



UCLG
Committee

Social Inclusion
Participatory Democracy
and Human Rights

Information on Local Government Initiatives to Prevent and Address Femicides and Violence Against Women

Submitted by the UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights

A. Introduction

Local governments are a key tier of government in preventing and addressing femicides and violence against women, contributing to shift long entrenched social patterns of inequality and discrimination while offering sound mechanisms to support victims and guarantee access to justice and reparation through proximity-based mechanisms. Their cooperation with other local actors, such as civil society and academia, has also triggered key methodological and capacity-building advances in terms of monitoring this phenomenon in connection to policy making, while contributing to the effectiveness of awareness raising efforts.

On many occasions, local governments' overall initiatives in the field of preventing and addressing violence against women connect with existing narratives and policy approaches which seek to integrate the human rights-based approach to the local government. Indeed, the Human Rights Council adopted relevant reports and statements on the “Local Governments and Human Rights” agenda (including A/HRC/30/49¹ and A/HRC/42/22²) which closely addressed the role of local governments in protecting and promoting human rights. At an international level, the “human rights cities movement” is supported by hundreds of local governments in the four corners of the world. Over more than 20 years, it has come to develop a relevant policy framework around documents like the “Global Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City³” or the “Gwangju Guiding Principles for a Human Rights City⁴”.

The following contribution has been developed by the UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights: a global platform for local government collective action on human rights and right to the city matters integrated within the world's organization of local and regional governments: United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). This contribution showcases key practices shared by members on the issue of this consultation throughout the last years' exchanges on the role of local governments in advancing women rights and a life which is free from violence. It is structured around the guiding questions developed by the UN Special Rapporteur. A more accurate description of the policies implemented by two key members of the Committee (Iztapalapa in Mexico and Seine Saint Denis in France) is attached in the final segment of the document.

¹ <https://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/2507002.65169144.html>

² <https://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/5365630.98430634.html>

³ <https://www.uclg-cisdg.org/en/right-to-the-city/world-charter-agenda>

⁴ <https://www.uclg-cisdg.org/en/activities/human-rights-cities/gwangju-guiding-principles-human-rights-cities>

B. On the existence, or progress in the creation, of a national femicide watch and/or femicide observatory and/or observatory on violence against women with a femicide watch role; observatories at Ombudspersons' office or Equality Bodies; academic institutions and/or NGOs, or any plans to create one.

There are good examples of observatories on violence against women and girls (VAWG) implemented by local governments around the world, which pay a particular emphasis on the issue of femicides. **Iztapalapa** (Mexico) implemented an initiative of this kind in 2018⁵, adopting an advisory role to local policies aimed at preventing VAWG and femicides. This observatory is composed by local government representatives as well as activists and experts. The Departmental Council of **Seine Saint Denis** (France) implemented a pioneer local observatory on VAWG back in 2002⁶, which played an instrumental role in mainstreaming this kind of policy in the whole French territory. The Seine Saint Denis observatory has carried out both monitoring, prevention and victim support initiatives; both of them in close coordination with the work of other stakeholders on the ground (including national agencies and institutions, civil society groups and local governments inside the department).

Local observatories on VAWG such as that of **Rivas Vaciamadrid**, in Spain, tend to offer a focal point for women who are victims of violence within the same local government administration⁷. As in the case of Rivas, this type of institution offers advice and protection to women at risk, including psychosocial support and legal assistance, as well as coordination with other competent municipal services. Other local observatories also adopted a “watch role”. The Office of Non-Discrimination of **Barcelona** carried out extensive monitoring studies of discriminatory events occurred within the Catalan capital, including the production of data on discrimination episodes against women through cooperation with judicial authorities and civil society⁸.

Local authorities count with good experience in adopting local ombudsperson institutions playing a role in mediating between citizens and the local government in case of human rights infringement by the latter, as well as offering proximity-based access to justice mechanisms - most of which pay an important emphasis on women's rights. In Europe, good examples can be found in cities like **Segovia's** (Spain) *Defensora de la Ciudadanía*⁹ (Citizens' Defender) and **Charleroi's** (France) *Médiateur Communal*¹⁰ (Municipal Mediator). The South Korean local governments of **Gwangju**¹¹ and **Seoul**¹² implemented both sound local ombudsperson and human rights office systems in line with their respective human rights commitments, which pay particular attention to women rights and VAWG.

