

The Importance of Local Public Financial Resources in Improving Women's Roles in Society

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Illustrated by Mariana Lorenzo

Advocacy Summary

Women's rights organisations receive only 0.13% of official development assistance (ODA), and only 0.42% of foundation grants are directed towards women's rights projects (AWID, 2021). This stark disparity between the critical role these organisations play and the financial resources they receive creates a significant bottleneck in progress. The underfunding limits the scope and impact of their work, undermining their capacity to build sustainable infrastructure, develop long-term strategies, and respond effectively to emerging challenges. This scarcity forces many organisations to operate on a project-by-project basis, hindering their ability to establish consistent, systemic change. Furthermore, it perpetuates a cycle of precariousness, where organisations are reliant on short-term grants, making it challenging to attract and retain skilled personnel, invest in crucial research, or engage in sustained advocacy. Investing in feminist movements is not merely a philanthropic gesture; it is a strategic imperative that recognises their unique understanding of the complex, intersectional barriers women face, and their ability to drive transformative change from the grassroots level. Broad funding of feminist movements would be a powerful means of advancing equality between women and men. By providing consistent and substantial funding,

donors can empower these movements to amplify women's voices, challenge discriminatory norms, and create lasting, equitable societies.

The research was conducted in the 12 departments¹ of Benin, covering 23 municipalities to explore the constraints, opportunities and possibilities for funding feminist organisations from public resources collected at both local and central levels. The lines of research included:

1. Are there any mechanisms already in place to fund feminist organisations?
2. What are the main obstacles to local funding for feminism?
3. What opportunities might communities have for securing local funding for feminist initiatives?
4. Could feminist funding be factored into the municipal budget?

■ Key Findings

Analysis shows that 89% of communities surveyed have gender-sensitive budgets (actions specific to women), but the funds are not allocated to feminist organisations. Actions for women are carried out directly by the town hall staff. Among these, the amounts allocated remain very low, often less than 1% of the municipalities' overall resources.

Interviews conducted revealed that people in charge of planning at the town halls, who are responsible for listing civil society organisations, find it challenging to identify women's organisations within their municipalities. In some municipalities, they are virtually non-existent, as they are either non-functional or not known to town hall departments. Accessing local revenues, such as taxes and fees, is also difficult.

According to the heads of women's organisations, the municipalities stand to gain significantly from partnerships with women's organisations because they have a better grasp of grassroots populations and would contribute to reducing cases of violence against women. The organisations would be functional, contributing to the municipalities' development and helping them carry out community actions.

Additionally, women from feminist associations would assist municipalities in raising awareness among women in the markets and other businesses about the benefits of paying taxes, and contribute to collecting taxes from women

1. Departments are the administrative divisions of Benin. These are equivalent to provinces in some countries. For more information <https://www.mappr.co/counties/benin-departments/>

traders and entrepreneurs. Moreover, the municipalities would improve their Local Governance Index (LGI).

Based on the responses from the surveyed municipalities, all executive managers (i.e., 100%) have agreed to vote for or make provision for a section on gender equality activities and to finance most of the women's activities in the 2026 budgets, as well as in 2025 for some. To ensure its effectiveness, pleas or motivational communications must be made to the municipalities' supervisory boards starting in 2025.

■ Key Recommendations

- **Women's organisations:** Should participate at the municipal level to ensure visibility and legal recognition by local authorities.
- **To municipal and central authorities:** Should promote sustainable development through funding women's organisations' community actions.
- **To technical and financial research partners:** Should continue to support the implementation of budgeting mechanisms for women's organisations in the identified municipalities.

Authors and Acknowledgements

About the authors

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In 2022, she carried out studies on the rights of immigrant women in Northern Benin, funded by the European Union (EU), and in 2023, on the satisfaction of women users of health centres in Atacora, financed by the Association of Communes. In addition, between 2023 and 2024, Nadia implemented projects to defend the rights of young girls who are victims of forced marriage, financed by the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) with Féministe en Action. Another project was implemented between 2024 and 2025 to strengthen knowledge of and access to women's rights from the villages in Benin with support from the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF).

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Acronym List

AWID	Association for Women's Rights In Development	ODA	Official Development Assistance
CSO	Civil Society Organisation	OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
CSP	Centre for Social Promotion	SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
ES	Executive Secretary/ Executive Secretariat	TAC	Territorial Administration Code
GBV	Gender-Based Violence	UEWCM	Union of Elected Women Councillors in Municipalities
IWD	International Women's Day	UN	United Nations
LGI	Local Governance Index		
NISD	National Institute of Statistics and Demography		

Introduction

Majority World countries, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa, benefit from Official Development Assistance (ODA) to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across all sectors. Despite the increase in ODA for gender equality over the past ten years in the Sahel and West Africa, rates of gender inequality remain high in the region. While many other factors, including ODA, influence progress toward gender equality in the region, it is clear that efforts to tackle the root causes of gender inequality and initiate real change have not yet yielded sufficient results.

