



## ■ In Profile – Micheline Gilbert, Global Affairs Canada



Micheline Gilbert has over 25 years of international development experience in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean region. She worked for 11 years in five developing countries: in Rwanda, Angola, Cambodia with UNDP, and more recently in Mozambique and Morocco with Global Affairs Canada (GAC). She has experience in managing various governance programming in fragile states. She holds a MA in Economics and a post-graduate degree in international development. She is currently a Senior Governance Specialist providing support and advice to GAC programmes in relation to the Department's feminist policy.

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**Dear Micheline, let us first thank you for taking your time for this interview! You are the GAC's focal point in the DeLoG Network since November 2018. What were your first impressions of DeLoG and its activities?**

I was pleased to participate this year in different events organised by DeLoG and get to know the network better. I participated in the learning event, 'local governance and sustaining peace' in Brussels and on the session during the Africities conference in Marrakech, 'Leaving no one behind – by localizing the SDGs' organised by DeLoG and UCLG. Both events helped me to understand what DeLoG does and how DeLoG works through its network. These two events were really well organized and useful for my day-to-day work. My recent participation at the Annual Meeting helped me to get further knowledge about DeLoG. I think DeLoG's emphasis in 2018 - 2019 on leaving no one behind and on fragile states was really judicious, two areas of intervention becoming essential for obvious reasons and where stakeholders put more emphasis than ever.

**On a personal note: When did you start to work in the field of local governance and decentralisation and from where do you draw your motivation?**

I started to work in the governance sector since almost the beginning of my career at the UN in 1994. I was responsible among other files of local governance projects and public sector reforms. Since then I have always been involved in the governance sector, except for a few years working on global health issues.

These days, my motivation is coming from the Canadian feminist approach and leaving no one behind. I firmly believe that to reach the poor, most vulnerable and most marginalized ones, particularly women and girls at local level, we need to empower them notably in giving them access, to public life, decent work and to adequate services.



**Global Affairs Canada (GAC) leads Canada's international development and humanitarian assistance. Can you tell us more about GAC's approach in Local Governance and Decentralisation?**

Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP), is human rights-based, inclusive and focuses Canada's international assistance on reducing inequalities to eradicate poverty. This approach aims to be mainstreamed in all our programming, including local governance and decentralisation, to counter systemic discrimination and unequal power relationships. For Canada, governance is inclusive when it effectively serves and engages all people and takes into account gender and other facets of personal identity. That also means that institutions, policies and services at the local level are accessible, accountable and responsive to all members of the society. Partners working with us have to include these key concepts and approach in their proposal.

Canada focuses its efforts at local level on various paths to advance "inclusive governance", support growth and public services that work for everyone. For instance, we: enhance participation in public life especially for women; use innovation to generate decent jobs and foster women's entrepreneurship to enhance the inclusiveness of growth; work with service providers, local governments, CSOs, private sector entities and the media to foster gender-responsive, inclusive and human rights-based approaches to deliver public services in post conflict settings; strengthen women's leadership and women's rights organisations and networks at local levels and support greater political participation by women, through training programmes for women candidates and through support for gender-responsive civic education; support public sector reforms, including decentralisation processes, which foster diversity and gender equality as well as leadership opportunities for people from marginalised groups; support women-led private sector initiatives, financial inclusion and access to decent work, which includes corporate gender equality as well as diversity; find innovative solutions, encouraging multi-stakeholder partnerships that involve 'blended finance' and impact investment to mobilise new sources of financing for development.

**Which emerging topics do you see for the work of Global Affairs Canada for the following years to come and which activities are on the agenda at the moment?**

As I just mentioned, we are working hand-in-hand with women's rights and other equality-seeking organisations and movements, especially those that represent the voices and interests of the most marginalised. Besides, in February 2019, Canada developed a new initiative for international assistance funding over five years with 10 million dollars per year local and regional LGBTQ2I organisations. This should contribute to advance human rights and improve socioeconomic outcomes for LGBTQ2I communities in developing countries and in Canada as well.

I would say that second emerging topic Canada is working on improving the accessibility and inclusion for persons with disabilities and their representative organisations at a domestic and international level. Through its engagement in the Global Action on Disability (GLAD) Network Global Affairs Canada has been focused on advancing the issue in international development and humanitarian action, which we see as a key to fulfil the 'leave no one behind'-promise of the 2030 Agenda.

