

## NEWS



Gender equality

## **Women are leading metropolitan communities towards a more sustainable and equitable future**

Thursday 24/03/2022

Women leaders from local and regional governments in the Metropolis network are leading the response to climate change, mitigation and adaptation strategies to build a more sustainable future for people living in metropolitan spaces. Their leadership was one of the main focal points during International Women's Day 2022.

In line with the UN Women slogan: "Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow", Metropolis emphasised the importance and impact of women-led public policy for a more sustainable and egalitarian

future, while highlighting examples of women leaders among our members—from Montréal to Kathmandu via Rio de Janeiro.

Led by Mayor Valérie Plante, our Co-president for Nature, Biodiversity and Mobility, Montréal is one of the metropolitan spaces with the best air quality and highest rates of green space per inhabitant.

“I am committed to a green and inclusive recovery, one that leaves no one behind. We need to double down on our efforts to fight climate change. We must keep nature in the city by putting biodiversity and green spaces at the heart of our decisions. This will improve the health and well-being of the population, including women.” - Valérie Plante

The city’s Climate Plan 2020–2030 is one of the tools that will allow Montréal to make the city more resilient, green and carbon neutral by 2050, as well as fairer and more inclusive. Containing more than 40 actions, the Climate Plan comes in response to Montrealers’ demands for safer and more user-friendly streets that share the space among all means of transportation—including motorised transport, active transport, public



*Mathieu Sparks, Ville de Montréal*

Across various metropolitan areas around the world, 29-to-49-year-old women are the population group with the highest mobility rate, for reasons related to caring for children and dependents. They are the population sector most likely to travel by sustainable means, yet the needs of these women are being met the least.

Another woman at the frontline of the response to climate change, mitigation and adaptation efforts is Débora de Barros, Undersecretary of Environment of the Rio de Janeiro Municipality, who leads urban agriculture programmes as a fundamental strategy to preserve the environment in the metropolis.



*Rio de Janeiro Prefeitura, n.d.*

For example, Rio de Janeiro's Hortas Cariocas are urban gardens that provide ecological value, access to healthy food, environmental education, and job opportunities for some of the city's most vulnerable people. Overall, the gardens produce around 80 tons of food, feeding more than 20,000 inhabitants annually, while making use of underutilised land, disseminating sustainable agricultural practices, and harnessing agricultural opportunities for the urban poor.

“Because it produces a significant amount of organic food that directly benefits local communities, Hortas Cariocas is a reference project for food security. The project received an award in 2019 from the Milan Pact, and has been inspiring other cities since then.” - Débora de Barros

In a metropolitan area like Kathmandu, where rapid and uncontrolled urbanisation has created challenges related to water scarcity, waste management, and food security as the area surrounding Kathmandu has deteriorated, Sanu Maiya Maharjan, Assistant Director at the Department of Environment and Agriculture, Kathmandu Metropolitan City, is leading rooftop farming initiatives aimed at helping the metropolis mitigate and adapt to climate change.

This initiative demonstrates how coordinating institutions and building governance capacity through public participation, international aid, and development can contribute to multiple climate-, food security-, sustainable development-, and biodiversity-related goals.



*Santoshmajhi035/WikimediaCommons*

Women like Plante, De Barros and Maharjan are transforming what climate leadership looks like and delivering collaborative and caring responses to the climate emergency. However, women remain underrepresented in the public and political arena at every level of government, including in major cities and metropolitan areas. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that just 16% of our member cities are led by women (23 out of 143 governments). There is no doubt that we must increase our efforts to empower women in leadership positions at a local and regional level.

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Learn more about our gender mainstreaming strategy.