The OECD's 2022 report, "Financing Gender Equality in the Sahel and West Africa," emphasises the importance of increasing ODA for gender equality. It also highlights the need to support local women's organisations in reaching vulnerable populations, invest in gender assessment and awareness programs, and promote sex-disaggregated data collection for more effective action.

According to the National Institute of Statistics and Demography (NISD), Benin, a West African country, had an estimated population of 12,506,347 in 2021, with over 50% of the population comprising women and girls. Its socio-cultural diversity constitutes its wealth. In their cultural practices, these groups sometimes compromise the future of girls through gender-based sexual violence, particularly forced and early marriage.

In Benin, a 2023 report revealed that women operate the majority of businesses (66.3% compared to 33.7% for men). Notably, the food sales, accommodation, and catering sectors have a significantly higher proportion of women, with 6,855 women for every 100 men. Despite their relative importance, women's rights movements often face resource constraints.

Methodology

This research examines the constraints, opportunities, and possibilities for funding feminist organisations using public resources collected at both local and central levels. The scope of the research encompasses the temporal, geographical, and stakeholder dimensions relevant to the study. This study covers twelve (12) departments of Benin, namely Atlantique, Alibori, Atacora, Borgou, Collines, Couffo, Donga, Littoral, Mono, Plateau, Ouémé, and Zou. At least one municipality is reviewed, prioritising municipalities run by women from ES. Stakeholders included women's associations and organisations, executive secretaries, members of parliament, and staff from the decentralised departments of the Ministries of Social Affairs, Economy and Finance. Three questionnaires were designed for feminist organisations and associations, local authorities, ministry officials, members of parliament and prefects².

Table 1: Distribution of targets and numbers reached during the research

N°	Category of Respondents	Planned workforce	Maintained workforce	Percentage
01	Women's associations and organisations	23	23	100 %
02	Mayors / Executive Secretaries	23	23	100 %
03	Prefects	6	5	83 %
04	Members of Parliament	6	5	83 %
05	Heads of Social Affairs, Economy and Finance (decentralised agents of ministries)	6	5	83 %

Source: Sampling

2. According to the Oxford dictionary, a prefect is a chief officer, [magistrate](#), or regional governor in certain countries.

Literature Review

Overview of Feminism in Africa

According to UN Women (2020), feminism is a movement calling for equal social, political, legal, and economic rights for women and men. According to Fatou Sow, African women writers grapple with the complexities of asserting their womanhood, rights, and freedoms while retaining their African identity in modern societies. These societies have been significantly reshaped by historical forces such as colonisation, decolonisation, and globalisation, leading to continuous shifts in long-standing values of identity. Sow adds: Feminism is one way of challenging these orders, their representations of the social roles of the sexes, and the resulting inequalities to the detriment of women. It enables us to analyse the conditions faced by women and to deconstruct the mechanisms of gender inequality. To be a feminist is to strive for change in these power dynamics, to advocate for equality under the law, and to promote access to citizenship for all. Feminism (or should I say feminisms) has theorised, to varying degrees, the centrality of women's "oppression". It makes sexism the source of their oppression, marginalisation, invisibilisation, and even exclusion. Indeed, activists have questioned the causes, forms, and acts of sexism differently, and the changes that have taken place throughout history, as much as the language (notably gender) used to understand and describe them³.

Aminata Mbengue, a Senegalese clinical psychologist and feminist, posits that feminism entails dismantling patriarchy. She defines patriarchy as a system in which men hold the power to dictate the functioning of society. Moreover, Beninese feminist Prof. Yvette Onibon Doubogan (2002) states, "Feminism, to put it simply, is an international political and intellectual movement to confront the subordination of women. It has many roots and trajectories, some of which are indisputably transnational, in the sense that they reveal the relationships between local and global manifestations of present-day subordination". This definition emphasises the dependent and subordinate relationship of women to male authority. Feminism seeks to liberate women from this dependence and enhance their autonomy.

In recent years, new concepts have emerged, particularly "**Feminism 2.0**," as described by Africa Moussou in 2021, which refers to the end of women's silence on social networks. In West Africa, 2020 was undoubtedly the year when

3. Fatou SOW, Representations of femininity and civic demands in Africa: More than a political debate (International African Institute Biennial Lecture, Edinburgh, UK, June 11, 2019). (Représentations de la féminité et revendications citoyennes en Afrique : plus qu'un débat politique)

women grasped and leveraged the opportunities presented by social networks for feminism. Previously timid and unresponsive to specific topics and debates on the web, women are increasingly speaking out on issues that concern them (Moussou 2021). They promote women's rights and amplify the voices of victims of physical and sexual violence.

