

# Issue Brief – Local Democracy Talks

## If gender champions rule our cities

### Panelists:

Adelina Mwau Ndeto, Deputy Governor, Makueni County, Kenya  
Amelie Tarschys Ingre, Councilor and Chair of the Education Committee in Lidingö – Sweden  
Jimmy Jansson, Mayor of the city of Eskilstuna, Sweden  
Nereah Amondi Oketch, Member of County Assembly in Homa Bay County, Kenya  
Jacqueline Moustache Belle, Director of the Gender and Youth Department (REFELA) of  
UCLG Africa

**Moderator:** Johan Lilja, Secretary General ICLD

<https://youtu.be/6O5orZy1thw>

### **Introduction:**

On 3 March 2021 ICLD hosted its inaugural Local Democracy Talk on the topic of gender equality at the local level. The panelists – local politicians from Kenya and Sweden - spoke on the need for increased gender equality in cities and regions. Providing opening remarks, Swedish ambassador to Kenya, Caroline Vicini, highlighted the achievements of Kenya has made in this area, noting how much progress the country has made during the last ten years.

Speaking on the cooperation between Kenya and Sweden, Ambassador Vicini referred to the way in which both countries prioritize democracy, governance, and human rights.

The panel was attended by 75 participants online.

### **Gender equality**

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but an essential foundation for a peaceful, thriving, and sustainable world.<sup>1</sup> The notion of a more gender equal world is a fight that exist in all corners of the world and the

Local Democracy Talk was a successful attempt to bring people together from Kenya and Sweden to discuss how to move forward and how to promote a more gender equal society and world.

The message was clear: amongst the participants there was a form of consensus regarding the fact that gender equality is essential for our municipalities and regions to thrive.

### **Gender Equality in Kenya and Sweden**

In Kenya, over the past decade, legislative and policy reform has established a foundation for gender equality across all sectors. However, despite the progress made, there are numerous challenges that is compounded by the intersections of poverty, age, and education disparities, which remain, with distinct regional differences.<sup>2</sup> When looking at Sweden, gender equality is a principle in which everyone, regardless of gender, has the right to live without the fear of abuse or violence, to work and make a living for themselves. Moreover, gender equality is a fundamental

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>

<sup>2</sup> USAID, "Gender Equality & Female Empowerment in Kenya"

<https://www.usaid.gov/documents/1860/support-gender-equality-kenya-fact-sheet>

aim of Swedish foreign policy, which Ambassador Vicini brought up, which wants to ensure that women and girls enjoy fundamental human rights and is incorporated in all international commitments and is fundamental when it comes to achieving Sweden's broader foreign policy goals – peace, security and sustainable development.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Key Issues and Challenges***

During the Local Democracy Talk that was held in Nairobi, Kenya on March 2, key policies and challenges were discussed amongst the participants. A key message was that: ***more men champions are needed to help champion gender issues.*** As brought up by multiple panelists, but highlighted by Hon. Adelina (governor of Makueni county), she stated that politics is about men and women. In Kenya, there is a lack of conceptual understanding that gender is not about women, equality is about men and women and their political will to change, she stated.

When it comes to policies with positive effect on gender equality in Makueni county, the gender mainstreaming policy is one of the most successful ones. However, amongst panelists from both Kenya and Sweden, there was a common understanding regarding gender-based violence and the importance of fighting that, both in Kenya and in Sweden.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://sweden.se/society/gender-equality-in-sweden/>