

North-South Local Government Co-operation Programme

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Gender Equality in Local Governance

Kuntaliiton
VERKKOJULKAISU

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ISBN 978-952-213-598-8 (pdf)
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Local and Regional Authorities
Helsinki 2010

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Basic facts

The North-South Local Government Programme is coordinated and administrated by the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, the AFLRA (Suomen Kuntaliitto in Finnish) and funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. The Programme is an initiative by the AFLRA and it has started in 2002.

The overall objective of the Programme is to strengthen the capacities of local government to provide basic services and to promote good governance and local democracy, all by taking into consideration the principles of sustainable development. Through the Programme is also promoted awareness-raising, tolerance and development education.

The Programme supports co-operation between Finnish local governments and local governments in Southern countries (OECD/DAC list). Geographical focus in 2008-2010 is Africa. The Programme also produces information – researches, studies and organizes training – on issues of local governments and decentralization in African countries. This study is part of the North-South Local Government Co-operation Programme's publications.

For more information:

www.localfinland.fi/north-south (In English)

www.kunnat.net/north-south (In Finnish)

Guidance and expertise from the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities (AFLRA)

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Foreword

This survey offers an interesting opportunity to acquire knowledge about the principle of gender equality and its application in local government in six African countries. It is divided into two independent parts of which the first also describes the situation in Finland. The survey is a part of the North-South Local Government Co-operation Programme of the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities.

In the African countries participating in the North-South Local Government Co-operation Programme gender quotas have been implemented in local government by reserving council seats especially for women. Representatives for these seats are elected based on the proportion of votes exercised by the parties, gender quotas in municipal elected bodies or the requirement that half of the list of candidates must be women. The first part of the survey focuses on this issue and presents the gender division by percentage among local government councillors.

Why is it so important to achieve a balance in gender divisions within the local government? We will provide answers to this question in the second part of the survey. Listening to female local government councillors can lead to a better understanding of how hard they have worked to achieve their position. The interviewees felt strongly that there still are a lot of people, especially less-privileged women, who need someone to promote their interests in the municipality, when they cannot do it themselves. The interviewed female councillors said that it is crucial to tell people about their rights and encourage them to take responsibility for their own lives.

The interviews of the African female councillors show that gender equality cannot be achieved unless both men and women want it. There is still a lot to be done to change people's attitudes and behaviour, so that both genders could feel equal in local government.

This survey and drawing attention to gender equality issues in different ways are part of the local governments' equality work, which is one of the focus areas in the North-South Local Government Co-operation Programme. The female councillors' eagerness and need to network shows that these issues will be important in the future as well. It has been a great pleasure and honour to participate in the important work of promoting gender equality within local government development cooperation.

In Tampere 21.10.2009

Saara Simonen

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GENDER EQUALITY IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE

PART ONE

Study on the representation of women at the local government level in Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania and Finland

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Summary

This study gives an overview of the scope of gender equality at local government level by presenting statistical and legislative data about the countries taking part in the North-South Local Government Co-operation Programme.

The programme organised a Seminar for Local Government Female Decision makers in Helsinki, Finland from 18th to 20th of May 2009. The purpose of this seminar was to address the theme of gender equality together with southern and northern female councillors, and more specifically, find out their views on gender equality and how to best promote it in local governance. Their aim of this seminar was to exchange information on best practices and innovative ideas related to the promotion of gender equality.

The study provides information on the number of female councillors and the special legislation on gender equality at local government level in the countries taking part in the programme at the time of the preparation of this study. These countries are Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania and Finland.

Local government is divided into different units and as the results of the study show, there is great variation between countries when it comes to women at local governments. Also most of the countries in this study have their own national gender policies to promote gender equality. The aim is to strengthen the position of women in society in general, which also affects the local governments. Of the countries in this study only Swaziland and Ghana have no national gender policies.

National gender policies have often led to special legislation being drafted to ensure adequate representation of women in municipal organs such as councils. As this study shows, this legislation provides a backbone that has a direct positive impact on the number of female councillors. The two countries that have the smallest number of female councillors, Kenya and Swaziland, are also the ones that do not have any legislation to ensure gender balance in the local government decision-making structures.

The study showed that Namibia has the highest percentage of women councillors: in 2005, 43 per cent of the councillors were women. Also in South Africa the number of woman councillors has increased steadily, in 2006 it reached 40 per cent. Compared to these countries Finland had fewer female councillors; in 2008, 37 per cent of the councillors were women. As for Tanzania, there are no exact numbers available due to multilevel governance. This is explained in more detail in the part dealing with Tanzania. There has been a minor increase in the number of female councillors in both Kenya and Ghana: in Ghana, 14 per cent of local government level councillors were women in 2002; in Kenya, their proportion was 16 per cent in 2008. Swaziland has the smallest proportion of female councillors, only 8 per cent in 2007.

Abbreviations

AFLRA	The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities
ANC	African National Congress, a political party in South Africa
AZAPO	Azanian People's Organisation, a political party in South Africa
COD	The Congress of Democrats, a political party in Namibia
KLGRP	The Kenya Local Government Reform Programme
LGRP	The Local Government Reform Programme in Tanzania
MOWAC	The Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs in Ghana
MP	Member of Parliament
NUDO	The National Unity Democratic Organisation, a political party in Namibia
PR	Proportional representation
SADC	The Southern African Development Community
SALGA	The South African Local Government Association
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organisation, a political party in Namibia

1 Introduction

The importance of female decision makers is recognised worldwide; therefore, the number of laws concerning representation of women in decision-making bodies has been growing over the past years.

This study examines the gender balance at local government level in Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania and Finland. We will also look at whether there is special legislation in place to increase the participation and representation of women at the local government level and examine the current number of female councillors in these countries. Where possible, we will also present trends concerning the numbers.

In the context of this study, specific legislation usually means some form of a quota system for women. In most cases a quota system guarantees the representation of women by reserving them special seats at different levels of decision making, for example a certain number of appointed councillors must be women.

Many of the countries examined in this study have committed themselves to declarations concerning the number and role of women in decision-making bodies. For example, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland and Tanzania are committed to the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) Gender and Development Protocol, ensuring that women occupy at least 30 per cent of the positions in political and decision-making structures by the year 2015.

The systems of local government are introduced briefly, followed by descriptions of special actions to promote gender equality. Where possible the ratio of women and men in councils is presented in a table format. The special legislation and the declarations that a country in question is committed to are highlighted. Finally, a summary will be provided of the ways gender equality is promoted at the local government level in these countries.

The material used in this study consists of publications of international organizations, country gender profiles and policies and general literature related to the question of gender equality at the local government level. The female councillors who took part in the Seminar for Local Government Female Decision Makers had the opportunity to comment on and complement the study during the seminar.

2 Ghana

Processes of decentralization have occupied governments in Ghana since independence from British rule 1957. The latest effort began at 1988, when extensive powers and competencies were transferred to districts. 110 district assemblies were created. District assemblies are headed by the district chief executives or mayors. The assembly is composed of representatives of the people in the districts. Two thirds of its members are elected through universal adult suffrage. The other third is appointed by the central government in consultation with traditional authorities and interests groups in the district. The appointed membership is intended to ensure representation of key interest groups and sections of the population and to infuse technical expertise (by appointing some key professionals) into the assembly.¹

In Ghana the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs (MOWAC) is liable for the issues related to gender equality in governmental level. The country has a National Gender and Children's Policy from year 2004 that particularly sets the agenda for the development of women and children, it is coordinated by MOWAC. To implement the Policy MOWAC has had a three-year Strategic Implementation Plan for the period of 2005-2008. One of the three broad areas of this plan has been good governance and it has sought to achieve the status of decentralized national gender machinery with the capacity to reform policies. Ghana has committed to improving the gender equality level in the country and different levels of governance are one area where changes have been made.²

The Constitution of Ghana guarantees all persons the opportunity to participate in decision-making at every level. In District Assemblies 70 percent of the members are elected and 30 percent are appointed. In local level governance the Government of Ghana issued a directive in 1998 according to which reserved 30% of the appointed seats of assemblies for women.² In Ghana women's representation among elected councillors has been low; in the 1998 District Assembly Elections out of an overall total of 4820 elected candidates only 196, a mere 4 %, were women. There was an increase in the elected women councillors at the 2002 elections when out of 4583 there were 7, 4 %, a total of 341 women councillors.³ The Government has tried to increase the number of female councillors by increasing the quota of female appointed members at the District Assembly level from 30 percent to 50 percent in year 2002. This resulted in women constituting 35.5 percent of appointed members for 97 out of the 138 districts.⁴ All together this means, that after the 2002 elections of all the councillors, 14 % were women.

1 Ayee 2004, 129-133.

2 Ofei-Aboagye 2000, 4.

3 The Women's Manifesto for Ghana 2004, 32.

4 Country Gender Profile: Ghana, 27.

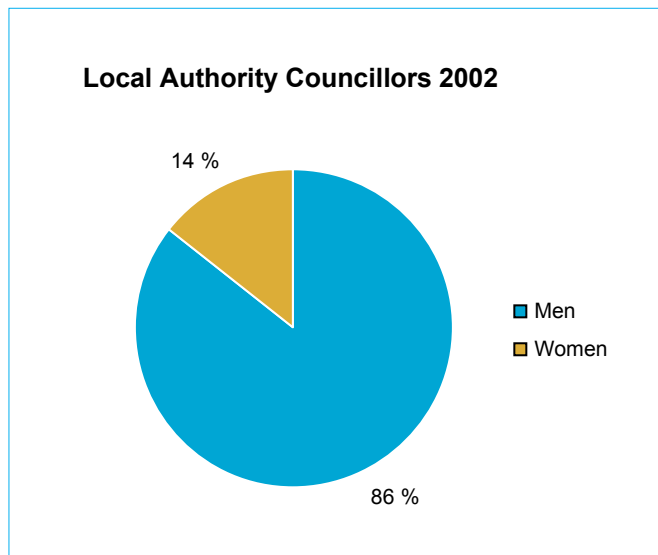


Table: The Woman's Manifesto for Ghana 2004.