It is posited that these actions are not amenable to individual implementation. Consequently, evaluating the activities undertaken by women's organisations in Benin to advocate for women's rights is deemed necessary. Onibon Doubogan (2022) notes that to promote gender equality in education, many Beninese feminist organisations rely on local, endogenous knowledge to bring about behavioural change in local communities. Although the patriarchal context appears to be a factor of resistance to inclusive education, our research shows that concrete actions centred on women's strategic roles are being implemented by various local organisations.⁴

Legal Basis for Taking Feminism into Account

Several texts and laws form the legal basis for defending women's rights. For example, Article 18 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights specifies that "the State must ensure the elimination of all discrimination against Women and to ensure the protection of the rights of women and children as stipulated in international declarations and conventions". This includes the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which came into effect on September 03, 1981.

Also, Article 19 of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights reveals that, "Women have the right to enjoy their right to sustainable development fully. This article specifies that States shall take all appropriate measures to introduce a gender perspective into national development planning processes and ensure women's equitable participation at all levels of the design, decision-making, implementation and evaluation of development policies and programmes." This article reinforces the notion that feminist organisations can now be financially supported to intervene at all levels of decision-making.

Women's equality and empowerment are key themes of one of the 17 SDGs, but they are also integral to all aspects of inclusive and sustainable development. In short, all the SDGs depend on achieving SDG 5: to achieve gender equality and

4. Yvette ONIBON DOBOUGAN, 2022, *Feminist Movements and Endogenous Local Knowledge in Education in Benin: A Relationship of Alterity for a Decolonization of African Feminism*. (Les mouvements féministes et les savoirs locaux endogènes en matière d'éducation au Bénin : une relation d'altérité pour une décolonisation du féminisme africain)

empower all women and girls. *The targets note* that women's full and effective participation, as well as equal access to leadership roles, must be ensured at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life. States must undertake reforms to grant women equal rights to economic resources and access to ownership and control of land and other forms of property, as well as financial services, inheritance, and natural resources, through domestic law.

All these provisions promote the financial support of feminist organisations in Africa and worldwide. On a local level, the law establishing the Constitution of the Republic of Benin stipulates that "Every human being has the right to development and to the full blossoming of his person in his material, temporal, intellectual and spiritual dimensions, provided that he does not violate the rights of others or infringe constitutional order and good morals".⁵ The law gives full authorisation to women and women's organisations to enjoy resources and act on behalf of their peers.

Furthermore, the constitution guarantees equality before the law for all, regardless of origin, race, sex, religion, political opinion or social position. Men and women are equal before the law. It should also be noted that the law may establish special provisions to enhance the representation of women in public life.

The Local Governance Index (LGI), which measures performance in good governance at the local level, also serves as a self-assessment and learning tool for municipalities, enabling the State and support organisations to target capacity-building themes for municipalities. In Benin, the LGI considers the gender approach and the financing of feminist actions. It is measured by indicators grouped into five main areas, including Participatory Governance and Gender. The Participatory Governance and Gender domain has five indicators, particularly the number of specific actions favouring women during the year (description: Count of actions carried out by the municipality in favour of women over a year). This indicator requires Benin's municipalities or local communities to undertake actions specifically targeted at women.

Financing Feminism

Drawn up in April 2011, the Istanbul Convention was previously known as the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence. This convention emphasises that Parties must allocate appropriate financial and human resources for the effective implementation

5. Law 90-32 of December 11, 1990

of integrated policies, measures, and programs. These initiatives should aim to prevent and combat all forms of violence covered by the Convention's scope, including those undertaken by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and civil society.

This Convention specifies that Parties shall *“recognise, encourage and support, at all levels, the work of relevant non-governmental and civil society organisations that are active in combating violence against women, and establish effective cooperation with such organisations.”* Thus, the Istanbul Convention acknowledges the central role of feminists in promoting equal rights for men and women through their organisations.

Likewise, UN France argues that women's rights organisations play an essential role in combating gender-based violence, achieving progress towards a more equitable world, and eliminating violence against women and girls.

While feminist activism has demonstrably played a critical role in the mitigation of violence against women, a discernible global resurgence of anti-rights movements and a concurrent backlash against defenders of women's fundamental rights has been observed. The following three rationales underscore the imperative of funding women's organisations in the pursuit of eradicating violence against women and girls:

Providing Survivors with Life-Saving Services

Women's organisations play a vital role in providing services to survivors and victims of gender-based violence, which remains the most widespread form of human rights violation in the world, affecting at least one in three women. According to a United Nations study, only 40 per cent of women seek help after experiencing violence, making the advocacy work of women's rights organisations all the more critical. Women's rights organisations enable women and girls to assert their rights and seek help when they are victims of violence.

