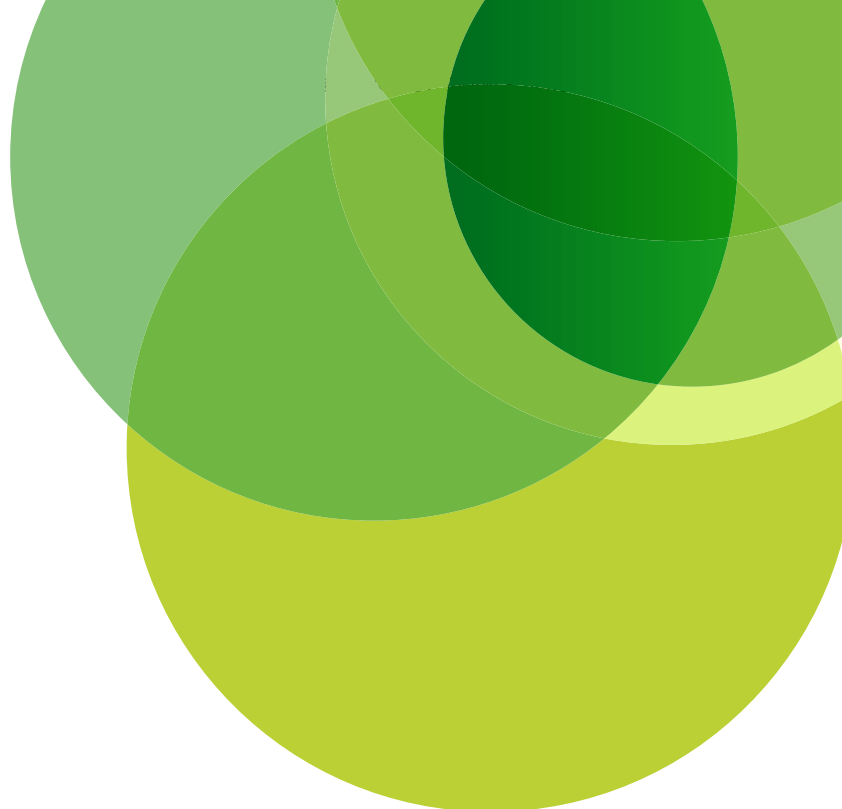DECENTRALISATION &
LOCAL GOVERNANCE

**Development Partners Network on
Decentralisation & Local Governance (DeLoG)**

Making Decentralisation & Local Governance Gender Inclusive

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1.

Introduction - Relevance & Scope

As of April 2022, the DeLoG Secretariat, hosted by the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and Global Affairs Canada (GAC) signed a special agreement to enhance the exchange on gender equality and women's rights as well as to diversify the exchange around decentralisation and local governance (DLG) by including voices of the Global South into DeLoG. For Canada, governance is inclusive – and therefore, more effective – when it equitably serves and engages all people, especially women and girls, in all their diversity. Inclusive governance means that approaches are informed by gender-based analysis, which also recognizes the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination experienced by persons, based on identity factors, such as gender identity, sexual orientation, age, race, ethnicity, disability, among others. It means that policies, services and institutions at the local level are accessible and responsive to the differential needs of all members of the society, and the institutions setting these policies and providing these services are held accountable for ensuring their approach is inclusive.

With this paper, the Development Partners Network on Decentralisation & Local Governance (DeLoG) aims to contribute to a better understanding of the current status, processes and challenges involved in establishing a more gender responsive and transformative approach of decentralisation in the network. It is the result of a series of DeLoG activities in the field of decentralisation and local governance (DLG) with a particular focus on gender equality. In conclusion, it outlines a new approach to discussing DLG and gender equality at the local level with the related support of Development Partners. Additionally, it highlights a selection of practical implications and recommendations for the network and the ways in which DeLoG should proceed.

The full, meaningful, and effective participation of women and girls, in all their diversity and of others who face multiple and intersecting forms of discriminationin is a top priority for DeLoG, as set out in the 2030 Agenda, especially as targets under goals 5 and 16:

TARGET 5.5

Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

TARGET 5.C

Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels

TARGET 16.7

Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels

TARGET 16.B

Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.

THE AIM OF THIS DELOG GENDER ANALYSIS IS THEREFORE THREEFOLD:

I.   Assess to what extent DeLoG's institutional structures and objectives integrate gender equality and have capacities in the field of DLG and gender equality

II. Understand how to operationalise DLG and gender equality as a focus theme for further collaboration

III. Recognise practical implications for next steps towards joint objectives for a more inclusive DeLoG

THIS SERVES AS A STARTING POINT FOR A DISCUSSION ON THE PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES ON DLG & GENDER EQUALITY IN DELOG.

In chapter 2, the paper illustrates gender related fundamental concepts and definitions. The purpose of chapter 3 is to sketch out the existing links between decentralisation, local governance, and gender equality. Chapter 4 takes an internal look at the structures and processes of the Network, such as the internal governance structures and the joint learning activities.

Chapter 7 and 8 will summarise the current state and future directions for the network with regards to DLG and gender equality. The chapters will highlight trends as well as gaps and in conclusion discuss a selection of practical next steps and recommendations for the network's way forward.

2.

Gender Related Fundamental Concepts

GENDER-RELATED FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS

GENDER

The socially constructed differences between men and women.

GENDER IDENTITY

An individual's perception of their gender, which may or may not correspond with their birth sex or their gender expression.

GENDER EQUALITY

Means that diverse groups of women, men and non-binary people can develop their potential with equal opportunities and rights and are able to participate fully in all spheres of life.

SEX

It is the biological, anatomical, and physio-logical division of a species (e.g. differences in reproductive functions).

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other individuals.

GENDER SENSITIVE

Recognises different needs of women, men, boys and girls and acknowledges gender power dynamics but does not necessarily address.

GENDER DATA

"Gender Data comprises:
i)   data collected and disaggregated by sex;
ii) qualitative data on gender issues and
iii) data to adequately reflect diversity within subgroups and capture all aspects of their lives." ☞(UN Women)

GENDER RESPONSIVE

An approach that acknowledges and addresses gender specific needs to take specific actions to close identified gender gaps.

INTERSECTIONALITY

Systems of inequality and discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, class and other identity factors that interlock and overlap with each other.

GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE

The change and deconstruction of social/gender norms, rules and power relations lead to the empowerment and strengthening of all genders, especially women, girls and LGBTQI+ individuals.

3.

The Impact of Decentralisation & Local Governance on Gender Equality

Local governance is about the formal and informal rules, systems and structures by which societies are organised, take decisions and how they are implemented. It affects all aspects and sectors of human society – politics, economics and business, culture, social interaction, religion, and security – at all levels, from the most global to the very local. Working in the field of governance can be a powerful instrument to transform gender relations towards greater equality. Conversely, local governance interventions that do not consider gendered power imbalances in society can perpetuate or worsen inequalities. Therefore, gender sensitivity is a key requirement for effective work on governance. Without an inclusive gender lens, the 2030 Agenda principle to Leave No One Behind cannot be translated into practice.

Most people experience the immediate impacts of governance, whether fair or unfair, at a very local level. Gender and other identity factors (e.g., social class, physical ability and so on) shape a person's place in society and their opportunities to contribute to – or to obstruct – public decision-making and the enforcement of laws and policies. As a result, women, girls and others who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination are facing barriers. Issues that particularly affect them tend to get de-prioritised and their participation obstructed. In most political systems, the local level is where all citizens should best be able to participate in governance, for example by voting for their local councillors, taking part in local committees, or protesting against laws or actions that they consider unfair. People may face different and intersecting barriers to expressing their opinions and accessing information, which are based on identity features, such as language, ethnicity, gender, class, poverty. In governance, there are visible, formal structures of local government, but there are also informal structures of power, such as village or neighborhood committees, service user groups, councils, dominant families or traditional leaders. The way a community is governed is also influenced by other power dynamics, such as business interests or patronage relationships based on debt and obligation.

It is essential for anyone working on governance to conduct a thorough analysis of those local power relations, drawing on history and culture, specific economic realities and the interests of different groups of people, including those whose realities are least often reflected in policies and programming, such as women, girls, and those facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. This analysis — which should be informed or conducted by gender equality experts — can then shape the options and approaches that a DLG development programs uses, informed by how change has occurred in the past and could occur in the future. Decentralisation is a multi-dimensional reform. The very concept of decentralisation itself is a multi-faceted and contested concept for different ways of transferring powers and the "locus of decision making" from central to regional, municipal or local governments (deconcentration, delegation, devolution). It is multi-dimensional also in the sense that its motivation and development rationale concern both issues of political governance and socio-economic dimensions. The implementation of decentralisation covers wide-ranging political, administrative and fiscal reforms.

The influence of decentralisation and local governance on gender equality is affected by a number of inter-related factors at all levels of governance. All citizens are expected to benefit from better service delivery at the local level. Several studies emphasise opportunities for women's leadership created by processes of decentralisation that include deliberate efforts to strengthen women's meaningful participation. For instance, Sudarshan and Bisht (2006) present an analysis highlighting the impact of decentralisation and reservation policy in India's Panchayati Raj institutions. This policy, which mandates a one-third quota for women in local governance, has significantly expanded the opportunities available to women. Through their argument, they shed light on the transformative effects of these measures on women's participation and empowerment in the realm of local governance in India.

> **This devolution of authority and responsibility is expected to improve the responsiveness of government to local needs and priorities. From a gender perspective, decentralization also holds the promise of more locally appropriate public service delivery and increased opportunities for women to participate in government planning, budgeting, and oversight."** (ADB 2012)

Although representation of women, girls and others facing multiple and intersecting forms of discriminimationin political fora has increased in the last decades for various reasons, including decentralisation, this still does not necessarily mean that they are given the opportunity and space to fully articulate their opinions and are allowed to do so (cf. UN-Women 2022[1]). The analysis on "Women's Representation in Local Government" by UN-Women indicates that women's representation in deliberative bodies of local government is higher than in parliament, but still not equal to men. Women's representation in local positions is on average 34%. The report also shows data gaps on women's political participation at local level, such as disaggregation data, electoral data, and the need for new data collection tools to capture women's full and effective participation in local government. UCLG estimates that around 20% of councillors and just 5% of mayors globally are women. In addition, there currently is a lack of comparable global data on the number of women in local councils.[2]

The political dimension of decentralisation has the potential to increase participation of marginalised groups in local decision-making, participatory budgeting and development planning. This could contribute to overcoming the under-representation of those groups at any level of governance and decision-making. Supporting women's and non-male participation at the local level, as well as formal and informal leadership, is crucial. It is at this level that many of the decisions that

affect the lives of women and marginalised groups are made. Currently, women's influence often takes place through informal mechanisms such as self-help groups, women's rights organisations and networks, community groups and cooperatives (example Slum Dwellers International, Kenya). These are typically not taken into account in measures and interventions to increase women's participation and influence in decision-making. Analysing voice and political empowerment as well as issues of representation and participation is challenging. It is possible to hold a position as an elected representative without being able to exercise power. It is also possible to exercise a high degree of political influence without being an elected representative or even participating in formal consultation processes.

In the dimension of public administration, women represent only a small proportion of civil servants in any country. On average, women make up less than 10% of staff in public administration (UN-Women 2022), and the percentage is even lower when it comes to management positions in public administration. This lack of women's representation in public administration contributes to states' inefficiencies and lack of capacity, as statistically the wider and more diverse the selection pool, the more likely it is to find talented, hardworking and committed individuals. Representation and participation of the population groups that are likely to be affected by public decisions are also necessary prerequisites if governments intend to make evidence-based decisions and understand the implications of these decisions, including the risks for certain population groups. This also holds true for the supply side (outcome) of local administration, like in the delivery of public services and distribution of investments. The inclusive and effective delivery of services at the local level depends significantly on political will and the attitudes and behaviour of front-line civil servants. There needs to be a gender responsiveness as well as gender equality capacities by civil servants, which requires trainings, resources, and tools, in the public service institutions. Furthermore, the government and administration must ensure the basic right to representation and that these representatives have influence.

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[1] ☛ Women's Representation in Local Government: A Global Analysis | Women in Local Government (unwomen.org)

[2] ☛ https://www.uclg.org/en/Locally_elected_women_to_BeCounted_to_achive_SDG5

POTENTIAL POSITIVE IMPACTS, SUCH AS:

INCREASED
EFFICIENCY

IMPROVED QUALITY
OF PUBLIC SERVICES

POLITICAL
EMPOWERMENT
PARTICIPATION

INCREASED TRANSPARENCY
AND BETTER
ACCOUNTABILITY, ETC.