⁵ <https://elanden.mx/item-Iztapalapa-instala-Observatorio-contra-Violencia-a-Mujeres-2018271147>

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<https://seinesaintdenis.fr/solidarite/observatoire-des-violences-envers-les-femmes/article/l-observatoire-departemental-des-violences-envers-les-femmes>

⁷ <https://sede-electronica.rivasciudad.es/equipamiento/punto-municipal-del-observatorio-regional-contra-la-violencia-de-genero/>

⁸ <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/oficina-no-discriminacio/en/discrimination-observatory>

⁹ https://cadenaser.com/emisora/2021/03/26/radio_segovia/1616760108_679714.html

¹⁰ <https://www.charleroi.be/vie-communale/mediateur-communal>

¹¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/LocalGvt/Local/20190222Gwangju.docx>

¹² <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/LocalGvt/Local/20190214Seoul.docx>

C. On other measures including research and studies undertaken to analyse femicide or gender related killings of women and girls, or homicides of women by intimate partners or family members and other femicides. If available, please share a copy of such studies.

On the results of analysis of femicide cases, including the review of previous court cases and recommendations and actions undertaken in this respect.

The **Seine Saint Denis** Observatory developed several reports on issues related to VAWG, most of the times in close collaboration with justice institutions in its own territory, as well as data produced by civil society organizations. In 2019, the Observatory published a report on child prostitution on the basis of information provided by Bobigny district court and national protection services of children¹³. In 2018, the Observatory developed a report on the impact of domestic violence on children¹⁴. In 2015, the Observatory developed a report in partnership with the Bobigny district court on rapes and sexual assault cases tried in 2013 and 2014¹⁵. In 2012, the Observatory developed a similar report on the issue of forced marriages which led to the adoption of a new protocol at the Departmental Council level¹⁶.

The domestic violence observatory of the **Canton of Geneva** gathers on the other hand different regional and local public administration efforts (including the regional statistics office) to monitor VAWG to produce studies that inform local government action¹⁷. From 2011 to 2019, the Canton has published annual reports on “VAWG in figures” in its territory.

Other local government municipal services in charge of VAWG have kept track of their own public attention and service beneficiary data and used it later to produce reports that have a communication and/or informative role towards competent authorities, such as **Montevideo** through its Comuna Mujer (City of Women) program¹⁸. The Women Secretariat of **Mexico City** developed similar efforts or funded external partners to produce reports on femicides or VAWG in specific contexts, such as public space, educational services¹⁹.

D. On concrete measures taken to improve support to victims of violence and to prevent femicide, (risk assessment, efficiency of protection orders), in connection with the information gathered via femicide watches or observatories.

Iztapalapa and Seine Saint Denis implemented sound measures to improve support of victims (see block F and G of this report). **Barcelona** counts with a sound municipal service aimed at supporting women who have been victims of male violence called SARA²⁰. This includes

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<https://seinesaintdenis.fr/solidarite/observatoire-des-violences-envers-les-femmes/article/etude-sur-la-prostitution-des-mineures-en-seine-saint-denis>

¹⁴

<https://seinesaintdenis.fr/solidarite/observatoire-des-violences-envers-les-femmes/article/etude-sur-l-impact-des-violences-dans-le-couple-sur-les-enfants-dans-les>

¹⁵

<https://seinesaintdenis.fr/solidarite/observatoire-des-violences-envers-les-femmes/article/les-violents-et-agressions-sexuelles-juge-e-s-en-cour-d-assises-et-au-tribunal>

¹⁶ <https://seinesaintdenis.fr/solidarite/observatoire-des-violences-envers-les-femmes/article/lutte-contre-les-mariages-forces>

¹⁷ <https://www.ge.ch/dossier/prevenir-violences-domestiques/moyens-prevention-violences-domestiques/observatoire-violences-domestiques>

¹⁸ <https://montevideo.gub.uy/noticias/genero/contra-la-violencia-de-genero>

¹⁹ <https://semujeres.cdmx.gob.mx/estudios-y-diagnosticos>

²⁰ <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/bcnantimaselista/en/care-services/sara>

various care and targeted services to youth victims or men responsible of violence. The city also devoted efforts to prevent violence and femicides through the adoption and promotion of protocols and campaigns, including specific protocols for night time leisure venues²¹. More than 390 municipalities in **Quebec** adopted a joint initiative to fight violence against women²². Actions promoted include strengthening the capacities of local services protecting victims and fostering awareness raising and capacity building. Through its local human rights secretariat, **Rosario** (Argentina) developed a local, comprehensive care program for victims of violence, including the creation of hotlines, public attention services (*puntos violetas*), integral protection centers and protocols to prevent VAWG in the work environment²³.

