

GOLD VI

**Case-Based Contribution
to Chapter 9: Democratizing**
*GOLD VI Report on Pathways
to urban and territorial equality*

Transparency and Human Rights

– Cooperation, partnerships and

human rights

In partnership with:



Commissioned by:



Produced by:



Transparency and Human Rights – Cooperation, partnerships and human rights

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The Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (RWI)

CITIES/COUNTRIES IT COVERS

Istanbul (Turkey), Iztapalapa (Mexico), Hwaseong (Republic of Korea), Pakistan, Sweden, Wonosobo (Indonesia), Tubajon (the Philippines), and Muratpasa and Cankaya (Turkey)

CHAPTER

9: Democratizing

SUMMARY

This Case Based Contribution (CBC) focuses on experiences of counter-corruption measures as a way to address human rights challenges and inequality, as well as of the integration of human rights approaches to local Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) plans and “human rights city” initiatives to increase meaningful participation and accountability in Turkey. The second strategy aims particularly to ensure that development benefits and includes all segments of society, and that it contributes to addressing inequalities.

The entry point for the CBC is the implementation of international human rights guarantees, where duties of local and regional governments follow the decentralisation of functions in each State and on what Treaties the State ratified. In addition, the general principles underpinning human rights law apply everywhere and at all levels of governance. These include participation, transparency, accountability and non-discrimination. This CBC focuses particularly on the first two of these.

The focus on inclusion, participation and accountability in human rights based approaches and in the examples featured below, coincides with and reinforces principles of, and pathways to, democracy. Its point of departure, that the same rights are inherently owned by all human beings (rights-holders), and that they are to be respected, protected and fulfilled without discrimination by States Parties to international human rights treaties (duty-bearers), is also coherent with a strive against inequality.

The three strategies of cases described below build on RWI’s cooperation with local governments and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the framework of capacity development and research in Sweden, Turkey, and Asia, and include Local and Regional Government representatives suggested by UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion (strategy 1), and members of UCLG ASPAC (strategy 2).

The partnerships with UCLG, Gwangju City and the WHRCF secretariat, the Asia Democracy Network (ADN), and the Embassy of Sweden in Seoul, have been crucial for the results achieved.

Olsson, Helena, Bahar Özden Cosgun, and Windi Arini. “Transparency and Human Rights – Cooperation, partnerships and human rights”. *GOLD VI Pathways to Equality Cases Repository: Democratizing (2022). United Cities and Local Governments.*

Introduction

The experiences included in this Case-Based Contribution (CBC) respond to obstacles to the enjoyment of human rights, where participation and transparency were common denominators and factors for solutions. The CBC includes examples of addressing mismanagement of public funds, where lack of transparency, and corruption, had contributed greatly to reducing public trust in institutions, and in representative democracy itself. Participation and accountability are shown to be key both to uphold human rights and as antidotes to such downward spirals. They are also necessary ingredients in rebuilding trust and re-establishing a social contract where trust has been eroded.

Furthermore, cases respond to the challenge, and opportunity, of SDG plans, processes and reporting, which, with a clear rights based approach has the potential of influencing long-term policies of local and regional, as well as central governments. Activities described in strategy 2 have aimed to equip local governments with tools to use such an approach, and to support them in applying these tools to local contexts and priorities. Strategy 3 directly relates to participation and inclusion of vulnerable groups in municipal design and planning processes.

Experiences followed a variety of strategies, that have been divided into three main streams in the CBC:

- Counter-corruption measures to improve human rights and address inequality
- Integrating human rights approaches into local and regional development plans (Asia)
- Good practices from RWI's cooperation on human rights with Turkish Municipalities



1.1 What role Local and Regional Governments have in this experience?

Local and Regional Governments, (hereafter "LRGs"), are main stakeholders in this CBC, in their role as duty bearers of human rights. This role includes respecting (not violating), protecting (against third parties, through policies and enforcement) and fulfilling (actively "make happen" through budgets and programmes) rights. They are also responsible for using human rights based approaches in their policies and work, including through transparent and accountable budgeting and governance overall. Their relationship to the citizens/inhabitants of their municipalities or regions is, from this perspective, that of duty bearers accountable to rights-holders – eg, every individual in the locality. That and, in democracies, that of democratically elected and thereby accountable, government to its electorate.