Potential positive impacts of DLG reforms (source: DeLoG e-learning 2022)

Fiscal decentralisation is concerned with transfer of revenue and / or expenditure responsibilities to lower levels of government, intergovernmental fiscal transfers and subnational governments borrowing. The extent to which decisions made and budgets allocated by public institutions at different levels take into consideration the situation and priorities of women, girls, men and marginalised groups is key in the field of fiscal decentralisation. It is important to bear in mind that there are often implicit and explicit gender and social biases in the revenue and expenditure side of public budgets. The first gender-specific issue in fiscal systems is open gender bias, for example when joint business or asset income is assigned exclusively to household members who are men, or when only men are allowed to have legal standing on tax issues. The second set of gaps relates to public spending, budgeting, and resource mobilisation that fail to consider the different conditions, needs and interests of women, men, and persons of other genders respectively. The third major issue is related to the political dimension of decentralisation and focuses on the under-representation of women and marginalised groups in local financial governance institutions.

At the local level, the impetus is typically given to participatory planning and budgeting processes and use of social accountability tools to hold the local government to account. If national budgets are not adequately addressing the needs of women and marginalised groups or if decentralised funds do not fully trickle down to municipalities, local gender responsive interventions will have less impact. National and local budgets are key to understand (local) government priorities, as a budget reflects the developmental and service agenda of the government. The Council of Europe defines gender budgeting as a "gender-based assessment of budgets incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality".

Gender-Responsive Budget Initiatives (GRBIs) analyse policies, taxation, revenues, expenditures and deficits from a gender perspective, that is, from a perspective that analyses the differences in power and opportunities in society that women, men, and persons of other genders are experiencing due to prevailing gender norms (see Stotsky 2016).

THE PURPOSE OF GENDER BUDGETING IS THREEFOLD:

I.   to promote accountability and transparency in fiscal planning;

II. to increase gender responsive participation in the budget process, for example by undertaking steps to involve women and men equally in budget preparation;

III. to advance gender equality and women's rights.

Gender budgeting is grounded in gender analysis, which assesses how well a budget addresses gender gaps and reviews the actual distribution of resources between women and men and other groups. Such an analysis also allows for the inclusion of key issues that are frequently overlooked in budgets and policy analyses. These include the economic effect of uneven distribution of unpaid work and its net economic effect on women, as well as the uneven distribution of resources within families. Sound gender analysis leads to good planning and budgeting for gender equality and economic growth.

Gender as a System of Power

As stated in the introduction people may face different and intersecting barriers to accessing information and speaking out based on their social relations and features, such as language, ethnicity, gender, class, and poverty. They face visible formal and informal structures of power. It is therefore crucial to understand and explore the multiple power dimensions that affect a given situation, in order to better understand the different factors that interact to reinforce situations of discriminatory behavior, structures and policies. As power is not static, it will often cut across the different forms, sectors and levels.

Having a more complete understanding of the (gendered) power relations at play can offer valuable perspectives. This lens highlights that individuals' experiences of power and vulnerability vary based on intersecting factors such as gender, age, class, and others. Empowerment strategies that solely focus on the public sphere may miss the obstacles faced by individuals, especially women, within their households and families. Gender analysis in this field requires a holistic view of the decision-making processes and institutional spaces, from households and community organisations to local and national governments and international organisations.

A stronger focus on gender equality in DeLoG will help efforts to understand gendered power relations in partner countries and particular the ways in which gender hierarchies shape economic, political, and social structures and institutions. A more focused discussion around transformative gender approaches can significantly enhance donors' insights into power dynamics, resulting in better programming.

EXCERPT FROM "SIDA GUIDE TO POWER ANALYSIS"[3]

- "How does gender intersect with the distribution of formal and informal power in society in terms of the public sphere (political institutions, social institutions, rule of law, the market and economy) and the private sphere (domestic life and family, intimate relations)?

- What can be said about both the situation of women in general and about particular groups of women (such as women who do not cohabit with men, whether single mothers, widows, non-married women) as well as about particular groups of men who may be disadvantaged by dominant ideas of masculinity?

- (...) do particular laws (deliberately or unintentionally) reinforce and sustain subordinate or discriminated gender roles?"'

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[3]   ☞ https://cdn.sida.se/publications/files/sida61639en-power-analysis-a-practical-guide.pdf
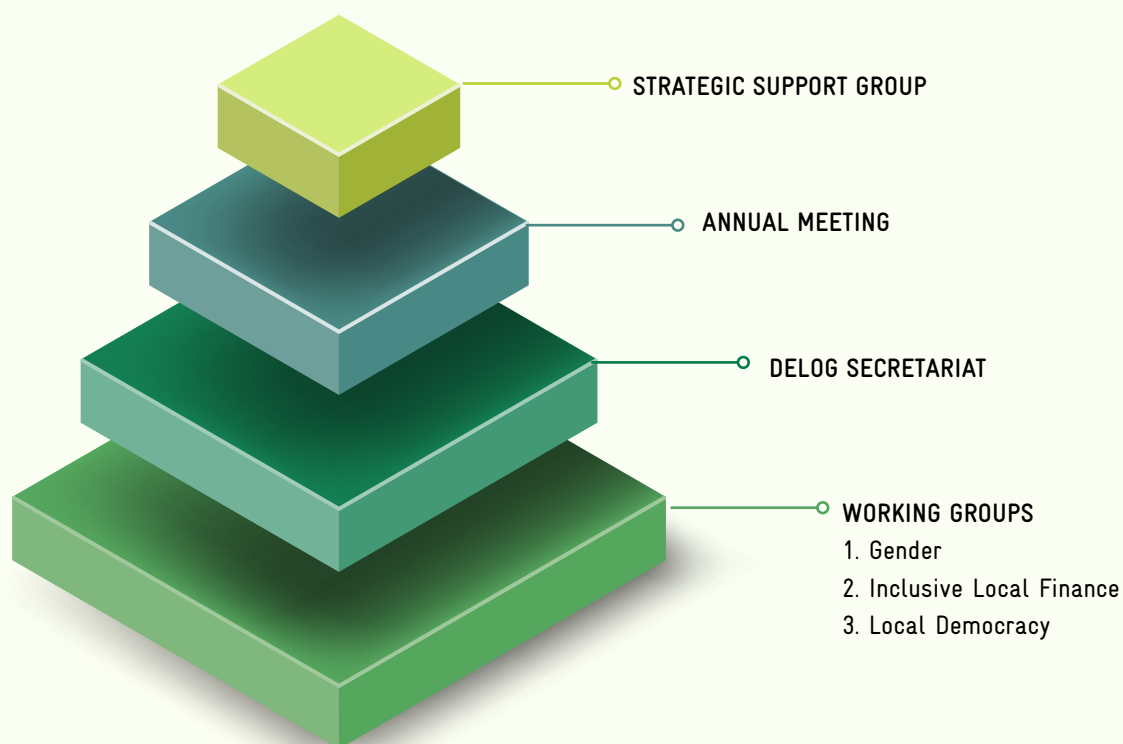
4.