Fostering Political Change

Research shows that the presence of a strong, autonomous feminist movement is the most critical factor in advancing the fight against violence against women and girls at both national and international policy-making levels. Countries with more substantial feminist movements tend to have more comprehensive policies on violence against women than countries with weaker movements, thanks to the tireless advocacy of women's rights organisations that often receive very little funding.

Reducing gender-based violence

There is growing evidence that the efforts of women's rights organisations are reducing gender-based violence. Despite this, they remain chronically underfunded, emphasising the urgent and significant need for a sharp increase in funding for women's rights organisations.

AWID: Where's the Money for Organising Feminist Movements?

According to the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), women's rights organisations receive just 0.13% of official development assistance (ODA), and only 0.42% of foundation grants are directed towards women's rights projects. AWID's 2020 analysis shows that of the \$99 billion in grants awarded by private foundations in 2017, only \$422.3 million—or 0.42%—went to women's rights organisations.

An examination of governmental funding patterns reveals a parallel disparity. Analysis of the USD 153 billion allocated in international development funding by multilateral and bilateral donors in 2018 indicates that a mere USD 198 million, representing 0.13% of the total, was directed toward women's rights organisations. These figures show that feminist organisations do not yet have the full attention of governments to achieve an effective fight against violence against women.

Findings

Information gathered from all 12 departments indicates that gender mainstreaming remains a distant reality, and progress in integrating gender perspectives into decision-making bodies is slow at the authority level.

Table 2: Assessment of feminist associations and organisations

N°	Elements taken into account	Number of associations/ organisations (a)	Number of positive responses from organisations (b)	Percentage (b)/(a)
1	Does the municipality involve you in its activities?	23	5	21,74%
2	Does the municipality bring you together to hear your opinions on actions to be carried out in the municipality?	23	5	21,74%
3	Does your local authority fund your activities?	23	2	8,70%
4	Is your organisation self-sufficient when it comes to taking action to defend women's rights?	23	2	8,70%
5	Should town halls provide financial support for feminist organisations?	23	23	100%

Source: Database collected for 2024 survey

Analysis of the survey results in this table reveals that 21.74% of respondents are invited and occasionally involved in municipal activities. Most of these organisations are women market traders' associations or cooperatives of food producers or processors who are invited to participate in specific projects that involve them. Apart from this, no women's organisations are involved in municipal activities.

At the time of the study, 91.30% of the surveyed women's organisations did not receive any funding from the municipality. Only 8.7% of the recipients, including one in Cotonou and one in Porto-Novo, have received funding for their activities, which support the purchase of craft materials for a women's association and

participation in activities outside the country by an association leader. All the women's organisations interviewed in the surveyed municipalities agreed that their organisations should be financed by the municipalities.

Research findings also showed that in some municipalities, initiatives aimed at women were already underway. However, for the most part, the actions were carried out directly by the town halls, rather than by feminist organisations.

