



## 5 Local Government Associations (LGAs) in Colombia and Peru

The objective of local government associations is to represent the interests of municipalities at a local and national level. In Colombia, the Federation of Colombian Municipalities (FCoIM) unites the majority of local governments. According to a study by the Office of the Auditor General of the Nation in Colombia, Colombia has over 50 municipal associations throughout the country<sup>16</sup>. In Peru, the law recognizes the Municipal Association of Peru (AMPE) as well as other associations such as the Network of Urban and Rural Municipalities of Peru (REMURPE) and other local municipal associations.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.contraloria.gov.co/documents/20181/465015/Estudio+Asociaci%C3%B3n+Municipios.pdf/b9b634f9-029a-408f-9408-16b9175b1009?version=1.0>



## What are the functions of local government associations?

Local government associations such as the FCoIM, AMPE, and REMURPE can also offer a set of services that will vary depending on the mission and strategic objectives of each municipal organization. For example, according to Colombia's regulatory framework and to the Constitutional Law for Municipalities of Peru<sup>17</sup>, while the objective of local government associations (LGAs) is to focus on the region's comprehensive development, they can also be responsible for the following:

- Creating spaces to establish, coordinate and implement projects or public policies and provide services.
- Designing or developing public policies in order to strengthen the region.
- Representing the voice of local governments on a national and local level.
- Carrying out works or providing inter-municipal public services.
- Auditing local projects or the technical studies of projects and services.
- Improving the performance of local development processes.

## Challenges of municipal organizations

LGAs in Colombia and in Peru, and in Latin America in general, face immense challenges to fully achieve their institutional missions. Through an institutional strengthening process held between the Federation of Colombian Municipalities (FCM) and the CISAL Project, together with the FCoIM, AMPE, and REMURPE, the following challenges were identified for LGAs in Colombia and Peru:

- Positioning the LGA before local and national governments as a legitimate organization that represents the interests of its municipalities.
- Positioning the LGA among its potential members and/or local governments as the voice that represents their interests.
- Offering effective services to meet local needs so that local governments have the capacities to respond to the challenges they face.
- Financing the association's services and activities.
- Planning activities to meet the needs and opportunities identified by the association's members.
- Integrating local interests into the national political agenda.
- Providing better resources, capacities and tools to local governments for decentralization processes.
- Preventing partisan interests from influencing the impact of LGAs.

<sup>17</sup> [https://www.mef.gob.pe/contenidos/presu\\_publ/capacita/programacion\\_formulacion\\_presupuestal2012/Anexos/ley27972.pdf](https://www.mef.gob.pe/contenidos/presu_publ/capacita/programacion_formulacion_presupuestal2012/Anexos/ley27972.pdf)

# The CISAL experience: strengthening local government associations

For over thirty years, FCM has worked with local government associations (LGAs) from all over the world to exchange good practices on how to best represent the interests of municipalities.

Within the framework of the CISAL Project, the FCM worked with the FCoIM, AMPE and REMURPE to strengthen the organizations of their local government. In an initial stage, program agreements were reached among LGAs to establish the agendas and scopes for doing collaborative work. In a later stage, strategies were designed to bring these organizations closer to those they represent in order to strengthen the relationships and services that LGAs offer to local governments.

Planning sessions between FCM and FCoLM in 2015

## *CISAL Experience*



### Step one: building trust among institutions

The technical assistance model that the FCM uses with LGAs is different than the model that institutions in Colombia and Peru are familiar with: it seeks to contribute to institutional strengthening by exchanging innovative practices rather than providing funding resources to implement projects.

In 2015, the FCM invited the directors of the LGAs to take a site visit to Canada so they could learn about the context of Canada's municipalities and identify potential areas for receiving technical assistance. The most significant outcome of this trip was establishing

an environment of inter-institutional trust that would help facilitate cooperative projects. It was the first step to establishing a joint work agenda.

Over a one-year period, workshops and meetings were held with experts from Canadian organizations during which key areas for municipal strengthening were identified: strategic planning, advocacy, the services LGAs offer their members, and knowledge management.

## Step two: strategies for bringing organizations closer to their members

Colombia has 1,122 municipalities and Peru has 1,655 district municipalities and 196 provincial municipalities<sup>18</sup>. One of the main challenges to LGAs is for all these local governments to feel represented by them. It is important to consider the diversity of municipalities and their different needs: those that operate in urban areas and those that operate in rural areas, or those areas where mining or other extractive activities take place and those where these activities do not take place.

One of the effective strategies of the FCoIM (Federación Colombiana de Municipios) is establishing municipal networks, or networks of knowledge, that work in collaboration with mayors to develop public policies, coordinate with nationwide institutions, do advocacy work and put municipal issues on the national agenda.

This is how - together with the support of the CISAL Project - the Network of Mayors in Mining Contexts (REMEM) was created and how the Network of Women Mayors for Democracy and Peace was reactivated, which will be further explored in the section on good practices and lessons learned from the process.

The site visit to Canada also served to make the LGA directors and teams from Colombia and Peru familiar with the format of the FCM Annual Conference, which contributed greatly to LGAs rethinking how they were reaching their partners through national and local meetings. Both for Peru and Colombia, this transformed the way in which communication was established between organizations and those they represent.

