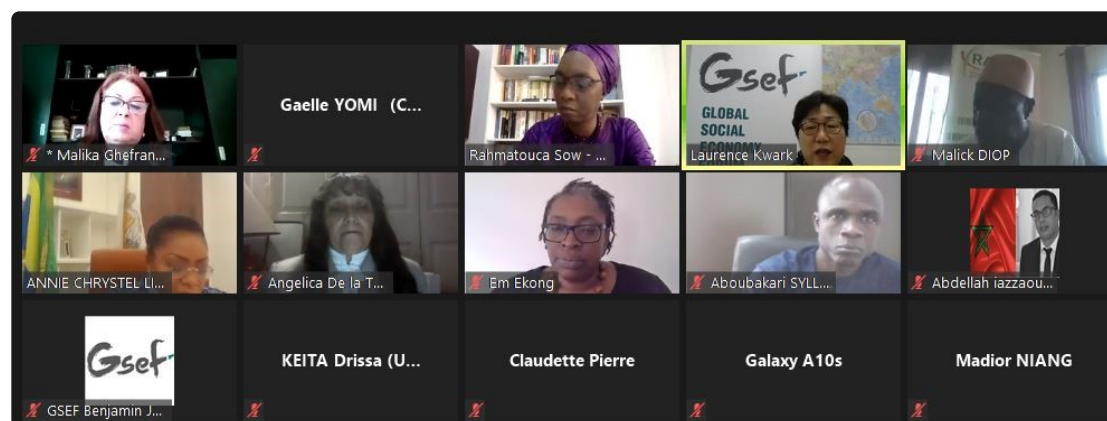


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The Social and Solidarity Economy at the heart of the REFELA agenda: a lever for the empowerment of women in Africa

28 October 2020 / in [News](#), [News - CARO](#), [News - EARO](#), [News - NARO](#), [News - SARO](#) /

On 23 October 2020, the Network of Local Elected Women of Africa (REFELA) facilitated a session on, “**The Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) at the heart of the REFELA’s Agenda: a lever for the empowerment of women in Africa,**” as part of the framework for the virtual Global Social Economy Forum (GSEF) held from October 19 to October 23, 2020.

Fifty participants took part in the session including, **Mrs. Annie Chrystel Limbourg Iwenga**, Deputy Mayor of Libreville, Gabon, member of the REFELA Caucus for Central Africa; **Ms. Macoura Dao** representing the President of REFELA; **Ms. Rahmatouca Sow**, Advisor for Political Affairs and International Relations at UCLG Africa; **Mr. Jean Pierre Elong Mbassi**, Secretary General for UCLG Africa; and **Ms. Laurence Kawark**, Secretary General of the Global Social Economy Forum (GSEF).



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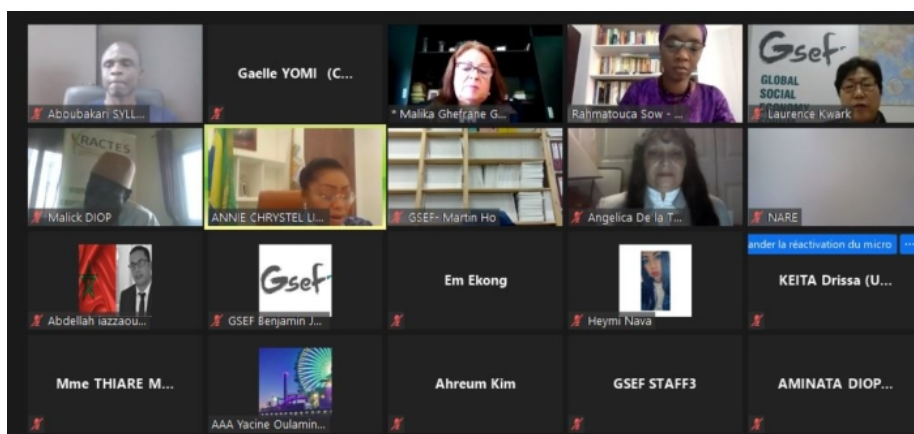
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agenda, not only the launch but also the implementation and the follow-up of, **‘The Campaign of African cities favorable to the economic empowerment of women.** Indeed, for REFELA, the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE), constitutes a lever for the empowerment of women in Africa. Women mayors and local elected officials on the continent are convinced that this sector is a significant part of getting women out of the informal sector and out of precariousness by giving them a local economic positioning that matches their potential,”

This point of view is shared by **Ms. Rahmatouca Sow.** “REFELA supports more than ever, the achievement of SDGs 4 & 5 and urges all national, sub-national and local governments, as well as all stakeholders, to support the achievement of these goals. This forum is taking place in the context of a global pandemic which has shown how fragile, non-egalitarian and non-inclusive our economies are. This economic and social crisis particularly affects women. We will not overcome the crisis by relaunching growth, but by changing the economic paradigm, by daring to resort to a plurality of alternative and endogenous models. It seems relevant to see how the social and solidarity economy can position itself in relation to these issues and provide solutions and alternatives to the dominant and traditional models. Investing in women’s entrepreneurship in Africa makes a lot of sense. 26% of women of working age in Africa embark on business creation, but only 4% of women entrepreneurs access a bank loan. It is imperative that we support these women on the path to success because they are key players in sustainable economic development in Africa. Let us commit to forming new alliances between generations, urban, rural and metropolitan territories areas.”



