



30 Women in Local Government: Celebrating CLGF's 30th Anniversary

Featured Interviewee #20: Councillor Nozipho Dlamini-Gamedze

Deputy Mayor, City of Manzini, Eswatini



Profile

Nozipho Dlamini-Gamedze is a committed public servant and leader currently serving as the Deputy Mayor of the City of Manzini. She represents Ward 11 as Councillor and previously served as Mayor of Manzini (2023–

2024). Her leadership is marked by integrity, strategic thinking, and a strong dedication to community engagement.

Before entering municipal leadership, Nozipho built a solid career at the Eswatini National Provident Fund, where she worked as a Reconciliation Administrator. Her experience in administration, governance, and public service continues to shape her approach to effective, people-centered leadership.

She holds an AAT Level 2 certification from the University of Eswatini and has earned additional qualifications in customer care, grievance handling, healing and transformation, and evangelist training. Nozipho also serves in treasury roles within HISWA and Women Manyano, reflecting her commitment to accountability and service.

Fluent in SiSwati and English, she is recognized for her strong interpersonal skills, ethical conduct, and dedication to the wellbeing of the Manzini community.

Nozipho P. Dlamini-Gamedze

Deputy Mayor
City of Manzini
Municipal Council of Manzini,
Eswatini

Interview Highlights

1. How has the role of women in local government evolved over the past three decades, and how do you think women can accelerate action for gender equality today?

Over the past three decades, the role of women in local government has gradually evolved. While progress has not been as rapid as many would hope, women have moved from being largely underrepresented in decision-making spaces to increasingly occupying key leadership positions such as councillors, mayors, and committee leaders. This shift reflects a growing recognition that women bring valuable perspectives to governance, particularly on matters affecting families, communities, and social development.

In the current Council, women make up three of the twelve members, alongside nine men. Notably, all three women hold leadership roles, demonstrating the confidence placed in their capabilities and



contributions. I had the honour of serving as Mayor from 2023 to 2024, and I currently serve as the Deputy Mayor. Despite these encouraging strides, more work remains to be done. Accelerating gender equality in local government requires sustained investment in leadership development programmes, mentorship opportunities, and policies that actively encourage and support women's participation in political leadership and decision-making

2. What inspired you to enter local government, and how has your journey advanced gender equality in your community or country?

My journey into local government was driven by a strong desire to serve my community and contribute to improving the lives of ordinary citizens. Having worked for many years as a Reconciliation Administrator at the Eswatini National Provident Fund, I developed a deep appreciation for public service, as well as the importance of accountability, transparency, and fairness in managing resources that impact people's livelihoods.

In 2023, I was elected as Councillor for Ward 11 in the Municipal Council of Manzini, an opportunity I embraced with a strong commitment to representing and advocating for my community. My focus has been on ensuring that the voices of women, youth, and vulnerable groups are heard and considered in local governance and development initiatives. During my tenure as Mayor, and now in my current role as Deputy Mayor, I have continued to champion inclusive participation, encouraging more women to actively engage in community dialogues and decision-making processes that shape the development of our city.

3. What has been your most rewarding experience as a woman leader in local government, and how did it contribute to promoting gender equality?

One of the most rewarding experiences in my leadership journey has been serving as Mayor of Manzini City. This role provided a valuable platform to demonstrate that women are fully capable of leading major institutions and effectively managing complex governance responsibilities. Holding such a position helped challenge long-standing perceptions about women's leadership in local government.

During this time, I made a deliberate effort to encourage greater participation of women in community dialogues and civic processes. By creating spaces where women felt heard and valued, more women began to engage with local leadership and take interest in community development matters. Seeing women in my community grow more confident in voicing their concerns, sharing ideas, and contributing to discussions about the future of the city has been particularly fulfilling. These moments reaffirm the importance of representation, as visible women leaders can inspire others to step forward and actively participate in shaping their communities.

4. What challenges did you face as a woman entering local government, and how did you overcome them? What can be done to accelerate overcoming these barriers for future women leaders?

Like many women entering leadership positions, one of the main challenges I faced was overcoming societal perceptions that politics and governance are primarily male-dominated spaces. Women leaders often find themselves having to work harder to prove their competence and earn the same level of recognition and respect as their male counterparts.



I was able to overcome these challenges through perseverance, integrity, and a strong commitment to serving my community effectively. By remaining focused on delivering results, building meaningful relationships with community members, and consistently demonstrating dedication to public service, I gradually earned the trust and support of those I serve.

To accelerate progress for future women leaders, governments and institutions must intentionally create enabling environments for women in politics. This includes implementing policies that encourage women's participation, providing leadership development and training programmes, and establishing mentorship networks that support and guide aspiring women leaders in navigating the political and governance landscape.

5. What advice would you give to other women considering a career in local government to help them accelerate gender equality in their communities?

My advice to women considering a career in local government is to believe in their ability to lead and remain committed to serving their communities. Leadership requires courage, patience, resilience, and a genuine passion for creating positive change. Women should not allow societal perceptions or self-doubt to limit their potential, as their perspectives and contributions are essential in shaping inclusive and responsive governance.