3 Kenya

Kenya became independent in 1963 and after the independence Kenya went through a tendency towards centralization. Before the independence from the British rule and straight after it local authorities had much stronger authority and resources.⁵ The local government level has strengthened again in the 1990's because of the recognition by the central government that a more effective local government system is needed.⁶ The reform process has been implemented under the Kenya Local Government Reform Programme (KLGRP). The Programme has not yet significantly increased the services delivered by the local authorities and its main contribution has been the re-building of credibility to local authorities. The reform process is slow, but the changing of attitudes suggests that the prospects for effective local government reform are more and more encouraging.⁷

Gender equality in Kenya is promoted by the National Policy on Gender Development from year 2000. The Government is also in a process of developing a Gender mainstreaming Implementation Plan of Action for the National Policy on Gender and development, since the implementation of national Gender Policy needs to be strengthened. Women's participation in decision making at the household and national levels has been found to be an important ingredient in development. These papers show that there is a mounting awareness in Kenya towards gender equality.⁸

In the local government system in Kenya the practice is that two thirds of the councillors are directly elected and the remaining one third is appointed by the Minister of Local Government from the nominations made by the political parties or coalitions on the basis of their representation in the councils.⁹ Often there are women among the appointed members, but there is no specific percentage for appointed female councillors.

Although women's participation is increasing it remains below that of men. In recent years there has been increase in the numbers of women at local government level as can be seen from the diagrams presented in this paper. In five years the percentage of women in local government level has increased 3 percentage units.

It is recognised that a lot needs to be done to promote gender equality in local governance in Kenya. Institutional aspect is one part of this project and national wide efforts, implemented by the national government are needed. One crucial fact is the implementation of laws that reflect gender equality and women's human rights. At the moment women's organisations are pressuring for the promotion of quotas for women.¹⁰ For the meantime Kenya is in a process of new Constitution formulation, where the equal treatment of men and women is expected to be included and highlighted in many ways¹¹.

5 Smoke 2004, 221.

6 Smoke 2004, 222-223.

7 Smoke 2004, 227-233

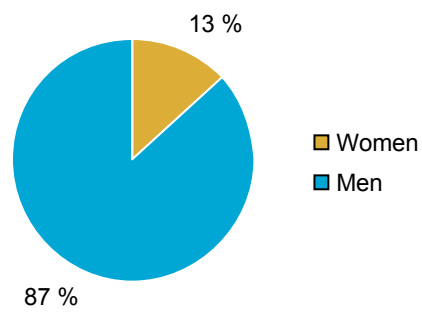
8 Country Gender Profile2007: Kenya, 6.

9 CLGE, 98.

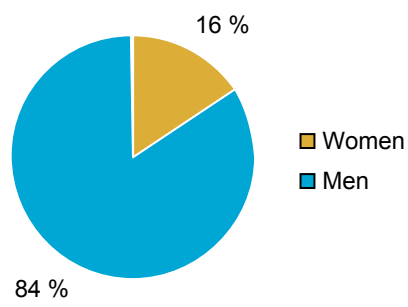
10 Millennium Development Goals: Status Report for Kenya, 18-19.

11 Country Gender Profile2007: Kenya, 9.

Local Authority Councillors 2003



Local Authority Councillors 2008



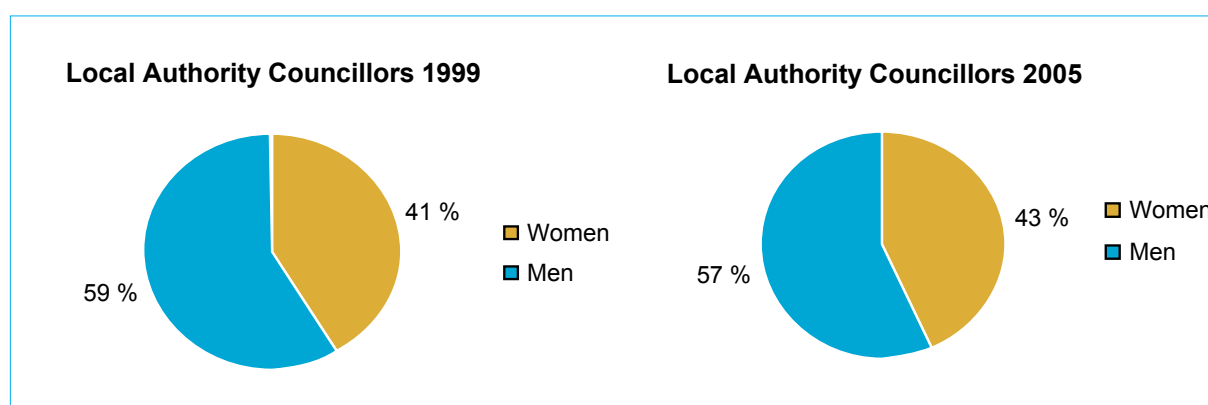
Tables: Millennium Development Goals, Status report for Kenya 2007, 17.

4 Namibia

The local government system in Namibia is defined in the Local Authorities Act from year 1992 that states that local authorities are established at urban areas, and regional councils are responsible for rural areas. Namibia has 13 regions and 50 local authorities divided into four categories: Part I municipalities, Part II municipalities, town councils and village councils. The members of the municipal, town and village councils are elected on party lists at the general elections held every five years. The national Decentralisation Policy started at 1997, the Policy gave timing for decentralisation and has divided different kinds of responsibilities for different types of local authorities. The process of decentralisation has been slow and a number of functions to be decentralized have not been done yet, still the belief in the process has not failed and Namibia continues to work with decentralisation.¹²

In Namibia local councils are elected through a party list system of proportional representation. In local governance level there is a legislated 50% quota for women, which has been authorised in Local Authorities Act in 1992. In practice this means that 50% of the candidates on lists submitted by political parties for local government elections are women, but the order within the list is decided by the parties themselves. Such system is not functional at the national or regional level in Namibia.¹³ This has increased the number of women at councils. In the 2004 Local Authorities elections women won 123 of the 283 seats available countrywide. Women form a majority on thirteen councils, women are adequately represented as local authority councillors instead they are underrepresented as Mayors.¹⁴ Namibia has a National Gender Policy from year 1997, but the Government has agreed that it needs revision.¹⁵

Altogether Namibia has a high level of local government female decision-makers and also the latest election results show an increase of the numbers of women councillors.



Tables: Republic of Namibia: Country Gender Profile, 48.

12 Gender Strategy for Local Government in Namibia 2007, 1-5.

13 Tonchi&Shifotoka 2005, 13.

14 Republic of Namibia: Country gender profile, 47.

15 The Namibian 2006.

5 South Africa

The End of Apartheid changed the face of South African local government system. The restructuring of local government has been governed by the Local Government Transition act launched 1993 that defined a three-phased restructuring process. In the first phase elections were held for transitional local councils in 1995/96, allowing for some continuity until the second phase of local government reform was in place. At the second phase the Municipal Demarcation Board was established in 1998 to redraw municipal boundaries across the country. The third stage of fully fledged democratic local government followed the local elections in 2000.¹⁶

The Municipal Structures Act in 1998 also changed the electoral system at local governance level. The Act stated that all metropolitan municipalities and the local municipalities that have seven or more councillors are divided into wards for electoral purposes. Local municipalities with fewer than seven councillors have no wards. The electoral system for metro and local councils consists of a combination of first-past-the-post elections in the wards. Half of the councillors are elected according to proportional representation (PR) where the voter votes for a party list not for a specific person and the other half of the councillors are elected as ward councillors by the residents in each ward. The councillors representing the wards are directly elected by the voters registered in the respective wards in the municipality. In the election the voter may vote for only one candidate in the ward and the candidate who receives most votes is the elected councillor for that ward. In a case where there are no wards only the proportional representation system is used.¹⁷ South Africa also has its own Gender Policy.¹⁸

National Representation of Women at the Local Government level		
Year	PR List	Ward Councillors
1995/96	28 %	11 %
2000	38 %	17 %
2006	43 %	37 %

Table: Letsholo, Sydney 2006, 12.

It has been seen that the proportional system has worked in favour of women, but as the table below shows the number of women as ward councillors has increased significantly in after year 2000. This shows that women political representatives are more and more accepted at the local governance level.

Historically women have played a very important role in community-level politics but they did not have a large representation in local government negotiations after apartheid during the transition period. Largely as a consequence of lobbying of different women's organisations the Municipal Structures Act given in 1998 included guidelines stating that "every party must seek to ensure that 50% of the candidates on the party list are women and that women and men candidates are evenly distributed through the list". Legislation also provided that there should be equal representation of women and men on the ward committees. Before this South Africa had already committed itself to the SADC Gender and Development Protocol, ensuring that women

¹⁶ Beall 2005, 10.