Table 3: Level of consideration given to actions specific to women

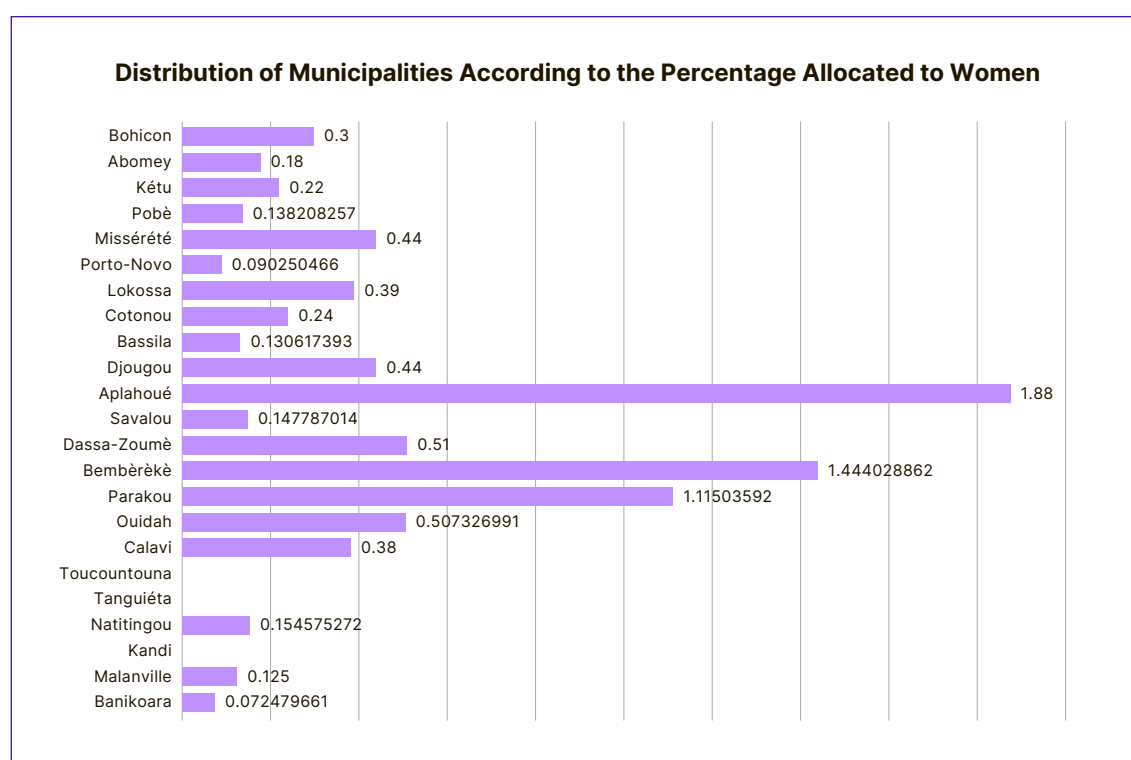
N°	Departments	Municipalities	Actions specific to women	Amounts allocated from equity (a)	Total own resources (taxes collected) (b)	Percentage (a)/(b)
1	Alibori	Banikoara	Subsidy to SPC for GBV and care for survivors/	600,000 XOF	827 818 441 XOF	0,07%
		Malanville	GBV	500,000 XOF	400 000 000 XOF	0,13%
		Kandi	-	-	456 800 711 XOF	0%
2	Atacora	Natitingou	Support for girls' high school	500,000 XOF	323 467 004 XOF	0,15%
		Tanguiéta	-	-	113 307 835 XOF	0%
		Toucountouna	-	-	47 014 289 XOF	0%
3	Atlantique	Calavi	Issuance of cards to canteen cooks/ Women's Day/ Women's literacy	10,000,000 XOF	4 000 000 000 XOF	0,38%
				4,000,000 XOF		
				1,000,000 XOF		
		Ouidah	Support for craftswomen in Ouidah/ Support for the girls' hostel	5 000 000 XOF	1 379 780 717 XOF	0,50%
				2,000,000 XOF		
4	Borgou	Parakou	Construction of hangars and stores for women's markets	24,000,000 XOF	2 152 397 027 XOF	1,11%
		Bembèrèkè	Women's empowerment	5,000,000 XOF	346 253 467 XOF	1,44%
5	Collines	Dassa – Zoumè	JIF / Indigent funds for women at the SPC	1,000,000 XOF	391 147 381 XOF	0,51%
				1,000,000 XOF		
		Savalou	Support for girls in Savalou	400,000 XOF	270 659 776 XOF	0,15%

N°	Departments	Municipalities	Actions specific to women	Amounts allocated from equity (a)	Total own resources (taxes collected) (b)	Percentage (a)/(b)
6	Couffo	Aplahoué	Tutoring for girls in middle school exam classes/ Tutoring for girls in primary school exam classes/ Consideration of GBV/Funds for girls' high school.	2,500,000 XOF	303 745 886 XOF	1,88%
				2,000,000 XOF		
				700,000 XOF		
				500,000 XOF		
7	Donga	Djougou	Grant to the social promotion centre for GBV/ Grant to the girls' high school in Natitingou	500,000 XOF	383 237 245 XOF	0,44%
				1,200,000 XOF		
		Bassila	Support for GBV at the SPC	500,000 XOF	382 797 411 XOF	0,13%
8	Littoral	Cotonou	Support for the girls' hostel	10,000,000 XOF	17 313 311 887 XOF	0,24%
			Raising awareness of unwanted pregnancies in Cotonou secondary schools/ Funding for a family planning project/ Raising awareness of the International Day of the Girl	5,000,000 XOF		
				25,000,000 XOF		
				2,500,000 XOF		
9	Mono	Lokossa	Awareness-raising and care for GBV/ Support for the girls' high school / Care for HIV carriers	1,000,000 XOF	510 504 388 XOF	0,39%
				500,000 XOF		
				500,000 XOF		
10	Ouémé	Porto-Novo	Support for organisations fighting against GBV	2,000,000 XOF	2 216 055 040 XOF	0,09%
		Misséréte	Support to the SPC for GBV / Social assistance for pregnant women	1,000,000 XOF	452 886 064 XOF	0,44%
				1,000,000 XOF		
11	Plateau	Pobè	JIF	517,000 XOF	374 073 164 XOF	0,13%
		Kétou	Support for gender promotion/ Support for girls at the Tofa 1er high school	300,000 XOF	230 777 384 XOF	0,22 %
				200, 000 XOF		