Structures and Processes of the Network

The DeLoG network works through a range of governance structures, which are mainly laid out and agreed upon by members in the DeLoG Charter 2018. The following analysis of the network's internal governance structure is mainly concerned with examining the ways in which gender considerations affect the steering, management and decision-making processes of the network. It aims to identify any gender-based barriers or biases that may exist within the network's internal governance structure. By conducting this gender analysis of the network's governance structure, DeLoG aims to ensure that it is inclusive and promotes gender equality, leading to more effective and sustainable outcomes for all network members.

4.1. Internal Governance – Strategic Support Group (SSG)

DeLoG's Strategic Support Groups is currently comprised of five organisations: the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), International Cooperation Agency of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNGi), Network of Associations of Local Authorities in South-East Europe (NALAS) and the Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy (ICLD). Every organisation is represented by a respective focal point with specific expertise in the field of DLG. All organisations represented in the SSG have a respective gender strategy, gender approach and focus in their programming and in their internal governance structures.[4]

POTENTIAL POSITIVE IMPACTS OF DLG REFORMS (SOURCE: DELOG E-LEARNING 2022)

STRATEGIC SUPPORT GROUP

ANNUAL MEETING

DELOG SECRETARIAT

WORKING GROUPS
1. Gender
2. Inclusive Local Finance
3. Local Democracy

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[4] At the time of preparation of this analysis BMZ was drafting a Feminist Development Policy.
See also, GAC – Feminist International Assistance Policy.

The **Strategic Support Group (SSG)** is composed of one representative from each of the funders (BMZ and GAC as of April 2022), the previous host of the DeLoG Annual Meeting, the future host of the DeLoG Annual Meeting and one DeLoG member on a voluntary basis, rotating yearly. The SSG serves as a "sounding" board for the Secretariat to discuss the development of the network on a regular basis throughout the year. This means discussing activities and progress within the work streams and monitoring the implementation of activities, discussing and facilitating decision-making processes on strategic orientation, making decisions on ad-hoc issues that may arise and supporting the Secretariat in broadening and sustaining the network's financial basis. Additional strategic tasks include the identification of possible other networks and supporting the Secretariat and the host in organising the Annual Meeting with regard to the agenda setting, identification of possible expert inputs and in preparing decisions to be taken in plenary.

The following aspects will be revised with regards to the SSG:

I.   **REPRESENTATION:** Examining the representation of women and men in DeLoG main decision-making body within the network, the SSG.

II. **DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES:** Analysing the methods used for making decisions and examining whether women's voices and perspectives are equally represented and valued.

III. **SSG CULTURE:** Examining the cultural norms and values within the SSG and evaluating whether they are inclusive and respectful of diverse perspectives.

Analyzing these aspects within the steering structure involved examining the composition and dynamics of the SSG to identify any disparities, biases, or barriers that may exist. This included collecting relevant data on the composition of the SSG, for instance the gender of individuals holding a position in the SSG. There was also an analysis of perception and culture within the SSG based on participation in the SSG meetings and interviews with participants to gain insights into the culture and perceptions related to gender equality. The

aim was to evaluate whether there are any prevailing stereotypes, biases, or unconscious beliefs that may affect the opportunities or treatment of women within the steering group. The Review of DeLoG's policies, practices, and procedures related to the SSG to identify any gender-related biases or gaps was also an important part of the analysis. Examination specifically looked at possible gender disparities or policies that hinder the participation and inclusion of women.

The aim of this analysis was to get a deeper understanding of the gender bias within the steering structure. This analysis provides a foundation for targeted interventions and strategies to promote gender equality and foster a more inclusive and diverse SSG.

REPRESENTATION: In order to determine the representation of women within DeLoG's main governing body, namely the SSG, the composition of its members was reviewed, with a view to encourage equal representation of women at all levels of decision-making and leadership. Of the five organisations comprising the SSG, two organisations are represented by women. As elaborated above, the nomination of the represented organisations depends on financial and general commitment to contribute to the network (for instance by hosting an Annual Meeting). The analysis reveals a disparity in DeLoG's efforts to uphold gender equality within its governance structures. Specifically, the formalized governance policies, such as the Charter, lack an explicit commitment to gender equality in the SSG, and fail to establish gender equality in the SSG as an objective. Furthermore, the absence of clear selection criteria that incorporate a gender and diversity perspective hampers effective monitoring and evaluation of the SSG and its selection procedures. Consequently, there is a lack of transparency regarding the methodology employed in appointing representatives from respective organizations to the SSG. However, even if the processes to determine SSG members are agreed upon by DeLoG members, it is still necessary to adjust policies (such as the DeLoG Charter) and procedures. This will ensure that they support gender equality and there is equal gender representation in the SSG. The following adjustments to the DeLoG policies and processes are recommended in order to ensure a gender equal SSG:

▶ DeLoG's commitment to achieving gender equality in the Strategic Support Group must be established, clearly defined and communicated. This commitment should be communicated to all members and partners and other relevant stakeholders.

▶ Set gender equality goals in the DeLoG Charter. Define specific goals and targets for achieving gender equality in the SSG. These goals should be measurable, time-bound, and aligned with broader diversity and inclusion objectives.

▶ Develop selection criteria (also to be formalized in the Charter) for the SSG to ensure they are fair, transparent, and free from gender bias. This also includes criteria that promote more diversity and gender balance in the SSG.