The link to corruption discussed in the first strategy includes both the use of public funds and measures to restrict corruption from third parties that affect the rights of its population. In the second strategy, the role of LRGs is to plan and

First meeting of the older persons' assembly in Muratpaşa together with Mayor Ümit Uysal and his co-workers in the social services department. Source: Doğan Kütükçü, Muratpaşa Municipality.

manage measures to achieve local SDG targets in a way that respects, does not harm, and aims to improve the fulfilment of human rights. The projects mentioned as good practices under this strategy address community complaints and communication with local authorities, and the local improvement of access to justice with a strong participatory approach.

Finally, the Turkish Municipalities supported by RWI to develop into “Human Rights Cities” implemented the participatory activities mentioned in this CBC, targeting vulnerable groups and in cooperation with universities, academics and related civil society organizations that also took part in the RWI project.

1.2 What other institutions and actors were involved?

All strategies put local government officials, or associations of LRGs, at the centre. In the first as panellists and drivers of transparency measures, in the second as learners, but highly active such, in testing HRBA approaches through their own projects and sharing experiences with the group for peer learning. Courses also connected to events where LRGs are central stakeholders: the World Human Rights Cities Forum, spearheaded by the City of Gwangju, and the Human Rights Festival in Indonesia. The second course group included local representatives of Civil Society Organisations, academics, private sector stakeholders and National Human Rights Institutions, along with LRGs. The course that supported the projects was co-organised by RWI with the UCLG Asia Pacific in Jakarta, Gwangju City (course 1), and the Asia Democracy Network (course 2) in the framework of the RWI Regional Asia Programme on Human Rights and Sustainable Development (2017-2021), funded by Swedish Development Cooperation. Projects were

funded by LRGs themselves, apart from symbolic awards to “best” projects. In the third strategy, municipalities cooperated with academics and CSOs in activities.

It is relevant to note that a multi-actor approach, with emphasis on identifying synergies and collaboration between local actors, is a common denominator in several cases described in this CBC.

1.3 What are the main lessons of the experience in terms of building pathways to urban equality and the specific focus of the chapter?

From the first strategy, a main conclusion was that measures to counter corruption and to promote human rights can be mutually reinforcing. We also saw clear examples from panellists that pointed to the relevance and potential of the human rights framework for the efficient management of public funds. In particular, to support the prioritisation and accountable use of resources to address inequalities and offer inclusive social policy and to make participation meaningful, with due access to information and the possibility of residents to influence policy decisions on matters that concern them.

The second seems to confirm the usefulness of the strategy to work with concrete rights-based approaches in local plans for global agendas to address inequalities and achieve more meaningful and inclusive participation in policy processes – e.g. by those affected and concerned by different initiatives - and frameworks of accountability for the same. Examples from courses also indicate that adding a human rights dimension to existing plans (development, COVID-19 or

disaster response, etc.) adds value and sustainability, as this can build on and strengthen procedures that LRGs already have in place for reporting to donors and central governments (transparency), and/or participatory processes such as Voluntary Local Reviews.

The third demonstrated the value of participation and influence of elderly people in public policy processes and decisions, where

they tend to be excluded in spite of their high degree of dependency on these policies being adequate and sensitive to their situation. This was clearly illustrated in the COVID-19 pandemic and experience in Antalya. It also showed, through the example from Çankaya how citizen participation benefitted the whole community, including local government city planners.

