



**Report to the CEDAW Committee
13 November 2015, Room XVI, Palais des Nations, Geneva**

**Cities for CEDAW
Beijing+20**



INTRODUCTION

Madame chair, CEDAW experts, colleagues and friends. Welcome to the briefing on the Cities for CEDAW campaign. I am Soon-Young Yoon, past chair of NGO Committee on the Status of Women/New York and UN representative for the International Alliance of Women. I bring you good news that we have succeeded in bringing the global to the local.

Inspired by the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, in 1998 San Francisco became the first municipality in the world to adopt a local ordinance reflecting the principles of the UN Convention on the



Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). This was the first time in UN history that a human rights treaty was adopted as law at a local level. Between 1998 and 2013, other cities — including Los Angeles and Berkeley, as well as the State of Hawaii —enacted similar initiatives. So far, the campaign has engaged more than 50 cities and counties across the U.S., earned commitments to CEDAW from more than 200 mayors, and brought “Cities for CEDAW” to the UN’s attention.

Some of the leaders of this remarkable achievement are right in this room. I invite members of our civil society delegation to introduce yourselves.

The campaign is part of our preparation for “Beijing+20” – the commemorative year of the UN Fourth World Conference on Women. In 2014, the NGO Committee on the Status of Women/New York invited the San Francisco Department on the Status of Women and the Women’s Intercultural Network to be peer leaders for a national U.S. “Cities for CEDAW” campaign. The short-term goal is to “make the global local” by promoting the adoption of CEDAW as a municipal ordinance in cities large and small. The long-term goal is to ensure that CEDAW is fully integrated into the 2030 sustainable development agenda.

****“Your campaign seems to be a model” Patrician Schultz, CEDAW expert from Switzerland***

****“How can we connect to this campaign”? Lia Nadaraja, CEDAW expert from Georgia***

The feminist and women’s movements—involving men and women alike—have an historic opportunity to shape our future now. The concept is simple: If we can weave women’s human rights into the urban sustainable development agenda, we can change the course of development, not just for women but also for the whole world.

Why is this important? First, the world is increasingly urban. For example, nearly 90% of citizens in Qatar live in the capital city of Doha. Most South Koreans live in a handful of cities. More than 80% of Americans

live in urban areas. By 2050, nearly 80% of the world’s women and girls will live in urban areas.¹ Second, cities have the ability to innovate and measure rapid change, even when the national government cannot—or will not—take action.

Above all, cities are increasingly becoming the epicenter of political, economic, and cultural growth and innovation. As the home of the world’s greatest concentration of cities, the industrialized countries have a critical role to play in achieving the 2030 sustainable development goals, including Goal number 3 on Gender Equality and Goal number 13 on Urban settlements.

STRUCTURE AND STRATEGIES

Governments

How is the campaign organized? Some activists might proudly claim that it isn’t. The structure and organization of “Cities for CEDAW” is similar to the 16 Days of Activism to end violence against women campaign. It is a bottom-up, horizontal organization and a creative political space. In reports from more than 20 cities, we find diverse leadership, strategic coalitions and a reliance on local resources. Toolkits and trainings as well as technical help for city officials and citizens are underway. Each city group has found different means to reach municipal allies.

From the outset, the campaign has attracted the support of a number of farsighted officials. At the launch during CSW 58 in 2014, Mayor Shelley Welsch of University City, Missouri, and Araceli Campo, and then-President of the Women’s Commission of Los Angeles, spoke forcefully in support of making CEDAW work for city governance. Mayor Lee of San Francisco, Mayor Garcetti of Los Angeles and Gavin Newsom, Lt. Governor of California all sent video messages. I’d like to play a mayor Lee’s message for you, now.

Coalitions



Impressive coalitions are driving the campaign’s momentum. Localized “Cities for CEDAW” campaigns are just starting in some cities, including Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Santa Monica, Santa Barbara and Sarasota. Resolutions and ordinances may soon be drafted in other areas, such as in Juneau, Alaska, Orange County, California, Wake County, North Carolina and New York City. In all cases, organizers are keenly

aware of the need to build coalitions of municipal constituencies from the bottom up, rather than rush to have legislation passed² (see Appendix I).

¹ UN Conference of Parties, Outreach Issues, Warsaw, 2013, www.cop19.gov.pl.

