

2 The political and economic empowerment of women

In Latin America, the feminist movement to attain equal opportunities and gender equity took a big step forward just 60 years ago when women won the right to vote.

It all started in the 1930s, when some women in Brazil, Chile, Cuba, and Uruguay went to the polls for the first time. In Colombia, the right to vote was extended to all women in 1954, while Peruvian women gained the right in 1955. While this movement has gained momentum in recent years, and major struggles have been fought to secure equal rights, the task of breaking down sexist paradigms and stereotypes continues.

Sustainable development is only possible if it is inclusive, with social, political, and economic opportunities that allow women to fulfill their full potential as human beings and equal members of society.

Women are being respected as agents of change and advocates that can transform the dynamics of entire communities. This is why, in 2017, the Government of Canada adopted the Feminist International Assistance Policy, which firmly establishes that promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls is the most effective approach to eradicate poverty and build a more peaceful and inclusive world ⁴.

In response to this public policy, the CISAL program has supported local governments to focus on offering better social, political and economic opportunities to all women in their communities.



Woman in Livitaca, Cusco

⁴ https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_developpement-enjeux_developpement/priorities-priorites/policy-politique.aspx?lang=eng

WOMEN IN POLITICS

Why is the political empowerment of women important?

Women make up, at a minimum, half of the population, half of the voices, and half of the potential of any given region⁵. But women in regions like Cusco or La Guajira have been assigned a more passive role of doing housework, and their voices are often not heard in the public sphere. Women have lived at the margin of any collective development efforts.

This is why creating inclusive and sustainable regions requires integrating women's voices in the development process. All development efforts need to involve women in decision-making spaces, consulting women about their needs and priorities, and enabling access to political and public participation to all women.

There is also research, including from the United Nations, that demonstrates women are powerful agents of change, whether in the way they manage resources or the ideas that they bring to public and private management. So what are local governments waiting for to support all women?



What barriers do women face to participate in politics?

According to the World Economic Forum, if we do not take effective and urgent measures to reduce gender inequality, it will take 170 years before women have access to the same social, educational, economic, and political opportunities as men⁶.

This task belongs to all of society: from governments, to the private sector, academia, and civil society. We must move forward with efforts and actions that lead to changing paradigms for effective and sustainable transformation.

However, it is important to understand the main barriers that women face. To do this, CISAL completed a series of assessments to understand women's barriers in Latin America to participate effectively in politics.

⁵ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/5.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.weforum.org/press/2016/10/beyond-our-lifetimes-prospects-for-workplace-gender-equality-slip-to-2186/>

Barriers women face to participating in politics

Social norms, paradigms and preconceived notions about women's roles

For centuries, men have dominated politics. Women who pursue public office constantly face prejudice about what a woman's role should be: a mother and a wife. Often, this social pressure leads to guilt and even family conflict, limiting the participation of women in social and political spheres. Women in rural areas face even more pressure and limitations.

Keeping balance with the responsibilities at home

In most cases, especially in rural areas, household and parenting responsibilities are automatically assigned to women. Women often do not have the time to participate in activities, meetings or political campaigns.

Holding political office requires dedication and effort. If women do not have the support of their partners, it is very difficult for them to maintain a balance between their personal and public lives.

Accessing education in politics and leadership

Women have limited access to strengthen their leadership and political education skills. This may be due to tuition costs, transportation costs, or limited access to take online courses.

Economic resources to run political campaigns

Pursuing elected positions requires receiving support from a political party or from politicians that already have a career and experience.

For the women that decide to start their campaigns, their main challenge is financing activities. This is why many women involved in politics ascribe to political parties that may or may not represent the main needs of women.

Legal and institutional gaps

Public policies that promote women's participation in politics need to check for legal gaps. While policies that promote women's participation exist, they are not always adhered to or are only partially adhered to, inhibiting progress towards a society full of equal opportunities for men and women.

Political violence

Harassment, threats, intimidation, and even death have made politics a risky option for women in Latin America⁷.

Once elected, women can experience hostile situations in dealing with politicians, media, opinion leaders and political enemies. This can affect their performance, political image, and motivation and even make them think of not running again for office. Political violence against women seeks to intimidate and exclude them from public spheres.