2. Counter-corruption measures to improve human rights guarantees

At the World Human Rights City Forum 2020, RWI organised an “International Human Rights Policy-Session” together with the Embassy of Sweden to the Republic of Korea, on “The role of cities in combatting corruption and strengthening human rights”. The session addressed corruption as a human rights issue, and related it to democratic participation and transparency. (A link to the full recording of the webinar is available under references, below). Among promising strategies discussed:

The council member from **Istanbul** (Turkey), shared how a reduced number of cars for municipal staff (previously excessive), were re-directed to establishing safe houses for victims of domestic violence. The example was not pointed to as corruption per se but as a step to increase efficiency after a review of budget allocations and resources of a local government that concretely contributed to improved services and human rights protection. From **Iztapalapa** (Mexico), we learned about a similar re-direction of public funds, that was part of a comprehensive anti-corruption drive, introduced by the current Mayor, who was also the panellist sharing, as she entered office. Funds that previously had disappeared into private pockets or inefficient

procedures were invested to for instance expand (equal) access to potable water. As the Municipality, with transparency safeguards in place, assumed responsibility for water delivery, access increased both because private service providers had been very costly, and because residents no longer had to pay bribes to these service providers to have water delivered to their neighbourhoods. As a step to institutionalize budget transparency and community engagement, the city established mechanisms, including digital channels for residents to report abuse, and independent citizen committees where residents can raise and address concerns. We also heard how **Hwaseong** city (Republic of Korea) successfully had worked to restore trust with its citizens and to protect the human rights of its residents, for instance by strengthening communication channels and by often in-person meetings in handling complaints, coupled with safeguards against corruption. Through these measures, and as a result of intense efforts to establish cooperation between public officials and citizens, the Mayor shared how his municipality rose dramatically in public integrity ratings between 2018 and 2020, from mediocre to top rating.

The speaker representing UCLG Pakistan explained the functioning of Provincial Treaty Implementation Cells (TICs) in Pakistan, established to support data collection and monitoring of the implementation of human rights treaties. The TICs, led by Provincial human rights departments, were presented as a promising structure to help increase awareness and transparency about the human rights situation in different provinces. He also discussed the potential of local committees and focal points for the SDGs to help ensure that strategies and plans build on local needs. Difficulties in implementing these new models were also underlined. The panellist from the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR), which encompasses all local and regional governments in Sweden, explained how SALAR works to support members in preventing and countering corruption, and how they

connect this to human rights initiatives. She also referred to the “human rights platform”, which SALAR developed in collaboration with RWI, as a guide for members to use human rights perspectives in their work.

The RWI Director and the expert from the Korean Ministry of Justice stressed the importance of connecting agendas and actors on human rights and corruption to work effectively on both issues. The Ambassador moderating the session connected practices shared to the Swedish Drive for Democracy, and concluded that it is clear that corruption concretely affects human rights in many local (and central) administrations, and that stronger democracy and human rights approaches – in particular participation – also are helpful to counteract corruption.

3. Integrating human rights approaches into local and regional development plans (Asia)

As backdrop to cases presented at the end of this section, RWI and UCLG Asia Pacific (UCLG ASPAC) have worked together since 2019 to support the integration of human rights and human rights based approaches into local and regional SDG plans. The collaboration builds on a UCLG ASPAC initiative to support LRGs with tools and knowledge on how to plan for and follow up on Agenda 2030 locally. By engaging with RWI, UCLG ASPAC added a strong human rights perspective to this process. The International Centre of **Gwangju** Metropolitan City (Republic of Korea) has been another key stakeholder and partner to RWI in this work, as 10 year host of the World Human Rights Cities Forum (WHRCF) and itself a longstanding and active “human

rights city”.¹ The Asia Democracy Network (ADN) has also played an important role as partner coordinating and supporting CSO participation in the Institute’s activities in this field. ADN also contributed, through analyses and perspectives, to connecting course topics to local democracy.

A first workshop for local and regional governments from the Asia Pacific was organised jointly by RWI, UCLG ASPAC and Gwangju City in connection to the WHRCF in 2019. Well received by LRG attendants, the three partners decided to repeat the experience and to add online elements to the course to offer comprehensive and practically connected learning for LRGs in the region.

