

The Importance of Municipal Agenda for Gender Policies in Brazilian Federalism

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Abstract : The Brazilian Federal Constitution from 1988 innovated with decentralized management, sharing the decision process among the federal government, states, and municipality (federalism). This innovation gave the opportunity to the civil society participates in the public policy agenda, including the municipal one; the state recognized that new actors were needed now it has been one more actor and not the only one. It was in this context that the woman's Policy Secretaries were created in the three levels of government: federal, state and municipal. It intend to reduce the historical and social differences between men and women, especially in the poorest municipalities, working in a network basis with other secretaries, governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations to promote actions that can result in benefits and empowerment for women. In addition, they promote actions to protect them from domestic violence and to help them to learn how generate income. It was not a calm process, women have been fighting for their rights since the 1970s and despite the gender equality was recognized in the Federal Constitution of 1988, just in 2013 it was possible to see a real growth in the creation of municipal Women's Policy Secretary. In 2009, just 6.5% of the cities in Brazil had implemented the Secretary; in 2013, it was 11%. The municipality realized that the gender issue was in reality a public problem, so the municipal agenda incorporated it and transformed in public policy, creating the municipal Women's Policy Secretary. The introduction of a gender policy in Brazilian municipalities shows us that the female citizens are treated as political subjects and it is the first step to try to compensate inequality between men and women in the local level. It becomes more important when the Brazilian federalism is analyzed. In Brazil, the federal government controls the municipalities' budgets to implement federal public policies and others federal interests, so having a public policy of gender approved by the actors in the local government with so little freedom to manage is something very important. It is necessary mark some points: taking a gender policy to the poorest cities is a form to protect all citizens with no distinction, men and women, as recommended in the Federal Constitution; not all problems in a city center in the municipal agenda, this only happens when a problem is perceived as an issue, it means the women situation was perceived as important, so that it became a public policy; at least, the gender public policy intend to emancipate and contemplate the empowerment of women.

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