⁷ <http://www.unwomen.org/es/news/stories/2018/11/feature-across-latin-america-women-fight-back-against-violence-in-politics>

WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY

Why is the economic empowerment of women important?

When women work outside their homes and earn a salary, the contribution they make to the well-being of their family is more visible, they gain more respect, and they can contribute to reducing serious issues like child malnutrition.

In Latin America's rural areas, women often encounter more barriers to participate in the economy than their urban counterparts do. However, participating in economic development and taking a more visible role has a transformative effect. One such result can be reducing gender violence and motivating other women to move forward and participate in public office.

Additionally, the more women work and participate in the economy, the more a region's economy will grow. Evidence and research shows that women's economic empowerment increases municipal productivity and economic diversification, and leads to other positive development results⁸.

Local governments should address all barriers that women face to access economic opportunities to ensure local economies grow and diversify, but also so that women's and children's lives improve.

The following chart summarizes some findings regarding the barriers women face to access economic opportunities in Colombia and Peru:

⁸ International Monetary Fund (2018). Pursuing Women's Economic Empowerment

Two women artisan leaders of La Guajira, Colombia



Barriers women face to access economic opportunities:

Access to information	<p>Women say that limited information is available on markets, demand and business opportunities.</p> <p>In addition, for those women who do not speak Spanish, information is not available in other languages (Wayuunaiki or Quechua, for example). There is also little information on formal employment and human development opportunities.</p>
Unbalanced household responsibilities	<p>Influenced by the community, family and husbands, women are expected to fulfill responsibilities in their homes, with childcare and looking after their husbands. This prevents women from finding the time and support to have a role in different economic activities.</p>
Illiteracy	<p>Women who do not have the ability to read or write are limited when it comes to getting training or to accessing resources or opportunities in human development.</p> <p>There are also women in indigenous or rural communities who do not speak Spanish and therefore normally face barriers to accessing economic opportunities.</p>
Gender violence	<p>Violence against women is a critical issue both in Colombia and Peru. It prevents them from participating in their community, lowers their self-esteem and limits their agency as actors in development. In addition to physical violence, women can face also psychological violence.</p>
Few job opportunities for women	<p>Women are overrepresented in informal and vulnerable jobs⁹ and they have few opportunities for decent employment, either because they have few human development and training opportunities or because they do not have enough support in taking care of their home and family.</p> <p>In extractive contexts, mining companies tend to attract and retain male employees in greater proportion, distancing them from rural jobs and redefining the roles of the rest of the family.</p>

⁹ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures>

Access to financial and business education

Women in rural areas have little internet access to take online courses and have few financial resources to access training offered by universities or other institutes related to entrepreneurship and financial and business.

Limited access to financial loans

Financial institutions do not trust women's abilities to pay and sometimes even consider them a high risk for granting them loans.

Weaknesses in women's organizations

When women's associations are not legally constituted, they cannot participate in local management spaces such as Participatory Budgets (PP, presupuestos participativos), in the case of Peru, and they cannot access public benefits or resources.

Public and civil society institutions lack the coordination and strategic partnerships to make women's voices stronger.



Women threshing wheat in Ancash, Peru

The CISAL experience: listening to women's voices

The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #5 is to achieve gender equality and empower all girls and women¹⁰. Although local governments should be at the main stage of this SDG and may intend to promote the participation and inclusion of women in development processes, along the way they may encounter limitations to achieve it.

With this in mind, The CISAL Project supported the design and development of a series of strategies and tools to help local governments in extractive contexts encourage the participation of women in political, social, and economic processes by listening to their needs and priorities.



Flora, a women leader from Cusco, Peru

Meeting women's needs

If a local government is committed to design projects, programs or public policies that improve women's lives and reduce gender inequality, the best way to achieve this is to consult directly with women. What are the most urgent priorities local governments should address? Making sure the voices of different women are heard is a central component of having a gender-based approach to assure women are well represented.¹¹

CISAL consulted women, people with disabilities, the elderly, youth and other vulnerable groups in municipalities to understand what the main needs were of excluded communities. Based on this assessment, local governments could identify, or at least confirm, a group's most urgent needs.