N°	Departments	Municipalities	Actions specific to women	Amounts allocated from equity (a)	Total own resources (taxes collected) (b)	Percentage (a)/(b)
12	Zou	Abomey	Support for the girls' high school / Gender and GBV consultation framework	500, 000 XOF	413 115 094 XOF	0,18%
				250,000 XOF		
		Bohicon	Support for the schooling of disadvantaged girls at the girls' high school, / Financial support for the organisation of the market women's festival	450,000 XOF	1 142 786 901 XOF	0,30%
				3,000,000 XOF		

Source: 2023 municipal budgets (2024 survey)

Figure 1: Consideration of actions specific to women in tax revenues



Source: Data collected in the 2024 survey

Overall, 89% of the surveyed communities have a feminist-sensitive budget. Among these, the amounts allocated remain very low, often less than 1% of overall resources. On the other hand, the municipalities of Kandi, Toucountouna, and Tanguiéta do not have resources for women.

Table 4: Assessment of feminist-sensitive criteria in the municipalities

N°	Labels	Total number of municipalities subject to the criterion	Number of municipalities meeting the criterion	Percentage
1	Gender-sensitive budget / Gender-sensitive own resources	22	19	86,38%
2	Planned activities to promote gender equality in the municipality	22	19	86,38%
3	Discussion and collection of the periodic needs of women's associations in the municipality	22	10	45,45%
4	Measures taken at the local level to protect women and ensure the effective application of laws in favour of women's rights	22	15	68,18%
5	Do you ever gather information on the needs of market women or craftswomen from whom you collect taxes?	22	7	31,82%
6	Evaluation of the amount or overall rate of taxes collected from market women, artisans, or roadside stores	22	0	00 %
7	Knowledge of the share of women traders in the municipal budget	22	5 ⁶	22,72%
8	The municipality may agree to vote for or set aside a specific heading to fund feminist organisations for gender equality actions.	22	22	100%

Source: 2023 municipal budgets (2024 survey)

No municipality could estimate the proportion of its revenues or taxes from women annually. Also, no municipality disaggregated the data regarding taxes collected from women and men.

Approximately 22.72% of municipal executives estimated that women contributed 60-70% of tax revenue. This estimation was based on the gender of individuals most active in the markets. Some estimates, even without exact figures, suggest that women account for a significant proportion of the municipalities' resources collected.

6. Estimation by some municipalities based on the gender of the majority of taxpayers (no exact figures)

However, the municipalities do not yet fund women's organisations, except for Cotonou, Porto-Novo, and Calavi, which tend to support organisations run by men in general. Bembèrèkè, for example, has scheduled funding for women's organisations for 2024 but has postponed this until 2025.

Town hall planners, responsible for listing civil society organisations, explained that they have difficulty identifying women's organisations in their municipalities. For some, they are virtually non-existent, as they are either non-functional or unknown to the town hall departments. They also mentioned the difficulty of making substantial recoveries from the town hall's funds, considering many things.

Consequently, all municipalities agreed to either vote for or make provision for a heading dedicated to gender equality activities. Furthermore, they committed to financing women's activities in their 2026 budgets for the majority, and as early as 2025 for a few. For its effectiveness, pleas or motivational communications had to be made to the municipality supervisory boards from the beginning of 2025.

Integrating Women into Decision-Making Bodies

Table 5: Assessment of the level of integration of women in municipal decision-making bodies