It is important for women to actively participate in community meetings, civic initiatives, and leadership development programmes. By engaging in these spaces, women gain valuable experience, build confidence, and strengthen their understanding of local development processes.

Through active involvement, women can ensure that the needs, concerns, and aspirations of their communities are represented in decision-making platforms. When more women step forward to lead and participate in governance, they help create more balanced, inclusive, and equitable communities, ultimately accelerating progress toward gender equality in local government.

6. How can we encourage more women, particularly young women, to enter leadership roles in local government, and what actions can governments take to create more inclusive environments for women?

Encouraging more women, particularly young women, to enter leadership roles in local government requires intentional efforts to build their confidence, knowledge, and leadership skills from an early stage. Mentorship programmes, civic education initiatives, and leadership training can play a significant role in helping young women understand how governance works and inspiring them to actively participate in community and political processes. Exposure to women leaders and role models can also motivate young women to see leadership as an achievable path.

Governments have an important role to play in creating inclusive environments that support women's participation. This can be achieved by adopting gender-responsive policies, promoting fair representation in decision-making structures, and ensuring that institutional systems do not disadvantage women. Additionally, supporting programmes that empower women economically and socially can strengthen their ability to participate in leadership roles.



When governments and institutions actively support women's participation, more women will feel confident and encouraged to step forward and lead within their communities.

7. Why is it urgent to increase the number and influence of women in local government, and how will this contribute to positive change in governance?

Increasing the number and influence of women in local government is essential because women make up a significant portion of our communities and bring valuable perspectives to governance and decision-making. Their experiences and insights often highlight issues that directly affect families and communities, such as social welfare, community safety, education, healthcare, and economic empowerment.

When women actively participate in leadership and decision-making processes, policies and development programmes are more likely to reflect the real needs and priorities of the broader community. This leads to more balanced and people-centred approaches to governance. Greater representation of women also strengthens democratic governance by ensuring that leadership structures reflect the diversity of the population they serve. Inclusive leadership fosters transparency, accountability, and more responsive service delivery.

Ultimately, increasing women's participation and influence in local government contributes to stronger institutions and more sustainable development, as decisions are shaped by a wider range of voices, experiences, and perspectives within society.

8. How has digital technology helped or can help accelerate women's political inclusion in local government, and what steps should we take to make it more accessible to women in leadership?

Digital technology has created valuable opportunities for women to participate more actively in governance and engage with their communities. Through social media platforms and other digital communication tools, women leaders are able to share information, communicate directly with citizens, and encourage greater public participation in decision-making processes. These platforms also provide spaces where women can voice their views, raise community concerns, and mobilise support for development initiatives. Digital technology can also help amplify women's voices in leadership by making it easier to connect with wider audiences and networks beyond traditional platforms.

To ensure that more women benefit from these opportunities, governments should invest in digital literacy programmes that equip women with the skills needed to effectively use technology. Providing training, access to digital tools, and reliable internet connectivity in communities is also essential. By improving digital access and capacity, more women will be empowered to participate meaningfully in leadership and governance processes.

9. What innovative practices or strategies have you used to accelerate women's participation and leadership in local government in your region or country?

In my role within the Municipal Council of Manzini, I have intentionally encouraged women to participate more actively in community meetings and local development discussions. One of the key strategies has been creating safe and inclusive spaces where women feel comfortable expressing their views, sharing their experiences, and contributing ideas that can influence community development.



When women are given the opportunity to speak and be heard, they become more confident in engaging with local leadership and governance processes.

I have also worked closely with community groups and faith-based organisations to mobilise women and encourage their involvement in civic initiatives. These partnerships have been valuable in reaching women at the grassroots level and promoting awareness about the importance of their participation in local governance. By strengthening collaboration with these community structures, we are gradually building a culture where women feel empowered to take on leadership roles and actively contribute to shaping the development of their communities.

10. As CLGF celebrates 30 years, what actions must be taken in the next 30 years to ensure the continued empowerment of women in local government?

As the Commonwealth Local Government Forum celebrates 30 years of advancing local democracy, the next three decades should focus on further strengthening women's leadership at all levels of local governance. While progress has been made, sustained efforts are needed to ensure that women continue to have equal opportunities to participate in and influence decision-making processes.

Key actions should include *expanding leadership development programmes* for girls, young women, and aspiring women leaders. *Strengthening mentorship initiatives* will also be important in supporting women as they navigate leadership roles and build confidence in governance spaces. In addition, governments and institutions should *promote policies that ensure equitable representation of women* in political and administrative structures. International platforms such as the Commonwealth Local Government Forum play a vital role in facilitating knowledge exchange, sharing best practices, and fostering collaboration between countries.

By continuing to invest in women's leadership, we can build more inclusive, responsive, and resilient local governments that effectively serve the needs of all citizens.

CLGF 30th Anniversary Commemoration

In celebration of CLGF's 30th Anniversary, we are honoured to spotlight the inspiring stories of 30 trailblazing women in local government from across the Commonwealth, all members of the Commonwealth Women in Local Government Network. These interviews celebrate their groundbreaking contributions to gender equality and their transformative impact on building inclusive, empowered communities.

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