

Good Local Governance and Leadership Training Programme (GLTP)

Gender and the Involvement of Women in Local Governance



A Handbook of Concepts Training and Action Tools



UN-HABITAT



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GOOD LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND
LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAMME



UN-HABITAT

GENDER AND THE INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE

**A HANDBOOK OF CONCEPTS
TRAINING AND ACTION TOOLS**

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This manual is part of the ongoing support of the Disaster, Post Conflict and Safety Section of UN-HABITAT in providing normative support to field programmes, particularly in such important areas as gender mainstreaming in post conflict contexts.

The writing and compilation of the manual was undertaken by Meredith Preston for UN-HABITAT.

FOREWORD

There has been an increasing recognition, world-wide, of the equal rights of women and of the importance of gender mainstreaming, gender equality, and full involvement of women for peace, social stability and economic development. This is reflected in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and in the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), committing the United Nations to promoting gender equality and adopting gender mainstreaming as a key strategy in all UN activities.

In conflict and post conflict situations in particular, the equal participation of women and men and an understanding of their different needs is vital for sustainable transitions to peace. However, this is often difficult to achieve, and methodological tools are required to support countries in these transition periods.

Gender mainstreaming is a critically important issue for human settlements development. Men and women utilise and experience cities and towns differently. Urban development should reflect different gender roles and responsibilities, but this is only possible if men and women participate equally in local governance and urban management.

Elected local government officials, and other local leaders play a vital role in the effective management of cities and towns. In post conflict situations in particular, they face complex challenges. Supporting the development of their potential is one of the key priorities of the UN-HABITAT's Global Campaign on Urban Governance. In the context of Somalia this is the central objective of the UN-HABITAT's Good Local Governance and Leadership Training Programme, funded by the European Community.

This Programme is using a series of UN-HABITAT manuals on local leadership and management skills, conflict management and participatory planning, which have been widely tested around the world before having been translated and adapted for Somali society. To complement these series a new training manual on gender mainstreaming and the involvement of women in local governance has been prepared.

This manual, "Gender and the Involvement of Women in Local Governance: a handbook of concepts, training and action tools" is an attempt to draw on regional experiences and reflect broader principles of gender equality in a practical format that considers the challenges and opportunities that men and women face in Somali society, and how these will impact the roles they play in urban settings. This manual, which has been translated into Somali and field tested in several cities all over the region, has proven to be an effective tool in a post conflict situation and Islamic context.

The manual comprises a series of tools and exercises that will help local leaders to better understand concepts of gender and how they relate to their work. It also provides the tools to practically apply gender perspectives in municipal leadership.

It is hoped that this manual will also prove a valuable resource to practitioners in a variety of fields in the Somali context to integrate gender perspectives into their work and to promote women's valuable involvement in the development of Somali society. Given the universal importance of gender equality and full involvement of women we see this manual also as a valuable material for preparing capacity-building for gender mainstreaming in other countries and regions.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the contribution of Ms. Meredith Preston, the main author of this manual, the inputs of the gender experts and women activists in Somaliland, Puntland and in South Central Somalia, and of the UN-HABITAT's Good Local Governance and Leadership Training Programme team.

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WHAT IS GENDER?

Gender is about the way that men and women interact with one another. It is about the roles and responsibilities they have in society based on their biological sex. It is about the way men and women are able to access different things, to control choices in their lives.

In the Somali context, the views and expectations of men and women will be different from other places. Ideas about the roles of men and women in Somali culture are complex and changing

FOREWORD

The purpose of this manual is to look at the links between gender and local governance. What does it mean to use and involve men and women equally in local governance, and how can it help to develop a more effective municipality? How can this best be achieved in the Somali context? These are the key questions that this material will help to address.

Equal participation in consultations, in decision making, and in all aspects of governance, helps to create societies that are more productive, efficient and successful. Including all voices, of the youth, elderly, minorities and men and women is at the heart of good governance. Promoting gender equality and the equal involvement of men and women in society is a vital aspect of this.

Local leaders play a central role involving their populations in governance activities. It is important to understand the challenges of involving men and women equally in systems of local governance. This manual will provide an introduction to gender and some basic strategies for integrating gender perspectives into activities of municipal leaders. This manual is also envisioned as a resource for training on gender more broadly in the Somali context - to promote the involvement of men and women equally in all spheres and at all levels of society.

The manual is a companion resource to the Training for Elected Leadership series of manuals, each of which will look more specifically at the different roles played by councillors and how those roles are linked with gender issues in governance. The Training for Elected Leadership series is designed to assist local leaders to represent citizens, provide civic leadership and effectively work with central government and with the management, technical and professional staff in local authorities and other local institutions. This addition to the series is designed to strengthen the ability of local leaders to act as representatives for all members of their communities, both women and men.

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