Category: **Substantive Obligations**

Sub-Category: Environmental Review Implementation Guidelines

Name of Good Practice: New York City’s Environmental Quality Review Technical Guidelines

Key Words: Guidelines, Impact Assessment

Implementing Actors: Sub-National Government: New York City

Location: New York City, United States

Description: The City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual assists city agencies, project sponsors and the public in conducting environmental reviews subject to CEQR procedures. CEQR requires city agencies to assess, disclose and mitigate to the greatest extent practicable the significant environmental consequences of their decisions to fund, undertake or approve a project. The Manual summarizes the CEQR process and provides guidance on the substantive areas of analysis customarily assessed in an environmental review. Although the Manual does not expressly address human rights impacts, it provides detailed guidance on how an environmental review for a project should investigate and, if necessary, plan for mitigation for a wide range of potential social, health, historical and cultural impacts. Courts look to projects’ compliance with the Manual’s requirements when adjudicating challenges to the environmental review process.

The Manual has 24 chapters, including chapters devoted to socio-economic conditions, historic and cultural resources, hazardous materials, air quality, greenhouse gas emissions and climate change, public health, natural resources, noise, neighbourhood character, community services, and water infrastructure. For example, the public health chapter sets out the different scenarios where a public health assessment would be necessary and provides detailed guidelines for undertaking such an assessment. The Manual explains that “the assessment process involves evaluating whether and how exposure to environmental contaminants may occur and the extent of that exposure; characterizing the relationship between exposures and health risks; and applying that relationship to the population exposed.” It also provides that such an “assessment should be conducted in consultation with an environmental epidemiologist, a professional exposure or risk assessor, or similarly trained person.”

The Manual explains that it was first “written in 1993, soon after procedural changes were made in the City’s environmental review process. It was then revised in 2001, 2010, and 2012. The March 2014 edition is the result of a thorough review and update performed by the City’s technical agencies under the supervision of the Mayor’s Office of Environmental Coordination.”

Further Information: The Manual is available online: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/oec/html/ceqr/technical_manual_2014.shtml>.