¹⁰. <https://www.sdgfund.org/es/objetivo-5-igualdad-de-g%C3%A9nero>

¹¹. UN Women.



Participatory planning

As a result of the assessment's findings, there was an urgent need to involve women in planning and decision making processes in order to take their voices into account. One example was the creation of local economic development plans. Women's organizations and women leaders were invited to be involved in LED planning.

In Ancash, Peru, women's participation helped ensure the local government's commitment to strengthen the productive chain of flowers, and the production and sale of guinea pigs.

In Santa Fe de Antioquia and Manaure, Colombia, the participation of women was key to the process of introducing the LED Plan to the Municipal Council and to getting it approved as a ten-year public policy. Women were also included in LED steering committees, whose task is to implement and monitor LED plans in each region.

The representation and participation of women was present in the different forms of local management in the four municipalities of Chumbivilcas, Peru, such as with participatory budgets of 2019.

Women in the media

In Ancash, Cusco and Antioquia, radio programs were used to facilitate constructive dialogue about issues regarding sustainable and inclusive municipal development in the regions.

Women's empowerment has been a common theme in these programs, where visibility was given to the leadership and life stories of women leaders from political, social, and business spheres.

In Chumbivilcas, where women are excluded from the public and political arena, of the 60 guests that were invited to the radio programs, an impressive 35 were women who stepped up to the microphone to talk on the radio about women's empowerment, gender equity, and the role of women in sustainable development.

CISAL participant, Yudy, has been trained as a municipal expert



Promoting women's political leadership

The following examples demonstrate how the CISAL Project worked with several organizations and partners to encourage more women to participate in politics:

Networks that promote collaborative learning

The Network of Women Mayors of the Federation of Colombian Municipalities (FCOLM) connects 132 women mayors in Colombia to strengthen their leadership and strategic communication skills, to exchange good practices in municipal management, and to promote a local management model with a gender-based and socially inclusive approach.

The network has served as a bridge towards holding effective dialogue between women mayors with the national government and international cooperation agencies to position their needs regarding women's participation in Colombian politics. Later in the document, we illustrate how the Network has promoted a local management model with a gender-based and socially inclusive approach.

In Peru, the Association of Municipal Councilors of the Province of Chumbivilcas was also led by CISAL with the support of other civil society organizations. While this network already existed, its efforts focused on strengthening the skills of 20 women councillors and leaders who were promoting the development of the Political Agenda of the Chumbivilcan Women, to put it on the local political agenda.

These networks for exchanging knowledge and experiences served as platforms to strengthen skills and develop support and communication systems among women leaders and regional and national actors.

More women in decision making positions

Another strategy was to promote the participation of women in decision-making spaces. For example, the incursion of women in the Saline Development Board of Manaure in La Guajira. The local government guaranteed to include the associations of women artisans and indigenous people who extract the salt, to know their main needs and to help propose solutions. The women proposed training that was carried out with public institutions, benefiting more than 300 women.

The presence of women on committees was important to make more inclusive decisions, promote accountability, and effectiveness in the implementation of the annual plans.



LED Steering Committee of Buritica, Colombia

Education for political leadership

Campaign School is an initiative of the Colombian Federation of Municipalities that took place in more than 10 regions of Colombia to qualify women who made the decision to participate in politics. In the last section of the document, this strategy is deepened, which sought to strengthen the capacities of women politicians.

In Peru, more than 180 leaders of the Province of Chumbivilcas, gathered for the construction of the Political Agenda of Chumbivilcana Women. In Ancash, the Network of Regidoras was encouraged to identify the main problems that they faced and prioritized which one to start working together.

Women artisans from La Guajira, Colombia, sell their goods at the Expobarrancas Fair.



Women's economic empowerment

CISAL promoted a series of strategies so that local governments could offer better social and economic opportunities for women:

Better opportunities for entrepreneurs

Through the CISAL Fund, women's entrepreneurial ability was strengthened. In total, 61% of the 831 people trained in business planning were women; this enabled them to compete, under better conditions, for the resources normally available only to men.

