

## Women's Contribution to Urban Governance In The Municipalities Of Greater Lomé

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### Abstract

*This paper analyses, in the specific context of Togo, the contribution of women to urban governance in the municipalities of Greater Lomé, which is characterised by a dynamic of decentralisation and growing citizen participation. Although women play a central role in society, their formal involvement in urban decision-making processes remains limited, particularly due to restrictive sociocultural norms, lack of access to training and information, and the absence of specific institutional support to strengthen their engagement. The study adopts a mixed methodology combining quantitative surveys of women and men living in the municipalities of Greater Lomé, semi-structured interviews with key actors such as local elected officials, NGO managers and community leaders, as well as a documentary analysis of the legislative and institutional frameworks governing urban governance in Togo. The results show that the involvement of women in governance is constantly increasing, even though they are affected by sociocultural influences that limit their participation in decision-making processes. However, the article emphasises that local initiatives are bearing fruit, particularly in certain municipalities where programmes to strengthen women's capacities are being implemented. To strengthen the contribution of women in the urban governance of the municipalities of Greater Lomé, this study recommends eliminating structural and sociocultural barriers, improving access to training for women, and creating an institutional environment that supports their involvement in governance processes.*

**Keywords:** *Urban governance, Contribution of women, Decentralisation, Sociocultural barriers, Greater Lomé.*

### Introduction

The participation of women in the development of cities and the consideration of their particular needs are on the international agenda, particularly since the World Summit on Sustainable Development ('Habitat II').

During his inauguration speech as the first black president of South Africa, a historic moment for the country, Mandela said that 'social progress can only be achieved through the joint efforts of all, men and women' (Nelson Mandela, 1994). This statement by the former South African president emphasises the importance, indeed the necessity, of the contribution of each and every person, man and woman, to the development of the city. The world, and Africa in particular, needs to make full use of the skills and talents of all its citizens, including women, in order to ensure more inclusive and balanced growth (Merzouki, 2016). This is a reality on a global scale and particularly for the African continent.

The need to promote equitable inclusivity of women in political decisions is an essential element of Development Goal 11 (make cities and settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable). Consequently, sustainable urban governance must meet the needs of women by ensuring that they have a voice in the decision-making process on the same basis as men (ONU Femmes, 2024).

In Africa, as everywhere else in the world, it is women who provide most of the food and who own a third of the businesses (African Development Bank, 2019). Agri-food systems are major providers of employment for women due to a lack of education and limited access to essential infrastructure and markets. In 2019, 36% of women and 38% of men in the labour force worked in agri-food systems. Nevertheless, women make up well over 50% of the agricultural labour force in many sub-Saharan African countries (FAO, 2023). Indeed, women make up almost half of the world's population. However, their social, economic and political status is inferior to that of men in many countries because they are rarely

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taken into account by the public authorities (Singhal, 2014). In Africa, as in Togo, women are under-represented in public affairs management bodies. They are disadvantaged in their participation in local and national political life. This is because they are disadvantaged in their access to political processes.

Like other African countries, Togo is a West African country, but it is not exempt from the many challenges facing urban governance. To this end, the representation of women in local consultation frameworks remains low. This can be explained by the following observations: a low level of involvement of women in local political action; limited analytical and action capacities for women leaders; a lack of visibility and structuring of women's organisations around local political action; and local authorities that are still too often lacking in voluntarism, skills and relevant tools to address the issue of gender. Based on these observations, the present study looks at the contribution of women to urban governance in the municipalities of Greater Lomé in Togo, as their involvement in local development planning remains limited. Because women are catalysts for change, the integration of women into local government and their effective representation would be a key element in urban governance in African cities. This study looks at the question of *what contribution women make to urban governance in Greater Lomé?* By examining this question, we aim to gain a detailed understanding of the actions and influence of women within the governance structures of the municipalities of Greater Lomé. The main objective is to assess the contribution of women to the governance of the municipalities of Greater Lomé. This objective involves not only (i) identifying and measuring the contribution of women in decision-making bodies, but also (ii) evaluating their impact on the urban governance policies and practices of Greater Lomé. To achieve these objectives, we formulate the following hypothesis: the contribution of women to the governance of the municipalities of Greater Lomé is influenced by institutional, cultural and socio-economic factors. This hypothesis postulates that institutional variables, cultural norms and socio-economic conditions play a decisive role in the participation and effectiveness of women in urban governance (Ayelevi Adjo Nubukpo & Carina Kern, 2020).

## Materials and method

### The study environment

Togo is a sub-Saharan country in West Africa, located on the Atlantic Ocean. It is bordered to the east by Benin, to the west by Ghana, to the north by Burkina Faso and to the south by the Gulf of Guinea in the Atlantic Ocean. With a surface area of 56,600 km<sup>2</sup>, the country is rectangular in shape and divided into 5 large regions from north to south: the Savannah Region, the Kara Region, the Central Region, the Plateaux Region and the Maritime Region. Located at 6°13' and 6°8' north latitude and 1°12' and 1°21' east longitude, in the extreme south-west of Togo, in the Maritime Region, along the coast of the Gulf of Guinea, Lomé, the capital, is bounded by the marshy valley of the Zio River to the north-east, the Atlantic Ocean to the south and the Togo-Ghana border to the west (Bawa, n.d.). Since Law No. 2019-006 of 26 June 2019 on decentralisation (Togo-Loi-2022 sur la décentralisation, 2022), the city of Lomé has become the Autonomous District of Greater Lomé, a local authority with special status comprising two prefectures: the Gulf Prefecture and the Agoè-Nyivé Prefecture. The Gulf prefecture has 7 municipalities (Golfe 1 to 7) and the Agoè-Nyivé prefecture has 6 municipalities (Agoè-Nyivé 1 to 6). Greater Lomé thus comprises 13 municipalities over an area of 425.6 km<sup>2</sup>. From 375,000 inhabitants in 1981, the population of Lomé rose to 800,000 in 2000 (Guézéré, 2011) and 1,571,508 in 2010, and has had a population of 2,078,182 inhabitants since the last census in 2022 (INSEED - Togo, 2023), or 24% of the national population. This strong demographic pressure has led to spatial expansion that has blurred the boundary between urban and peri-urban areas. The agglomeration covers an area of 333 km<sup>2</sup>, including 30 km<sup>2</sup> in the lagoon area, and extends to the border with Ghana, located a few metres from the city centre (Figure 1).

