

Connective Cities' working group

Women's Leadership in municipalities and local governments

Kickoff virtual event: 16th May 2024

In-person workshop in Amman: 15-17th October 2024

Background

Despite the international agreements formulated over the past half-century aimed at enhancing women's roles as equal partners with men in political life and public affairs, women in the MENA region and in many parts of the world continue to encounter significant legal, social, and economic barriers that hinder their progress towards achieving their full potential in public life. Efforts made by governments, international and local organizations remain insufficient to realize the goal of gender equality and full participation of women in areas of public affairs, including municipalities. Women remain underrepresented in decision-making positions and face unique challenges in accessing resources, opportunities, and support systems.

Against this background, Connective Cities is launching a working group to spread awareness and advocate for creating a supportive environment where women can play an active, productive and leading role in municipal and local governance. Empowering women includes strengthening their knowledge and boosting their skills to give them more opportunities and capacities in communicating and building fruitful partnerships and fulfill a decisive role in achieving sustainable development.

Thematically, the working group's activities both virtual and in-presence shall focus on the following topics:

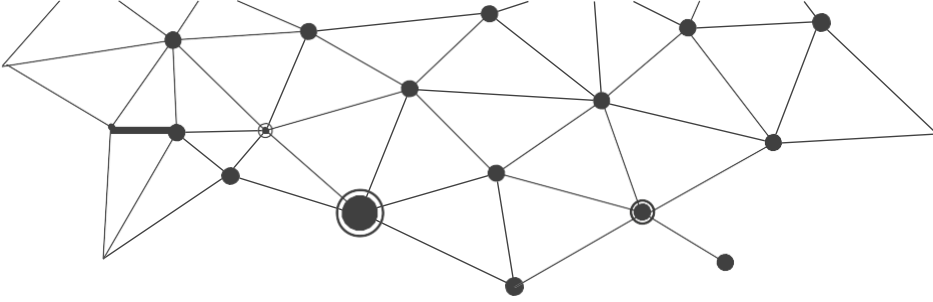
- A- **Legal barriers and their impact on women election and roles:** assessing the advantages and disadvantages of the gender quota in election.
- B- **Opportunities and challenges for the full participation of women in politics and public affairs:** examining the role of political parties, families, traditional societal concepts and strategies to overcome obstacles, during the election phase and while assuming responsibility.
- C- **Women leadership and good governance in municipal functions:** exploring the added value of women leadership in combating corruption, promoting access to information and fostering openness to the community.
- D- **Financial obstacles hindering women's advancement:** strategies for financing election campaigns and insuring adequate funds for women's projects in local development.

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- E- **The community and women's trust gap:** a) assessing women's knowledge about their legal rights and about implementing community projects, b) exploring the inclusion of women's roles in local policies and strategies for integrating these roles into the educational programs, c) exploring how women advocate for and communicate with relevant stakeholders with regards to projects of the common good.

The working group's objectives

- 1- Share good practices and develop solutions within the thematic area of enhancing women's leadership in municipalities;
- 2- Provide a platform for local networks and mentorship initiatives aimed at empowering female candidates for municipal elections and professional work within municipalities: This requires engagement with stakeholders at various levels including government officials, community leaders and civil society organizations. Additionally, the provision of guidance, skills upgrading, knowledge and encouragement are needed in order to face the challenges that women can encounter not only for election journey but for long-term support structures for women in politics.
- 3- Equip female candidates and women active in municipal governance with the tools and knowledge needed to effectively address obstacles and foster local development initiatives. This includes knowledge of legal aspects, women's rights, good governance, communication, negotiation, project management, advocacy and raising awareness. The advocacy actions will focus on the legislative reforms to eliminate discriminatory laws and promote gender equality in political representation

Expected outcome and long-term impact

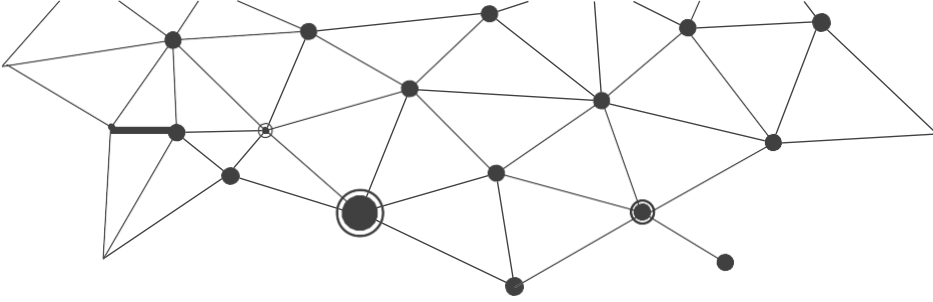
1. A tool that serves as a knowledge sharing product will be developed that will enable the assessment of women's performance throughout the election journey and while assuming municipal responsibilities. It should provide evaluation criteria encompassing leadership skills, effectiveness in policy implementation, community engagement and other pertinent factors.
2. Through cross-regional collaboration, the working group's activities shall contribute to reducing inequalities, empowering women, promote social justice and accelerate the achievement of sustainable development goals at the local level.

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The Methodology:

As part of the working group's activities, **good practices will be showcased** on promoting women's leadership in municipalities and local governments as well as examples of faltering implementation in this sphere. Participating municipalities will engage in peer learning **to devise solutions** to achieve their desired goals related to empowering female candidates for municipal elections and professional work within municipalities. **The formulated solutions can also induce organisational changes to improve procedures, methods, and data availability.**

The work process involves the following steps:

1. The working group's activities include both virtual and in-person events as well as content preparation and **production of digital materials**. This includes podcasts, videos, interviews on **good practice** examples. This digital content will be available to participants on the online platform. Participants will receive a technical walkthrough and instructions on using the online tools.
2. Thematically-focused input including **keynote speeches and showcasing of success stories**;
3. **Peer-to-peer consultations** among participants to identify and discuss existing challenges and lessons learned from ongoing municipal practices.
4. **Devising solutions** to the identified challenges

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