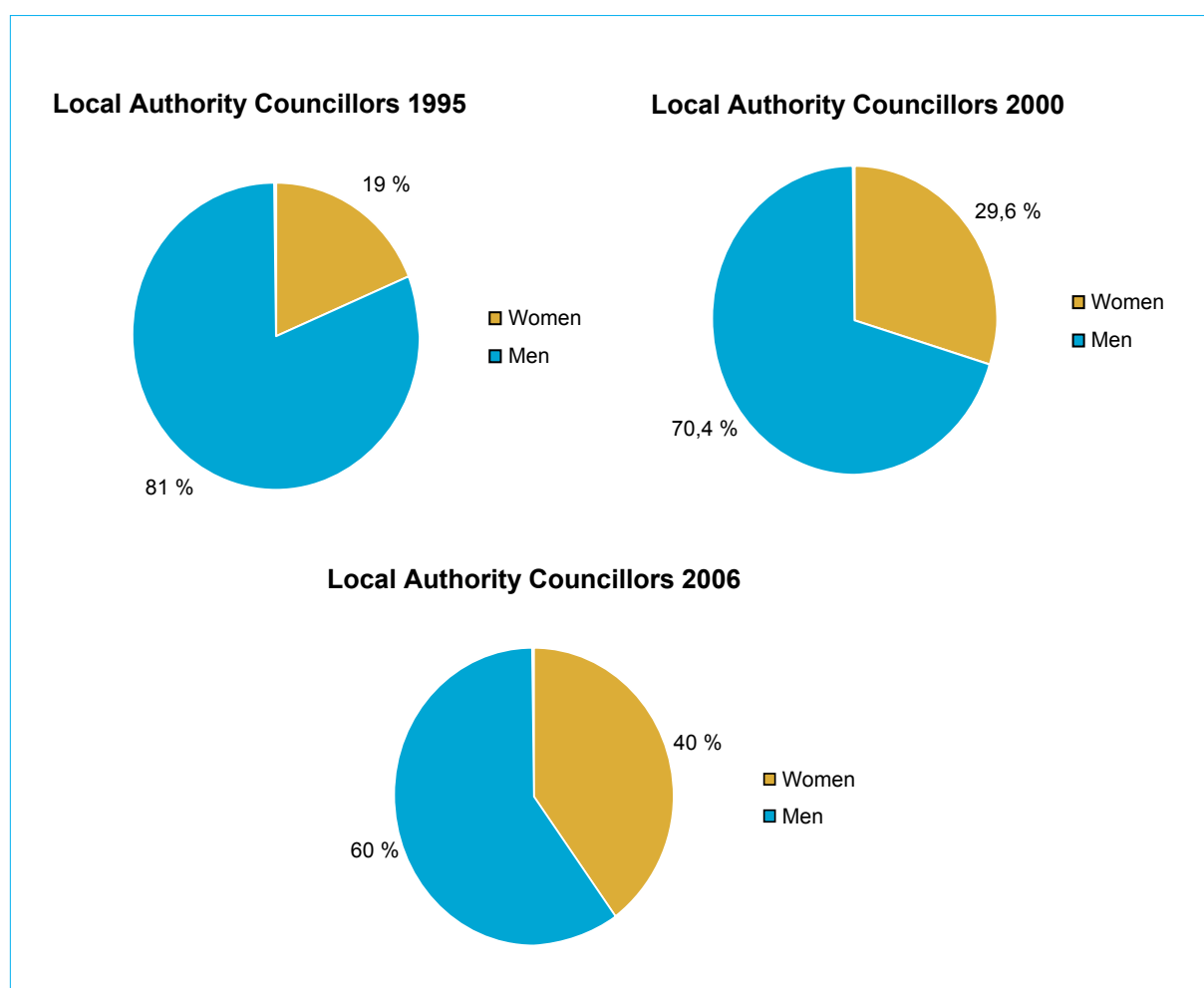
¹⁷ Ibid, 10-11.

¹⁸ South Africa's National Policy for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality

occupy at least 30% of the positions in political and decision-making structures by the year 2015. This led to an increase in the proportion of women councillors.¹⁹

In South Africa parties have also adopted quotas for women candidates; African National Congress (ANC) was the first one to support 50% quota of women on proportional representation lists for local elections. These guidelines given by Municipal Structures Act and ANC quota system had some impact to other party lists as well, already on the 2000 local government elections. Three parties Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO), the Inkatha Freedom Party and the United Christian Democratic Party had over 30% of women on their lists. The lists have been designed as zebra-style meaning that every other person on the list is a woman to guarantee the representation of both sexes.²⁰

The South African Local Government Association (SALGA) has campaigned for 50/50 women representation before 2006 local government elections. In June 2005 at the Women in Local Government Summit hosted by SALGA adopted the Benoni Declaration promoting 50/50 women representation for the next year's elections. Present at this summit were representatives from organisations promoting gender equality and representatives from political parties.²¹



Tables: Electoral Institute of Southern Africa, Country Profile: South Africa

19 Beall 2005, 10.

20 Mbatha 2003, 194-195.

21 Press Statement SALGA.

6 Swaziland

Swaziland is divided into four geographical and administrative regions that all have a district administration responsible for coordinating the functions of government at district level. The local government level consists of urban and rural local authorities, urban councils are municipalities and rural councils are tinkundla. There are three tiers of government in the urban areas: city councils, town councils and town boards. Equally there are three tiers in the rural areas: regional administration, tinkundla and chiefdoms.²²

The areas of urban local authorities are divided into wards, and the councillors are elected from the wards under the first-past-the-post system on the basis of universal adult suffrage. Urban local authorities are divided into wards through which voting takes place. The administration of large rural and semi-urban areas falls in the authority of the Chiefs, who are authorities and representatives of the King at local level.²³ Currently about 8 percent of the councillors are women and there is one female mayor.²⁴

Recently Swaziland has adopted a new constitution that came into force in 2006. The Constitution recognises local authorities, and provides for a reform of local government system within five years. The new constitution guarantees women equality under the law.²⁵

Swaziland has no national gender policy or any other guiding principles for improving the participation of women at the local government level at the moment, even though it has committed to the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) Gender and Development Protocol, ensuring that women occupy at least 30% of the positions in political and decision-making structures by the year 2015.

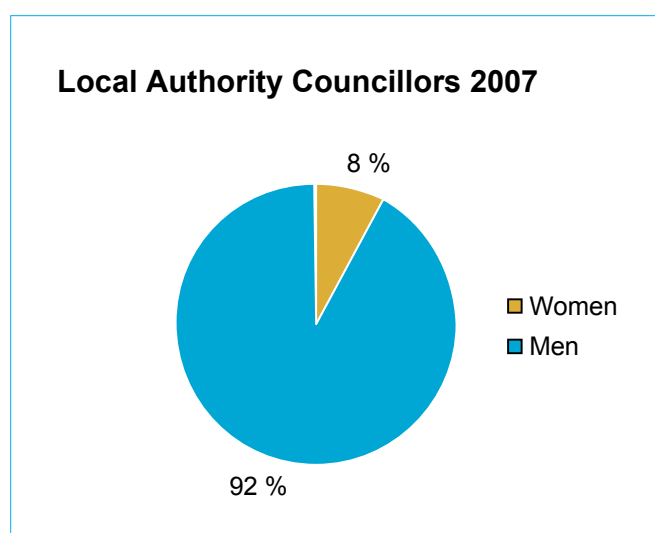


Table: Commonwealth Local Government Forum, 2008.

22 CLFG, 208.

23 United Nations, Public Administration Country profile 2004, 6.

24 CLFG, 208.

25 Electoral Institute of Southern Africa, Swaziland: Women's Representation Quotas.

7 Tanzania

The Government started the decentralisation process in Tanzania in 1972 in order to give power to the people. A decentralized structure with clearly defined development responsibilities, coordination and direction of the rural development work was not considered as effective and did not bring the desired results. The question of decentralisation was raised again in 1990's and the government of Tanzania launched the Local Government Reform Programme (LGRP) in 1998. The objective of the LGRP was to improve the quality of, and access to public services provided through or facilitated by local government authorities.²⁶

The local government level in Tanzania is distributed to district authorities in rural areas and urban authorities in urban areas. The district authorities include district councils, village councils, township authorities and ward development committees. The urban authorities are divided into city, municipal and town councils which all have their own functions.²⁷ On Zanzibar urban authorities are town councils and municipalities, while rural authorities are district councils.²⁸ Tanzania got a Women Development Policy in 1992 and 2000 it was revised to a Gender Policy.²⁹

Councillors are elected by the first-past-the-post system. Village councils are elected by the village assembly comprising all adults over the age 18. The urban and district councils comprise members elected from each ward, the Members of Parliament representing the constituency within which the urban area is situated, and women members appointed by the National Electoral Commission from the proposals submitted by the political parties in proportion to the number of elected positions held on the council. The number of women appointed to the council is 'not less than one-third' of ward representatives and MPs combined. City councils comprise all the mayors from the urban authorities within their jurisdiction, all MPs representing constituencies within their area, at least two women MPs resident in the city and elected from the women in parliament, and three councillors from each urban council, one of whom must be a woman. The township authorities comprise the chairperson of the vitongji with its area, not more than three members appointed by the district council, and women appointed according to political proportionality to make up at least one-third of the authority. Village councils have between 15 and 25 members, and women must account for 25 percent of council members.³⁰

In 1997 a constitutional reform was made for the quota for women being increased to 15 percent of special seats in parliament and 25 percent of seats on local councils. This was an addition to normal constituency representation elections. A constitutional amendment in 2000 resulted in the percentages of special seats being further increased to 20 percent in parliament and 33.3 percent on local councils. Legislated seats have augmented the number of women councillors and ensured women's representation in local government. Tanzania has also committed to the 30 percent target set by the Beijing Platform of Action and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).³¹

From Tanzania there are no tables since the system of local governance is multilevel, and the number of female councillors is depending on the size of the local authority, but it should vary between 25 and 33%.