▶ To regularly monitor progress DeLoG (the SSG, Secretariat and its members) need to establish a system for monitoring progress towards gender equality in the SSG. Track relevant data, such as the gender composition of the group, and regularly review and report on the progress made. This will help identify any areas that require further attention or improvement.

▶ Regularly reassess and refine policies and practices to ensure that they remain effective in promoting gender equality in the SSG and beyond.

DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES: The SSG is a deliberative body. Dissenting positions and opinions are discussed in an open, respectful and sufficient manner. The meetings and discussions are moderated by the Secretariat. All participating SSG members as well as the Secretariat ensure that all have equal opportunities to express their opinions, share their experiences and influence the outcome of decision-making. Decisions are mainly taken by majority vote and/ or compromise. The inclusive and equal opportunity to express opinions is ensured by the Secretariat through several measurs, for instance:

▶ The Secretariat plays an active role in facilitating discussions during SSG meetings. They ensure that each SSG member has the opportunity to speak and be heard. They manage the speaking order, allocate sufficient time for discussions allowing each member to express their opinion, encourage participation from all SSG members, and prevent any dominant voices from monopolising the discussion. Adequate time is also always be given for questions and clarifications after every agenda item and at the end of the meeting.

▶ Agenda setting: The Secretariat involves the SSG in the agenda-setting process for the meetings. A draft agenda is sent out to all SSG members beforehand (with sufficient preparation time for the SSG) and all members are encouraged to suggest agenda items and themes, ensuring a diverse range of topics that reflect the interests and concerns of the group.

▶ The Secretariat as well as the SSG itself strive for more inclusivity and diversity within the Strategic Support Group. This will be achieved by actively seeking representation from different regions and backgrounds. By ensuring a diverse composition, different perspectives and opinions can be brought to the table.

Nevertheless, clear guidelines and explicitly formalized procedures are missing. The Secretariat should establish clear guidelines and procedures for the operation of the steering board. These guidelines should outline how meetings are conducted, how decisions are made, and how SSG members can express their opinions. It should be emphasized that all members have an equal opportunity to contribute and express their views at every stage of the SSG meeting and decision-making process.

CULTURE: Founded in 2006, DeLoG has evolved as a network over the last 17 years. It startet as an exclusively donor-driven network on harmonisation, which mainly included bilateral donor agencies and ministries, which are based in the Global North. The network slowly developed to a more dynamic and open platform with a broad member- and partnership base to foster knowledge exchange and mutual learning among its member and partner organisations. In order to foster an inclusive SSG that values diversity and promotes gender equality in the network, it is necessary to have representation from the Global South. Inclusion in a decision-making body not only refers to gender equality, but also to having other diverse backgrounds represented in the SSG to ensure that diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences are represented and taken into account when making decisions. This means that the SSG needs to ensure equal opportunities for organisations from the Global South to participate and influence the decision-making process.

This can be achieved trough actively reaching out to organizations and stakeholders in the Global South through various channels, such as conferences, events, social media platforms, and relevant online communities. DeLoG always has been strong in fostering partnerships and collaborations. This needs to be pushed further with existing Global South organisations or networks that share similar goals and values in the areas of local governance and gender. Also, actively seeking the involvement and input in shaping the network's direction and activities is of key concern to evolve the network and its activities. This representation will demonstrate the network's commitment to inclusivity and attract more Global South organisations to participate. The network's communication materials, including website content, publications, and event announcements, should also be available in multiple languages to ensure inclusivity. Showcasing success stories, achievements, and contributions of Global South partners o within the network is also an important pillar that give visibility to their work and increases the value of the network for these organisations.

Currently, the SSG is entirely comprised of organisations from the Global North. This is also due to the overall underrepresentation of organisations from the Global South in the network as such. Inclusion in decision-making leads to better outcomes and increased innovation, as a wider range of experiences and ideas are considered. It also promotes equity and fairness, as more and diverse perspectives are represented, and their needs are taken into account.

4.2. Joint Learning & Knowledge Sharing Activities on Gender and Inclusion

The analysis of knowledge sharing activities on gender and inclusion aims at evaluating and assessing the effectiveness of formats and content and other initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality and inclusion. The objectives of the knowledge sharing activities and joint learning experiences on gender is to ensure that they are effective in promoting understanding and advancing gender equality. This is ensured by incorporating gender equality as a core theme throughout learning events and knowledge sharing activities. Also, diverse speakers and facilitators who possess expertise and lived experiences related to local governance and gender equality are invited. This diversity provided a range of perspectives and fostered a more comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand. DeLoG always tries to ensure the provided information are accurate and up to date. This is established through including researchers and research findings, case studies, and local real-life examples to enhance understanding and highlight the relevance of gender equality in various contexts. With its learning activities like "DeLoG in DiaLoGue", the network tries to encourage active engagement and participation from attendees and also discussions within the network. This approach allows participants to learn from one another and deepen their understanding through shared experiences and perspectives. Evaluations for webinars and e-learning courses as well as for knowledge sharing activities during Annual Meetings are regulary conducted. These evaluations assess the effectiveness of the learning event in promoting understanding and advancing gender equality. They also aim to ensure that the design and delivery of these activities are continuously improved to maximise their impact.

One of the main formats developed by the DeLoG Secretariat to engage members in a deepened exchange around gender equality and inclusive local governance is the "DeLoG in DiaLoGue" series.[5] This online exchange initiative aims to provide Members and Partners with the opportunity to call on the expertise and help of the network on short notice. It offers Members and Partners the space to pitch innovative ideas, discuss

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[5]   ☞ News and Reports – DeLoG – Decentralisation & Local Governance

relevant topics, identify synergies and pave the way for new long-term cooperations. Through the format, Members and Partners can gain quick access to the high-level expertise, diversity and openness of the network.

The objective of these knowledge sharing activities was to present innovative approaches to gender transformation. Increasing the exchange around gender-related topics and issues with regards to DLG reforms was also one of the main goals. The assessment of the quality and relevance of the content by the Secretariat or in the case of webinars and e-learning courses by external consultants, concluded that the representation of diverse perspectives, objectives and content was highly appreciated and shared by all participating members and partners. There was relevance to the audience and attempts were made to address the needs and challenges with regards to gender equality faced by every respective member organisation. It was also ensured by the Secretariat that diverse perspectives from different kinds of organisations as well as from the "Global South" were integrated. The emphasis was on practical applications and examples that provide actionable steps and room for discussion to advance gender equality in the respective focus areas of the organisations. The short online method used to deliver the content reached between 30-45 individuals in the network per session. This format allows practitioners to participate in discussions and learning. For deeper understanding, longer and different formats need to be developed.

