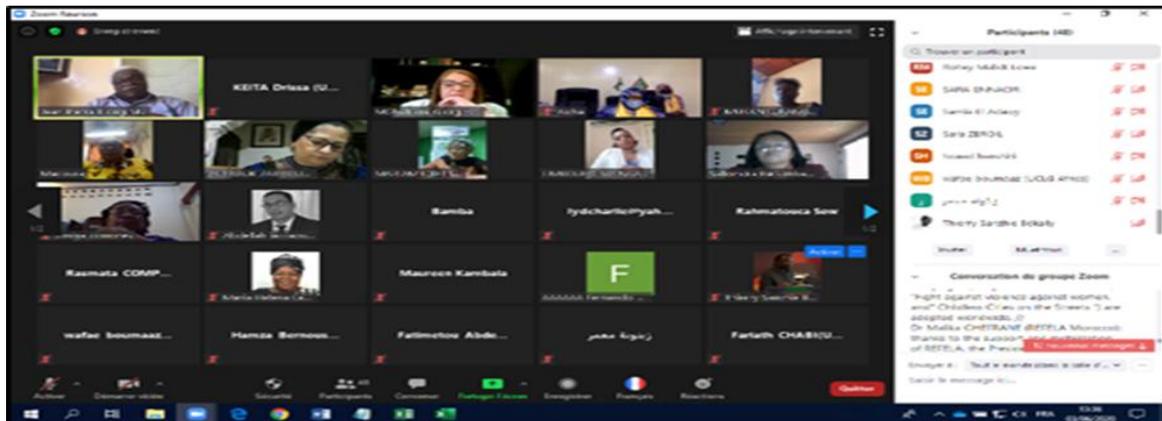


## Webinar

### REFELA: review and prospects in the context of the Covid 19 pandemic.



On 3 June 2020, the members of the Pan-African Council of the Network of Local Elected Women of Africa (REFELA) hosted a webinar for their 3rd statutory meeting and their 1st meeting of the year with the theme: "**REFELA: Assessment and perspectives in the context of the Covid 19 pandemic.**" The webinar was chaired by **Mrs. Dao Macoura Coulibaly**, Mayor of the commune of Foubolo (Ivory Coast) and President of REFELA, in the presence of the Secretary General of UCLG Africa, **Mr. Jean Pierre Elong Mbassi**. More than 68 people attended, made up of women, mayors and local elected women, members of REFELA and also members from the national chapters of REFELA.

In her opening speech, the President of REFELA said that the main objectives of the webinar were to : (i) take stock of achievements; (ii) examine the prospects in the light of the current situation marked by the Covid 19 health crisis; (iii) and define the most appropriate trajectories to pursue for the achievement of the objectives that the Network had set in the framework of its three-year action plan 2019-2021, around the five points on the webinar's agenda.

The debate opened on three points relating to the impact of Covid-19 on the implementation of the 3 campaigns by African cities; on the process of drafting the Charter of Local and Regional Authorities for Gender Equality in Africa and on the implementation of the national chapters (REFELA-Countries), as strategic and priority actions, inscribed in the agenda of REFELA 2019-2021. These 3 points were introduced successively by **Mrs. Mariam Iddrisu**, Mayor of Sagnarigu and President of REFELA Ghana, **Mrs. Ratsimbazafi Sahondramalala Esther**, Mayor of the Commune of Fianarantsoa in Madagascar, REFELA Vice-President for East Africa, and **Dr. Malika Ghefrane Giorgi**, the Network's Special Advisor. Elements of the discussion were synthesized by **Dr. Najat Zarrouk**, Director of ALGA.

The contributions of **Mrs. Roheyatou Lowe**, Mayor of Banjul, Gambia, **Mrs. Annie Christelle Limbourg Iwenga**, 2nd Deputy Mayor of Libreville, Gabon, **Mrs. Maria Helena Langa**, mayor of Mandlakazi of Mozambique, **Ms Sahondra Ratsimbazafy**, mayor of Fianarantsoa of Madagascar, **Ms Aicha Bady**, mayor of Araffat of Mauritania, and **Ms Diabaté Mamou Bamba**, mayor of Pelengana of

Mali, et al. all stated that the impact of Covid 19 had been felt in terms of a marked delay in the implementation of REFELA-Countries and the implementation of the program of the existing chapters, 28 in total, involving the search for partnerships and the implementation of actions linked in particular to the 3 campaigns initiated by REFELA. As an example, the president of REFELA stressed that the launch of the ***Campaign in the District of Abidjan of Côte d'Ivoire, without street children***, could not be organized as planned in April 20, because of the Covid 19.

Women mayors and local elected officials, who are under great pressure to limit the spread of the Covid 19 pandemic, are currently facing inequalities, which have become more pronounced in their communes. The consequences of these inequalities have been felt acutely by women because of their limited access to health services, their children's education, the maintenance of their subsistence activities, mostly in the informal sector, and also because of the increase in violence against women due to the confinement in many countries (such as South Africa, Ghana, Morocco...), not forgetting the children who have been seriously affected, especially those living without protection in the streets of African cities.