² The information presented here is a summary of reports submitted to the NGO CSW/NY up to October 15 2015. For more information on the cities engaged in the campaign, see:



CEDAW. The lead County is the Hope



Two statewide coalitions have emerged in Oregon and North Carolina. In other cases, such as in Orange County, California and Miami-Dade County in Florida, the efforts have focused on countywide campaigns.

The Oregon CEDAW Coalition reports it is working with 13 organizations and three supporting partnerships. Its aim is to have *all* cities in Oregon take action on organization in Orange in Life Foundation in

collaboration with the UN Association/USA. The group has contacted 34 mayors in an effort to implement CEDAW in all county cities.



As the report from New York city notes, “The major strategy of NYC4CEDAW is a grassroots focus. . . . When strong public participation has been lacking, there have been innumerable examples when a newly elected mayor has sidelined or even disbanded the initiatives of his

predecessor. . . The public must feel that they have input in the way the legislation is written and that they also, most importantly, must believe that the structures developed will have a place for their input and involvement.” (New York City for CEDAW report 2015)

ACHIEVEMENTS

In less than three years, the campaign has launched regional, national and even international events. The following are some highlights.

International and National events

January 2014 – First National Conference for the Cities for CEDAW campaign – This event was organized by the NGO CSW/NY in partnership with National Committees for UN Women and chaired by Krishanti

<https://citiesforcedaw.wordpress.com/2014/06/05/welcome-to-the-cities-for-cedaw-weblog/> and <https://www.facebook.com/cities4CEDAW/>

Dhamaraj. Speakers during the virtual conference included Dr. Ivan Simonovic from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in New York, Lakshmi Puri of UN women, Ambassador Henry McDonald of Suriname and then-ambassador Dubravka Simonovic of Croatia who spoke along with Elmy Bermejo, regional representative for the US Secretary of Labor. The virtual conference was followed by real time panel discussions and receptions in Louisville, New York City, Washington, D.C., and San Francisco, organized by Metrochapters of UN Women, the Louisville for CEDAW coalition, the YWCA, UNA /USA, Women's Intercultural Network, and the San Francisco Department on the Status of Women.

March 2014 – The campaign was officially launched during the NGO Forum held in parallel with the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

June 2014 –The U.S. National Conference of Mayors adopted a general resolution in support of CEDAW. In 2015, the U.S. National Conference of Mayors passed a number of specific recommendations referencing the group's past commitments to CEDAW.

June 2015 — As peer leaders for the U.S. campaign, the San Francisco Department on the Status of Women organized a mayor's Roundtable prior to the US National Conference of mayor.

September 2015— The Board of County Commissioners of Miami-Dade County in Florida voted to implement CEDAW, making it the first county in the U.S. to pass CEDAW as a county-wide ordinance.

October 2015 —The National Association of Women Commissioners conducted a webinar training on "Cities for CEDAW" with Los Angeles as the main presenter.

Examples from reports

You have copies of the complete reports from our campaign. Here are some noteworthy examples of what the campaign has achieved thus far.

San Francisco's Department on the Status of Women focuses on outreach to mayors through conferences and government administrators. The Department has also provided technical assistance to more than 18 cities nationwide. Most importantly, it has documented achievements and reported on compliance since the passing of the ordinance in 1998. On the civil society side, the Women's Intercultural Network as the co-chair and peer leader now has nearly 4,000 members on its listserv, keeping the main database for the campaign in its Landscape Roster of cities. It continues to provide the main public outreach and home of resources such as tool kits, webinars, social media outreach and group conferences. All these achievements have been driven by volunteers without UN funding.



Los Angeles has also made an extraordinary contribution. As part of his commitment to the campaign, Mayor Garcetti released the first in a series of gender studies and issued an Executive Directive on CEDAW (see Appendix II). The five-part report will include demographics, leadership, veterans, education and workforce development, and public safety. For the first time in the history of Los Angeles, all of the city's databases were open to independent researchers. Reporting on the City of Los Angeles Commission on the Status of Women, Araceli

Campo said, "The good news is that the Departments are thrilled to be part of this historic effort, and, of course, we have a Mayor, First Lady and Chief of Staff putting their political will and heart and soul into the project" (personal communication). The Executive Directive on CEDAW also created a Gender Equity Coalition co-powered by the Commission on the Status of Women. All General Managers and Department Heads were requested to submit a Gender Equity Action Plan by February 1, 2016, and the personnel department will conduct salary analyses to ensure that there is no gender wage gap for city employees.