4.3. Involvement of non-governmental actors, in particular feminist organisations

Increasing the representation of civil society organisations (CSOs), including women's rights organisations or WROs, from the "Global South" is one of DeLoG's main objectives and priorities. To ensure that the network is inclusive and promotes gender equality also from an intersectional point of view, the network relies on the experience and knowledge of the new organisations like as well as their active involvement in learning and knowledge activities in DeLoG.

During the DeLoG Knowledge and Dialogue Days 2022, two new member organisations from the "Global South" were welcomed ☞ Southern Voice and ☞ Democracy Works Foundation and showcased their work.[6] The knowledge and representation by these organisations is highly appreciated and approved by all members and the SSG. But there is still an imbalance in the membership of DeLoG with 43 member organisations from the "Global North" and only 5 organisations from the ' 'Global South".

Active involvement and engagement in activities by the member organisations from the "Global South" is lacking as well, which needs further analysis by DeLoG, also through feedback from the organisations and stronger involvement in the steering and decision-making of the network.

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[6] ☞ DeLoG Knowledge and Dialogue Days: Showcasing of Our New Members and the CBMS Network – DeLoG – Decentralisation & Local Governance

5.

Knowledge and Eexperiences of DeLoG members

5.1 DeLoG Members' Policies and Strategies Related to Gender Equality

40 out of 48 member organisations published a gender strategy that guides the internal processes as well as programming and cooperation with partner countries.[7] The strategies include a variety of fields, connections and priorities. It is notable that a lot of the overall strategies as well as the gender specific strategies do not explicitly include DLG reforms as a possible entry point for effective and inclusive development reforms and advances. And while a majority of member organisations developed a gender strategy, not all organisations recognise and consider the experiences of those facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Member organisations indicated a need for more and higher quality data as well as data collection instruments, methods, and techniques that facilitate the collection of gender-sensitive statistics and sex-disaggregated data. In assessing the gender strategies of the 40 organisations, it is apparent that the member organisations mainly follow a gender-sensitive approach in their gender mainstreaming efforts. However, this may not be sufficient, since it does not necessarily result in programming that narrows gender inequalities.

It needs to be further discussed how a transformative approach that challenges gender norms and structures and includes power analysis can be further integrated into the thinking and policies of member organisations. All organisations recognise the importance of collaboration with stakeholders and international partners to achieve respective gender equality objectives that mostly align with gender equality objectives set in the 2030 Agenda. Engaging with stakeholders, partners and international organisations, including women's rights organisations and gender experts, to ensure that the analysis is based on the perspectives and experiences of diverse groups of individuals and communities, can be a role for the DeLoG network.

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[7] Annex 1 Members and Partners Gender Strategies and Indicators

6.

Structures and Processes of the Secretariat

The DeLoG Secretariat coordinates the activities of the network and provides support to it. The Secretariat is responsible for communicating with and updating the network members and strategic partners. Additionally, it facilitates communication amongst members and strategic partners, identifies, stimulates and manages the cooperation with new members and (strategic) partners, explores partnerships with other development partners, networks and working groups and maintains the website. Furthermore, the Secretariat produces the newsletter, conducts knowledge management and public relations, organises joint DeLoG learning events and assists the hosts of the Annual Meetings in its preparation, implementation and wrap-up. Moreover, it proposes and consolidates the annual work plan, monitors the activities and progress in the work streams and facilitates the work and meetings of the SSG. The DeLoG Secretariat gets in touch with all members on a regular basis and follows up on their membership.

6.1 Resources and Funding

The network and its Secretariat rely on a diversified and stable funding structure. DeLoG members acknowledge a fair burden and cost sharing principle. Funding is a crucial component for the operation and success of a secretariat to achieve its objectives, including with regard to achieving gender equality.

The financing agreement between GIZ and Global Affairs Canada aligns the DeLoG Network with Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP). GAC assigns the priorities of Canada's FIAP to the capacity of DeLoG's Secretariat and its membership-related activities. Through GAC's support, DeLoG increased awareness and dialogue on the challenges of participation and inclusion at the local government level, in particular on the barriers faced by women and those in vulnerable situations. The engagement of GAC together with SDC and the commitment by the broader membership base devoted more resources to learning about and listening to women's and girls' voices and leadership at the local level and has simultaneously increased awareness of the barriers and obstacles to participation and an equal, meaningful voice in local government structures faced by women.

The network also needs to discuss on the options for financial assistance and resources for partner from the Global South. SSG and network need to explore opportunities to provide financial assistance or access to resources for organisations to participate in network activities. This can include travel grants or funding for participation in conferences, workshops, or network events. This has already been done with partners from the Global South for the Annual meeting 2023 in Marrakech, Morocco.

6.2 DeLoG Secretariat – Structures and Processes

A gender inclusive secretariat is an organisational structure that promotes equal access and opportunities for people of all gender identities and expressions to be participants and representatives. It would have an enabling environment for the meaningful engagement of all persons and equal valuing of their input, regardless of their gender. Since the network's activities are facilitated by the DeLoG Secretariat, which is hosted by GIZ, all structures and processes have to be aligned with GIZ's gender strategy, policies and safeguards.