1. The annual World Human Rights City Forum has been organised by Gwangju city since 2011. See www.whrcf.org

In 2020, two regional blended learning courses were offered to UCLG ASPAC members on the topic “Localising human rights in the SDG process”.² Courses started with a webinar, followed by online introduction modules on human rights and systems of monitoring and implementation at international to local levels. They also explained the human rights based approach concept, the localisation of SDGs, and the nexus between human rights and Agenda 2030. In a next step, each participant selected a priority area from local SDG plans where they would take steps to integrate human rights. Once these were defined, and formulated as a course project, participants were offered tailor-made support and mentoring for their projects, and started their work. At the end of the full course period (in total 6 months), participants shared their progress and experiences in the groups for feedback and reflection.

Both blended learning courses in 2020 also included elements of networking with LRGs already actively engaged in human rights. Participants in the first course joined (online) sessions of the World Human Rights City Forum, and a discussion with City officials in Gwangju. Participants in the second course attended sessions of the (annual) Human Rights Festival in Indonesia, which focuses on LRGs and Human Rights City initiatives. The second course included local representatives of CSOs and National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI)³ among participants, with the aim to spark dialogue and cooperation between stakeholders. NHRIs were also engaged as mentors in some projects, with promising results.

Good practices produced as result of these processes, exemplified below, show the relevance and benefits of using rights-based approaches and of linking local initiatives to global agendas.

Judging by participants’ evaluations, project results, and interest in subsequent courses (2021), the blended courses format seems workable and useful for LRG officials to calmly get (re-)acquainted with the human rights framework and then analyse and revise plans and policies in this light, with advisory support along the way. Connecting LRGs to NHRIs⁴ as mentors proved particularly useful, as these could provide details and advice on the human rights situation locally. In addition to the benefits we could observe in the course projects, establishing contacts with NHRIs is also likely to benefit the LRGs long term, as the key function of NHRIs is⁵ to support governments - at all levels - to uphold human rights commitments.

The exchange with other LRGs within course groups and in related events was much appreciated, and not least the exchange with LRGs that already work actively with human rights. These included, most notably, the Gwangju city officials that the first course group had the opportunity to meet, but also other LRGs that took part, and shared, in the WHRCF and in the human rights festival in Indonesia.

While course projects covered a wide range of issues – from COVID-19 measures to health services, food security, physical city planning, and disaster response - most included expanding outreach and participation of concerned groups in planning, implementation and assessment of LRG initiatives.

Among the many interesting projects, one that clearly addressed participation was the development of an app for handling citizen complaints in the city of **Wonosobo**, in Central Java (Indonesia). The project was led by the Coordinator of the Human Rights City Task Force and the SDG Centre of the city, building on already advanced local structures for human rights implementation in Wonosobo.

2. The concept of blended learning courses, as applied by RWI, means that courses include a series of learning elements on- and offline, which are combined to increase knowledge (theory), understanding (case and context based) and skills (application) on a topic, as well as networks for continued exchange within the target group: here between LRGs in Asia.

3. Not all countries have NHRIs. The functions and nature of these public, but politically independent, institutions are described in the Paris Principles on National Human Rights Institutions from 1993. See: <https://ganhri.org/>

4. Ibid.

5. See note above on Paris Principles of NHRIs.

Wonosobo has a 2016 Bylaw that establishes Wonosobo as a “Human Rights Friendly City”. The Bylaw recognises the importance of public participation in city planning, and mentions the need to create an accountability mechanism to ensure the right for public participation. The complaints handling app is developed to be connected to another local tool for participation – the SDG tool “Wonosobo Action”. The tool will let inhabitants, as well as private and CSO stakeholders, communicate with the city government on progress and challenges related to the SDGs, and coordinate local SDG actions. The complaints handling function specifically aims to strengthen the dialogue between the city administration and communities on human rights related concerns. The creation of this app was considered particularly urgent in the 2020 context of the COVID-19 crisis, where other forms of outreach were hampered at the same time as living conditions for the population worsened. At the time the course project ended, the complaints handling app and Wonosobo Action had not yet been launched, but community and political support was strong and both were prepared and consulted with a wide range of local stakeholders. The strong support from the newly appointed Wonosobo regent, who was directly involved in issuing the 2016 Bylaw, makes it very likely that the functions will soon be in use.