Gender-specific workshops were carried out in the 17 municipalities, to help women to develop their ideas, to fill out the CISAL Fund forms and so that they could present their business ideas more competitively.

A total of 474 women participated in these training sessions, which highlighted the importance of promoting women in the local economy.

In total, 91 (56%) of 162 projects financed and supported by the CISAL Fund are led by women or by women's associations. Chapter 4 discusses the CISAL Fund mechanism in detail and the main lessons learned from the Fund.

Strengthening women's associations

Some of the barriers for women to enter the job market or contribute to the local economy include limited job opportunities, poor access to finance, and access to entrepreneurial training and education. Therefore, the CISAL Fund concentrated its efforts on convening women's groups and associations.

In Ancash, for example, the CISAL Fund supported women's guinea pig production associations in Raquia, and women's flower producers in Taricá. They required specific technical assistance and training to market their products and thus position themselves on the market

In La Guajira, the CISAL Fund supported an association of female coffee producers who are victims of the armed conflict, to formalize the association in order to strengthen marketing, their access to new financing opportunities and the opening to new markets.

CASE STUDY:

The political agenda of the women from Chumbivilcas



Background

Historically, the needs and problems faced by women have not been taken into account in the region of Chumbivilcas. This has fostered a constant state of human rights violations and exclusion, reflected in high levels of poverty, gender-based violence and women's low level of education.

Challenges

In the region, 79.4% of women have suffered psychological or verbal violence and 44.7% physical violence; and the rate of women with low levels of education ranges from 73.5% to 85%¹².

Approach

Based on a social inclusion study led by CISAL, one of the research proposals was to design a Women's Political Agenda in the region of Chumbivilcas.

The Agenda is a local management tool that is created in a participatory manner between men and women, where interests and needs are expressed, and problems that affect living conditions and development opportunities are identified. It is also a political instrument for negotiation and which enables local authorities to identify gender priorities.

The Political Agenda of the Women from Chumbivilcas is aligned with the United Nations reference framework, which establishes equality and non-discrimination between women and men as guiding principles, and the State must guarantee the full exercise of these rights.

The Agenda has a sustainable human development approach, because it emphasizes the protection of rights, in terms of gender, recognizes asymmetric power relations existing between men and women, and is sustainable because it is created in favour of economic growth, prioritizing equity and the environment, placing women at the center of the debate.

¹² INEI (National Institute of Statistics and Computer Sciences) 2013 Province and District Poverty Map

Methodology for the design of the agenda

A *The Steering Committee for the Governance of Chumbivilcas*

The construction of a management tool such as the Political Agenda required allies to convene, design, and implement the entire work methodology. The Agenda benefited from the synergy and commitment of several NGOs that generated trust and credibility among different stakeholders, ranging from community sectors to politicians. For this occasion, CISAL led the efforts with the support of the Arariwa Association and Human Rights Without Borders.

B *The revision of the national gender plan and the regional plan for equal opportunities*

It is important to align local initiatives with national and regional plans in order to propose actions, programs, and projects that can benefit women at the three levels: local, regional, and national. This also contributed to having a more agreeable relationship and engagement with the provincial and national government.

Thus, the strategic elements of these plans were taken into account for the design of the Agenda:

- Health: sexual and reproductive rights
- Political and citizen participation
- Gender-based violence
- Income generation
- Education and culture
- Resources, environment, and food security

C *Diagnosis of the current situation*

An initial workshop was held to understand the problems faced by women in the province. Community leaders, civil society representatives, local government, and productive associations were invited.

The strategic focal points mentioned above were prioritized. Participants identified their problems: the importance of women's empowerment according to their potential, the proposals for solutions, and those who are responsible for carrying them out.

D *Building the agenda*

The Technical Committee made up by the NGOs and ARMAPCH (Association of Municipal Councilors and Authorities of Chumbivilcas) suggested building the Agenda at two levels. First, at the participatory level, where the indicators and expected results, the goals and those responsible for achieving them were identified. Secondly, at the technical level, civil society representatives and NGO's met to systematize, organize and categorize information.



