



Municipal Observatory for Gender Mainstreaming

A guide for municipalities in the MENA region





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1. Introduction

“What gets measured, gets managed.” This adage underscores the importance of tracking progress to achieve meaningful change. For municipalities committed to gender mainstreaming, this means developing structured data systems, enriching the knowledge base, and ensuring precise monitoring—essential steps toward truly inclusive, gender-sensitive local governance.

Building on the model pioneered by the National Federation of Tunisian municipalities (FNCT) and its partners,¹ this guide provides a unified, practical framework for advancing gender equality by integrating a gender perspective across all municipal services. Beyond policies and projects, it aims to catalyze a cultural shift—one where gender mainstreaming is no longer an add-on, but a fundamental pillar of equitable and effective local governance. Establishing a municipal observatory for Gender Mainstreaming enables municipalities to integrate the gender perspective into all aspects of municipal services, and to foster a shift in mindset where gender mainstreaming is recognized as a core element of fair and inclusive local governance. Employing the guide’s evidence-based approach, municipalities can stimulate dialogue, propose concrete solutions, and develop measurable gender related indicators that municipalities can apply and track.

2. Key Concepts and Definitions

Gender mainstreaming is a strategy to promote gender equality by systematically integrating a gender perspective into all policies, programs, and institutional practices. It ensures that the different needs, experiences, and impacts on women, men, and gender-diverse individuals are considered in decision-making at all levels. It is endorsed by the United Nations and is a key part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5: Gender Equality). It shifts the focus from fixing inequalities after they occur to preventing them through proactive planning.

The **Municipal Observatory for Gender Mainstreaming (MOGM)** is a specialized monitoring and advisory body established at the local government level to track, analyze, and promote gender equality policies within a municipality. It serves as a data-driven platform to assess how local laws, programs, and services impact different genders and recommends improvements to ensure fairness and inclusivity. Its core principles are inclusivity, intersectionality, and participatory governance. MOGM should be linked to broader national gender equality mechanisms and civil society groups, fostering participatory democracy.

Examples of Municipal Gender Observatories in Practice

- Barcelona (Spain): The Barcelona Gender Observatory analyzes urban mobility, labor markets, and violence prevention to shape local policies.
- Mexico City (Mexico): Tracks femicides and promotes gender-sensitive urban design.
- Vienna (Austria): Uses gender mainstreaming in housing and infrastructure planning.

¹ FNCT has presented this concept as part of Connective Cities working group ‘[Women’s leadership in municipalities](#)’.



3. Strategic Objectives and Core Functions of MOGM

Objective 1: Establish a Central Hub for Accountability and Action

As the cornerstone for gender-responsive local governance, MOGM systematically gathers grassroots-level insights, tracks gender indicators, and delivers data-driven policy recommendations. Initially piloted in a selected number of model municipalities, the observatory will be designed for scalability to ensure nationwide impact.

Objective 2: Institutionalize Gender Equality in Local Governance

- Integrate gender equality as a cross-cutting priority in all municipal strategies, budgets, and services.
- Conduct targeted gap analyses in critical areas (e.g. service provision, political participation)
- Co-design interventions with communities to dismantle systemic barriers.

Objective 3: Strengthen Evidence-Based Decision-Making

- Build a robust monitoring framework by collecting, analyzing, and reporting gender-disaggregated data.
- Leverage mixed-method approach—including participatory audits and digital dashboards—to translate findings into actionable solutions.

Objective 4: Deliver Equitable and Inclusive Public Services

Transform municipal service delivery through gender-responsive tools, such as:

- **Inclusive urban planning** (e.g. safe lighting, accessible infrastructure)
- **Gender-sensitive budgeting** to reallocate resources for equity
- **Climate and mobility projects** that address gendered vulnerabilities, ensuring services meeting the needs of marginalized groups (women, children, persons with disabilities, and the elderly).

Objective 5: Foster Knowledge Exchange and Innovation

- Create dynamic learning networks for municipal teams to share successes, challenges, and scalable solutions.
- Showcase "good practices" with reflections on barriers encountered, enabling adaptive replication across regions.



Cross-Cutting Functions Supporting all Objectives

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

- Implement a robust M&E system with regular progress tracking and adaptive management.
- Apply gender-sensitive indicators to measure the impact of local policies and programs.
- Map and benchmark initiatives to recognize high-performing municipalities and target support for those needing improvement.
- Publish results through reports, dashboards, and forums at local, national, and international levels to ensure transparency and accountability.

Gender-Sensitive Communication & Advocacy

- Develop a clear communication strategy tailored to diverse audiences (citizens, municipal staff, civil society).
- Use innovative tools (videos, infographics, digital guides, newsletters) to demystify gender concepts and showcase progress.
- Launch awareness campaigns with inclusive messaging, supported by trained gender focal points in each municipality.