Faced with this situation and in the face of the emergency, women mayors and local elected representatives testify that they continue to mobilize to help their local communities through awareness-raising activities, respect for the measures decreed by their governments, as well as activities around the distribution of food and protection kits including masks, gloves etc. They have been working in synergy with other organizations including local civil society, to support above all, unemployed women, single parents, widows, the elderly and also children in vulnerable situations, including street children.

The relevance of REFELA's concerns have been clearly demonstrated and translated into concrete actions given the issues they address, such as African cities without street children; cities with zero tolerance to violence against women; and cities conducive to women's economic empowerment. The Charter, as an important policy instrument, gives impetus to an effective dynamic of struggle against gender inequalities, which are rife in their communities and at the heart of this crisis generated by Covid 19. They recommend that all actions to protect their communities continue, whilst taking in account their interest in learning lessons from this crisis of Covid 19. In order to do so they will continue to:

- Organize and bring together women mayors and local elected women, within REFELA-functional countries with the support of their national associations of local authorities, by providing them with rules of procedure and an action plan, based on REFELA's rules and agenda. This they will do by reinforcing their capacities, with the support of UCLG Africa, through the Academy, ALGA and the Guide, systematizing the tools necessary for their revitalization, elaborated upon and made available to them by the Network's Secretariat;
- Continue the process of drafting the Charter and organizing the 2nd meeting of the Africa-Europe Drafting Committee with the support of UCLG Africa, CEMR and UCLG, by mid-July 2020 to exchange on the preliminary architecture of the Charter, resulting from the synthesis of the results of the online consultation carried out by the REFELA team, of which 118 women and men (mainly occupying positions as mayors, elected representatives or resources of African local authorities) responded;

- Give importance to intensive communication, through the media, including television, radio and others, which can contribute enormously to making REFELA and its national chapters known to governments and future technical and financial partners, whose agencies are interested in promoting gender equality in African cities and communities;
- Multiply advocacy actions to strengthen the sharing of synergies between both male and female mayors and local elected officials with their governments, their civil society organizations, and with the support of international partners, UNDP, UN-Women, UNICEF and others for the establishment of constructive partnerships, on the basis of strategies and programming aimed at the fight against gender inequalities at the local level, which are to be implemented through actions initiated by REFELA, including the 3 campaigns;
- Observe that this Covid 19 crisis is, "an unprecedented experience and a test for the human spirit," according to the Network's women and that it would be a question of giving ourselves the necessary means to build a post-Covid 19 era, where local authorities would put resilience at the centre of their concerns, solidarity, the promotion of equality and social protection, as well as peace, in order to be able to face these kinds of challenges that may arise in the future and ensure that their impact will never again affect their communities.

**QUESTION 4**

<p><b>Quelles propositions les membres de REFELA souhaitent-elles soumettre aux instances dirigeantes de CGLU et de CGLU Afrique ?</b></p> <p><b>Le débat relatif à cette question 4, est ouvert sur :</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quelle appréciation faites-vous de l'ensemble de ces propositions</li> <li>• Sont-elles faisables et pertinentes ?</li> <li>• Conviennent-elles à la Présidente et aux membres du REFELA ?</li> <li>• Comment les enrichir?</li> <li>• Et sous quelle forme et par quel moyen les transmettre aux instances dirigeantes de CGLU Afrique et CGLU ?</li> </ul>	<p><b>What proposals do REFELA members wish to submit to the governing bodies of UCLG and UCLG Africa?</b></p> <p><b>The debate on this question 4, is open on:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think of all of these proposals</li> <li>• Are they feasible and relevant?</li> <li>• Are they suitable for the President and REFELA members?</li> <li>• How to enrich them?</li> <li>• And in what form and by what means to transmit them to the governing bodies of UCLG Africa and UCLG?</li> </ul>
--	--

**GENERAL EQUALITY**

The debate continued around the 4th point - Proposals that REFELA members wish to submit to the bodies of UCLG and UCLG Africa - concerning a presentation of the current state of REFELA's position within the bodies of UCLG Africa and UCLG World and proposals that REFELA wish to submit to them.

REFELA's representation within these bodies has certainly improved, reaching up to 30% within the Pan-African Council of UCLG Africa. The women of REFELA have actively contributed to the advent of the African Presidency at the head of UCLG, **Mr. Mohammed Boudra**, (6th Congress, Durban, November 2019). In this way, they intend to continue to strengthen their commitments to these bodies, hence the interest of the proposals they wish to submit to them for consideration. In short, these proposals are the responsibility of these bodies to mobilize in favor of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls at the level of local and regional authorities of their African regional section and also at the global level.

Finally, on the 5th point of debate, relating to their 4th statutory meeting, REFELA agreed that this meeting will be organized and held before the end of the year 2020 and that it will include the updating of the Rules of Procedure for their Network in light of the progress made, including

reference to the constitution of REFELA in 2016 as the Standing Committee on Gender Equality of UCLG Africa, regulated by Article 16 of its Constitutional Statute.

**Dr Malika Ghefrane Giorgi**  
**REFELA Special Advisor**