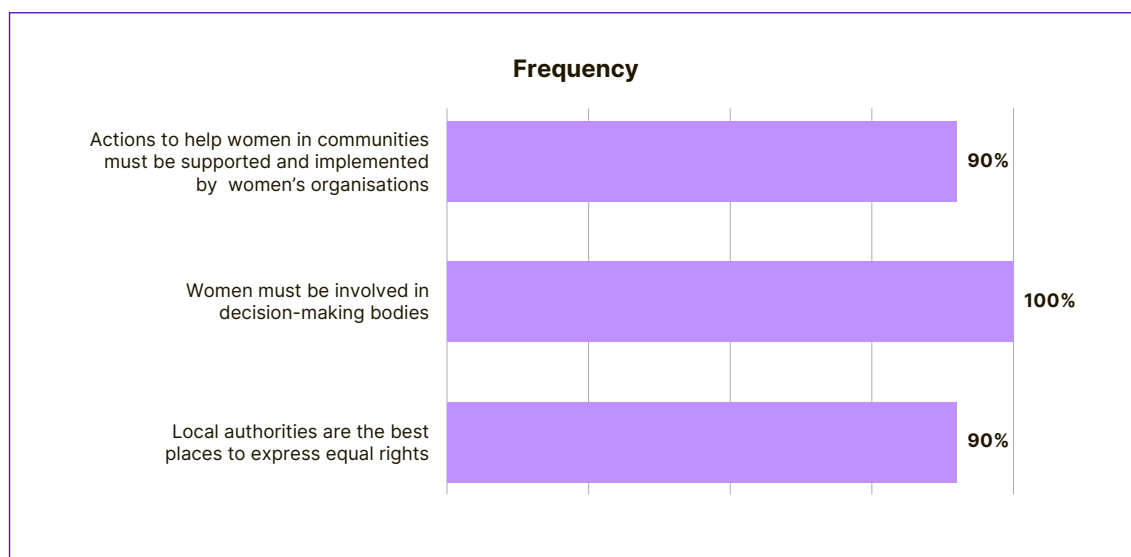
N°	Municipalities	Number of advisors (a)	Number of women (b)	Percentage (b)/(a)
1	Abomey	19	2	10,53%
2	Ouidah	29	3	10,34%
3	Calavi	49	5	10,20%
4	Porto Novo	33	4	12,12%
5	Aplahoué	28	3	10,71%
6	Lokossa	25	1	4,00%
7	Bohicon	29	3	10,34%
8	Dassa	25	1	4,00%
9	Djougou	33	0	0,00%
10	Cotonou	48	7	14,58

11	Parakou	31	4	12,90%
12	Tanguiéta	34	3	8,82%
13	Toucoutouna	27	3	11,11%
14	Natitingou	25	1	4,00%
15	Bembèrèkè	25	1	4,00%
16	Malanville	29	1	3,45%
17	Banikoara	33	2	6,06%
18	Savalou	25	0	0,00%
19	Bassila	25	1	4,00%
20	Kandi	29	1	3,45%
21	Kétou	22	2	9,09%
22	Pobè	25	1	4,00%
23	Missérété	25	1	4%
	TOTAL	673	50	7,42 %

Source: Municipal councils (2024 survey data collection)

Women are underrepresented in decision-making bodies, which would help ensure that actions specific to women are considered. Local public financial resources are essential to enhance the role of women in our societies, which also involves integrating women's organisations into municipal development initiatives. The municipalities where the rate of women present in municipal councils reaches 10% are 8 out of 23 municipalities surveyed, i.e, 34% of the target municipalities.

The majority of departmental authorities, including the prefects and members of parliament interviewed, were committed to feminism. They have proposed introducing grassroots funding for feminism and are available to support it.

Figure 2: Assessment of the theme by departmental and parliamentary authorities

Source: Municipal councils (2024 survey data collection)

Departmental officials hold differing views on the importance of equal rights for women and men. A significant majority (90%) consider municipalities as the most effective level for promoting gender equality and protecting women's rights. In comparison, a smaller proportion (10%) believe the central state should take the primary role. There is a strong consensus (90%) that municipalities have the capacity and responsibility to create channels for women's organisations to access funding for local development initiatives. One member of parliament said, "We shouldn't wait for Official Development Assistance for everything before taking action."

To address violence against women, feminist efforts require public financial resources. This research examines the perspectives of local authorities and ministry officials on the importance of public funding for gender equality initiatives. A questionnaire was used to evaluate their comprehension of feminism, their present engagement, and their openness to incorporating dedicated budgets for women. The objective was to understand their perspectives on allocating specific financial resources to advance women's roles in society.

Feminist organisations advocate for municipalities to allocate specific funding for their initiatives, arguing that this would greatly benefit the local governments. They contend that women's organisations possess a deep understanding of grassroots communities and can effectively contribute to the reduction of violence against women through targeted actions. Furthermore, these organisations would actively participate in the development of municipalities and assist in the execution of community projects, thereby enhancing local governance and social well-being.

Women from feminist associations would help municipalities raise awareness among market women and other businesses of the benefits of paying taxes and contribute to tax collection from women traders and entrepreneurs. The unemployment rate among women in the municipalities is expected to be reduced, as women's organisations will be able to recruit women and collect income taxes from them. These organisations will promote laws in favour of women's rights, such as *Law 2021-11 of December 2021, which provides special provisions for the repression of offences committed on the grounds of gender and the protection of women in the Republic of Benin*.

Many municipalities (11%) fail to dedicate resources or collect taxes to women's initiatives. Even among the 89% that undertake specific actions, the level of consideration is minimal, with town halls primarily leading these efforts. Few municipalities provide funding to civil society organisations for development and social activities. This situation indicates that gender equality is not a priority, highlighting the necessity for a systematic approach and guidelines for incorporating funding for women's CSOs into budgets.

