regional Governments get on board: some examples of local initiatives to fight violence against women

Cocody, Abidjan, Ivory Coast

The Cocody town council, in collaboration with the Akwaba Mouso association, has opened a shelter and accommodation center for women victims of violence. The center offers free comprehensive care to women victims of all types of violence.



The **Undersecretary of Women's Rights Policies of the state of Minas Gerais (Brazil)** has presented the **Fale agora (Speak now) protocol**. This protocol aims to fight against sexist and sexual violence during carnival festivities.

Within this framework, training sessions have been organized with samba schools, event organizers and other representatives of the leisure and tourism sectors so that they know how to act to prevent sexual violence and protect victims.

Villa Alemana, Chile

On the occasion of March 8, the **Gender Commission of the Chilean Association of Municipalities** organizes round tables on local policies regarding women's rights. The objective is to propose public policies from the local to the national level. In this context, **Ms. Javiera Toledo**, Mayor of Villa Alemana and President of the commission, tells us more details:

"We held meetings with elected women to prepare these debates during 2024, with the idea of putting together a series of proposals from municipalities and local organizations at the national level. Our work base is co-management, because by working collectively we achieve better results that benefit, "In this specific case, all women. That is why we will present these proposals, with a local perspective, to Congress and the Ministry of Women."





The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68)
Local and Regional
Governments' Day

#CSW
#Listen2Cities

**Empowering
Women to Empower
Communities:
Local Economies
of Equality and Care**

**14 March
14:30-18:00 EST**

Venue:
Riverview Room,
UN One Plaza Millenium
Hilton Hotel





The 68th Session of the **Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68)** will be taking place in New York from 11 to 22 March, 2024. The Priority theme of this year's CSW is **"Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective"** and the Review theme is **"Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls"**.

UCLG will organize the CSW68 on **"Local and Regional Governments' Day on Empowering Women to Empower Communities: Local Economies of Equality and Care"**. Please click on [this link](#) to access the concept note. UCLG will also co-organize and official CSW Side event on **"Promoting Women's Political Participation for Equitable and Strong Public Institutions"**, with the Permanent Mission of Mauritania and the Region of Nouakchott.

find the CSW68 **Written Statement** submitted by UCLG on behalf of the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments is available [here](#).

FOLLOW-US

Next Steps



- **New mission of the OVF team in Ngazidja**, a pilot territory of the program, focused on the implementation of the local action plan and the training of professionals.
- **A major exchange and capitalization seminar** to mark the end of the international program will be held in Seine-Saint-Denis on November 26, 2024.

More to come on the websites of the [UCLG-CSIPDHR](#) and of the [International Observatory on Violence against Women](#). You can also contact us at the following email addresses: oivf@seinesaintdenis.fr; cisd1@uclg.org