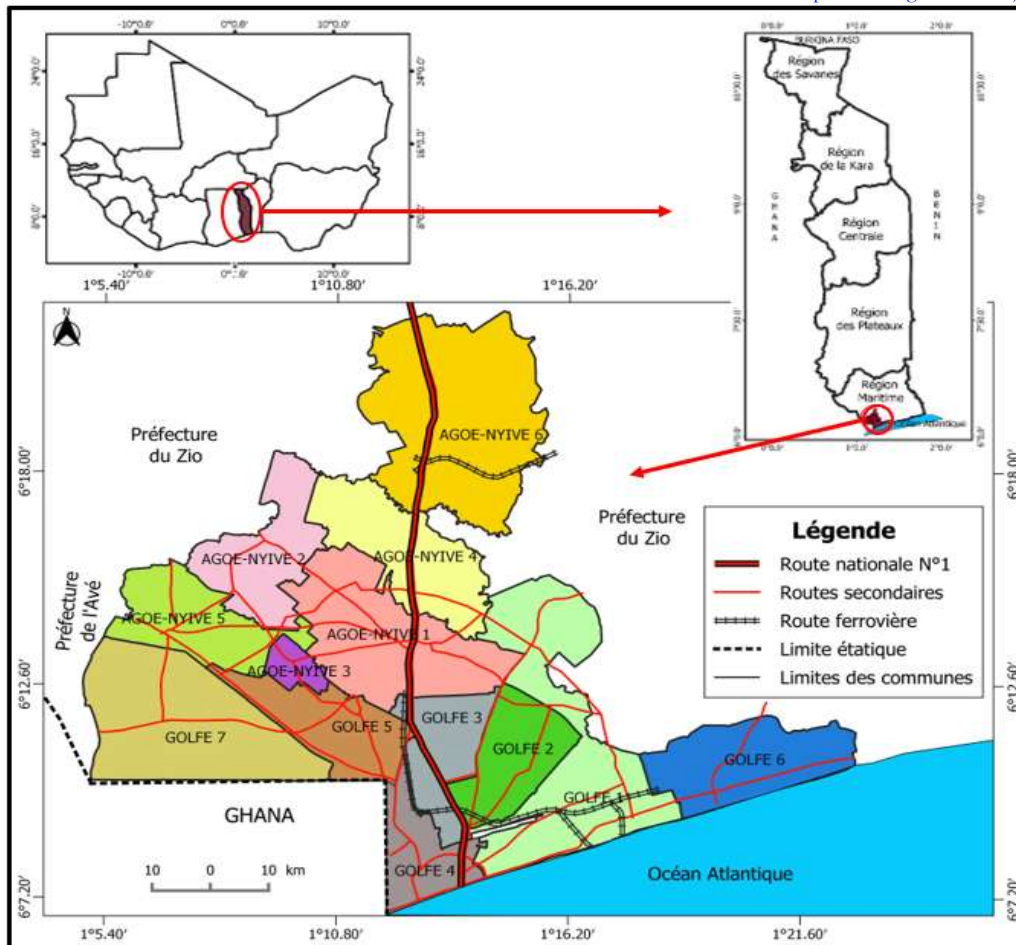


Figure 1: Geographical location of Greater Lomé.

Source: Author

### Constitution of the study sample

The sample was constituted in accordance with the provisions of law no. 2019-006 of 26 June 2019 amending law no. 2007-011 of 13 March 2007 on decentralisation and local freedoms, as amended by law no. 2018-003 of 31 January 2018, based on drawing on documents from the Ministry of Territorial Administration, Decentralisation and Local Authorities and the work of Tankpé (2015) cited by (Maman & Magnangou, 2019)). Various statistical methods for forming samples for scientific studies were also called upon.

The surveyed population was distributed across the thirteen (13) municipalities of Greater Lomé. The simple random sampling method was used to select the populations to be surveyed. The sample size was determined using the Schwartz formula, which allowed us to deduce for the entire urban population of Greater Lomé.

Using the Schwarz formula, the sample size 'n' (384) was determined, with a risk of error (i) of 5% for a reduced variance (z) of 1.96 at a proportion (p) of 50%. However, for the smaller target of local councillors (141), Cochran's formula was generalised as follows: where N represents the number of local councillors in Greater Lomé from which the municipal sample is extracted.

The chosen unit of investigation being the commune, the entire direct and indirect actors of urban governance then constitute the target population of the study. The following Table 1 presents the distribution of the population by commune in Greater Lomé.

**Table 1. Population size by commune of Greater Lomé**

Golfe	Headcount	Frequency	Agoè-Nyivé	Headcount	Frequency
Golfe 1	351 550	27%	Agoè-Nyivé 1	317 255	36%
Golfe 2	136 153	10%	Agoè-Nyivé 2	128 164	15%
Golfe 3	52 769	4%	Agoè-Nyivé 3	47 554	5%
Golfe 4	155 842	12%	Agoè-Nyivé 4	154 431	17%
Golfe 5	169 993	13%	Agoè-Nyivé 5	125 097	14%
Golfe 6	181 561	14%	Agoè-Nyivé 6	110 194	13%
Golfe 7	257 813	20%			
Total	1 305 681	100%	Total	882 695	100%

Source: National Institute of Statistics and Economic and Demographic Studies of Togo (INSEED - Togo, 2023).