All these municipal services are aimed at preventing femicide. More examples of local policies addressing this issue can be found elsewhere around the world. **Sao Paulo**'s *Casa da Mulher Brasileira* (Home of the Brazilian Woman) efforts focus in both supporting victims as well as in coordinating with competent authorities to prevent situations that might put women at risk in their domestic environment²⁴. A decentralized network of municipal public attention offices (*Centros de Referência da Mulher*) allow victims living in different areas of the city to access this service in proximity²⁵. These services are integrated in the city's human rights secretariat, showing once more how local governments take on their role to protect women from violence from a human rights based perspective²⁶. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, other local and regional governments adopted renewed approaches to their policies on the matter to make it easier for victims to ask for help. The **Pichincha** province in Ecuador developed the "*Canasta Roja*" (Red Basket) protocol, that allows women to denounce their aggressors through a phone call by asking a "red basket" of food - the key word that will activate the provincial government protocol to support the victim²⁷.

E. On good practices and challenges in implementing an evidence-based response to the prevention of femicide.

Local governments relied on internal decentralization and the use of participatory democracy to strengthen their policy efforts. The examples of Sao Paulo and Mexico City / Iztapalapa already showed how, in the context of large metropolitan areas, municipal governments are well aware of the need to create proximity-based public attention channels that make it easier for victims to access integral care programs. **Rosario** introduced a participatory based approach to its policies through the creation of "networks of women"²⁸. These allow the municipality to welcome civil society and women's direct inputs and involvement on how to develop its own policies in this field (a fundamental form of evidence-based response) as well as to foster grassroots solidarity networks. The **Seine Saint Denis** example also showed how many of the reports developed led to the adoption of specific protocols. A 2019 seminar held

²¹ <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/bcnantimasclista/en/preventing-and-acting/protocols>

²² <https://maisons-femmes.qc.ca/municipalitesalliees-2017/>

²³ <https://www.rosario.gob.ar/web/gobierno/desarrollo-social/mujer/>

²⁴ https://www.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/cidade/secretarias/direitos_humanos/mulheres/equipamentos/index.php?p=288423

²⁵ https://www.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/cidade/secretarias/direitos_humanos/mulheres/equipamentos/index.php?p=271105

²⁶ https://www.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/cidade/secretarias/direitos_humanos/

²⁷

<http://www.pichinchaldia.gob.ec/actualidad/item/4483-el-gobierno-de-pichincha-activa-el-codigo-canasta-roja-para-mujeres-y-familias-victimas-de-violencia-de-genero-e-intrafamiliar.html>

²⁸ <https://www.rosario.gob.ar/web/gobierno/desarrollo-social/mujer/redes-de-mujeres>

in the same territory brought together hundreds of public officials working on this issue to address what were their needs in this regard and how to strengthen the effectiveness of their policies²⁹. **Quito** followed a similar approach through its local Council for the Protection of Human Rights, which welcomes women groups in the definition of new policies on VAWG³⁰. Indeed, these efforts led to the 2018 city agreement “Acuerdo por un Quito libre de violencia” which aims at tackling the high rate of femicides taking place yearly in the city³¹. Umea (Sweden) introduced the use of participatory methodologies such as participatory women walks to collectively identify potential threats in public space and how to build safer cities through the better adaptation of the built environment to the specific needs of women³².

F. Specific cases: Iztapalapa (Mexico City), Mexico

Iztapalapa (1,815,786 inhabitants) is the most populated municipality in Mexico City. Located on the southern edge of the Valley of Mexico, this territory is also one of the poorest and most affected by social and territorial inequality. Some 35% of Iztapalapa's residents live below the poverty line and 14% do not have access to running water. Likewise, Iztapalapa suffers one of the highest incidences of male violence and femicides in the entire Mexico City. Between 2012 and 2017, 67,000 cases of violence in the family context, 3,168 rapes and 112 kidnappings were reported. In 2020 alone, there were 12 femicides and 263 rapes.

The mayor's office of Iztapalapa has taken action, leading, together with other local actors, a real effort to combat VAWG, as well as to prevent and address femicide. At a general level, the mayor's office has tried to map those territories where violence against women is most persistent. In this sense, it has been able to identify the different levels of affectation of this phenomenon in the different neighborhoods and colonies.

Since 2018, Iztapalapa counts with an Observatory of violence against women from where it monitors the situation, promotes awareness-raising actions among civil servants and the police force, and coordinates the work of rights defenders at the community level³³. After the adoption of a Decalogue against violence against women in 2018, several awareness-raising campaigns were carried out, including actions in schools, communities and civic centers³⁴.