> **'GIZ promotes gender equality and the elimination of gender-specific disadvantages and discrimination. It does this in the services it provides and as part of its equal opportunity policies within the company.[8]**

The DeLoG Secretariat tries to maintain and improve its structures and processes with regard to a gender inclusive and diverse approach through various means, such as:

A diverse hiring practice that seeks to recruit individuals with different gender identities and diverse backgrounds at all possible levels to promote representation, inclusion and diversity in the workplace. The DeLoG Secretariat consciously and systematically strives to reach and evaluate a large number of applications and ultimately to recruit a diverse

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[8] ☞ Gender (giz.de)

workforce representing different backgrounds as set out in the German Diversity Charter signed by GIZ, which is an employers' initiative to promote diversity in companies and institutions. Taking into account different experiences, perspectives, and identities, such as race, gender, ethnicity, age, religion, ability, sexual orientation and having a diverse workforce enriches and enhances the work. This approach helps to create a more inclusive workplace culture and can lead to improved decision-making, creativity, and overall performance of the Secretariat. In all joint activities, products and initiatives the DeLoG Secretariat applies gender-responsive (and if possible transformative) policies and procedures in implementing those activities. A special focus and top priority for the Secretariat is to address and be aware of gender-based and intersectional discrimination and ensure equal opportunities and diversity.This is in line with, required and acitvley supported by GIZ's (the hosting organization of the Secretariat) ☛ Code of Ethics and its ☛ Gender Strategy. Through gender-mainstreaming into all aspects of the Secretariat's work, including planning, implementation, and evaluation of its activities as well as through internal tools and guidelines such as gender sensitive event management guidelines, DeLoG helps to ensure a balanced, inclusive and diverse group of participants, speakers and contributions in general. The Secretariat is led by a coordinator, whose role and performance are assessed anually based on a gender-responsive survey by the employees under the guidance of external moderation. Based on the results of this survey recommendations and steps for improvement are formulated. This assessment also examines the performance of the coordinator with regards to gender and diversity.

The collaboration with gender equality-focused organisations, women's rights organisations or individual advocates for gender equality is monitored by the Secretariat against the benchmark of actively including five new CSOs from the Global South with a focus on gender equality and reported to its commission parties in order to promote gender equality and inclusion within the network and beyond. This objective was followed by an exercise to identify of women's rights organisations that might be of interest for cooperation with the DeLoG. However, the representation of these organisations in the network is lacking and collaboration with these organisations or individual advocates is only selective and not established in a systematic and sustainable way.[9]

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[9] ☛ In Crisis and Beyond: Local Governments are Critical to Building Functional States – Keynote Speech of Kah Walla – DeLoG – Decentralisation & Local Governance

7.

Summarising Achievements and the Current State (Conclusion)

The analysis of DeLoG's current institutional structures and processes with regards to gender equality showed some achievements but also revealed needs, issues, and challenges with regards to inclusive, diverse and non-biased modes of operation. The formalised internal governance structure that is guiding in strategic questions is the Strategic Support Group (SSG). The analysis revelead shortcomings in this governance structure as well as the policies (Charter) that formalize it. Recommendations addressing thos shortcomings and barriers included ecplicitly stating the commitment to gender equality in the formalized policies and communicating it to all stakeholders. Additionally, specific goals and targets should be set, aligned with broader diversity objectives, and selection criteria should be developed and regularly revised to ensure equality, transparency, and freedom from gender bias. Nevertheless, representation from the Global South and a more gender-balanced composition of the group needs to be achieved. DeLoG's joint learning & knowledge sharing activities on gender and inclusion have made progress in recent years, both in terms of numbers and thematic relevance, trying to follow a more gender responsive and in some cases a gender-transformative approach by recognizing that gender intersects with other social identities such as race, class, sexuality, and disability. The events tried to examine the complex interactions between different forms of oppression and discrimination. Also, the active promotion of the participation and inclusion of diverse voices, perspectives, and experiences ensured a transformative approach. It ensured that marginalised groups had equal opportunities to contribute in the planning and implementation of learning events. Selected knowledge sharing activities promoted the critical reflection on how gender norms and biases shape behaviors, attitudes, and social structures and showcased examples and practices to transform them towards more gender equality and diversity. The Secretariat reaches highly occupied practitioners in its network with short and informative online formats that allow quick learning gains. The involvement of non-governmental actors, in particular feminist organisations, is actively pursued by the network and Secretariat. Two new organisations from the "Global South" have been reached, but the active engagement of these new organisations is lacking. There is still an imbalance of CSO's and women's rights organisations from the "Global South" within DeLoG, which needs to be further analysed. More engagement with these actors is desirable.

40 out of 48 member organisations have adopted a gender strategy, which guides their work in partner countries as well as their internal organisational structure and processes. The focus areas and approaches are highly diverse and already show the difficulty to follow a joint agenda with regard to gender equality and diversity within the broad network of DeLoG. Funding is an essential component for the success of DeLoG network to contribute to the objective of achieving gender equality. Adequate and reliable funding will enable the Secretariat to carry out its mandate, implement activities and initiatives and achieve its goals related to gender equality. Gender-inclusive, sensitive and diverse structures and processes are well established within the DeloG Secretariat due to the hosting organisations (GIZ) own regulations and guidelines. Also, the performance and inclusiveness of the Secretariat itself is annually assessed and the workforce trained with regards to gender, diversity, and intersectionality on a regular basis by company internal gender experts as well as through external workshops.

8.

Future Directions and Recommendations for DeLoG

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR USING THIS ANALYSIS

The results of this analysis feed into guidance for the network's overall approach and objectives for gender equality. This needs further discussion within the network and SSG for formalised and stronger comittment

The gender analysis needs to be linked to the broader overarching DeLoG strategy as well as to Canada's FIAP

The development of a joint gender equality mission statement and a gender strategy will be instrumental to provide overall direction and momentum for mainstreaming into network activities, policies and governance structures.

STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES OF THE NETWORK

Diversify the composition of the SSG in terms of representation from "Global South" and ensure gender balance within SSG. This needs a revision of the policies and criteria for SSG selection.

The network needs to increase its involvement of non-governmental actors, in particular feminist organisations

Survey about the lacking engagement by new networks members from the "Global South"

Showcase gender-sensitive in comparison to transformative approaches. Resource persons with specific gender expertise could add knowledge to the network

STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES OF THE SECRETARIAT

Long-term sustainable funding is a prerequisite for all joint activities and follow along with the dialogue of DLG and gender among the diverse actors in DeLoG

Future hosting and/or funding arrangements should also have a clear gender focus and commitment. This needs to be noted in a mission statement and communicated to all stakeholders

Measuring the relevance of topic and impact of the activities on DeLoG members. (e.g., gathering feedback from partici-pants to understand their perspectives on DLG and gender equality)

Using the results of the analysis to inform future knowledge sharing ac-tivities and continuously improve their design and delivery.

9.