The study involved 141 of the 225 elected representatives. In addition to the municipal councillors who are elected representatives, four appointed general secretaries, administrative and technical staff, and members of civil society were also surveyed. The four general secretaries concerned are the only women in these positions of responsibility. Table 2 below shows the distribution of local elected representatives by municipality in Greater Lomé.

**Table 2. Proportion of local elected representatives per commune in Greater Lomé**

Golfe	Headcount	Frequency	Agoè-Nyivé	Headcount	Frequency
Golfe 1	23	16%	Agoè-Nyivé 1	23	29%
Golfe 2	19	13%	Agoè-Nyivé 2	11	14%
Golfe 3	19	13%	Agoè-Nyivé 3	11	14%
Golfe 4	23	16%	Agoè-Nyivé 4	11	14%
Golfe 5	23	16%	Agoè-Nyivé 5	13	16%
Golfe 6	19	13%	Agoè-Nyivé 6	11	14%
Golfe 7	19	13%			
Total	145	100%	Total	80	100%

Source: Author

The total number of respondents was 384 individuals. It should be noted that except for the municipality of Agoè-Nyivé 5, the other municipalities are not headed by women.

The sample size, denoted 'n' (384), was calculated using the Schwartz formula, with a confidence level (z) of 1.96, corresponding to a margin of error (i) of 5% and a hypothetical proportion (p) of 50%. This approach guarantees statistical representativeness for the entire target population.

For the subgroup of local councillors (141), Cochran's formula was adjusted to consider the finite size of this population, using N to represent the total number of local councillors in the municipalities of Greater Lomé.

Table 3 summarises the proportions of councillors selected for the study in each municipality, ensuring representative coverage within the municipal sample.

### Rationale for the selection of municipalities and the sample

Although the coastal municipalities of the Gulf have similar territorial and sociodemographic characteristics, as do the peri-urban municipalities of Agoè-Nyivé, this study has chosen to include all thirteen municipalities of Greater Lomé. This extensive coverage makes it possible to capture the specific perceptions and realities of each municipality, ensuring an exhaustive and representative approach to the various local dynamics.

The sample includes municipal councillors, municipal secretaries general, resource persons, heads of civil society organisations involved in governance and women's leadership, as well as administrative and technical staff from the municipalities. The sampling of local elected representatives was carried out by stratum, with a representative selection of 37% of the targets located in the prefecture of Agoè-Nyivé and 63% in the prefecture of the Gulf.

To determine the number of elected representatives to be interviewed in each municipality, a ratio was calculated by dividing the sample size by the total number of elected representatives in the selected municipalities. This ratio was then applied to the number of elected representatives in each municipality to obtain a representative sample. Table 3 below shows the distribution of local councillors surveyed by municipality, ensuring proportionality that is faithful to the actual numbers of councillors in each area.

Respondents for the semi-structured interviews were recruited for convenience. Each member was interviewed once. However, the snowball effect (Wilhelm, 2014), based on the networks of those recruited, was used when interviewing resource persons.

**Table 3.** Local elected representatives surveyed by the municipality

Prefecture	Municipality	Number	Ratio	Sample
Golfe	Golfe 1	23	0.97	22
	Golfe 4	23	0.97	22
	Golfe 5	23	0.97	22
	Golfe 2	19	0.97	18
Agoè-nyivé	Agoè-Nyivé 1	23	0.97	22
	Agoè-Nyivé 5	13	0.97	13
	Agoè-Nyivé 2	11	0.97	11
	Agoè-Nyivé 3	11	0.97	11
<b>Total</b>		<b>146</b>	<b>0.97</b>	<b>141</b>

Source: Author

## Data collection methodology

The study uses a mixed approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative methods, to collect reliable data on the contributions of women in the management of the municipalities of Greater Lomé. In addition to the literature review, fifteen (15) semi-structured interviews, four (4) focus groups and surveys of various stakeholders were used to explore the realities that influence women's contribution to municipal governance.

The literature review identified similar studies. Respondents for the semi-structured interviews were selected for convenience, and a snowball effect developed by Wilhelm, (2014) made it possible to mobilise the networks of respondents during interviews with resource persons. These surveys involved municipal councillors, municipal secretaries general, members of civil society, administrative staff and residents of the municipalities of Greater Lomé.

It should be noted that the data collection forms used for the individual interviews contained information such as:

- Socio-economic characteristics (age, gender, occupation, level of education, marital status, etc.).
- The current state of women's participation in urban governance in Greater Lomé and the population's view of this governance.
- Perception of the role of women and female leadership in urban governance.
- Women's contribution to urban governance.

Data collection took place between June 2022 and April 2024. The interview guide developed for this purpose has four sections: the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents (I), the state of play of urban governance (II), perceptions of the role of women and female leadership (III), and the contribution of women to the urban governance of Greater Lomé (IV). For the present study, which focuses mainly on the last section, the results will concern the assessments of questions such as: Do you participate in municipal decision-making? Are you a member of a technical committee? Do you participate in the definition of municipal strategies? Is your opinion considered? Do you often make spontaneous proposals? How do you contribute to the governance of the municipality? Is there a hierarchy of contributions? ...).