It is also worth noting how, in the context of Mexico City, training programs for police officers have also been implemented³⁵. An online platform offers training modules for police forces. These enable a better identification and treatment of situations of VAWG, from those occurring within the family level to those in the public sphere or at the societal level.

²⁹

<https://seinesaintdenis.fr/solidarite/observatoire-des-violences-envers-les-femmes/article/lutte-contre-les-violences-faites-aux-femmes-que-v-eulent-les-professionnel-le-s>

³⁰ <https://proteccionderechosquito.gob.ec/informacion-juntas-quito/>

³¹ <https://ciudadesiberoamericanas.org/2019/12/03/acuerdo-por-un-quito-sin-violencia-de-genero/>

³² <https://urbact.eu/gender-equality-heart-city>

³³ <https://elanden.mx/item-iztapalapa-instala-Observatorio-contr-Violencia-a-Mujeres-2018271147>

³⁴ <https://www.eluniversal.com.mx/metropoli/cdmx/iztapalapa-crea-decalogo-contr-la-violencia-mujeres>

³⁵ <https://formacionpolicia.cdmx.gob.mx/>

At the prevention level, Iztapalapa has implemented a follow-up strategy at the level of homes and families. Accordingly, it trained a team of 200 local civil servants to work on the issue of violence at the intra-family level. This includes working on the prevention of femicide, rape and other forms of violence. Methodologies were developed to work on this issue, promoting different habits of coexistence and seeking the involvement of male spouses.

Numerous workshops and awareness-raising initiatives on the issue of femicides were also organized both in the public space and at the level of social networks. Some of these initiatives were developed in partnership with local civil society organizations³⁶.

The city has also taken particular care in the area of public space. Public funds have been invested in improving and lighting public roads, creating a network of "safe roads" for women (*Camino Libre y Segura*³⁷). This includes the reduction of road traffic and support for different forms of urban art to generate more dynamic, inclusive and accessible public spaces.

In order to support women victims of violence, Iztapalapa implemented the policy *Puertas Violetas*³⁸. These are physical spaces and telematic attention channels that offer legal and psychological orientation and accompaniment to victims, as well as access to safe spaces and shelters. A similar initiative is the *Casas de las Siemprevivas*³⁹ aimed at bringing legal and psychological assistance to women victims of violence in the territories throughout the Iztapalapa district (thus bringing public attention as close as possible to victims).

These initiatives on the part of Iztapalapa are complemented by the LUNAS spaces implemented by the government of Mexico City throughout its territory⁴⁰.

In general terms, both Iztapalapa and Mexico City made great efforts to promote women's empowerment at all levels: supporting their access to educational opportunities to finish their compulsory studies (see the Women Studying program⁴¹); as well as to recreational and socialization spaces such as those offered by the PILARES program⁴², the Utopias public spaces⁴³ or the different actions carried out within the framework of the Iztapalapa the most sporty and cultural that seek to promote sports and access to culture among women⁴⁴. Both cases favor the empowerment of women in terms of self-esteem, greater opportunities to access employment, as well as access to new social and care networks. It is worth noting that, in this last sense, Iztapalapa also led the recent implementation of a public care system⁴⁵.

G. Specific cases: The Seine Saint Denis Departmental Council, France

³⁶ <http://activistasmx.org/prevencion-del-feminicidio-en-iztapalapa/>

³⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/AlcIztapalapa/videos/camino-mujeres-libres-y-seguras/704551660224640/>

³⁸ <https://www.milenio.com/politica/inauguran-iztapalapa-puertas-violeta-atenderan-violencia-genero>

³⁹ <http://www.iztapalapa.cdmx.gob.mx/boletines/?bol=1376>

⁴⁰ <https://www.semujeres.cdmx.gob.mx/servicios/servicio/lunas>

⁴¹ <https://becas-sin-fronteras.com/beca/becas-mujeres-estudiando-a0554/>

⁴² <https://pilares.cdmx.gob.mx/inicio>

⁴³ <https://mxcity.mx/2020/06/utopias-de-iztapalapa-proyecto-inclusion-social/>

⁴⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Sports/Iztapalapa-La-M%C3%A1s-Deportiva-106264630868243/>

⁴⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hv5z3PsYFc8>

In 2002, the Departmental Council of Seine Saint Denis (1,382,681 inhabitants) set up a pioneering Observatory of Violence against Women (the first of its kind in France) to inform local authorities about the extent of violence against women in its own territory and to propose solutions⁴⁶. The Observatory adopted a comprehensive approach and a set of complementary measures adapted to the diversity of situations to not only enable women to deal with the emergency, but also to provide them with long-term support so that they can resume their lives.