26 The Local Government Reform Programme in Tanzania, Country Experience 2002, 3.0.

27 Ngwilizi 2001.

28 CLGF, 213.

29 Tanzania Gender Networking Programme

30 CLGF, 213.

31 Meena 2003, 3.

8 Finland

Finland is a highly decentralized country where the role of the local governments is strong and they have a wide range of functions. In 2009 Finland has 348 municipalities. The size of the municipalities varies from small rural municipalities of population of 100 to the capital city of Helsinki of over 570 000 inhabitants. Municipalities can organize their administration rather freely but all of them have to have a municipal Council, Board, Auditing Committee, an Election Committee and a municipal Manager. The Municipal elections are direct, secret and proportional. Each municipality forms one electorate and the number of councillors elected depends on the number of the residents in the municipality. Usually the candidates run for the council through national party organisations. The total number of votes on party list, association list or joint list resolves how many candidates of that list will be accepted. The number of votes for each individual candidate solves which candidates on the list will be council members. The local government elections are held every fourth year.³²

In Finland municipalities are the main basic public service providers, the provision of social and health care services by the municipalities has enabled women to access paid work and supported the evolution of more equal gender relations. At the local government level the proportion of women has risen steadily from 1960s onwards. At the latest local government election held in October 2008 women represented an average of 36,7 % of councillors in Finland. In the period 2005-2008 the average percentage of women in the Municipal Executive Boards was 46% and in the Municipal Committees women comprised 48%. The proportion of women in councils varies from 7 to 60 percentages. Every fourth chairperson of the Council or Municipal Executive Board is a woman.³³

In jurisdictional level the new national law on gender equality that was enacted the 1st June 2005 provides that municipalities are responsible for actively promoting gender equality in more systematic way. Municipalities have to apply gender quotas of at least 40% of both sexes to all municipal organs except the directly elected councils.³⁴ In Finland municipalities are significant employers for women, since 80% of all people employed by the municipalities are women. Many of the Finnish municipalities also have done their own Equality Plan, which is expected if the employer has more than 30 employees.³⁵

The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities (AFLRA) works effectively for the promotion of gender equality. One of the recent developments has been the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local life that the representatives of AFLRA have been also formulating. The Charter was accepted by the Executive Board of AFLRA in September 2006 and it recommends this to be done also by the Finnish municipalities, Regional Associations and Federations of Municipalities.³⁶

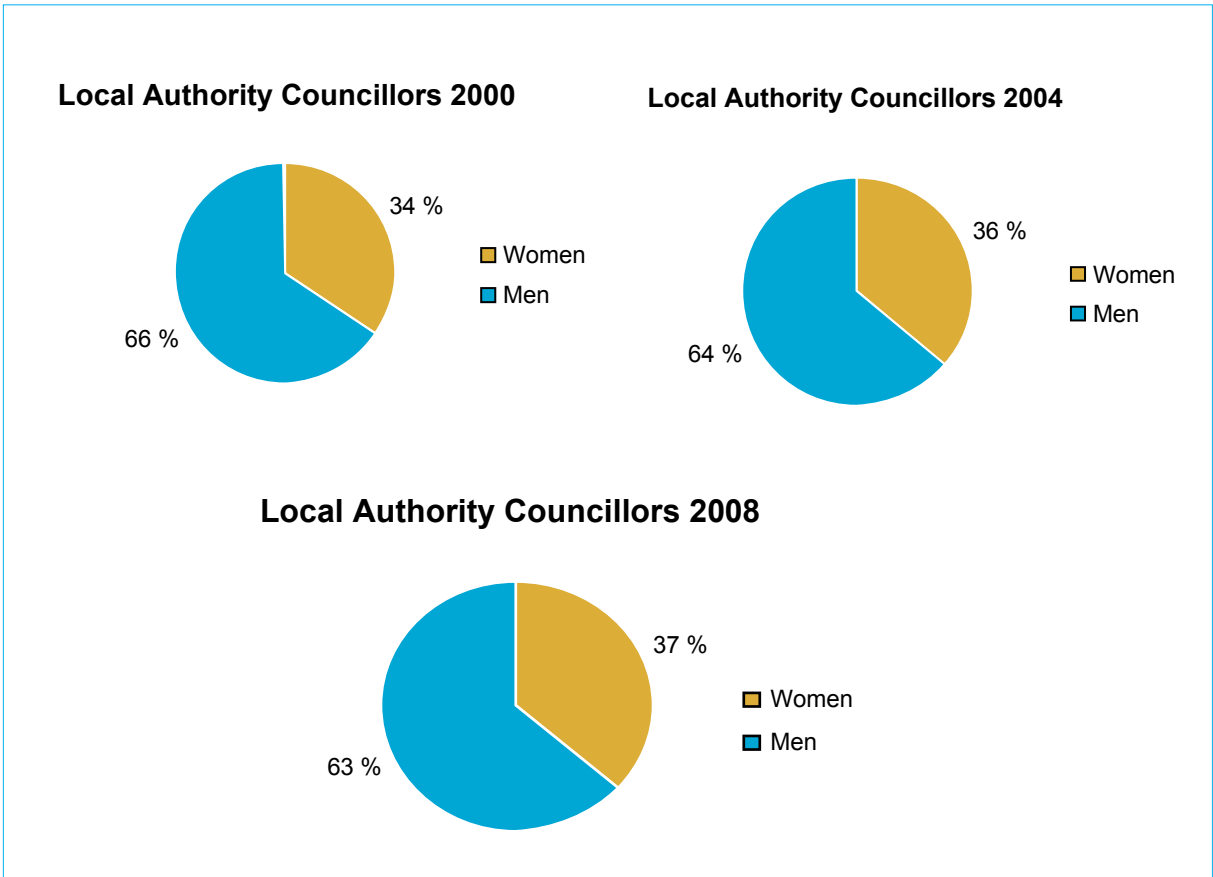
32 Kajaste 2008, 11-14.

33 The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities 'tasa-arvo', Finnish website.

34 The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities 'tasa-arvolain kiintiösäännös', Finnish website.

35 The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities 'tasa-arvo', Finnish website.

36 The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities 'eurooppalainen paikallis -ja aluehallinnon naisten ja miesten välisen tasa-arvon peruskirja', Finnish website.



Tables: The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities ‘kuntavaalitulostot’.

9 Conclusion

In the African countries included in this study, that is Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland and Tanzania, the process of decentralization started after their independence during the latter half of the 20th century. The importance of an effective local government system has been recognised by the central governments, as the local government is the level of governance nearest to the people and is often responsible for many of the basic services, such as schools and healthcare. By contrast, Finland is shifting from decentralisation to centralisation in the restructuring of local government and services, as smaller municipalities merge to form larger entities.

The promotion of women at the local government decision-making begins with the commitment of the central government. Many of the countries in this study have formulated their own national gender policies which include quotas for women at the different levels of decision-making. In these policies the way the issue of gender equality is tackled varies.

The representation of women at the local government level is guaranteed by various legislative measures. Ghana appoints a certain number of councillors to municipal councils and 30 per cent of these seats are reserved for women. Kenya also has a system of appointing councillors but there is no legislative obligation that requires a certain proportion of these seats to be reserved for women. In Namibia, all the councillors at the local government level are elected using the proportional representation system. Many of the biggest parties in Namibia have introduced a 50 per cent quota for women candidates, which has contributed to the high number of female councillors. In South Africa half of the councillors are elected on a proportional representation list system and the other half are ward councillors elected by their wards. In South Africa zebra-style lists are used by most of the parties to guarantee 50 per cent representation of women on their list of candidates. In Swaziland, where women are few at councils, there is no specific legislation to promote gender balance at the local government level. The local government in Tanzania is divided into district authorities in rural areas and urban authorities in urban areas. In Tanzania there are special seats reserved for women in the councils, their number depending on the size of the local government in question. In Finland local government elections are direct, secret and proportional. The municipalities have to apply gender quotas of at least 40 per cent of both sexes to all municipal organs except for the directly elected councils.

So we can see that there is great variation between different countries in the number of female councillors and the ways of promoting gender equality, for example with binding regulations. Countries such as Namibia have nearly reached a gender balance, with 43 per cent of female councillors after the 2005 elections, while other countries are still far from this goal. In Swaziland the number of female councillors in 2007 was only 8 per cent. The rest of the countries studied here, including Finland, fall between these two extremes.

The measures applied by the countries to improve gender equality at the local government level differ and so do the numbers of female councillors. The highest numbers come from Namibia and South Africa where the focus in promoting gender equality is on drafting candidate lists for the elections. It should be noted that these countries do not apply a quota system for the composition of the council as such and there are no appointed councillors; every councillor is nominated only after an elector-

al process. For countries like Tanzania it is difficult to get accurate statistical information on the numbers because the local government system is multilayered. The countries with the lowest number of female councillors are Kenya and Swaziland. Neither country has specific legislation in place to promote gender balance in local government decision-making.

To sum up, a comparison of the practices used to promote gender equality and the number of female councillors at local government level shows that binding legislative measures are needed to ensure the representation of both sexes. Countries where such measures are not taken and the central government is therefore not that committed to the issue of gender equality, the number of female councillors remains low.

The municipalities and countries can learn from the experiences of others, but it should be remembered that even when the same methods and measures are applied, the results may vary. Each country has to find its own way to genuinely commit to gender equality and then start to identify ways to best promote it in its particular setting and circumstances.

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GENDER EQUALITY IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE

PART TWO

Interview study: Local government female decision makers
and promotion of gender equality

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Summary

This study was done for the North-South Local Government Co-operation Programme administered by the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities (AFLRA). The North-South Local Government Co-operation Programme encourages equal co-operation between local governments in Finland and in the South. In the 2008-2010 programme period, the geographical area covered by programme is Africa. The Programme aims to build the capacities and strengthen the role of local governments. The Programme deals with sustainability issues to enhance successful co-operation. These issues include environmental, socio-cultural, and structural factors, sustainability of institutions, organizations and human resources, sustainability of governance, economic and financial sustainability, infrastructural preconditions, equality between genders and other equality issues, promotion of innovative factors and use of locally appropriate technology.

During the Programme period 2008-2010, the North-South Local Government Co-operation Programme has as one of its special themes gender equality. This study examines the views on gender equality of female councillors in countries taking part in the North-South Local Government Co-operation Programme. The aim of the study is to get information on how well the gender equality issues are known in the municipalities, what the challenges of promoting gender equality are and how these challenges could be responded to. This study also presents the suggestions of southern female councillors on how the North-South Local Government Co-operation Programme could promote gender equality within the Programme.

Local authorities seem to have gained many good experiences of promoting gender equality, which can and should be shared. The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities supports the efforts by the Finnish municipalities towards gender equality by mainstreaming gender equality in all co-operation projects and encouraging municipalities to network and share information and experiences on gender equality.

The study showed that there is variation in the level of gender equality between countries and municipalities. For example, while in Swaziland the interviewed female councillors were still not aware of gender equality issues, in Tanga, a municipality in Tanzania, these issues had been brought up at the local government level. There are disparities in the numbers of female councillors, and only some countries have special quotas for women at the local government level. The principle of gender equality is generally known, but it is not yet generally welcomed.