The contextual variables relate to institutional variables (such as public policies, legislation and institutional support), cultural norms (including traditional perceptions of gender roles) and socio-economic conditions (such as level of education, economic opportunities and access to resources). The semi-directive approach provided a better understanding of women's contributions to urban governance, taking the study beyond the simple collection of closed data (Argyris et Schon, 1994) (Thiétart, 2014).

The qualitative analysis method used was narrative analysis. It consisted of interpreting the data provided by the respondents, including testimonies, examples, focus groups, interviews and data from direct observations.

## Data processing

As part of this study on women's contribution to urban governance in Greater Lomé, the data collected using KoboCollect v2022.4.4 software was extracted and exported to Excel 2021 (Microsoft Office 365). The data collected by audio recording was transcribed manually. STATA 14 software was then used to format and analyse all the data. This analysis focused on descriptive statistics relating to sociodemographic parameters (level of education, monthly income, dependants, age and gender). A hierarchical classification was also favoured to group the respondents according to a similar perception of the contribution of women



in urban governance. Then, triangulation of the cross-checked information made it possible to highlight the most relevant elements and group them by category of ideas.

## Results

The data presented in Table 2 below illustrate the assessment of women's contribution to urban governance in Greater Lomé.

**Table 2.** Distribution of respondents on the contribution of women to urban governance

	Number of participants	Frequency (%)
<b>Women's membership of technical committees</b>		
Yes	35	100
No	0	0
<b>Participation of women in the implementation of strategies put in place by the State</b>		
Yes	116	30
No	268	70
<b>Application of measures favouring the contribution of women</b>		
Yes	50	13
No	61	16
No answer	273	71
<b>Effectiveness of policies promoting the contribution of women</b>		
Yes	25	7
No	25	7
No answer	334	86
<b>Existence of municipal strategies promoting the contribution of women</b>		
Yes	51	13
No	333	87

Source : Author

Analysis of this data shows that 100% of respondents confirm that women belong to technical committees. This unanimity underlines the formal integration of women in these bodies, suggesting recognition of their potential role in urban governance. But it is also a consequence of the very small number of women in local government.

Only 30% of respondents believe that women participate in the implementation of strategies put in place by the state, compared to 70% who indicate the opposite. These figures reveal a low level of operational participation by women, highlighting a gap between their theoretical inclusion and their actual contribution.

The results also reveal that only 13% of respondents believe that measures to promote women's contribution are being applied, while 16% think the opposite. An overwhelming majority of 71% did not respond. This high non-response rate may reflect a lack of awareness or information about the existence and impact of these measures.

At the same time, 86% did not express an opinion on the effectiveness of policies promoting the contribution of women, while 87% think that such policies do not even exist. These figures probably point

to a lack of evaluation of policies or a generalised perception of ineffectiveness, and above all an urgent need to strengthen local initiatives to promote the participation of women in urban governance.

These results thus provide an overall assessment of the place accorded to women in urban governance, including the forms of contribution, the levels of contribution and the levers and obstacles to their active participation.

### **The forms of women's contribution to urban governance in Greater Lomé**

In questioning the respondents, three forms of women's contribution to the governance of the municipalities of Greater Lomé were identified. These are contributions through institutional participation, through community or informal participation and through consultative participation.

#### **Contribution through institutional participation: an essential driving force to be structured**

The institutional participation of women is a key form of their contribution to urban governance. This involvement is manifested through the formal roles they occupy in structures such as municipal councils, technical committees, and administrative or political posts. However, this participation falls short of expectations in Greater Lomé, where only 4 women hold the position of Secretary General among the 13 municipalities. Although these posts are of symbolic importance, their decision-making power is limited. Women represent only 11.1% of local councillors in the municipalities of Greater Lomé, i.e. 25 women out of a total of 225 councillors. Of these, only 4 hold significant positions, such as municipal secretary general.

Some women have been elected as municipal councillors or appointed to administrative posts. For example, in the municipality of Golfe 1, women are present in technical committees dealing with urban issues, although they often only have an advisory role. This reveals that women's participation is more related to administrative responsibilities than to strategic functions.

The example of Agoè-Nyivé 5 shows that female members of the municipal council are often appointed to committees with little strategic impact, their role being limited to administrative or representative functions.

The results of this study show that this situation is the result of the limited application of legal provisions promoting parity, such as Law No. 2019-006 on decentralisation in Togo, which remains unclear on sanctions for non-compliance with gender quotas. This law introduced measures to promote parity in local decision-making bodies. However, its application remains hampered by patriarchal perceptions and a lack of institutional support. Quotas are not respected and there is a lack of proactive policies for parity.

However, the following verbatim highlights the management by women of commercial spaces, thus emphasising their institutional participation in local economic activities.

*'They play an important role, especially in the organisation and management of commercial spaces. This also helps us in the implementation of certain municipal publications.'* (Extract from the words of the Administrative and Financial Director of a commune of Agoè-Nyivé. Interview conducted on 10 January 2025).

In addition, cultural stereotypes and systemic discrimination hinder women's access to significant positions of power. Women suffer from inequalities in access to education (patriarchal perceptions, inequalities in access to education and political training), which limits their ability to access decision-making positions. In fact, during field surveys, a female respondent made the following statement regarding the role of men in female leadership:

*'Men must help women at home and in everyday life. If by chance the woman has a job, it can become complicated if the man does not help her at home.'*

The key word in these remarks is 'by chance'. In fact, this woman, like several others who are uneducated, very easily linked women's employability to chance.



This strongly indicates the need to restructure the institutional participation of women in urban governance, so that they can be role models and inspire others.