The tools will be managed by the SDG Centre together with local civil society organisations, and support multi-stakeholder engagement by including functions facilitating the financing of SDG plans by locally active businesses, philanthropists and the Wonosobo Diaspora. Both apps have already been well received by private sector stakeholders as “quick wins” for Smart City plans in Wonosobo.

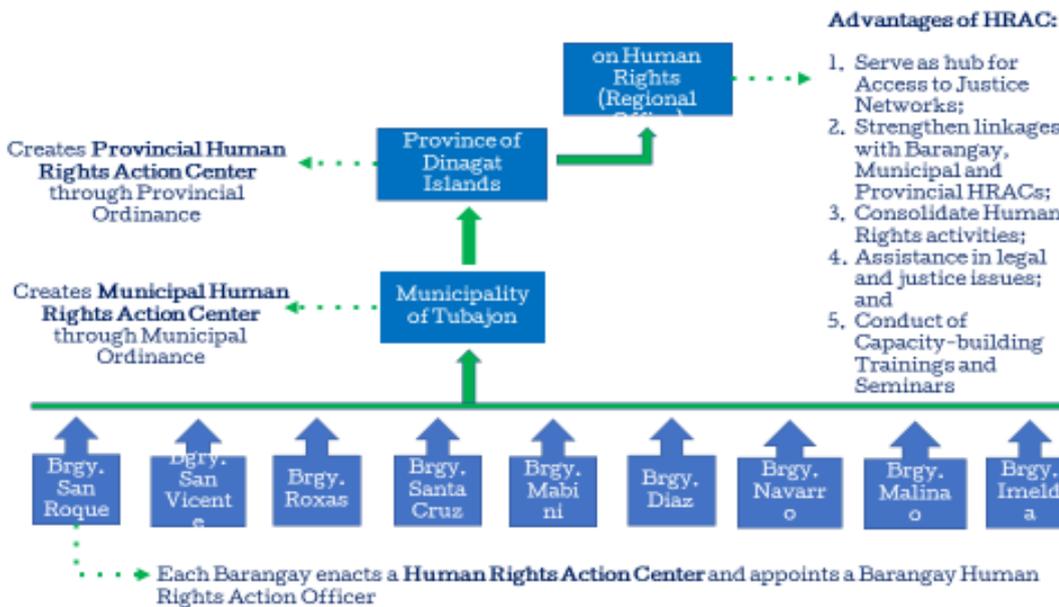
The project was coordinated with the local Human Rights Commission and the Communication and Information Service of the Regency, and had technical assistance from the (national) Ministry of Law and Human Rights and the National Commission of Human Rights.



Another laudable project, conducted by the Provincial Legal Officer of the newly established Province of **Dinagat Islands** (the Philippines), was the establishment of a pilot Human Rights Action Centre (HRAC) in one of the municipalities of the Islands, Tubajon, with the aim to improve access to justice for inhabitants. The process of developing the HRAC, as well as the structure itself, had a clear bottom-up approach. Preparations included a community survey, forums, and workshops to identify concerns. The structure includes community-level human rights action officers. The Governor, strongly committed to the initiative, also approved a plan for the gradual rollout of this structure throughout the Province in 2021. Provincial and municipal ordinances were also drafted to operationalize the plan. The project involved the closest regional office of the Human Rights Commission of the Philippines (in Caraga), and the Human Rights Centre of one of the leading universities in the Philippines (Ateneo de Manila).

Wonosobo Action tools, as presented in RWI workshop December 2020. Source: Powerpoint slide provided by project lead.

Methodology: *Bottom-up Approach*



In terms of how the HRAC, to date, has influenced citizens' participation, the establishment of the HRAC was unfortunately hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic, to the extent that the municipal local government unit of Tubajon has not yet formally issued the Ordinance for its establishment.⁶ Nevertheless, explicit commitment from both provincial and municipal governments, draft legal frameworks, and locally consulted structures make it highly likely that the model will be operative soon. The Provincial Legal Office also already started receiving requests for legal assistance in specific civil and criminal complaints among the constituents of the Tubajon municipality. Hence, there is already an informal structure in place, which attends to the needs of the communities in the meanwhile. The Office intends to formalize the HRAC structure once the pandemic is contained.