Ms. Laurence Kawark,
Secretary
General of the
Global Social
Economy Forum
(GSEF), thanked
UCLG Africa for
taking part in this
virtual global

forum through REFELA, under the theme of great challenges, more solidarity, the power of the community and the social and solidarity economy as a transformational tool. “This REFELA session is an initiative that I would like to congratulate as an implementation of



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how can we ensure a fair distribution of prosperity for all, especially in the current context of crisis linked to COVID which worsens poverty and inequalities? Elected officials and political decision-makers are looking for alternative strategies. For us, the key to these alternative strategies lies in the social and solidarity economy anchored at the local and territorial level, which has proved to be a resilient and very effective strategy to respond to all economic and social crises such as the 2008 crisis and the current covid-19 pandemic. Africa's development strategy must come through the empowerment of African women to meet these major challenges. Women mayors must take a leading role."

Participants were shown a short video from the **Mayor Macoura Dao Coulibaly**, President of REFELA, which presented experiences and actions in the social and solidarity economy for support of women's associations in her commune Foubolo, Côte d'Ivoire. Following this living testimony, **Dr. Malika Ghefrane Giorgi**, Special Advisor to REFELA, clarified that it is a question of trusting women and their economic potential and their capacities, in terms of activities recognized in Africa, not to confine them to small projects and small income-generating activities (IGA), which remain rather limited in terms of substance and scope, to ensure their effective empowerment and the development of their leadership in the economy of their cities and municipalities. This is one of the goals of the Campaign of African Cities for the Economic Empowerment of Women, documented and referenced through the Africa-wide Situation Analysis Report, published [here](https://www.uclga.org/news/refela-analytical-report-on-the-economic-empowerment-of-women-in-africa-a-reference-document-for-the-campaign-of-african-cities-for-the-economic-empowerment-of-women/) [<https://www.uclga.org/news/refela-analytical-report-on-the-economic-empowerment-of-women-in-africa-a-reference-document-for-the-campaign-of-african-cities-for-the-economic-empowerment-of-women/>]. A call is therefore made to African cities to join this campaign in order to create a mobilizing movement in favor of the economic empowerment of African women. (See membership form [here](https://www.uclga.org/news/launch-of-the-call-for-expressions-of-interest-in-the-campaign-african-cities-in-favour-of-the-economic-empowerment-of-women/) [<https://www.uclga.org/news/launch-of-the-call-for-expressions-of-interest-in-the-campaign-african-cities-in-favour-of-the-economic-empowerment-of-women/>]).

The sub-theme, “ **Removing the obstacles to the development of female entrepreneurship in the field of SSE in Africa** ,” was developed by **Mr. Cheick Gueye** , Mayor of the commune of Dieuppeul-Derklé and First Deputy to the Mayor of Dakar, Senegal. The obstacles that hamper female entrepreneurship include socio-economic constraints, the low level of education, the difficult access to production factors (land, equipment) and the obstacles posed by banks with high interest rates which reduce access to loans. As a solution, the local elected official proposed the establishment of a national fund to finance female entrepreneurship at the state level. For local authorities, the First Deputy Mayor of Dakar, proposed the establishment of a financing entity for



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development and solidarity fund (FODEM) for the city of
innovative projects for women and young entrepreneurs
specialized financial structures.



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Mr. Sergio Castañar, Coordinator of the Federation of Andalusian Municipalities-FAMSI-Spain, gave a presentation on North-South cooperation and the promotion of female entrepreneurship: the case of the REFELA / UCLG Africa and FAMSI- partnership (Spain), for the empowerment of women at the local level. In collaboration between Andalusian municipalities and those of Morocco, an approach of “field schools for women” has been initiated. The project consisted of training women for professions generally reserved for men such as masonry and gardening. The project has been implemented in the cities of Chefchaouen and Tétouan (North of Morocco).

Mr. Gautier Brygo, Director of the Territorial Coaching Program of UCLG Africa, delivered a presentation that looked at parallels between coaching and SSE. *“Territorial coaching helps support national programs with SSE. Territorial coaching improves the strengthening of social cohesion and reinvents synergies with local governments. Coaching is a tool that can facilitate the implementation of SS.”*

The main recommendation from contributions were:

- A request for the creation of a social and solidarity economy bank. Such a creation would make it possible to meet the needs of SSE stakeholders.

Ms. Laurence Kawark, Secretary General of the Global Social Economy Forum (GSEF) underlined that this was a good avenue for reflection, indicating that, *“In Uganda, a bank of this type exists and in Quebec, there are several banks that primarily support ESS. UCLG Africa can reflect on the way in which the Local Governments could support the implementation of this project in each country.”*

In response, **Ms. Rahmatouca Sow** was of the opinion that, *“REFELA should boost the local level definitions of the co-creation of public policies in connection with this theme of the economic empowerment of women and the social economy. The legal framework must be defined to allow for a favorable framework with the last point being supervision, in particular through solidarity-based finance.”*

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