### **Contribution through community participation: informal lever of influence**

Alongside the formal institutions, women play an important role through community initiatives and local social networks. This type of participation, although often underestimated, is a driving force for the improvement of urban living conditions in Greater Lomé. For example, the ‘Urban Mothers’ Groups’ in Golfe 6 and the ‘Resilient Women of Golfe 7’. Women's associations, such as the ‘Urban Mothers’ Groups’ in Golfe 6, are actively involved in local initiatives, particularly in waste management and the maintenance of community infrastructure. In the municipality of Golfe 7, the implemented project called ‘Resilient Women of the Municipality of Golfe 7’ (ONG TOGO ENVIRONNEMENT PROPRE, 2023) aims to strengthen the economic autonomy of women, improve their access to productive resources, contribute to the food security of their community and promote sanitation and environmental protection. Three hundred (300) women beneficiaries are now involved in raising awareness about water management and sanitation, indirectly contributing to the development of local policies.

The facilitating factors are the women's solidarity networks and the dynamism of civil society organisations. Women benefit from the strong dynamism of civil society organisations and the solidarity within their communities. However, their institutional recognition remains limited, and they face obstacles in accessing financial resources and training.

To highlight the contribution of women in administration, commerce and community mobilisation, reinforcing their informal influence in governance, the Secretary General of the Municipality of Golfe 2 stated the following during the interview:

*"First of all, in terms of numbers, there are a lot of women. We have three female municipal councillors, one of whom is the 2nd deputy mayor. Furthermore, more than 80% of the commune's administrative staff are women. You only must come to the town hall on a meeting day to see this for yourself. Then, regarding activities, women play an essential role, particularly in business. They dominate several sectors such as the sale of all kinds of goods, sewing and hairdressing. However, they are still under-represented in trades such as masonry or electricity. Finally, when it comes to community mobilisation, they are indispensable. If we want to organise an activity or mobilise many people, we have to rely on them. Their influence is crucial to the success of initiatives"* (Extract from the words of the Secretary General of a Gulf Municipality. Interview conducted on 10 January 2025).

These words of the Secretary General of the Municipality of Golfe perfectly illustrate the contributions of women through their presence in the administration, their economic role and their influence in community mobilisation.

### **Contribution through consultative participation: a growing but limited commitment**

Consultative participation refers to the involvement of women in the processes of public consultation or urban policy development. It is characterised by interaction between women and institutions through mechanisms such as citizen consultations, urban public forums, participatory studies or simply through women's organisations. On this subject, the Administrative Director of a commune in Agoè-Nyivé confides:

*'Absolutely. Their role is very important in the local economy, and they are often key players in community initiatives. You know, the heads of the women vendors' groups are the ones who help us to mobilise resources effectively, especially taxes. They also help to resolve problems encountered in the administration of the municipality, especially when these problems concern women. Unfortunately, we do not yet have any non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to support these women in their activities. In principle, this should contribute to their empowerment and strengthen their contribution'* (Extract from the words of the Administrative and Financial Director of a commune in Agoè-Nyivé. Interview conducted on 10 January 2025).

This verbatim clearly illustrates the role of women's groups in mobilising resources and their involvement in community initiatives. It also highlights the need for NGOs to support these women.

The consultative participation of women in urban governance is a mechanism for integrating their perspectives into decision-making processes, even if their influence is sometimes marginal. This dynamic is illustrated by the development of the Golfe 2 Communal Development Plan.

During the public consultations for this plan, several women were invited to participate, showing institutional recognition of their advisory role. However, 59% of the women surveyed in this municipality feel that their contributions, although important, were often marginalised in the final decisions. This perception highlights a lack of mechanisms to ensure that their suggestions are considered in local policies.

However, despite these limitations, there are examples of positive impact. According to the respondents, the contributions of women's groups, particularly those of the members of the "Groupe de Réflexion et d'Action, Femmes, Démocratie et Développement" (Reflection and Action Group, Women, Democracy and Development, GF2D), have influenced the prioritisation of projects related to access to drinking water, highlighting the importance of their participation in identifying essential community needs. Similarly, in the municipality of Golfe 5, the NGO Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF) plays a decisive role in the consultative participation of women in urban governance. This organisation, dedicated to promoting women's rights and strengthening their leadership, has distinguished itself through its recommendations aimed at integrating the specific needs of women into municipal projects. These contributions demonstrate the commitment of women to orienting local policies towards more inclusive governance.

More broadly, in most of the projects carried out by local NGOs in Greater Lomé, such as those on sanitation, the opinions of women have been integrated into the recommendations presented to the municipal authorities. The figure below shows a map of NGOs in Greater Lomé.

The results of this study show that all respondents feel that women are involved in consultations for the planning of urban projects (infrastructure, transport, waste management, etc.). To facilitate this, citizen participation programmes must be developed with the involvement of local NGOs. The major obstacle to this is the limited access to information, even though the representation of women in consultative bodies is already weak. However, the absence of institutional mechanisms to systematically integrate the contributions of women into the final decisions constitutes a major barrier, as noted by 92% of the respondents. Indeed, the consultative structures often lack a formalised framework guaranteeing that the opinions expressed will be considered.

All in all, the municipalities are not standing idly by. In each municipality, as several officials have confided, several initiatives, such as training and tools, are being taken to strengthen women's skills to involve them more and get them to contribute. But there are still challenges to be overcome, particularly in terms of resource mobilisation. However, the consultative participation of women in the municipalities of Greater Lomé, although still limited, demonstrates its potential to influence decisions.

## The levels of contribution of women to the urban governance of Greater Lomé

Three levels of participation of women in the urban governance of Greater Lomé have been identified. Either they are at a symbolic level without power, or in a consultative role with limited power, or they are at an active or influential level, particularly in the context of shared governance.