The HRAC is a model promoted by the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines. So far, very few municipalities and cities in the Philippines have availed themselves of this structure, and so far no other Province has established a HRAC.

The project team will work to establish the HRAC successfully in Tubajon so that it later can be replicated throughout the province. It is also the explicit aim of the Province of Dinagat Islands to be the first Local Government Unit with a HRAC structure in place.

While both examples are based on limited periods of testing new strategies, the fact that projects were connected to local priorities and SDG targets, often tweaking processes already in motion, meant that many projects got surprisingly far in short periods of time, including in terms of participatory planning and consultations. While follow-up is needed to confirm continued progress, that should also make it more likely that initiatives will continue to develop and have longer-term effects. While effects are not automatic, and may not be visible directly, there is clearly much potential in the creation of proximity-based mechanisms and pathways to access justice, and in establishing more accessible channels for residents to communicate complaints and concerns, to build trust, resilience, and inclusive societies.

The HRAC structure and advantages, Dinagan Islands, as presented in RWI workshop December 2020. Source: Powerpoint slide provided by project lead

6. As of May 2021.

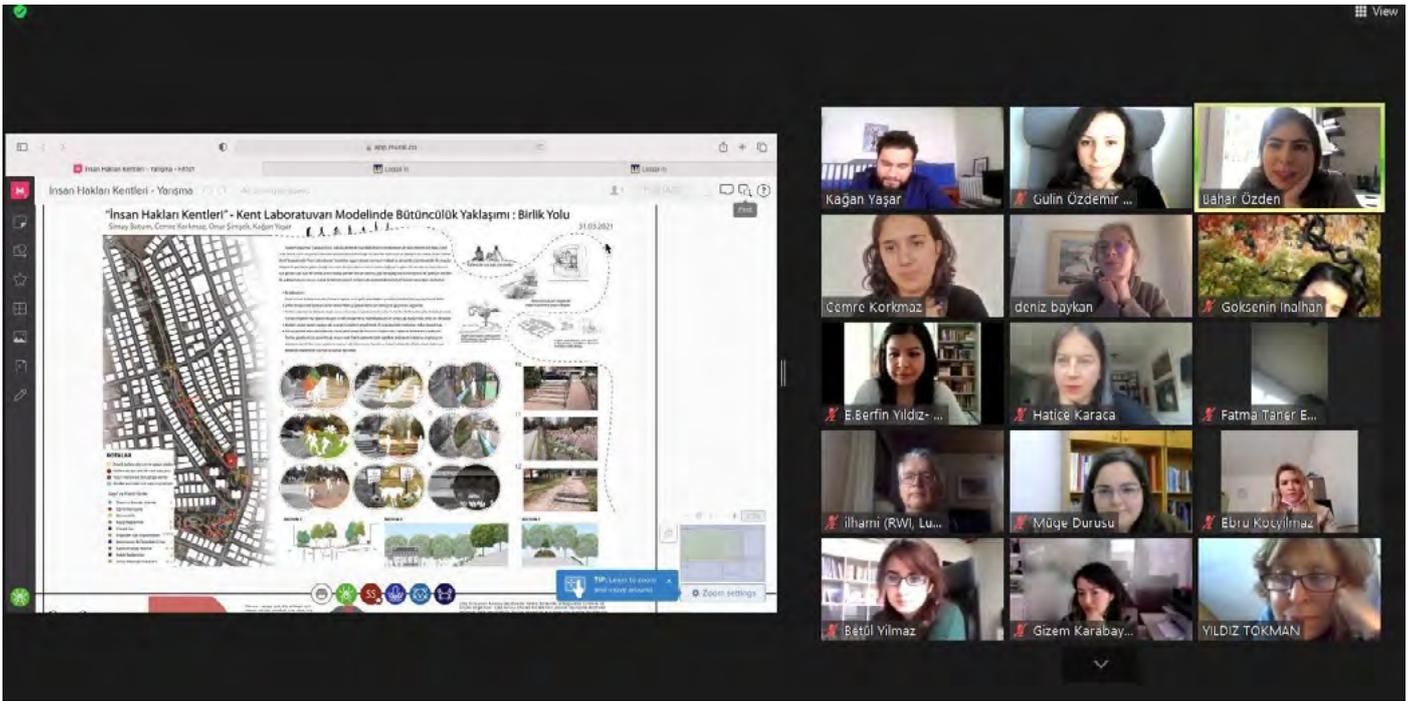
4. Good practices from RWI's cooperation on human rights with Turkish municipalities