Moutains of Quiñota, Cusco

E *Validation of agenda strategies*

The female leaders of the province, in charge of presenting the results to the local authorities, participated in the validation workshop.

F *Implementation of strategies to implement the agenda*

Presentation of the Agenda to candidates for Mayor in 2018, signing of a pledge of commitment and creation of a follow-up committee for the implementation of the Agenda by women's organizations and local actors.

LESSONS LEARNED

How to promote women's participation through local management

Municipalities wishing to undertake gender policies at the local level should bear in mind that:

“We can't do it alone”

Changing attitudes and norms that are rooted in our culture regarding the role of women in society and politics requires the commitment of everyone.

From public institutions to the private sector, from civil society to communities, it is necessary to work daily to change paradigms to achieve a more equitable society. A group of women can mobilize an entire society, as long as it has strong and strategic allies for its causes; local government should be the first ally of women in the territory.

It is a paradigm shift in the long-term

Every small success is a big success in the fight for gender equality. It is important to celebrate every step closer to a more equal society that includes women in development processes. However, gender equality is an ideal to which every society should aspire. This aspiration, of course, will demand long-term efforts. Recognizing that it is a long-term structural change that needs to be planned and addressed is one big step.

Maureen, a leader of people with disabilities, speaks at a CISAL event in La Guajira, Colombia



Perform an assessment to recognize priorities

As a first step, local governments can explore the main needs, opportunities and threats faced by women in order to design solutions, public policies and programs based on the reality of the territory.

The responsibility of local government is to ensure that all women feel that they are taken into account by their representatives and leaders, with their possible solutions and alternatives and to prioritize the most urgent needs.

Training for everyone

If a local government wants to take concrete action to ensure that women have better social, political and economic opportunities and lead the fight against gender-based violence, it needs to ensure that its government team is trained and understands the basic concepts of gender equity.

Training workshops for local governments, social leaders, politicians, the media and other actors in the territory can serve to add allies to the cause, but above all to enrich the language, critical thinking and position that people take on issues such as gender equity.



Yudy, a woman mayor from Antioquia, Colombia



Mariela, a women entrepreneur from Ancash, Peru

Positioning the issue on the political agenda

Civil society organizations and women's associations should make use of traditional and alternative media to raise awareness on the issue. For example, sharing women's experiences through the radio to share experiences and encounters is an effective and economical way to position key messages.

Local governments can support such initiatives and participate in forums, events and the celebration of important dates such as Women's Day or the Day Against Gender Violence to position the issue on the political agenda.

Using the media as a platform to give women a voice can be an effective strategy, especially if the right media, messages addressing the specific audience (in this case women, for example, from rural contexts) and appropriate language are used.

Closing gaps at all levels

In order to really address gender equity, all actions must be aimed at closing the gaps between men and women.

Today, painful educational gaps remain that keep girls limited to household chores and close the door on economic and social development options; they also contribute to violent and asymmetrical relationships, especially in rural areas.

Another regrettable gap is access to the job market. Female participation is lower in job markets and this phenomenon is not limited to low- and middle-income countries.

Another gap that high-income countries also share with less developed countries is the wage gap: women still earn lower wages on average for jobs similar to those of men.



Mayors and civil society with Fort St. John and Ccapacmarca.

The contribution of the canadian municipal sector

“The advancement of gender equity is impossible if women in our communities fear for their personal safety and have no clear options for access to justice.

After many dialogues and hours of work with women from Chumbivilcas, the municipality of Fort St. John, British Columbia, Canada, committed under the leadership of Mayor Lori Ackerman, to join efforts to address violence against women in the Peruvian region.

To this end, we focused and advised local governments to train men and women on human rights issues. Surprisingly, some women of Chumbivilcas did not know that they were subjects of law. We also supported an awareness-raising campaign for men to engage in combating violence against women, and the ones who were most surprised by the response were women.

Education, justice and institutional presence are key when it comes to addressing a multidimensional problem such as violence against women. Local governments and other orders of government must commit and lead these types of causes in order to increase the work of women in the territories.”

Dianne Hunter, Municipal Manager of Fort St. John.