### The level of symbolic contribution: a presence without real power

Symbolic contribution refers to a situation where women are included in governance or decision-making bodies, but their role remains limited to formal or honorary functions, without real power or influence over strategic decisions. This level of participation is intended more to convey an image of inclusivity than to promote true equality in urban governance. It is often perceived as a response to legal obligations or an attempt to display a certain degree of compliance with gender equality standards. Women are indeed present, but their role is essentially formal or symbolic, with little decision-making power.

An example of an honorary position is that of women appointed to positions such as ‘Secretary General’ in municipal councils, but without significant decision-making responsibilities. The same scenario can also be observed in local commissions or advisory committees, where women are present only to meet legal requirements or to present an inclusive image, without allowing them to contribute in any meaningful way.

Similarly, there are reported cases where women participate in municipal council meetings but have no real influence on the resolutions taken. Moreover, in the current urban governance system in force in Togo, the Mayor is a prominent figure in the municipal council over which he presides. The Autonomous District of Greater Lomé has four female Secretaries General out of 13. However, these women have no real power to contribute because, under Article 161 of the Decentralisation Act (Assemblée nationale Togolaise, 2019).

*The secretary general attends municipal council meetings in an advisory capacity’.*

To broaden the observation, it should be noted that a revealing example at the continental level is that of certain municipalities in sub-Saharan Africa where quotas for female participation are imposed by law, but where the women appointed do not have an active role. Research conducted on local governance in Senegal has shown that, although women are present on municipal councils to meet quotas, they do not really participate in debates or in the development of local public policies (Cornwall, 2008). Their involvement is often limited to approving the decisions made by their male counterparts.

According to the Administrative and Financial Director of a commune in Agoè-Nyivé, there is a limited presence of women in the communal executive and their role is restricted to sectors such as commerce. He states:

*"We observe a certain level of involvement, but there is still work to be done to increase their participation. At the level of the municipal executive, we have only two female municipal councillors, in addition to the mayor. Moreover, it is mainly the market traders who contribute"* (Extract from the words of the Administrative and Financial Director of a commune of Agoè-Nyivé. Interview conducted on 10 January 2025).

### The consultative level of participation: growing influence

The consultative level of participation represents progress compared to the token level of participation, insofar as women at this level are actively sought out to provide their opinion and contribute to planning and decision-making processes. However, their influence remains indirect and dependent on the willingness of decision-makers to take their contributions into account. In this case, the results of the present study undoubtedly show that women are involved in the decision-making processes, but their influence remains limited to consultations or opinions without executive power.

Women at this level can participate in public meetings or advisory committees without having a direct impact on decisions. One of the most telling examples is the participation of women in public consultations

on urban development projects in Greater Lomé. However, these consultations are not carried out in a specific manner but as part of a larger movement. As for the reasons for this unfortunate situation for participatory democracy, 7 out of 10 people, or 70% of those surveyed, think that it is the lack of political will that explains the limitations observed in women's decision-making processes. Very few (11%) believe that the causes are endogenous to women, even though more than half (51%) of the women surveyed think the opposite.

However, there is a growing commitment on the part of decision-makers to involve women in a genuine and proactive manner. Indeed, when urban development projects are being drawn up, women are invited to express their concerns on the various issues in question. Furthermore, in some projects led by local NGOs, such as those on sanitation in Agoè-Nyivé 3, women's opinions have been incorporated into the recommendations presented to the municipal authorities. However, these recommendations do not systematically translate into concrete actions.

### **The level of active and influential participation: shared governance**

The level of active and influential participation is characterised by the presence of women in key decision-making roles with effective power over urban management. This level, although rare or even non-existent in the context of Greater Lomé, demonstrates that women can contribute significantly to inclusive and effective urban governance when they have the necessary resources and institutional support.

In this scenario, women play an active role in decision-making and exert a real influence on urban management. This is the concrete example of women mayors, deputy mayors or directors of municipal services influencing decisions in the field of urban governance. In Greater Lomé, an analysis of the successes of women who have attained positions of power in governance shows huge areas to be filled.

According to the respondents, the factors that could facilitate the active participation of women in decision-making positions in urban governance are women's leadership programmes (67% of respondents). Similarly, mentoring and networking play a decisive role in supporting women in their progression to positions of influence. On this subject, the Secretary General of a commune in the Gulf states:

*"We encourage and support training and coaching to strengthen their capacities and encourage emulation so that they contribute more. It is also very important that the town hall is involved in the monitoring of projects in the municipal area, in order to ensure participatory and effective governance. We are working hard on this. We insist that any organisation applying for funding submits clear and transparent reports. These reports make it possible to verify that the actions undertaken really benefit the community, especially women"* (Excerpt from the words of the Secretary General of a Gulf Municipality. Interview conducted on 10 January 2025).

These remarks denote the efforts of the town hall to strengthen participatory governance through training and transparent monitoring of projects.

Secondly, 32% of respondents believe that legal representation quotas favour women's access to decision-making positions. The other 1% of respondents are sceptical.

However, significant challenges remain. Indeed, despite the progress made, the under-representation of women in urban governance bodies remains a structural obstacle. The ratios of local elected representatives in Greater Lomé show that less than 20% of positions of power are held by women, well below parity standards and the requirements of existing laws.