The Human Rights City Project of RWI in Turkey (2018-2020) has aimed to ensure that municipalities supported by the project implement human rights of vulnerable groups, as guaranteed by international and national laws, respect these rights, and reflect them in Municipal services. Five categories of groups, including women, children, persons with disabilities, the elderly, and refugees, were identified and considered in terms of their relations with the city and municipal services under the main headings of "(i) participation, (ii) accessibility and (iii) safety". Another goal of the project is to create participatory and inclusive platforms where professional organizations, public institutions, CSOs and international organizations working in these fields, and particularly municipalities and academia, can join efforts in developing policy proposals that contribute to localizing human rights in SDG plans.

In this context, one of the participating municipalities, **Muratpaşa** in Antalya, established an older persons' assembly in 2019, in cooperation with the Akdeniz University and the Aging Studies Association in the city, in order to ensure the participation of older persons in local government. The assembly, among other goals, focuses on raising awareness on age discrimination and all kinds of violence, neglect and abuse against the elderly; as well as on increasing the representation capabilities of the of older persons. The composition of the assembly also takes gender equality into consideration, and the assembly includes members representing older persons' NGOs, residents of nursing homes, and

older persons at the neighbourhood level. The inclusion of the older persons so they can themselves express their needs and experiences in designing policies and services has also been very functional during the COVID-19 pandemic, as it has helped to channel information about needs of older persons to the municipality, as the most vulnerable group to the pandemic. The assembly established a WhatsApp group, including the municipal experts, and also held online meetings via Zoom. The problems of isolation and loneliness, especially during COVID-19 lockdowns and mobility restrictions, were repeatedly expressed by the assembly. In response, the municipality initiated a special programme to provide psychological counselling through regular phone calls, along with the transmission of medicines from the pharmacy.

Another example is the implementation of a "CityLab" by another municipality, **Çankaya**, in Ankara, in cooperation with Bilkent University. The Lab involves academics, civil society, neighbourhood residents and university students in the upgrading of a park to make it more accessible, safe and inclusive. The municipality's Equality Unit, together with the Department of Parks and Gardens and Social Services, organized several workshops with people living in the area, and asked them to re-visit the park and take photos of what they liked or disliked. The aim was to include the daily experiences of vulnerable groups using the park in the design process. The resulting photos were presented to the municipality as a photo-story where they could share problems related to accessibility as seen by real users of the park,



directly with the planners and responsible officials from the municipality. Bilkent University students also took part in the Lab, and have developed new design projects taking these problems into account and suggested these to the municipality. The Parks and Gardens Department used these in the renovation of this park, and also as guidelines for the planning of new parks. The aim is to disseminate this CityLab method in various design processes of municipalities. The CityLab has been quite efficient as a way to spatialize gender equality and “Human Rights City” indicators, through a structured model of participation and citizen engagement at a very concrete level. The Çankaya Municipality, as one of pilot Human Rights Cities in the RWI project, will replicate and disseminate this model in other areas to increase the participation in the planning and design of public space and services in other neighbourhoods. The CityLab has also provided a tool for the municipality Equality Unit to mainstream gender equality in its technical departments.

Students present their designs for better accessibility and inclusiveness of the Çankaya park in a CityLab workshop with the Municipality, CSO representatives and academics.