Capacity Building & Institutional Training

- Assess training needs through a dynamic gap analysis, adapting content to local priorities.
- Deliver targeted programs for municipal leaders, staff, and civil society, emphasizing:
 - Gender-responsive planning and budgeting
 - Inclusive service delivery and policymaking
- Empower decision-makers through high-level workshops to institutionalize gender mainstreaming.
- Facilitate peer learning via study tours and exchanges of best practices.
- Build long-term expertise by certifying local trainers and partnering with gender specialists (e.g., universities, NGOs).
- Evaluate and refine training approaches to ensure continuous improvement and sustainability.

Partnerships & Community Engagement

- Promote inter-municipal collaboration to share resources, lessons, and innovations.
- Engage NGOs and grassroots organizations to ground initiatives in community needs and amplify outreach.
- Align with national/international frameworks by partnering with ministries, local councils, and global institutions for policy coherence and funding.



4. Laying the Groundwork: Foundations for a Successful MOGM

A permanent structure for systemic change grounded in local realities

Establishing a MOGM creates an institutionalized, sustainable mechanism to monitor progress, guide policy, and mainstream gender equality across all municipal operations. This ensures gender mainstreaming moves from ad hoc projects to integrated, long-term governance.

Impact hinges on **evidence-based solutions** shaped by:

- Field-level data (surveys, community feedback)
- Local gender indicators tracking disparities in services, participation, and access
- Contextualized analysis to adapt interventions to each municipality's needs

Continuous Capacity Building for Sustainable transformation

- Ongoing, needs-based training for gender focal points and municipal staff
- "Train-the-trainer" programs to cascade expertise and ensure local ownership
- Tailored curricula addressing gaps in planning, budgeting, and service delivery

Strategic Communication for Cultural Shift

A gender-sensitive communication strategy drives change by:

- Simplifying concepts through multimedia (videos, guides, newsletters)
- Celebrating successes to inspire further action
- Engaging communities via local gender focal points to ensure relevance

Learning Through Documentation

- "Good practice" case studies distill replicable lessons from successes and challenges
- Initiative mapping identifies scalable models and areas needing support

Accountability Through Rigorous M&E

A dedicated monitoring system ensures impact by:

- Tracking progress with gender-disaggregated indicators
- Conducting field audits and participatory evaluations
- Visualizing data (dashboards, maps) to pinpoint gaps and share progress transparently



5. Institutional Setup

Governance Structure of MOGM

Steering Committee (Decision-Making Body)

Role: Provides strategic direction, approves reports, and ensures political commitment.

Members

Municipal leaders (Mayor, Deputy Mayor for Social Policy)

Gender/Women’s Department representatives

City council members (especially from gender equality committees)

Civil society (NGOs, feminist organizations, academia)

Advisory Council (Stakeholder Participation)

Role: Ensures grassroots input and multi-sectoral collaboration.

Function: Provides feedback on community needs and monitors implementation gaps.

Technical Secretariat (Operational Core)

Role: Day-to-day management, data analysis, and report preparation.

Members

Research & Data Unit: Collects gender-disaggregated data, conducts gender impact assessments.

Policy Advisory Unit: Recommends gender mainstreaming measures for municipal departments.

Communication Unit: Disseminates findings via reports, dashboards, and public campaigns.

Staffing: Hired professionals (e.g. sociologists, economists) and municipal employees.

Interdepartmental Working Groups

Role: Integrates gender mainstreaming across municipal sectors.

Members

Transport Group: Reviews safety and accessibility for women.

Education Group: Addresses gender stereotypes in schools.

Health Group: Ensures reproductive services reach marginalized groups.

Coordination: Led by the Observatory but includes staff from relevant departments.



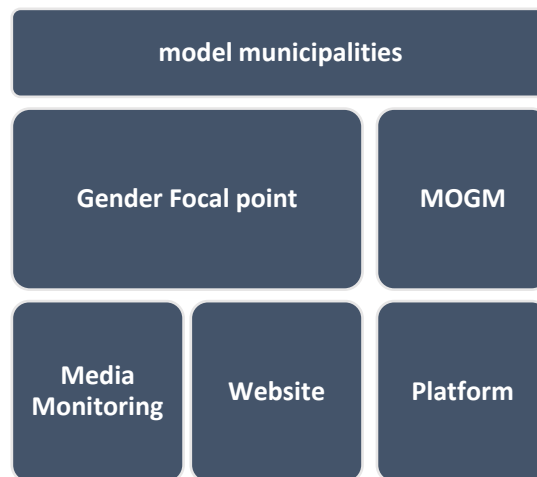
Operational Framework for MOGM

1. Pilot Phase: Model Municipalities-The initiative launches in a selected number of municipalities, chosen based on:

- Demonstrated commitment to gender equality (e.g. prior gender-sensitive policies or programs)
- Geographic and demographic diversity to ensure broad representation
- Capacity and willingness to serve as innovation hubs for replication

Each municipality appoints a **Gender Focal Point** to:

- Coordinate local gender mainstreaming efforts
- Serve as the primary liaison with the Observatory
- Lead the integration of gender perspectives into planning, budgeting, and service delivery



2. Observatory Support and Capacity Building- The Observatory provides tailored support to pilot municipalities, including:

- Technical assistance for gender-responsive local planning
- Tools and training to improve gender-sensitive service delivery (e.g. safe urban design, equitable resource allocation)

3. Communication and Knowledge Sharing

- **Interactive Online Platform:** A dedicated portal for mapping initiatives by location, enabling stakeholders to:
 - Track progress across municipalities
 - Identify best practices and collaboration opportunities
 - Peer learning to share challenges and solutions
- **Media Monitoring and Outreach:**
 - Regular updates on gender-related developments
 - Thematic calls for projects to mobilize local actors and sustain engagement

4. Scalability and sustainability

- Lessons from the pilot municipalities will inform **replicability**
- Annual reports to highlight achievements, challenges, and pathways for scaling
- Embed the observatory within the municipal structure to ensure continuity beyond political cycles.
- Formalize its role through local ordinances or policies.

5. Funding and Sustainability- MOGM requires a well-structured funding that incorporates a mix of public funding, grants, partnerships, and revenue-generating services. This includes:

- **Municipal Budget Allocation:** Secure a dedicated line in the local government’s annual budget.
- Grants from Higher Government Tiers
- Private & Philanthropic Funding: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Foundations & NGOs.
- **EU & UN Programs:** Apply for gender-focused grants (e.g. UN Women).



6. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

To effectively integrate gender mainstreaming at the municipal level, several components of monitoring, evaluation and learning components should be incorporated in a comprehensive system that employs:

- **Gender-Sensitive Indicators:** metrics (e.g. women’s access to services, participation in decision-making)
- **Tools and Methods:** participatory audits, gender-disaggregated data, GIS mapping for spatial equity
- **Technology Integration:** Digital platforms for real-time monitoring (e.g. dashboards, open-data portal)

Gender-Specific Indicators

- Measuring impact of implemented initiatives
- Linking to data collection and analysis processes
- Monitoring gender equality progress

Direct Source Collection

- Using **quantitative (surveys, indicators) and qualitative (field visits, research) methods**
- Ensure intersectional data (e.g., gender + ethnicity, disability, age) to avoid oversimplification.
- Include community participatory methods (e.g. focus groups) for marginalized voices.
- Updating the existing database and develop dashboards for analysis and decision-making

Stakeholder Collaboration

- Include diverse representation of stakeholder in MOGM committee (e.g. gender/Women’s Department representatives, relevant City council members, Civil society , NGOs, feminist organizations, academia).
- Formalize gender advisory councils with diverse representation.
- Ensure grassroots input and multi-sectoral collaboration.

Targeted Interventions

- Prioritize most vulnerable groups (e.g., rural women).
- Include capacity-building for municipal staff on gender-responsive budgeting.

Data-Driven Evaluation

- Use GIS mapping for location-specific gender gaps (e.g. access to services).
- Benchmark against national/international standards (e.g. UN SDG 5).

Performance Monitoring

- Evaluate gender mainstreaming effectiveness
- Use updated data and mapping tools
- Track gender indicators regularly
- Identify gaps for intervention

Learning and Knowledge Sharing

- Promote **cross-municipality collaboration** and scaling of best practices.
- Activate a **centralized knowledge hub** (e.g. an online portal with good practice examples).
- Facilitate **peer-learning exchanges** between

Communication and Transparency

- Enhance accountability via Public dashboards & dialogues
- Use accessible formats (e.g. infographics, local languages).
- Implement social audits where communities review gender equity progress.

MOGM’s comprehensive system of monitoring, evaluation and learning



7. From insights to Advocacy and Action

Establishing MOGM is not just about collecting data—it's about driving change. By transforming evidence into policy, engaging communities, and enforcing accountability, municipalities can move beyond analysis to tangible progress in gender equality.

To pave the pathways for impact, municipalities must consider the following key aspects:

a. From Data to Policy

- Ensure findings directly inform gender-responsive budgeting, service delivery adjustments, and legislative reforms.
- Develop clear, actionable recommendations tailored to decision-makers' needs.

b. Community Engagement for Ownership

- Host public forums, citizen panels, and awareness campaigns to ensure marginalized voices shape policies.
- Partner with media, NGOs, and grassroots organizations to amplify gender equity messages.

c. Accountability as a Catalyst

- Mandate regular reporting to municipal councils with progress dashboards.
- Introduce public scorecards to track commitments and foster transparency.

MOGM succeeds when it bridges the gap between knowledge and action. Municipalities must commit to:

- Using data courageously—even when it reveals uncomfortable gaps.
- Engaging communities authentically—beyond token consultations.
- Holding power accountable—through institutionalized checks and balances.

By embedding these principles, the observatory becomes more than a tool—it becomes a movement for equitable governance. Gender equality is not a checkbox—it's a continuous journey.



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