These capacity-building spaces provided by the LGAs also contributed to improving relationships and positioning organizations locally. In the trainings, the capacities of mayors were strengthened in the areas of leadership, accountability, strategic communication and local management.



Workshop of the Network of Women's Mayor in Bogotá, Colombia

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.inei.gob.pe/media/MenuRecursivo/publicaciones\\_digitales/Est/Lib1420/resumen.pdf](https://www.inei.gob.pe/media/MenuRecursivo/publicaciones_digitales/Est/Lib1420/resumen.pdf)

## *The Network of Mayors in Mining Contexts (REMEM)*

One common characteristic shared by the eight partner municipalities of the CISAL Project in Colombia is that they are located in areas impacted by mining. While all regions are different, CISAL found this to be a great opportunity for fostering discussion on what the role of local government in mining development should be.

This is how REMEM was started, an initiative spearheaded by the FCoIM. This municipal platform has allowed for local government advocacy to take place in extractive contexts and has provided an incentive for holding productive discussions between local and national governments.

After holding several productive workshops with mayors and representatives from the Ministry of Mining and from the National Environmental Licensing Agency, several proposals and public policies were presented. A coordinator from the FCoIM, an expert on the topic, helped shape proposals and lead local forums and conversations with ministries to put the voice of local governments on the national political agenda.

These mayors meetings are essential to developing a shared agenda among municipalities for specific topics. The role of an organization's experience is also key in order to inform mayors of the issues, opportunities, and consequences mining activities have on their territories. These types of networks among municipalities with similar trades essentially function as a means for education and for exchanging experiences. They allow for mayors to create a list of priorities and proposals that they would not be able to develop alone with other levels of government, as they face significant challenges in different areas, and on several occasions, the interests of their own communities are divided.

One of the main outcomes of REMEM is that it contributed to the national debate on local governments having access to the resources of extractive companies through two different types of investment: Tax-based Works and Royalty-based Works. For the FCoIM, the REMEM experience demonstrates how national municipal organizations can serve as partners for local development in effective ways and offer important services for a sub-sector of its members with very technical topics that are also very politically charged.

Mayor of La Guajira who is the spokesperson of REMEM



### GOOD PRACTICE OF THE REMEM

**A network of municipalities is positioned as a legitimate intermediary between local and national level when it really represents the interests and needs of local governments.**

#### *What is the challenge?*

One of the main challenges of LGA is that they can represent the legitimate voice of local governments vis-à-vis the national government. How do LGA's meet the needs of local governments in regions as diverse as Colombia and Peru? How do they ensure that the interests they represent, reflect the reality at the local level?

#### *How was the problem addressed?*

CISAL encouraged FCOLM to create a platform to identify the needs of local governments in extractive contexts. Thus, REMEM was born. The network was a strategy to propose public policies at the national level to benefit millions of Colombians who live in mining communities.

To achieve this, a series of actions were prioritized:

- Call out for mayors who had to deal with mining challenges to form a network that helped identify problems and possible solutions to promote development.
- Design methodologies to exchange knowledge, good practices and main needs between mayors.
- Ensure to communicate the advantages of being part of a network of municipalities so that mayors would find it as an attractive and enriching opportunity.
- Find spaces for meeting and exchanging with the national government and especially with institutions responsible for environmental and mining issues.

#### *Results*

Challenges that unite local governments: the success of REMEM is, in part, because it brings together local governments around an issue that mayors can relate to and perceive as urgent for municipalities.

- Everyone wants to participate: local leaders recognize the importance of being part of REMEM and how their regions benefit from the Network, independently of their position regarding mining.
- The voice of local governments: REMEM brings together a significant number of mayors and has a spokesperson representing them with the national government.
- The effectiveness of the Network: Two legal mechanisms were approved in the Congress of the Republic so that local governments can access resources from the extractive activity.

The Network achieved sustainability over time because the national government and some private companies recognize it as a legitimate space that brings municipalities together to address issues from a technical perspective.

## *Network of Women Mayors for Democracy and Peace*

This network is also an initiative of the FCoIM . It is a space for all of Colombia's female leaders to come together to strengthen their leadership roles in local management and promote the involvement of more women in politics. As a result of FCM's support, this network became active again in 2016 with a series of national and local workshops for identifying strategic objectives and scopes. Over 100 women mayors gathered; they were committed and motivated to leave a mark on the political agenda of the peace agreements in their negotiation phase.

The Network of Women Mayors was established as a platform for coordinating the interests, needs and proposals of the country's 132 women mayors (2016-2019). The network serves as a venue for making the work of women mayors visible and for fostering the exchange of experiences. More importantly, however, it serves to promote the incorporation of policies, programs, and projects that advocate for gender equity and for the citizen participation of women on a local level. This platform also helps coordinate policies on gender equity with local, national and international agencies.

To make the Network of Women Mayors sustainable, the FCoIM established an Institutional Committee with the following entities: CISAL, UN Women, the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia-OAS (MAPP/OAS).

Today, this network advocates for more women to become involved in politics by providing workshops and campaign training schools for candidates, by fostering discussion with the Vice Presidency of the Republic and by serving as a system for the constant exchange of good practices among women mayors.



Women Mayors in a workshop in Bogota, Colombia

*CISAL Experience*