Source: Bahar Özden Cosgun, RWI

References

Strategy 1 Counter-corruption measures to improve human rights and address inequality

The agenda for the WHRCF session on human rights and corruption is available in this link under "International Human Rights Policy Session"/ see more: <https://rwi.lu.se/events/whrcf-2021-highlights-summaries-and-recordings/>

More information (abstracts) from panellists in the session can be found on pp. 78-84 in the WHRCF conference programme, available here: [http://www.whrcf.org/file_Download/2020/The10thWHRCF_Program-Book\[Eng\].pdf](http://www.whrcf.org/file_Download/2020/The10thWHRCF_Program-Book[Eng].pdf)

A recording of the full session is available on the WHRCF Youtube channel: [The10thWHRCF] 해외인권 정책회의 International Human Rights Policy Session - YouTube

See also website of the government of Iztapalapa (Spanish), including detailed information on transparency structures and strategies: <http://www.iztapalapa.cdmx.gob.mx/transparencia/index.html>

For an example of Provincial Treaty Implementation Cells in Pakistan see: <https://tic.hrma.punjab.gov.pk/>

From the Swedish LRG network, see SALAR Human rights platform here: [HR – Platform | SKR](https://www.salar.se/)

Strategy 2. Integrating human rights approaches into local and regional development plans (Asia).

Project presentation, Dinagan Islands, from RWI workshop, December 2020

Project presentation, Wonosobo, from RWI workshop December 2020

For more on the work with human rights and SDGs in Wonosobo, see: <https://rwi.lu.se/pyramid-publications/sustainability-policy-of-human-rights-city-initiative-in-wonosobo-indonesia/>

Presentation of the 2020 course and more participant projects on the UCLG ASPAC website: <https://uclg-aspac.org/en/the-second-blended-learning-course-from-knowledge->

[to-action-in-localising-sdgs-with-a-human-rights-based-approach/](https://rwi.lu.se/pyramid-publications/sustainability-policy-of-human-rights-city-initiative-in-wonosobo-indonesia/)

For information and records of WHRCF, see www.whrcf.org. The website includes information on the history and framework of Gwangju as a human rights city.

More on the human rights cities movement from RWI: <https://rwi.lu.se/blog/what-is-a-human-rights-city/>

Strategy 3. Good practices from RWI's cooperation on human rights with Turkish Municipalities.

More information about RWI activities with local governments in Turkey can be found on the website: [Research Worldwide Istanbul \(rwistanbul.org\)](https://www.rwistanbul.org/)

Guidelines for CityLab initiatives, such as the Çankaya park project featured above, and a publication on Human Rights Indicators for work with local governments, will soon be available on this site.

This paper has been produced as a Case-Based Contribution to the sixth Global Report on Local Democracy and Decentralization (GOLD VI): the flagship publication of the organized constituency of local and regional governments represented in United Cities and Local Governments. The GOLD VI report has been produced in partnership with the Development Planning Unit (University College London), through the programme Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality (KNOW). GOLD VI focuses on how local and regional governments can address the local manifestations of growing inequalities and contribute to create “Pathways to urban and territorial equality”. The GOLD VI report has been produced through a large-scale international co-production process, bringing together over a hundred representatives of local and regional governments, academics and civil society organizations. This paper is an outcome of this process and is part of the *Pathways to Equality Cases Repository*, which collects the over 60 Case-Based Contributions produced as part of the GOLD VI report.

In particular, the present paper has contributed to Chapter 9 on “Democratizing”, which focuses on the challenges and opportunities for local and regional governments in implementing meaningful participatory processes, and democratizing decision-making, unpacking asymmetries of power and the underpinning trends affecting processes of democratization. The chapter explores how local and regional governments can promote more egalitarian, participatory and democratic processes, giving voice to marginalized groups of society, minorities and other groups, and thus contribute to urban and territorial equality.

Supported by:



**Funded by
the European Union**

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**Diputació
Barcelona**

This document was produced with the financial support of the Barcelona Provincial Council. Its contents are the sole responsibility of UCLG and UCL and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Barcelona Provincial Council.



**Sweden
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This document has been financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida. Sida does not necessarily share the views expressed in this material. Responsibility for its content rests entirely with the authors.



**UK Research
and Innovation**

This document was produced by UCLG and the “Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality” (KNOW) programme. KNOW is funded by UKRI through the Global Challenges Research Fund GROW Call, and led by The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, UCL. Grant Ref: ES/P011225/1