### **Discussion of the results**

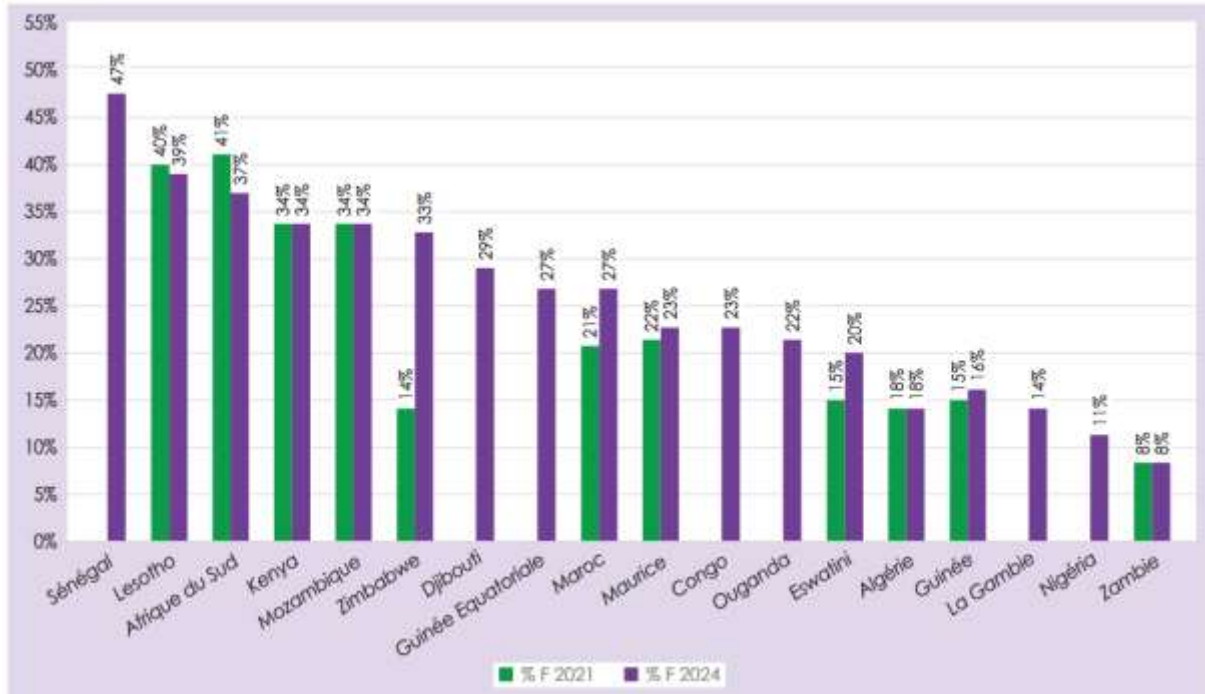
Several recent studies confirm the added value of women's presence in governing bodies. According to the Global Gender Index 2023 (World Bank, s. d.), gender parity in Europe (76.3%) exceeds the level of parity in North America (75%) this year to rank first among the eight geographic regions. Just behind Europe and North America is Latin America and the Caribbean, with 74.3% parity. Eurasia and Central Asia (69%) and

East Asia and the Pacific (68.8%) lag more than 5 percentage points behind Latin America and the Caribbean. Sub-Saharan Africa ranks 6th (68.2%), slightly below the global weighted average score (68.3%). South Asia (63.4%) surpasses the Middle East and North Africa (62.6%), which in 2023 is the region furthest from parity.

If African countries want to effectively embark on the path to economic prosperity, they must work to improve gender equality and the economic empowerment of women. Analysis of key sectors, namely agriculture, trade, industry, energy, finance, water, sanitation and hygiene, and the social sectors, shows that women and girls face several constraints that prevent them from actively participating in and fully benefiting from the potential and growth of the various sectors.

In sub-Saharan Africa, women occupy on average 24% of seats in national parliaments, but this figure drops to less than 15% in local governance bodies (*Women in Local Government | Global Overview*, 2024). A comparison with countries such as Rwanda and Senegal show that proactive policies can transform women's participation. Rwanda, with 56% female representation in local bodies, illustrates the effectiveness of strict legal quotas. Indeed, according to the Africa Barometer on Women's Political Participation (WPP), six (6) African countries (Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique and Ethiopia) have achieved 40% or more representation of female parliamentarians in their lower houses. Three African countries (Guinea Bissau, Gambia and Nigeria) have less than 10% of women parliamentarians in their lower houses (Institut International pour la Démocratie et l'assistance électorale, 2024). In Senegal, the introduction of parity laws has doubled the participation of women in municipal councils, from 10% to 20% between 2010 and 2020 (GUEYE, 2009). Graph 1 below shows the 18 countries in which local elections have taken place in Africa between 2021 and May 2024, ranked from highest to lowest in terms of FPP (2024).

**Graph 1.** Rate of women elected as councillors in local elections - 2021 to May 2024



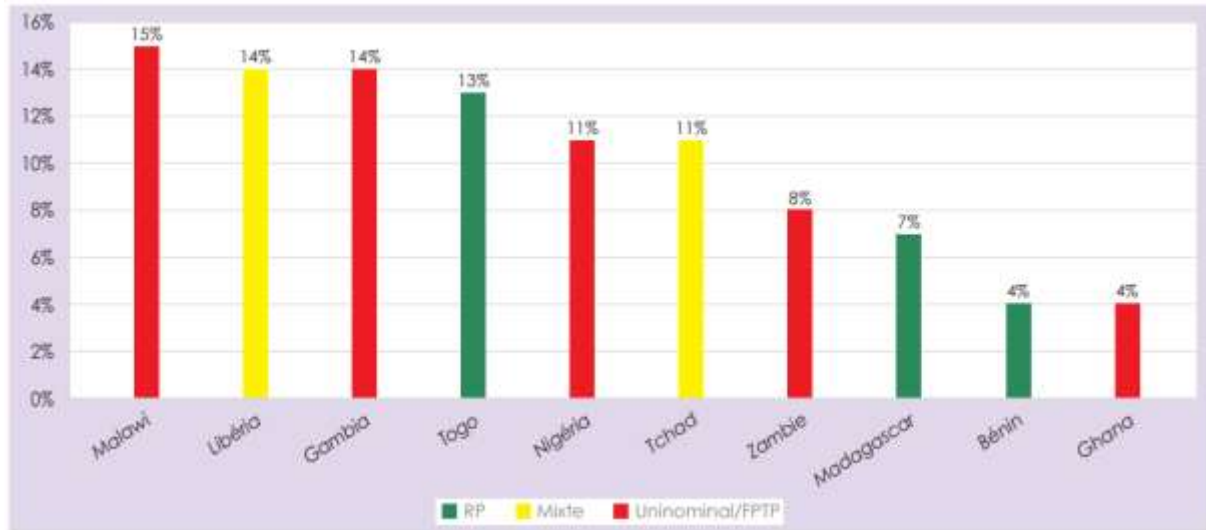
Source: Africa Barometer on Women's Political Participation, 2024

