

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

Featured Interviewee #8: Mazeena Bucker

Council Member – Moratuwa Municipal Council, Sri Lanka



Profile

Ms. Mazeena Bucker, from Sri Lanka, is serving her second term as a Councillor for the Moratuwa Municipal Council, representing the United National Party (UNP). She brings experience from the private (mercantile) sector and has served as the former Director of Ceybank Holiday Homes.

She holds a Higher National Certificate and Diploma in Politics, Governance, and Democracy, which complements her dedication to public service.

As a council member, her primary focus is to encourage and empower young women to enter the political sphere.

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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 evolved from limited participation to a more visible and influential presence driven by gender quotas, legal reforms and up roaring public support. Women have moved beyond token representation to policy agendas particularly in areas like health, education and safety. This has helped us more after the 1995 Beijing conference.

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

I was inspired to enter local government with a deep commitment to serve my community after witnessing challenges faced by women and marginalized groups. I wanted to ensure that women's voices are represented in decision making. I strongly believe that meaningful change must start at the grassroot level. My journey has allowed me to champion policies and

Mazeena Bucker (Sri Lanka)



initiatives that create more opportunity for women to take part in governance by breaking barriers and serving as a role model. I have been able to demonstrate that having women in leadership strengthens communities and advances gender equality.

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

My most rewarding experience as a women leader in the local government has been creating a safe space where women's voices are heard and valued during decision making processes. Leading initiatives that improve access to education, health care and entrepreneurship opportunities for women has shown me the transformative power of inclusion. By mentoring young women leaders and ensuring equal participation in community projects we have defied stereotypes and proved that women leadership brings strength, empathy and innovation. It is rewarding to see more women confidently participate in public forums.

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?

Facing doubts about my capabilities simply because I am a woman. Managing public duties along with family and personal commitments. Encountering opposition on being excluded from decision making spaces. *We can try overcoming this by empowering and educating women on local government and establishing mentorship programs.*

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 step up with confidence, use your voice and never underestimate the impact you can make. Build a network of support among women and allies and advocate strongly for inclusive policies by leading with integrity.

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?

Raise awareness and visibility, highlight success stories of women leaders so that young women can see role models who reflect their own backgrounds and ambitions. Facilitate practical experiences along with mentorship programs.

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?

It is urgent to increase the number and influence women in local government because women bring diverse perspectives, inclusive solutions and a stronger focus on community welfare. Their leadership ensures that policies reflect the real needs of families and communities, leading to more transparency, accountability, and compassionate governance.



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?

It has played a major role by breaking down barriers of access to visibility and participation through social media platforms and websites. It allows women leaders to share their ideas, mobilize communities and engage directly with voters.

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

One of the approaches we've found effective is pairing aspiring women leaders with experienced local councillors who can offer guidance, share insights, and help build their confidence. We've also been making greater use of social media and online platforms—not just to share campaign strategies, but also to highlight role models whose stories can inspire and encourage other women to step forward.

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?

Going forward, we must *enforce gender quotas* and laws within local councils to ensure balanced representation. Continuous *mentorship programmes* should be established so that women at every stage of their leadership journey feel supported. We also need to *create scholarship and training grants* specifically for young women interested in governance, planning, and public administration. Finally, it's essential to equip women councillors with *digital tools* for civic engagement and data-driven decision-making, so they can lead with both influence and impact in a rapidly changing world.

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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