

## A Guide to Effective Meetings with Local Elected Officials

### Background

The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is the only international human rights treaty to focus exclusively on the rights of women. Adopted in 1979, CEDAW has been ratified by 186 of 193 UN member states worldwide. The United States is one of the seven member states, and the only industrialized nation, that has failed to ratify CEDAW, joined by countries such as Iran, Somalia, and Sudan.

The purpose of the Cities for CEDAW campaign is to "make the global local" by harnessing the power of cities and promoting the adoption of CEDAW as a municipal ordinance. Adoption of CEDAW will create a framework for improving the status of women and girls. Mobilizing multiple stake holders, including elected officials, the media, business, youth, NGOs, faith communities, and women leaders, the campaign will focus on engaging cities across the United States.

As a Cities for CEDAW advocate, you will need to meet with the elected officials in your city. You may be asking a city official for his or her support and work to develop a long term relationship that will pave the way for a local CEDAW measure. Below are some best practices for talking to your elected official. For more information, visit [www.citiesforcedaw.org](http://www.citiesforcedaw.org).

### Preparing To Speak To Elected Officials

- 1.** Before setting up a meeting, read about the work local officials have been doing, particularly their priorities and successes in support of women and girls. Most city websites include information about projects the legislators and mayors have focused on. In addition many cities have a Commission on Women.

Problems vary from city to city. The goal of research is to identify specific problems that a local CEDAW ordinance may solve. Making talking points relevant to your city will engage officials and the outcome will have better success.

- 2.** Tailor your meeting to highlight the relationship between CEDAW and their interests.
- 3.** Contact the official's assistant or scheduler for more efficient scheduling.
- 4.** Describe why you want a meeting and whom you represent, be persistent, and don't forget to call and confirm your meeting.
- 5.** Time may be limited, so be prepared. Create an agenda, limit your talking points to 15 minutes or limit the number of speakers to 2-3 people who can convey a strong message and leave the official with printed material that summarizes the campaign and CEDAW.
- 6.** Exchange business cards and stay in touch. Send a thank you letter or email to remind the official again of the meeting and restate your key points and action items.