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UN Women/ Berevoescu, I., & Ballington, J. (2022). Women's Representation in Local Government:
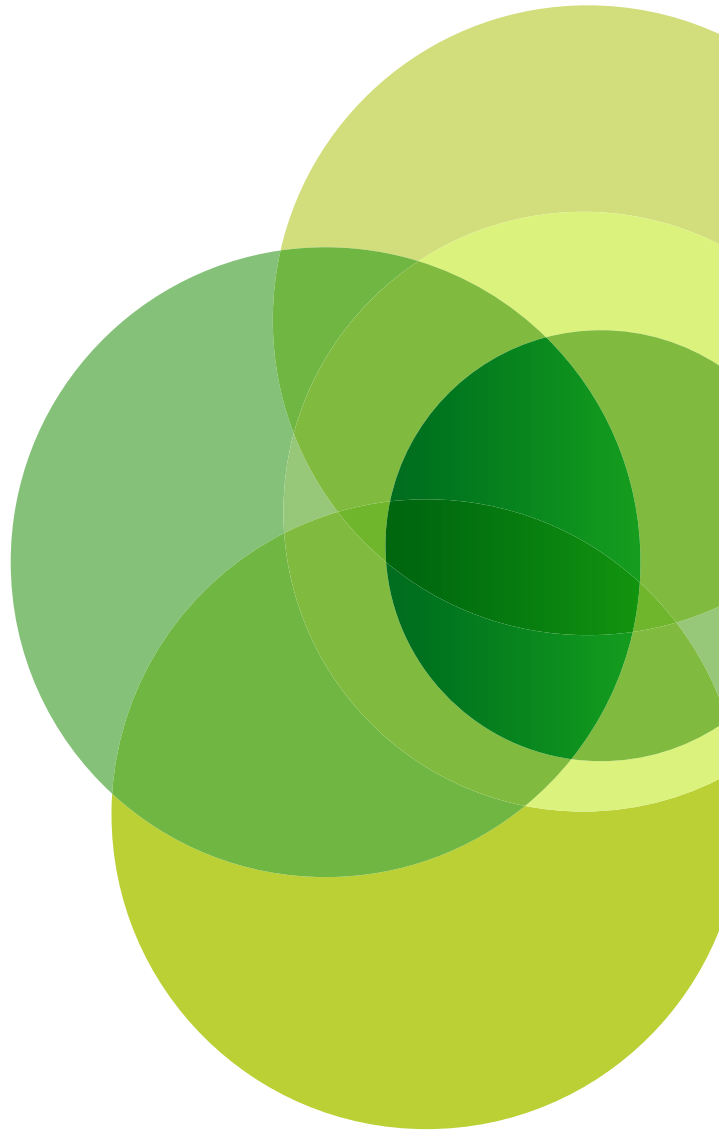A Global Analysis. UN Women.

ANNEX 1

**Members and Partners
Gender Strategies and Indicators**

ORGANISATION	GENDER STRATEGY	INDICATORS
ADB	☞ Gender Mainstreaming	☞ Toolkit on Gender Equality Result and Indicators
	☞ Guidelines	x
African D. Bank	☞ Gender Strategy	☞ Measure Gender Results
Berghof Foundation	☞ Gender-Inclusive Conflict Transformation	x
	☞ Supporting women in Resistance and Liberation Movements	x
AFD	☞ Gender Equality	☞ Gender Equality - Activity Report
ADA	☞ Gender Stratey	☞ Indicators, p. 11
Cities Alliance	☞ Gender Equality Action Plan	☞ Gender Mainstreaming in Projects
CLGF	☞ Gender Equality	☞ Measuring Participation
DWF	☞ Gender (General)	
GIZ	☞ Gender Strategy	☞ Gender Strategy Indicators
Enabel	☞ Gender Strategy Paper	x
ECDPM	x	x
KOM	☞ Gender Equality Strategy	☞ EU-wide survey (Eurostat), p. 5
FCM	☞ Considerations	x
Ministry Foreign Affairs Finland	☞ Gender Equality in Finish Foreign Affairs	x
Ministry Foreign Affairs France	☞ Strategy for Gender Equality	☞ Indicators, p. 36 (Appendix)
BMZ	☞ Feminist Development Policy	x
GAC	☞ FIAP	☞ FIAP Indicators
FMDV	x	x
Global Taskforce	☞ Local and Regional Governments Progress on Gender Equality	x
Gobierno de Espana	☞ Feminist Foreign Policy	x
Ministry Foreign Affairs Netherlands	☞ Feminist Foreign Policy	x
The Hague Academy	x	x
ICLEI	x	x
IDB	☞ Gender and Diversity	x
Irish Aid	☞ Gender Equality Policy	Indicators, but not clear which specific

ORGANISATION	GENDER STRATEGY	INDICATORS
KFW	☛ Promoting Gender Equality	x
LPSA	x	x
Lux Dev	☛ Guidelines for Mainstreaming Gender	☛ Annual Report
NALAS	☛ Gender and Youth	x
Norad	☛ Gender Equality for Development	x
OECD	☛ Gender Equality	☛ Gender Equality Indicators
RoAid	x ☛	x
Royal Danish Ministry for Foreign Affairs	☛ Strategic Framework	☛ The review found a recurring lack of specific objectives and indicators for gender equality and progress was therefore not monitored consistently', p. 10.
SDC	☛ Gender Equality	☛ Indicators
Southern Voice	x	x
ICLD	☛ Gender Mainstreaming Local Democracy	x
Sida	☛ Gender Equality	☛ Overview
UNCDF	☛ Gender Policy and Strategy	x
UN–Habitat	☛ Gender Strategy	☛ SDG land indicators 1.4.2, 5.a.1, 5.a.2 and 11.1.1 / Voluntary Local Reviews, p. 28
UNICEF	☛ Gender Policy and Action Plan	☛ Monitoring - Track Progress (Indicator Matrix)
UCLG	☛ Gender Equality	x
UCLG Africa	☛ Local and Regional Gov Charter for Gender Equality in Africa	Quantitative and qualitative indicators (not specified)
UK Foreign Office	Gender Equality	☛ Gender Equality Monitor - Tracking Progress
UNDP	☛ Gender Equality Strategy	e.g. gender digital divide gap index, defining a caring economy; capture 'time poverty; and recognize the economic value of unpaid care work in national accounting systems
USAID	☛ Gender Policy (in progress)	x
VNG Int.	☛ Gender Strategy	x
World Bank	☛ Gender Strategy	☛ Indicators - Gender Toolkit

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