Women's organisations are rarely asked to participate in defending women's rights. The limited impact of women in local municipal decision-making is evident, with an average representation of only 7% in these bodies, as demonstrated in Table 5. This level of involvement is practically negligible. In general, municipality officials are in favour of including lines for funding feminist and women's organisations in their forthcoming budgets, provided that advocacy communications are made in good time at the level of final decision-making bodies, such as supervisory boards and municipal councils.

Initiatives and good practices developed at national, regional, and local levels

In Benin, the government has implemented measures at the ministry level to support women's organisations. The ministries that work closely with women's organisations are the Ministry of Social Affairs and Microfinance and the Ministry of Health. They must approve feminist organisations receiving direct funding from these ministries. Approval is obtained by submitting an application and paying a fee. The organisation must be in good standing and justify its involvement in the field in its official documents and experience. Many other ministries collaborate with civil society organisations, including the Ministry of Sport, Agriculture, and Fisheries, where women's organisations are underrepresented.

The Association for the Development of the Borgou Municipalities (ADeCoB) organises the Best Governance Award, which serves as a precursor to the Local Governance Index (LGI). This initiative aims to guide Borgou municipalities towards embracing sound governance principles and prioritising actions that promote women's rights. The LGI further motivates these municipalities to enhance their integration of gender considerations.

Research in Benin suggests that municipal taxes could fund feminist initiatives, with prefects and town hall staff demonstrating a commitment. Survey respondents suggested two local financing options: competitive calls for proposals where organisations propose projects for funding, and direct subsidies to registered feminist organisations presenting well-justified projects before the annual budget vote.

Recommendations

This section allows for the formulation of recommendations to strengthen the involvement of public resources in the fight against violence against women.

Municipalities and supervisory bodies

- ➔ To advance the role of women in the Majority World, local and regional authorities should allocate funds for feminist initiatives within their yearly budgets, irrespective of their financial capacity, ensuring inclusivity. It is advisable to dedicate a segment of municipal income or taxes to feminist groups. These organisations implement local projects aimed at safeguarding the rights of the most marginalised and fostering sustainable development.

For feminist organisations

- ➔ To secure consideration in municipal budgets, women's organisations should actively engage at the local level and demonstrate their effectiveness and visibility to gain community trust and confidence. Survey findings indicate a municipal willingness to fund feminist organisations through annual tax revenues. Therefore, these organisations should strategically organise and conduct motivational outreach to advocate for substantial budgetary allocations. To facilitate this, research partners should continue to support the implementation of budgeting mechanisms for women's organisations within the identified municipalities in 2025.

Conclusion

This study cannot be concluded without acknowledging the efforts already underway in various municipalities of Benin regarding women's rights. The possibility of including lines in the budgets of municipalities, as gathered during the meetings, already favours the apprehension of feminism in Benin.

Declarations, texts, conventions, and international, regional, and national laws favour the implementation of the financing of feminist organisations in Benin through taxes collected from local governments, represented by municipalities in our country.

This research can be scaled up in other African countries and achieve similar results if the legal provisions, such as those found in Benin, are in place.

The researchers hope that advocacy will be conducted with relevant decision-making bodies, such as supervisory boards and municipal councils, at the local level in subsequent initiatives. The aim is that the majority of the selected municipalities will include specific budget allocations for subsidies to feminist organisations by the 2026 fiscal year.

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Annex: Roadmap

Roadmap for effective local funding of feminist organisations in Benin

(Developed by stakeholders at the end of the validation workshop of the research report)

N°	Actions	Responsible	Associates	Deadline
01	Advocate to the National Association of Benin Municipalities (NACB) for the creation of a systematic municipal budget line to fund feminist organisations and associations	Team of researchers	ES/ Director of Local Development and Planning (DLDP)/DAFA of town halls	January 2025 at the earliest
02	Train elected women councillors on the importance of budgeting funding for women's organisations in municipalities	Team of researchers	Mayors / Councillors	February 2025
03	Meet with mayors to introduce communication to the supervisory board to convince them of the need to create budget lines for funding feminist organisations	Team of researchers	ES	January / February 2025
05	Raise awareness of the need for organisations to register with town halls	ES	DLDP/ Director of Information Systems (DIS)	Permanent
04	Raise awareness of and support for women's associations/groups in municipalities to formalise and collaborate with town halls	ES	Prefecture /ATDA/ Town Hall Official Journal	permanent
05	Train women's organisations on the importance of paying royalties	ES	Director of Administrative and Financial Affairs (DAFA)/ DLDP	permanent

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