In Togo, Adelan (Adelan, 2024) asserts that in the Lacs prefecture, the significant lack of representation of women in the positions of municipal councillor can be explained by the absence of a legal and political framework favourable to access to the representation of women in political life; in other words, a real



political will in favour of women is almost non-existent. This general reality is confirmed by the studies conducted by the Africa Barometer on WPP. Indeed, Togo is ranked in the bottom ten countries in terms of WPP in local authorities in Africa by electoral system. The conclusion drawn from this graph is that countries that use the Proportional Representation (PR) electoral system are still lagging and have fewer women elected, as shown in graph 2 below.

**Graph 2.** The ten lowest countries in terms of FPP in local authorities in Africa by electoral system



Source: Africa Barometer on Women's Political Participation, 2024

Identifying levers for improvement in women's contribution to urban governance promotes inclusive and equitable governance. These levers revolve around legislative, educational, institutional and cultural dimensions.

Legal quotas and public policies promoting female representation are essential levers for overcoming gender inequalities in urban governance. In 2023, Togo achieved a rate of 12.4% female representation in municipal councils, well below the African average of 24% (African Development Bank, 2024). Global data shows that countries with mandatory quotas, such as Rwanda with 50% of seats reserved for women, have much higher rates of female participation in local government (World Economic Forum, 2023).

These measures are stipulated in electoral laws; in addition, they may be specified in national constitutions (in 11% of the countries where quotas are legislated), local government laws (32%), parity laws (15%) or party laws (5%). On the other hand, in the case of the Ivory Coast, for example, their proportion remains low in key decision-making positions, as only 7.46% of mayors and 11.76% of MPs are women, with limited influence on policies and decisions, according to a UN Women guide (2021) (Birgit Laubach, 2021). In contrast to Togo, there are no gender quotas for local elections.

In addition to legal quotas, the lack of training and preparation of women for leadership roles is a major barrier to their full participation. Indeed, according to the results of this study, around 67% of locally elected women in Greater Lomé feel that they have not received adequate training to carry out their role effectively, even though according to UN Women, leadership training programmes increase women's ability to influence local decisions by 25% (*Women in Local Government | Global Overview*, 2024).

Furthermore, even if the involvement of women in political life through parties is significant, there are still fewer of them in positions of responsibility in local government (Adelan, 2024). Indeed, women are marginalised when it comes to power sharing. They are only called upon to strengthen the party, to win elections and to support political leaders. However, when it comes to positions of responsibility, they are treated as minor partners.



Studies such as those of the Gorée Institute show that although efforts are being made to include women in local governance, their role is often limited to symbolic functions, with no real influence on decisions. These limitations are frequently linked to systemic barriers such as patriarchy and the lack of training for women in strategic areas of public management (*Accueil - Gorée Institute*, s. d.).

Organisations such as UN Women are actively working to reduce this symbolism by introducing programmes such as the incubator for young girls in politics or training for local mediators to increase their capacity to influence decision-making processes.

## Conclusion

This study is of particular importance for sustainable urban development in Greater Lomé. Understanding women's contributions and challenges in urban governance allows for the formulation of recommendations to strengthen their participation, reduce institutional and cultural obstacles, and promote more inclusive and equitable governance. The results presented in this study provide valuable insights for decision-makers to adjust local policies and foster female leadership in urban development.

Women in Greater Lomé contribute to urban governance in various ways, although their efforts are often hampered by institutional and cultural constraints. These three forms of participation, institutional, community and consultative, offer entry points for a better inclusion of women in urban management. This requires proactive policies to remove obstacles and enhance the value of women's contributions in all spheres of governance.

The levels of women's contribution to urban governance reflect complex dynamics, ranging from token participation to active and influential participation. To maximise their impact, it would be worthwhile to take several concrete actions, namely:

- Strengthen quotas and introduce measures to guarantee not only the presence of women, but also their decision-making power.
- Offer training in leadership and urban management to increase their ability to occupy strategic positions.
- Set up structured advisory frameworks where women's contributions are valued and integrated into decisions.
- Strengthen awareness-raising and training programmes so that women can participate effectively in public consultations.
- Establish binding mechanisms requiring local authorities to justify any failure to take account of the recommendations made during the consultations.

Ultimately, this study on the contribution of women to urban governance highlights several key aspects of their participation in the municipalities of Greater Lomé. It explores the membership of women in technical committees, their involvement in the implementation of strategies adopted by the State, as well as the concrete application of measures to encourage their contribution. The results also highlight the effectiveness of public policies in favour of women's participation, while examining the existence and relevance of municipal strategies that support their engagement. This analysis provides an overall assessment of the place accorded to women in urban governance, as well as the levers and obstacles to their active participation. These elements constitute a fundamental basis for an in-depth reflection on the progress made and the adjustments needed in terms of inclusive governance and the promotion of female leadership within urban municipalities.

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