As previously mentioned, some groups are taking action at county and state levels. For example, the Miami-Dade County Commission for Women plans to work with the Commission Auditor to report annually on the status of women and girls in the areas of economic development, health and education. As Commissioner Levine Cava noted in a press release (dated September 1, 2015), "The purpose of the ordinance is to track the status of women and girls comprehensively in Miami-Dade County so that the commission can make sound public policy base on objective data...CEDAW will help us better understand the challenges facing women and girls, and bring us one step closer to helping all of our residents thrive and prosper, free of discrimination." Oregon and North Carolina are also aiming for statewide actions.

Berkeley, California passed its ordinance in 2012 and is working to further implement it. Kansas City, Missouri passed its resolution in 2014. The campaign leadership is broadening its coalition and allies with city officials and works closely with the regional women's bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor. A broad coalition in Cincinnati, Ohio that includes university departments, NGOs women's clubs and Amnesty International, worked to help pass a City Council resolution in May 2015. In Louisville, Kentucky, hearings were held prior to passage of a resolution in the Metro Council and signing by the mayor. Special efforts are being made to reach the public through films, workshops and the creation of an Education Committee. New York City has reached down to the Borough level to start a "Boroughs for CEDAW" campaign and it has held numerous meetings to identify key allies within the Committee on Women's Issues, the Public Advocates Office, the Mayor's Office as well as within universities and community organizations. As already mentioned, the Oregon CEDAW coalition is working toward statewide implementation and has drafted a State Proclamation to be presented to the governor.

THE UN AND CEDAW COMMITTEE

One major innovation within this campaign is the engagement of local governments and civil society with the UN on CEDAW. And, in turn, the UN has increased its profile at the county and state levels. Not only has the global become local, but the local has also become global.

At CSW 60, which will take place from 14 to 24 March 2016, we expect to have a number of “Cities for CEDAW” events. This helps to inform member states and the UN Commission on the Status of Women and, hopefully, provide an input into the official CSW “outcome” document that provides policy guidance for the whole UN system and member states. UN Women has expressed strong support for “Cities for CEDAW” and can be a strong ally in continuing to bring the campaign to a global level.

Habitat III (October 17 to 20 in Quito, Ecuador) on human settlements will be another important event for the “Cities for CEDAW” campaign. The NGO CSW/NY has briefed the Habitat III secretariat. The cities program of the Global Compact has proposed holding a joint parallel event during Habitat III.

CHALLENGES

In addition to successes, the reports we received also identified challenges facing the campaign going forward.

1. Lack of public awareness about CEDAW.
2. Need to improve baseline data and research.
3. Diversity of political and administrative structures. In some instances, cities are the epicenter of political and economic influence. In others, counties or even the state may make promising partners. This means that the coalitions must take time to research the decision-making processes within cities, counties and states before acting.
4. Weak accountability mechanisms within city management, especially related to gender budgets.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Before closing, I’d like to say something about U.S. ratification of CEDAW. For some participants in this campaign, U.S. ratification remains a goal. For others, that would simply be icing on the cake.

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights reports that although President Carter signed CEDAW in 1980 and Senate hearings were held, it has never been brought to the Senate floor for a vote where a two-thirds majority would have ratified the treaty.

The truth is, even in the 188 countries that *have* ratified CEDAW, it is not often implemented. If the vast majority of U.S. cities implemented CEDAW, the effect could be similar to de facto national ratification.



We hope that this campaign will be a breakthrough in making CEDAW a living, life-changing reality in countries that have ratified as well as those that have not ratified. The light has turned on and may shine brightly in other lands. For this event, we received two reports from cities in two countries that have

ratified—notably India (Chennai) and Trinidad/Tobago (Port of Spain). That tells us that there is room for improvement.

What are our next steps?

We believe that this committee has a key role to play in bringing this campaign to the rest of the world. This briefing, itself, is a significant marker and we are grateful to committee members here for this opportunity. We hope that you will be advisors to the campaign, not only in your own countries, but others that may interest you. With your help, we can make CEDAW a practical, pro-active human rights instrument for the feminist and international women’s movement in cities throughout the world.