The female councillors said that they still face many challenges when doing their work, many of which stem from cultural beliefs. They also told that the participation of women has increased owing to local government measures such as promoting girls' education and giving small loans to female entrepreneurs. The councillors felt that education on gender equality issues of both sexes is the key to improving the situation of women. The interviewed female councillors were committed to work to promote gender equality. They felt that a lack of education and resources are the greatest obstacles to their work. Cultural beliefs influence opinions; in many places women are not seen as leaders.

The North-South Local Government Co-operation Programme acknowledges the importance of gathering experiences and good practices. Also the gathered information must be shared since full and equal engagement of women is crucial to ensure sustainable future development in the municipalities.

1 Introduction

This study examines the views of local government female decision makers from Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, Swaziland and Tanzania. The study is done for the North-South Local Government Co-operation Programme administered by the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities. The North-South Local Government Co-operation Programme encourages equal co-operation between local governments in Finland and in the south.

This study is based on interviews carried out during the Seminar for Local Government Female Decision Makers held by the North-South Local Government Co-operation Programme in Helsinki, Finland from 18th to 20th of May 2009. The purpose of this seminar was to address the theme of gender equality in co-operation with southern and northern female councillors, and to examine how they see gender equality is best promoted in local governance. The aim of this seminar was to exchange information on best practices and innovative ideas related to the promotion of gender equality.

Female councillors from Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, Swaziland and Tanzania were interviewed on issues concerning gender equality and how it could be best promoted in their municipalities. A total of 14 female councillors were interviewed and each interview lasted from 30 to 45 minutes. Three of the women were interviewed as a group via an interpreter; all the others were interviewed individually. The method used was thematic interview, a method particularly suitable when the purpose is to gain information on new viewpoints that have not been anticipated. This type of interview consists of open questions which are related to personal views. All the interviewees were asked the same questions (see an outline of the thematic interview in Annex 1). The aim of the study was to gather information on the current state of gender equality in the municipalities that these women represent and to find out how the North-South Local Government Co-operation Programme could help promote gender equality at local government level.

The study consists of the views and ideas of these female councillors, their personal opinions on gender equality and how it affects their everyday life. The study is organised according to the thematic interview questions and includes many quotations to show the opinion of the women. The study first provides an overview of the state of gender equality at the municipal level. Next, it discusses the challenges faced in the promotion of gender equality, and further, describes the roles adopted by the local authorities in gender equality issues. Finally, the study summarises the ways in which the North-South Local Government Co-operation Programme could promote gender equality.

2 The meaning of gender equality

The concept of gender describes the socially-constructed roles, rights and responsibilities that communities and societies consider appropriate for men and women. Being a social construction, gender is a very fluid concept. It changes not only over time, but also from one culture to another and among different groups within one culture. Therefore, gender roles, inequities and power imbalances are not a 'natural' result of biological differences, but are determined by the systems and cultures in which we live. This means that we can address and contribute to changing these roles by challenging the status quo and seeking social change.³⁷

The idea of gender equality has been used a lot in the development work and its meaning has sometimes been left unclear. This is the reason why it was important to ask the local government female decision makers how do they see the meaning of gender equality. Many of these women said that the concept of gender equality means equality between men and women; it seemed to be a common understanding no matter from which country these women were from. A Kenyan councillor simply stated the meaning of gender equality: "Equal opportunities for both men and women."³⁸

Since the women interviewed were all councillors at the local government they also saw it important that gender equality refers to the representation of women and men. As a councillor from Kenya says: "Gender equality to me means that women and men should share powers equally. That is the starting of gender equality, it should be half and half."³⁹ Also the possibility to take part was seen very important and a councillor from Namibia expressed it this way: "I believe that they should be given the same chances to participate in any form of activities, it is just that we should be given equal opportunities."⁴⁰ Some of these female councillors saw the question of gender equality also from the side of the justice saying that: "...gender equality it means that the same rights should be given to both males and females."⁴¹

The other side of gender equality that was brought up were the traditional roles imposed on men and women. They thought that gender has a lot to do the way women and men position themselves in the society. A Ghanaian councillor formulated the idea of gender equality: "I see it as...actually gender is the roles, the roles that we have in our communities, like structures from the tradition, roles that men are supposed to play and roles that women should also play. A woman keeps the house and a man goes to work."⁴² Many of the women referred to this same idea that women are seen at their homes and men are the ones controlling the life outside the homes, meaning also political life. The example for the roles related to gender equality is given at the family level, children are brought up to these roles and that is where the change should also begin from. As a Tanzanian councillor told: "...gender equality will only succeed if we start from home, from the family where we grow. You see there is something whenever we have a baby girl you use to buy her a toy, a doll and in our country they give something like small pots, so it means that you are educating her just to take care of the children and to cook. But when you have a baby boy, you buy a ball because with

37 Sukupuolten tasa-arvon edistämisen strategia ja toimintaohjelma Suomen kehityspolitiikassa 2003-2007, 8.

38 Informant 9, 1.

39 Informant 2, 1.

40 Informant 14, 1.

41 Informant 12, 1.

42 Informant 11, 1.

a ball you always play outside the house or buy a small car just a toy car so it means that you segregate them without knowing, that you will be able just to take care of the family...that is why I am giving you a doll and you will be driving your car outside the house you are not meant to work here.”⁴³

The simple question of the meaning of gender itself was maybe the one hindering the promotion of gender equality the most. Gender is seen referring only to women in many places and that does not encourage men to the promotion of gender equality at all. As the Kenyan councillor declared it: “...anytime you mention the question of gender people think it is just question of women.”⁴⁴ Men are of course not too enthusiastic about gender equality issues if they see it only as a women’s question. That is why many of these women felt that it would be important to include men in the discussions of the promotion of gender equality. So that they could see that it is not benefiting just the women but the whole society instead, this was one of the main things they wanted to highlight when making political decisions. In Tanzania men are invited to the meetings concerning women’s rights issues that local women hold. A Tanzanian councillor reminded that this might lead to a change so that men can better understand how women are still behind and that is why they need additional support: “...I also, usually use it to tell them that whenever we are talking about women’s problem we also must ensure to include men to listen, to contribute so that they can see how women are talking, sometimes they are crying, so that they can see the pain, they can share with us and I think they are going to change.”⁴⁵

Gender equality as a concept had many connotations among the interviewees. Most of all the councillors wanted to highlight the equality between both sexes and the question of attaining gender balance in decision making; to share the powers equally. The stereotypical ideas of the roles women and men have in the communities have restrained gender equality to become true.

43 Informant 1, 2.

44 Informant 9, 3.

45 Informant 1, 3.

3 The awareness of gender equality at the municipal level

In these interviews one of the objectives was to find out what is the state of gender equality in different municipalities, how well is the question of gender equality known at the grass root level. Many of the women answered first that the question is known but there are still many challenges to the promotion of gender equality. It seems also that there is a lot of diversity between the countries and the municipalities within the countries.

On the other hand it seemed that since many of these countries the decentralization process is still quite at the beginning, the commitment of the central government to the idea of gender equality affects also the way that gender equality questions are known all over the country. Namibia is an example of a country where the central government has made this kind of commitment, a Namibian councillor said about gender equality: "...especially our government is really serious about it. They are working on it and that is why we have a Ministry of Gender Equality in Namibia."⁴⁶ The opposite might be seen in Kenya where the promises made to implement female quotas in political decision making have not been put into practice, as the Kenyan councillor stated: "For example last year President Kibaki said we should have 30% of women but he has not done so."⁴⁷ In Ghana⁴⁸ women are facing a same kind of a problem: "...the new government came they promised to give 40% of the positions to women and the first two nominations they made were women but halfway they stopped, only men. So I am not even sure if they have reached 14% and they promised 40%."

The gender equality as a concept is known but at times it is not spoken about if the idea is not welcomed. Like the Tanzanian councillor told: "It is not well known, some people know about it but it is not as much wanted. Some people know about it but they don't want to know. You know men know but they don't want to know, they don't want to believe, they don't want to other people to know."⁴⁹ There also those who haven't even themselves seen the gender equality question so important, like a Swazi councillor: "I was not aware really that the gender balance is so important until I came here, now I have a challenge that when I go back home I have to look where is the Gender policy, where is it lying and why it is not domesticated?"⁵⁰ So even though there might be some official Gender Policies done by the central government or in some cases even by the local government, their implementation is still a problem. The Policy is not known or then it might be just gathering dust somewhere. It seems like words written about this issue will stay only on paper if no one starts to demand for them to be exposed.

The message of gender equality is told by the central government in some of the countries. In some countries it seems that local government has taken its responsibilities more seriously and is organising training or meetings where the issues related to the gender equality are discussed. Unwillingness to live up to the ideas of gender equality is still dominating in many municipalities.

46 Informant 14, 1.

47 Informant 3, 4.

48 Informant 11, 5.

49 Informant 1, 1.

50 Informant 13, 2.

3.1 Media and the awareness of gender equality

One powerful actor in promoting gender equality is media, but the relations of women and media can be troubled. For example in Tanzania there is a specific Women Media Network. Still they are not that interested on the issues of female decision makers at the local level. Like a Tanzanian councillor told: “I have heard from the radio and news papers that there is women media network in our country, but they never come to us even to motivate us, to see what we are doing. They never come.”⁵¹

The other example is from Kenya where the situation of women is very difficult and also the post-election violence in 2008 has affected the position of women negatively. The powerful women are very much needed and media sometimes co-operates with them. The Kenyan councillor told that: “Newspapers, radio and tv. Every month you should see me three times, appearing three times, even the police they usually call me if there is case for a woman. They usually call me.”⁵² By this comment she means that she is asked by the police and the media to give comments on gender issues to the media. She sees media working with her and helping to get the gender equality problems known. The Namibian councillor wanted to remind that the relationship with media will always stay complex because: “Media people want to catch a story that will attract the buyer to buy newspapers. As much as they want to do well they also sometimes do things that does not really fit to what they should be doing.”⁵³

The knowledge on gender equality questions is varying. It can be that the general idea is known but if there's lack of will, the implementation may face several shortages. Commitment is needed to gender equality. Media can be a good companion in the promotion of gender equality issues if it wants to be that.

