Human Rights Council Advisory Committee

Local Government and Human Rights Questionnaire

From: San Francisco Department on the Status of Women

1. **Please provide background information on the reasons and circumstances which led your city to take steps towards implementation/mainstreaming of human rights.**

In 1979, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. The 187 UN member states have ratified this treaty. In the United States, CEDAW was signed by then-President Jimmy Carter in 1980, but has languished in the U.S. Senate ever since.

Energized by the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, and frustrated by the continued inability to get CEDAW ratified in the U.S. Congress, a group of non-governmental organizations in San Francisco came together to determine how to implement the Beijing Platform for Action locally.

In October 1997, the consortium of community organization was joined by two local San Francisco commissions: the Commission on the Status of Women, and the Human Rights Commission. The group convened public hearings on the local implementation of CEDAW, which led to the conclusion that adopting the principles of CEDAW on the local level would promote equal access to and equity in many areas including health care, economic development, and education opportunities for women and girls.

In April 1998, San Francisco became the first municipality in the world to adopt a local ordinance reflecting the principles of CEDAW. The Commission on the Status of Women, the city body entrusted with ensuring that women and girls have equal economic, social, political, and educational opportunities, was designated as the implementing and monitoring agency of CEDAW in San Francisco.

1. **What measures (normative, institutional, policies, projects, etc.) have been undertaken at the city level for the implementation/mainstreaming of human rights?**
2. Gender Analysis – The Commission on the Status of Women is required by a city charter amendment to conduct gender analysis of its commissions and boards every two years. Gender analysis provides a framework for examining the cultural, economic, social, and political framework between women and men. Importantly, although the tool is called “gender” analysis, it also includes other demographic characteristics that are inextricably linked to gender, such as race, disability, immigration status, and sexual orientation when relevant data is available. It is designed to be a preventive tool to identify discrimination and, if identified, to remedy that discrimination. In the context of local government, the overall goal of gender analysis is to integrate gender considerations into the daily operations of local agencies so that citizens have equitable access to services, and employees are ensured fairness in the workplace, regardless of gender.
3. The San Francisco Gender Equality Principles Initiative – San Francisco’s CEDAW Ordinance states that “there is a need to work toward implementing the principles of CEDAW in the private sector,” so the Department on the Status of Women created the Gender Equality Principles (GEP) Initiative. The GEP Initiative is a groundbreaking program that helps companies around the world achieve greater equality and build more productive workplaces through practical implementations of GEP. Companies such as Gap Inc., Symantec Corporation, Google, Inc., Catalyst, and Deloitte & Touche LLP are among the 13 companies in the GEP Council. The 7 fundamental gender equality issues areas are:
   1. Employment and Compensation
   2. Work-Life Balance and Career Development
   3. Health, Safety and Freedom from Violence
   4. Management and Governance
   5. Business, Supply Chain, and Marketing Practices
   6. Civic and Community Engagement
   7. Transparency and Accountability
4. Violence Against Women Prevention and Intervention Grants Program – Since 1980, the Commission has funded domestic violence services. Today, the Commission funds 3 confidential shelters and 30 programs that provide crisis intervention, legal services, case management, transitional housing, and prevention education. Programs address domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking in a variety of San Francisco communities, including Arab, African American, Asian Pacific Islander, and Latina population; immigrant women, homeless women; lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered women, and school-aged youth. The Department also worked with other government agencies to promote preventative practice and resources for victims of domestic violence, which resulted in zero domestic violence homicides for 44 months in San Francisco.
5. San Francisco Collaborative Against Human Trafficking – Launched in 2010, the group comprises a diverse array of community-based organizations and government agencies dedicated to eliminating modern day slavery from San Francisco. The Collaborative builds public awareness of the problem, monitors legislation, tracks trafficking-related data, and creates a forum for alignment of survivor services and law enforcement efforts.
6. **Please describe the main challenges faced by the city authorities to implement/ mainstream human rights.**

One of the main challenges that the San Francisco Commission on the Status of Women faces is the lack of funding. The Department allocates the majority of its budget for the Violence Against Women Prevention and Intervention Grants Program, and city budget cuts results in decreased funding to these important agencies.

Another challenge is the public perception that human rights work only applies overseas, not locally. The Commission on the Status of Women’s work on CEDAW tries to dispel this misperception by connecting fundamental human rights principles to local issues that people care about, such as eliminating domestic violence and promoting women in the workplace.