Created in 2002, the Observatory brings together governmental and civil society actors working on this issue in the Seine Saint Denis territory. Through that, it aims to promote the consolidation of a common culture in the fight against violence. The Observatory brings together: professionals from the local social services, maternal and child protection, and child protection of the Seine Saint Denis Departmental Council; State services working in this field at the territorial level (justice, police, education, hospitals); local associations; and the cities of the territory (specific agreements have been signed with 28 of the 40 cities in the Seine Saint Denis territory). This partnership makes it possible to develop common reflection processes between these actors, as well as to improve the articulation between them.

The studies that the Observatory has conducted, as well as the experimental mechanisms it has created, make this structure a model in France. The Observatory has conducted investigations on forced marriages (which led to the adoption of a protocol in 2013⁴⁷), on the impact of violence in the couple on children⁴⁸ and on the prostitution of minors⁴⁹.

In the field of awareness raising, the Observatory has developed numerous methodologies aimed at raising awareness not only among local actors, but also society in general. Through the Femmes du Monde meetings⁵⁰, the Observatory showcased the voices of different local defenders of women's rights in Seine Saint Denis as well as throughout the world, given the diversity of the profiles of women living in this territory (Seine Saint Denis is, in fact, one of the departments with the highest proportion of population of migrant origin in France). The “Youth against sexism” program⁵¹ promotes the commitment of young people in the area and the denunciation of sexist behavior and violence against women through the organization of workshops and the creation of educational kits for national education professionals⁵².

Also in the field of prevention, the Observatory has developed tools to raise awareness among potential victims of violence. For example, the “*violentromètre*” developed by the Observatory helps to measure violence in the couple through a self-assessment tool composed

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<https://seinesaintdenis.fr/solidarite/observatoire-des-violences-envers-les-femmes/article/l-observatoire-departemental-des-violences-envers-les-femmes>

⁴⁷ <https://seinesaintdenis.fr/solidarite/observatoire-des-violences-envers-les-femmes/article/lutte-contre-les-mariages-forces>

⁴⁸

<https://seinesaintdenis.fr/solidarite/observatoire-des-violences-envers-les-femmes/article/etude-sur-l-impact-des-violences-dans-le-couple-sur-les-enfants-dans-les>

⁴⁹

<https://seinesaintdenis.fr/solidarite/observatoire-des-violences-envers-les-femmes/article/etude-sur-la-prostitution-des-mineures-en-seine-saint-denis>

⁵⁰ <https://lemag.seinesaintdenis.fr/16es-Rencontres-Femmes-du-monde-en-Seine-Saint-Denis>

⁵¹ <https://seinesaintdenis.fr/solidarite/observatoire-des-violences-envers-les-femmes/article/jeunes-contre-le-sexisme>

⁵² <https://seinesaintdenis.fr/solidarite/observatoire-des-violences-envers-les-femmes/article/kit-pedagogique-jeunes-contre-le-sexisme>

of 23 quick questions to ask⁵³. This tool allows to identify violent behaviors and to measure if the couple relationship is healthy or on the contrary, if it is violent.

In the field of care, the Observatory has promoted or supported the creation of several mechanisms, including: the alert telephone for women in great danger⁵⁴ (which has been generalized in France since 2014), psycho-traumatology consultations or protocols for the implementation of the protection order for women victims of violence (which allows the family court judge to decide on certain emergency protection measures for women victims of violence) among others. the “*Un toit pour elle*” (A rooftop for her) program facilitates access to safe and permanent housing for women and children who are victims of violence⁵⁵. This program is also coordinated with other territorial initiatives carried out by the cities in the territory of the Council, such as the women's center in Saint Denis⁵⁶ or the reception and orientation center in Bagnole⁵⁷.

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<https://seinesaintdenis.fr/solidarite/observatoire-des-violences-envers-les-femmes/article/le-violentometre-un-outil-pour-aider-a-mesurer-la-violence-dans-le-couple>

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<https://seinesaintdenis.fr/solidarite/observatoire-des-violences-envers-les-femmes/article/telephone-grave-danger-protoger-les-femmes-en-tres-grand-danger>

⁵⁵

<https://seinesaintdenis.fr/solidarite/observatoire-des-violences-envers-les-femmes/article/le-dispositif-un-toit-pour-elle-facilite-l-acces-au-logement-sur-et-perenne>

⁵⁶ <https://www.lamaisondesfemmes.fr/>

⁵⁷ <https://egalactu.com/a-bagnole-ouverture-dun-centre-daccueil-et-dorientation-pour-les-jeunes-femmes-victimes-de-violences/>