51 Informant 5, 6.

52 Informant 3, 2.

53 Informant 14, 3.

4 The challenges to the promotion of gender equality

The question on the challenges was the one that raised many thoughts with the interviewees. When put together the challenges of promotion gender equality seem considerable; certain cultural practices, lack of education and time consuming responsibilities at home prevent ordinary women to acquire the needed knowledge on gender equality and women's rights. The councillors in the local governments are working hard to pass the message and they have to confront these issues in their work. The work of the councillors is important and in order to do their work they need to be motivated to believe in themselves and this way they can gain the trust of the voters.

4.1 Cultural beliefs

The challenges relating to cultural beliefs came up in every interview. Certain cultural beliefs still have a hindering effect on women when they want to take part in the decision making. The beliefs are very influential; the beliefs affect the minds of both men and women.

Most of the interviewed councillors said that the traditional beliefs concerning the perceived natural place of men and women still affect. Traditionally men are seen as the head of the family and women as the caretakers and therefore women have no value outside the household. This has led to a conclusion that women have no place in politics and they can not act as leaders. Many of the female councillors said that they are very much troubled by this and they feel it stops voters to vote for female candidates in elections. A Kenyan councillor gave a harsh picture of the way women are seen by men and why it is so hard for a woman to become a leader: "Before they were like, women they are like children, don't talk with a woman. They were like, women know nothing. In some cultures they normally compare woman to a dog. So you see it is kind of very difficult for a woman to climb the ladder or for them to empower woman. Not unless other countries combine their hands and say that now we are going to support women in Kenya."⁵⁴ As it can be seen from her statement, awareness rising is really needed and sometimes these women would want assistance for doing that and improving their position in the community.

Another Kenyan councillor said: "Culture it really affects to the state of gender equality in my country because take for example in Kenya there are 42 tribes and some of the tribes believe that a woman can not lead, a woman was created to serve as a housewife and to look after kids, to look after them and stay at home."⁵⁵ In some of these countries, especially in Kenya also different tribal beliefs have impacted the role of women in the communities. Also a Ghanaian councillor talked about the impact of traditional beliefs saying that: "The abolition of this is so difficult because you feel like if you don't follow this line, then you feel that your family will be doomed and we are always afraid of what we should not fear. So these are some of the challenges we believe for instance such that we don't want to give in totally and then we feel what a woman must do."⁵⁶

Furthermore the problems relating to religious beliefs were mentioned. In some countries certain religious beliefs and practices may cause hindrance in improving the

54 Informant 10, 1.

55 Informant 2, 2.

56 Informant 12, 2.

position of women. One of the Tanzanian councillors said: “Another challenge is religion, especially Muslims there is no way you can find a woman sitting in front.”⁵⁷ Still in some places churches are open minded and have even been a companion to women when talking about gender issues. In Ghana the co-operation has worked especially with female priests:” In our municipality we have women ministries in some of our churches and these women mostly fight because of women. They concentrate much on women, in the church that I belong we have the women ministries and from time to time we organise the women together.”⁵⁸

4.2 Practical problems

There are as well many problems, which may be described as practical ones that affect the state of gender equality. One of the main problems is the lack of education, especially the education of girls. Like a Tanzanian councillor told: “...we used to have many parents who used to send boys at school and sometimes girls remained home to work. Or they can send both but whenever someone is sick they just ask the girl ‘Oh I am sick, stay here and take care of me’, but they will never ask the boy.”⁵⁹ The problem of illiteracy was mentioned. The other issue is that in most of the countries the official language is English which is not spoken by everyone. As a Tanzanian councillor said: “I can say low education because normally in the national policy there was writing in English, most of them they don’t know English or they can’t go about it. They don’t know what is said.”⁶⁰

Women have also many obligations at home and relating to this they don’t even have time to look for the information concerning gender equality issues or women’s rights. That is why the information might best be passed to them via personal contact. A Tanzanian councillor formed the idea this way: “Information from mouth to mouth. They have no time, houseworks, farming and looking after the family.”⁶¹ Women spend a lot of their time going around looking for things like water and firewood, if these were more easily reachable they would have more time to other things as well. One of the Tanzanian councillors said: “First of all they use a lot of time to looking for something to improve their standard of life, to eat, they don’t have time to politics...”⁶²

The lack of education also affects another way. When not educated it is hard to become a leader since people look for educated leader who to trust. Economic stability, not only helps when running for politics, but it also makes the women’s voice heard better in the families. Many of the councillors said that it is important for women to have their own income so that they can use it to what they want and are not so dependent on their families. Like a Kenyan councillor told women have been given training to run their own businesses: “In business we are trying to educate housewives on how to keep small businesses rather than staying in the house waiting for the husband to bring the daily bread or to bring some money for her to buy good clothes, to make good hair or to buy some nice shoes. So we are educating them how they can start small businesses.”⁶³

In recent years many of the African countries have been largely affected by HIV/Aids. This disease is affecting the population structure since the risk of infection is higher within the youth. Many female councillors said that AIDS is affecting the population and millions of children in Africa have become orphans as a result of it⁶⁴.

57 Informant 7, 2.

58 Informant 12, 3.

59 Informant 1, 2.

60 Informant 1, 4.

61 Informant 4, 2.

62 Informant 1, 3.

63 Informant 2, 3.

64 Informant 10 & 13.

Women are the ones who take care their own children and nowadays they may also have their relatives' orphaned children to look after.

Education encourages changes in the behaviour of men and women. That is why it is very important to educate all the children. The full and equal engagement of women is crucial to ensuring a socially and economically sustainable future in the municipalities. The councillors believed that educated women will become respected leaders in the communities.

4.3 The challenges of the female councillors

The feeling of the dedication of these women to their task of representing their community was expressed very strongly during the interviews. This is why this paragraph will concentrate on the challenges they have faced as female councillors at the local government level.

The ways the women have been chosen to represent their communities differ. They all have a strong commitment to do their best while in this position, as a Kenyan councillor told: "I am enjoying and it is my hope that I as a councillor lady I am going to bring changes in the municipality and also in communities. It is my hope."⁶⁵ Most of the interviewed women are elected councillors but some are appointed. The post of the councillor is not a permanent one and these women have to work to be re-elected. All of them have put a lot of their time to work as a councillor. Being a female councillor is not easy, as they work in male dominated environment and it was commonly expressed that they feel that men try to press them down. Many of the interviewees said that at times they did not feel their voices are heard.

Harassment

Female councillors have faced many problems especially in Kenya where they regularly were commented from fellow councillors: "You women you can not anything"⁶⁶ Also note that Kenyan councillors were the only ones who told about violent behaviour against women candidates during elections. The violence was either physical or psychological. A Kenyan councillor told how men use to distract the gender equality training: "So if you come up in a seminar and try to educate women showing them how we can join hearts and also set some women in the leadership so that we can have assistance shared. You meet at the following day and some men have come and they have confused them and they are blaming them and a woman, an illiterate person is given little money."⁶⁷ Also other women can be reluctant to vote for women because of the common belief that women can not lead. It seems that there is jealousy involved, because many of the councillors mentioned the dirty talks and gossiping going around. As a Ghanaian councillor puts it: "That one is that women we backbite a lot. You see a woman got into a position instead of supporting that person we start talking dirty things on her. They tell you have done that you have not done. They want to destroy your image."⁶⁸ A Kenyan councillor shed light of the situation: "Yes in our situation women are the majority of the electorate. It is very ironical, we have the majority yet we are the minority, yet we are the same people who elect the men."⁶⁹

65 Informant 2, 1.

66 Informant 9, 2.

67 Informant 2, 2.

68 Informant 12, 3.

69 Informant 9, 2.

Economical Problems

Women also lack financial resources. A Tanzanian councillor stated: “And another thing is stability economically, most of the women are not financially stable, so they lack trust on them selves first.”⁷⁰ In elections money is needed to contest since the parties don’t fund campaigning and that is why it is harder for the women than men to build a campaign. A Kenyan councillor told how money is been used to attract voters: “But why it has not been seen is because of men, it is not necessarily that the men they vote are the best people to be in leadership, but they use money, they are the ones who control and use the power of the shilling, they are the ones who do the corruption like now they are very busy for steeling money for 2012 elections.”⁷¹

The need of education

When becoming councillors, women need training on basic administrative issues. A female councillor from Swaziland gave the following statement concerning women in parliamentary level but the same issue can be seen at the local government level as well: “Because you might elect me to be a member of parliament despite that I have never read the constitution or policies so I don’t know the loopholes of the policies or legislation. The first thing if you are in parliament you have to see that are the laws followed and after that to ask why are they not followed.”⁷² A female councillor from Ghana told the following: “So you have to struggle yourself and sometimes people say I am a bit more aggressive, I want to attend almost every training, almost every conference. I am knowledge hungry, I want to know more. So if you are not knowledge hungry, if you don’t try struggle with men to attend such conferences then you will be there and you will not know anything.”⁷³ Since women are lacking experience and knowledge it is harder for them to have the needed self-confidence to work in a male dominated environment. The councillors need in a way constant motivation so that they will continue to give the example as women leaders.