Finally, we work with multi-stakeholder partners that advance 'blended finance' and impact investment to mobilise new sources of financing for development as a new way to support development. Such partnerships can be in collaboration with FinDev Canada (Canada's



Development Finance Institute) and other platforms for trade and social finance, including the private sector, philanthropists, institutional investors and public institutions such as multilateral development banks.

**Last question concerning Global Affairs Canada. The organisation has started to implement its Feminist International policy in June 2017 to promote gender equality. Which gender-sensitive reforms and legislation were especially relevant concerning local governance activities?**

GAC launched the Women Voice and Leadership programme in 2017. By providing women's rights organisations and networks with direct funding, this programme reduces funding gaps. The support also helps to advance gender equality and empower women in developing countries, at a grassroots level, and supports the promotion and protecting of their human rights. This programme is implemented through 30 projects with several partners in 30 countries, looking at increasing the effectiveness of local and national women's rights platforms, networks and alliances. The projects affect legal and social change, which includes the reform of discriminatory laws, such as those that impede women's equitable access, for instance to natural resources or economic assets. This kind of programme responds to the needs and priorities identified by women's rights organisations and place women at the centre of the project implementation.

**Let us talk more about your involvement in DeLoG now. You have recently also joined the Strategic Support Group, where guidance is given to the Secretariat. What would you and your colleagues at GAC like to focus on in your cooperation within the DeLoG-Network?**

We would like to showcase some of the work we do in terms of finding innovative solutions for the promotion and respect for women and girls economic and social rights such as innovative financing as well as collaborating more with the private sector at local level. Women's access to good, well-paying work, and enhanced labour and property rights are the types of activities that we are really pushing forward. We would be pleased to share some of the activities GAC does with the DeLoG network. That would be a great opportunity!

**We understand that some of your programmes are being implemented by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM). Can you tell our readers a little more about this approach and how this could be useful for DeLoG in the future?**

GAC has identified FCM as a key partner to increase inclusive governance and democracy at the local level. In 2015, GAC has developed a special five year-agreement with FCM concerning objects such as advancing democracy and good governance, strengthening economic prosperity and the engagement of the private sector, supporting safety and security especially in terms of including emergency preparedness in countries affected by natural disasters and conflict. FCM has various experiences and insights in Canada and abroad on fostering inclusive local governments, as well as engaging more women - from diverse backgrounds - in running for municipal office for instance, or generating local revenues. We decided to develop a specific partnership with FCM to increase and strengthen these interventions. Their strength is their ability to draw upon the expertise of its municipal members, a network of consultants specialised in municipal development.



Currently GAC has eight active development projects with FCM in various countries, which focus mainly on local governance and economic development and on the participation of women in municipal governance in Africa, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and the Americas. There will be more joint project's in the future. GAC and FCM will be pleased to share with the network some of these experiences.

**You participated at this year's DeLoG Annual Meeting in Bern. What were highlights of this participation and what do you think could we improve for next year?**

In general, I liked the way the Annual Meeting was managed. I liked the participative reflexion process and the peer-to-peer learning activities, notably concerning the preparation of the workplan. It was a good process to get to know each other, to share experiences and ideas. To further improve the outcome of the meeting, here are few suggestions: 1) to strengthen the analysis/discussion around the WP, we may want to report back more at outcomes level than at the activities level. Did we meet our outcomes? If not, why?; (2) to further enrich the discussions and help covering a wider range of possible activities, a draft workplan to review ahead of the meeting will be great. It will allow participants to start thinking about possible options and then share their views in small discussion groups at the AM; (3) to ensure local partners/organisations actively participate to the meeting, we may think at inviting several more of these. As key players, their views are essential to enhance discussions and develop a network that also responds to their needs.

**In general, what type of DeLoG would you like to see and shape in the future?**

In a near future, I would be great to see a DeLoG-Network that encourages further Innovation in finding solutions for the promotion of inclusive local governance (e.g. innovative finance for entrepreneurship, leadership, collaboration with the private sector, etc.), and; Promotes its uniqueness, added value, that is more visible and used by key stakeholders. Finally, I believe it is important to further develop collaboration with other networks, like GPEDC, OECD EIP, GovNet, GenderNet to foster synergies and efficiencies while streamlining efforts.