Struggling single-handed

The interviewed councillors felt that they are very much alone with their problems and in some cases the only female representant in the council. In these cases it is harder for them to get their voices heard. It also might affect on what can and what can not be said, like a Ghanaian councillor told: “Things are controlled in hidden ways and you have to play by their rules and if you don’t they will fight against you and they so many things behind you and you feel so vulnerable. I find myself in such position sometimes...”⁷⁴ Women felt that their opinion might be asked but decisions are still made elsewhere. This hidden way means usually that men have their own networks which women are not part of. Another Ghanaian councillor told an example: “Sometimes women make and then take the decisions but when you bring all this forward at the local authority level, you take the decisions and you have everything on paper and then you push it forward and there is no money at the moment for that to be implemented. At the end of it you are not given anything at all, so what you have already decided is juts pushed aside. So it is hurting women so much.”⁷⁵

The female councillors were asked about the networking with other actors in the field of gender equality. Some said that they have worked together with NGOs or other voluntary based organisations, but few had networked with the other women in pol-

70 Informant 1, 3.

71 Informant 9, 5.

72 Informant 13, 4.

73 Informant 11, 3.

74 Informant 11, 3.

75 Informant 12, 3.

itics like other councillors or members of the parliament. One of the Kenyan councillors expressed her wish for the importance of networking: “Let also these women who are in the parliamentary seats join together with councillors that is civic leaders, we join together so that we can be able to reach the community and give them this information because the problem is in our country majority of women are illiterate that is why you see that we are so sidelined us as women and those who are in power are very few.”⁷⁶ Still sometimes it seems that even working together with other female councillors in the own council is difficult, as one of the Kenyan councillors admitted: “...in fact I believe in unity because unity is strength. I just don’t understand, I am willing to work with them and you know they would be very curious to get more advices from me because I am the senior and elected.”⁷⁷ Nevertheless there are also encouraging examples like the one coming from Tanzania: “We have formed a women group it is like a women networking group in the local government association, Association of Local Governments in Tanzania (ALAT). It is a women network but because of the lack of resources we haven’t decided to implement it. But we are trying to form the group of leaders from all the councillors. We start with the councillors and then we go down to the grassroots...”⁷⁸

Acting as an example

The interviewed women despite all of the problems have realized the importance of acting as councillors and as role models for other women. Sometimes when the burden feels heavy to carry a Tanzanian councillor advised to remember: “Because we are role models, we must be whether we want it or not. We are the role models.”⁷⁹ The women felt that as female councillors they have better possibilities to understand and serve the need of the grass root people, like a Kenyan councillor said: “But we can also do marvellous things in leadership because there is now way a woman can go and mislead a nation, yet I am mother, I am a leader and I decide to mislead the nation and I am misleading my own children.[...] So I think women if they are well educated they can change their countries by offering good services as leaders.”⁸⁰ The local government level is a good place to start the promotion of gender equality and some women have ascended from councillors to higher positions. A Namibian councillor told about their current Ambassador to the Nordic countries who has inspired her a lot: “She started as a local authority councillor, she was the chairperson of the board, she became a mayor and from the mayor she was appointed as ambassador. I think that is where we need to start...”⁸¹ It was believed that when starting the career of political decision maker from the local government level you have the knowledge of the grass root level. Like a Kenyan councillor said: “... don’t start from growing a tree above, start from the bottom.”⁸²

The female councillors felt that it is their duty to speak about gender equality and gender balance in their communities. A Tanzanian councillor gave her personnel view why women must be persistent: “Because if we will keep quiet, nobody will do it for us. And the people will go on thinking that it is the men who are supposed to become leaders and you know the men don’t represent the women’s ideas at all. That is the problem. So we have to do something so that the changes can begin.”⁸³ The task is anything but easy.

76 Informant 2, 1.

77 Informant 9, 3.

78 Informant 5, 3.

79 Informant 1, 6.

80 Informant 2, 4.

81 Informant 14, 5.

82 Informant 3, 4.

83 Informant 5, 2.

4.4 The quota question

The question of quotas can not be bypassed when speaking about women and governance. In many countries special quotas for women have been used to increase the number of women in elected bodies. The main forms of quotas are gender quotas and then appointed seats among the councillors where there can be some special seats reserved for women. Of the countries represented in this study, Tanzania, Namibia and Ghana have a gender quota system in use at the local government level.

In Namibia local councils are elected through a party list system of proportional representation. At least 50 per cent of the candidates on the list must be women but the order of the candidates on the list is not regulated in anyway.⁸⁴ A Namibian councillor told that: “Most of the time you find out that may you have about 5 men and 5 women on the list, if the women come to numbers from five to ten and that party only got three seats you end up with three men in the parliament. I was saying that in Namibia we want to come with the zebra style lists, that helps a lot because then you don't have to have five men on top and five women down. So the zebra list is what we are aiming at.”⁸⁵ To have zebra style lists means that every other person on the list is a woman, every other a man.

In Ghana 30% of the councillors are appointed. From year 2002 onwards 50% of the appointed councillors should be women.⁸⁶ Ghanaian councillors did not have any strong opinions concerning the quota system, still they felt that they have not reached gender balance at the councils.⁸⁷

The Tanzanian councillors were puzzled with the question of quotas. In Tanzania there are several decision making levels and at all the levels there are seats reserved for women⁸⁸. Some of the Tanzanian councillors felt very strongly that the quota system is undermining the importance of elected female councillors. This was because the special seats councillors and elected ones are treated equally even though the elected ones have worked much more to gain their position. One of the Tanzanian councillors summarised her ideas about the quota system: “The real aim of having these special seats is to build confidence on women and after serving the council through special seats they can go and be elected [...] they must be there but it should be a transition to not permanent.”⁸⁹

In Kenya and Swaziland there is no law on the quota system for women in decision making organs. At the moment in Kenya one third of the councillors are appointed and often there are women among them but it is not mandatory⁹⁰.

Based on the interviews it seems that the elected councillors are more valued since they represent the views of the people who voted for them. Still it is understood that the quota system is needed to start the change to get more women in the elected bodies. With positive examples it is possible to encourage women to go for the elected seats after being appointed councillors. A Tanzanian councillor gave an example of this: “... when you get this change of being trained I strongly believe that this exposure will courage other women to contest for the election next year because these people they start to realize that elected councillors and those who represent the wards they are more important than special seats councillor.”⁹¹

84 Tonchi&Shifotoka 2005, 13.

85 Informant 14, 4.

86 Ofei-Aboagye 2000, 4.

87 Informant 11, 3.

88 CLGF Tanzania, 213.

89 Informant 8, 4.

90 CLGF Kenya, 98.

91 Informant 7, 4.

5 The role of local governments in promotion of gender equality

The interviewed councillors were asked what had been done by their local governments to promote gender equality and what do they feel should be done. In the following section answers to these questions are divided into three different categories.

The role of local authorities in promoting gender equality can be divided to the services they provide, the actions taken to promote gender equality at the strategic level, awareness raising done by the municipalities and the actions taken as an employer to enhance women's position in the economic and professional sphere of life. The good examples that came up in the interviews can be disseminated to other municipalities to strengthen the role of local authorities in the promotion of gender equality.

Local authorities have a responsibility to provide basic services to citizens. Local authorities can provide services to residents in different ways. In the municipalities the interviewees represent there are different tasks for local authorities. The issue of gender equality can be promoted through the acts done by local governments in many ways.

5.1 Local governments working at the strategic level

The idea of gender mainstreaming involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities - policy development, research, advocacy/ dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects.

Actions taken at the strategic level like planning and development work are very important when implementing the idea of gender equality. One of the preconditions before making strategies and plans is the mapping of basic information concerning the question of gender equality. An idea was brought up that one of the first things to do in the question of gender equality would be a research on the state of gender equality in the municipalities. This was the idea of a Swazi councillor⁹². She felt that the gender equality questions have not been given the importance needed in Swaziland and that is why she was promoting for a research saying: "I think a research need to be done really for the employers how is the state of gender equality, to all employers whether you are the central government or NGO... if there is a research I will be knowing very well the loopholes."⁹³

Many of the women felt that it is the job of councillors to see that gender equality questions are not forgotten. A Tanzanian councillor said: "And also to create a improving environment for them to make input in policy development"⁹⁴, meaning that there should be an ambiance where women feel that they have the possibility to affect the decision making processes. The next step after research could be the Gender planning done by different kind of actions at the strategic level, like formulating a gender policy or implementing gender budgeting. The promotion of Local Gender Policies is one way of going since all of the countries have a National Gender Policy, even though in some countries like Kenya the Policy is not recognised by most of the ministries⁹⁵. There is one example, from Tanga Tanzania where the municipality has made its own Gender Policy. A councillor told the following of this Policy: " We have national gen-

92 Informant 13, 2.

93 Informant 13, 2.

94 Informant 1, 5.

95 Country Gender Profile 2007: Kenya, 8.

der policy and we have local gender policy, because national policy is wide so we have other problems which are not included in the national policy but what we are facing in our district, so we decided to make our own in order to create, to have everything which we are facing there, which women are facing.”⁹⁶

It is not easy to create a Policy together with all the stakeholders and even then it stills needs to be implemented. As the Tanzanian councillor told: “Also people from the central government, people from the local government and ordinary people, we included them, we want to do this, we want to do and we put that everyone will discuss and at least we came up with a Policy. So how to implement it is the question now. First of all we need to be...to make people aware that there is a policy and to know their rights, to know what they should do, what the councillors should do and after that we build capacity...”⁹⁷

In Ghana the idea of gender budgeting will be put to the test soon. A councillor from Ghana told: “And recently in our parliament this policy was implemented: gender budgets. They are just like the normal budgets but they have to be gender sensitive, like the policies in the budgets are thought if it is women friendly and what does it do like talking about economical aspect especially things that women do more like provision of water.”⁹⁸ The manoeuvre is new and it is not yet completely revealed how gender budgeting is going to work.

5.2 Local governments building awareness on gender equality issues

The suggested way forward after researches and policies is awareness rising campaigns on gender equality. In some of the municipalities the local government has already initiated training on gender equality issues. A Ghanaian councillor told a very detailed example how this kind of training has been done in her municipality: “I remember one formal assembly before this one, this committee we planned a training for young women in the various rural areas. We brought women from different communities, we targeted, about 40 young women. So the first time we took them through some small scale training and taught to some of them how to make baskets for sale. We taught something about women’ rights and at that time we worked with female lawyers.”⁹⁹ Educating the women is one high priority for the councillors. Somewhere it has been done by the council or even by individual councillors, like in Kenya: “When we do it, it is your own. Like I have done it in the church, it is my own initiative, I am not given any funding I use my own resources”¹⁰⁰, told a councillor.

The motivation to awareness rising comes from the challenge of ignorance. Gender equality issues have also been dealt at international forums; the need to overcome this challenge is global. A Ghanaian gave her opinion: “Men here they say, “Oh, women again. Since Beijing conference they have been disturbing us with this gender equality.” It is not been implemented so it is time we make each other feel it even we women ourselves, do we understand that is a concept that has to realized and has to be integrated into our everyday life. So that it will come to stay and be sustainable. There has to be a big change in the whole world.”¹⁰¹

96 Informant 1, 5.

97 Informant 1, 6.

98 Informant 11, 4.

99 Informant 12, 3.

100 Informant 9, 3.

101 Informant 11, 1.

5.3 Local governments as basic services provider

One of the most important tasks of the local government is to provide basic services like primary education and health care for its inhabitants. The interviewed councillors recognised that by providing these basic services they can help women in their daily chores; the women will have more time to do other things¹⁰². Within the provision of basic services many things can be done to improve the position of women in the communities and that can help the promotion of gender equality.

A sector that has been the main focus of many studies and declarations is the educational sector. It has been said that education is the key to better living conditions. Also the interviewees wanted to concentrate improving education and the problems faced when uneducated¹⁰³. A Kenyan councillor told about the work done in schools where they have motivated the children in continuing with their studies: "...in education we are trying to help these poor people who does not have anything, maybe in primary schools we are buying examinations, we are paying examination fee for the pupils, we are taking career talks in secondary schools whereby we are going in and motivating those students who are in secondary schools tell them that they can, yes they can if they can put more effort on their studies [...]. So they should put more effort in their education and they should aim higher than our positions. We are educating them that they can be good leaders, tomorrow's leaders and through that career talks that we are taking to secondary schools we are seeing a lot of changes in our pupils."¹⁰⁴ One of the reasons why the importance of education was highlighted came up in the opinion of a Kenyan councillor who said: "... you educate a woman, you educate the whole family. You have enlightened this woman, you have enlightened the whole family."¹⁰⁵

Girls face the risk of dropping out from school for different reasons, for example they might be getting married in very young age or they are needed at home. Therefore some extra effort should be put in to their education. A Tanzanian councillor gave an example what has been done to this problem in her municipality: "So when the results come out...girls, some of them...because some of them will drop out, we consider them even if she has low marks but she is going to secondary school.[...] So we decided that even if she got...maybe we are taking from 115 in our country marks to 250 over 250. So girl student even if she got 110 she must go to secondary school."¹⁰⁶

A councillor from Ghana mentioned some new areas where the local government has started to work to promote gender equality. One of these was early childhood education; a kindergarden was also visited during the seminar in Helsinki. She said: "Yes recently the government has decided to build pre-schools which were not before. Before pre-schools were mainly private but now the government has started getting involved in pre-school education supplying the teachers and building some of the structures. So that helps women of course."¹⁰⁷ The other issue concerning schooling is always money. Even if there are no school fees, the school uniforms and books must be bought. One way to encourage parents to put their children in to schools is giving their children free meals at school. This example came also from Ghana: "Also the school feeding programme is been done at the local level where at least every child is given one meal. So that also helps the mothers because it takes the responsibility of repairing all the meals from them. It is a big relief because even the funds the money is also a problem for the economically disadvantaged, they think so much to feed their children and thank God they have another meal from school."¹⁰⁸

102 Informant 5 & 11.

103 Introduced already at the chapter 4.2. Practical problems.

104 Informant 2, 3.

105 Informant 9, 4.

106 Informant 1, 6.

107 Informant 11, 3.

108 Informant 11, 3.

7 Conclusion

The North-South Local Government Co-operation Programme seeks to establish sustainable co-operation relations between Finnish and southern local governments and do its share in strengthening the role of local governments in international development co-operation. In Finland municipalities have an important role in promoting gender equality; it is the duty of public authorities to promote the equality between women and men in all their activities. This study has examined the question of gender equality from the point of view of the southern female councillors. It is important to know their views when examining gender equality issues within the Programme.

The study shows that the participating municipalities differ as to their level of awareness of gender equality. Some of them have drafted their own gender policies; in others, even national gender policies are not yet in place or have not been properly implemented. It is very important to create a favourable ideological climate by raising awareness of the importance of gender equality.

This study shows that there are many challenges to overcome when working for gender equality. The councillors could identify some of the barriers; they all seemed to focus on problematic cultural beliefs, such as that women are not traditionally seen as leaders; lack of education among women (the more women are educated, the more they will want to participate), and the problem of economic stability of women in general. To become leaders, females need to have adequate education and the economic security to run for office. The position of councillors themselves is difficult; nevertheless, they are working hard to disseminate the idea of gender equality.

The local governments have an important role in promoting gender equality. The interviews indicate that this role is three-fold: The first role is as a policymaker, referring to the actions taken to promote gender equality at the strategic level, for example researches and policies. Secondly the role as a provider of basic-services, such as education and healthcare. The third role includes all the measures taken to build the capacity of women, for example through providing them micro-finances.

One aim of the interviews was to give the councillors an opportunity to express their ideas on how the North-South Local Government Co-operation Programme could promote gender equality. The interviewed councillors felt important because they were chosen to give their views of the southern partners to the North-South Local Government Co-operation Programme. The councillors felt that they need assistance in rising awareness of gender equality issues in their municipality. They wished to receive training on how to promote gender equality so they could themselves motivate people and also be able to offer training to local residents. The issue of training was raised by many of the councillors, who felt they needed financial and informational support in order to arrange the training. The councillors also hoped that women candidates would receive financial support for elections so that it would be easier to reach a gender balance in the councils. Many also felt that an introduction of a quota system could ensure a stronger representation of women in high local government positions.

The Seminar for Local Government Female Decision Makers gave proof that gender equality is indeed the issue of the day. Female councillors participating in the seminar held in Helsinki felt empowered. Getting together as a peer group and sharing experiences was important. Councillors told how they sometimes had felt alone fighting for gender equality in their municipalities and that it was not common to network

with other councillors nationwide. They expressed their concern that if women are not represented at councils and among high officials, the issues of gender equality are easily forgotten. That is why it had been such an enlightening and empowering experience to come together with other councillors from the southern countries and Finland.

The councillors came up with the idea of a formal network where to continue working together and exchange thoughts and ideas. They wished that the North-South Local Government Co-operation Programme would encourage North-South as well South-South information exchange, so that good practices on promoting gender equality could be passed from municipality to another through the female councillors. The interviewed councillors said that attention and direct resources to the promotion of gender equality are needed in the municipalities.

Both the seminar and the study have shown that by working together we can find new ways to promote gender equality. The ideas expressed in this study provide guidelines on how to proceed.

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Informants

The Original interview records are in the possession of the North-South Local Government Co-operation Programme.

Informant 1: Interview done at 18th of May, a Tanzanian elected councillor and has been a councillor for 4 years.

Informant 2: Interview done at 18th of May, a Kenyan appointed councillor and has been a councillor for 2 years.

Informant 3: Interview done at 18th of May, a Kenyan appointed councillor and has been a councillor for 12 years.

Informant 4: Interview done at 18th of May, a Tanzanian appointed councillor and has been a councillor for 10 years.

Informant 5: Interview done at 19th of May, a Tanzanian elected councillor and has been a councillor for 7 years.

Informant 6: Interview done at 19th of May, a Tanzanian elected councillor and has been a councillor for 4 years.

Informant 7: Interview done at 19th of May, a Tanzanian elected councillor and has been a councillor for 9 years.

Informant 8: Interview done at 19th of May, a Tanzanian elected councillor and has been a councillor for 9 years.

Informant 9: Interview done at 21st of May, a Kenyan appointed councillor and has been a councillor for 2 years.

Informant 10: Interview done at 21st of May, a Kenyan elected councillor and has been a councillor for 7 years.

Informant 11: Interview done at 21st of May, a Ghanaian elected councillor and has been a councillor for 3 years.

Informant 12: Interview done at 21st of May, a Ghanaian elected councillor and has been a councillor for 11 years.

Informant 13: Interview done at 22nd of May, a Swazi elected councillor and has been a councillor for 2 years.

Informant 14: Interview done at 22nd of May, a Namibian elected councillor and has been a councillor for 5 years.

Annex 1

The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities (AFLRA)
The Seminar for Local Government Female Decision-makers

Thematic Interviews during the Seminar for Local Government Female Decision-makers

Aim of this seminar is to discuss together of the role of local authorities on promoting gender equality. During this seminar or while staying in Finland all the female councillors from Kenyan, Tanzanian, Ghanaian, Namibian and Swazi local authorities will be interviewed. The purpose of these interviews is to find out how do female councillors from these local authorities see gender equality and in what ways the North-South Local Government Co-operation could best support the promotion of gender equality in local government level.

We have reserved 45 minutes for each interview and the following thematic issues should be gone through in all of the interviews. All persons interviewed will remain anonymous. The interviews will be revised and a report will be written on the grounds of the interviews. The report done in English will be sent to all the participants afterwards.

The materials will be also used in a master's thesis, done independently to the University of Tampere. The thesis will use the North-South Local Government Cooperation Programme as a case example of gender equality work in development cooperation.

In case of questions, don't hesitate to ask more information.

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The Outline of the thematic interview on gender equality

GENDER EQUALITY

- „ What does gender equality mean to you?
- „ How well are the gender equality questions known in your municipality and your country?
- „ How does the culture affect to the state of gender equality?

THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY

- „ How local government could promote gender equality?
- „ What kind of good experiences from promoting gender equality there are in your municipality?
- „ What kind of actors work for the promotion of gender equality in community level?

THE CHALLENGES OF PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY

- „ What are the biggest challenges for the promotion of gender equality in your local authority and in your country?
- „ What needs to be done that these challenges could be defeated?

THE NORTH-SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT CO-OPERATION PROGRAMME AS A PROMOTOR OF GENDER EQUALITY

- „ How do you think that the gender equality could best be promoted in international projects?
- „ Can international projects help the promotion of gender equality?
- „ What do you wish the North-South Local Government co-operation programme to take into account when supporting the municipalities in promoting gender equality?