



History and Futures Project

Cities for CEDAW Synthesis report 2014 to 2024

Report to the CEDAW Committee

14 February 2024, Room XXIII, Palais des Nations, Geneva

INTRODUCTION

Madame chair, CEDAW experts, colleagues, and friends. Welcome to the briefing on the [Cities for CEDAW](#) campaign. I am Soon-Young Yoon, founder and co-director of the Cities for CEDAW History and Futures Project.¹

The purpose of this report is to explore issues raised by our discovery over three years of the Cities for CEDAW History and Futures Project. Our working premise is that the success of international treaties like CEDAW can be measured by how well they change social norms and—ultimately-- personal choice.² I say this not as a legal scholar, but from my personal experiences with the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. From its origins at a 1998 Kobe conference on women and tobacco, in less than a decade, the tobacco treaty has transformed smoke-free laws globally and empowered consumers to make healthy choices.³ The key question for the Cities for CEDAW campaign is: How can cities help bridge the wide gap between international law and social norms affecting individual behavior? What is needed to turn CEDAW into effective city-wide institutional structures and sustainable financing that can survive changes in administrations? And how will this campaign influence US ratification of CEDAW—when it happens?⁴

¹ This report covers the period 2015 to 2024. Sources include three years of research by the Cities for CEDAW History and Futures Project, by the Women’s Intercultural Network, “Catalogue of Actionable Items” and “Report WIN 2022-2023”, written reports, interviews and media sources.

² See “Social Norms, Gender and Development: A Review of Research and Practice, Cookson, Furentes, Kuss and Bitterly of Ladysmith, UN Women, 2023. This report suggests a framework for social norms that “recognizes individuals but reemphasizes the embeddedness of social norms in the systems and structures of wider society”.

³ The WHO FCTC It was adopted by the World Health Assembly on 21 May 2003 and entered into force on 27 February 2005. It has since become one of the most rapidly and widely embraced treaties in United Nations history. Its effective levers for change were broad: in economics (taxation) community coalition building (NCD Alliance), as well as media (bans on advertising). See: <https://fctc.who.int/who-fctc/overview>

⁴ There are several scholarly articles supporting US ratification. See: “Times a Wasting: a Case for Ratification of CEDAW by the US”, Rangita de Silva de Alwis https://scholarship.law.upenn.edu/faculty_scholarship/2797/ and “Why America Should Ratify the Women’s Human Rights Treaty”, Harold Koh, https://scholarship.law.upenn.edu/faculty_scholarship/2797/

THE CONTEXT

The campaign is timely as the feminist and women's movement pushes forward against attempts to roll back progress and limit freedoms. Studies have confirmed that CEDAW can be an important lever for feminist and women's movements who have leaned on CEDAW to demand changes in power structures across a wide spectrum of issues from childcare and violence against women to unjust economic relations between states, market and family.⁵ Some analysts in the US suggest that the Cities for CEDAW campaign provides a much-needed landing platform for the spontaneous energy unleashed by the women's marches. Marches mobilize, but CEDAW guides policies to get the work done.

Much is at stake. In 2024, the Summit of the Future will adopt a Pact for the Future, a commitment to revitalize the UN fit for purpose and for future generations. The Secretary-General's Our Common Agenda report clearly places gender equality and women's empowerment at the center of a transformative agenda. However, it fails to identify how this can be achieved. Nor does it lean on the important policy and legal mandates that detail a roadmap for transformative change. The opportunity is thus open for the feminist and women's movement to define the future of the UN as it addresses the multiple and intersecting crises of our times: inequalities, climate change and conflicts—through a gender lens.⁶

At the heart of the Pact for the Future are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals adopted during the General assembly in 2016. Goal 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment should align with Goal 11 on Cities and human settlements.⁷ CEDAW provides the legally binding tool which should be used across all 17 SDGs to ensure that human rights of women and girls applies to them all. That is why CEDAW should also be visible in the Pact for the Future.

WHAT IS THE CAMPAIGN?

The short-term goal of the Cities for CEDAW campaign since 2014 is to “make the global local” by promoting the adoption of CEDAW as a municipal ordinance. The long-term goal is to ensure that CEDAW is fully integrated --and implemented-- with the 2030 sustainable development agenda at the local level. 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 for the whole world.

Why is this important? First, as [Habitat](#) notes we live in an increasingly urban world. More than 80% of Americans live in urban areas. By 2050, nearly 70% of the world's women and girls will live in cities.

Second, cities are 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 those related to gender equality, cities and human settlements, and others related to climate change and the environment. Equally important, cities can innovate and measure rapid change and collect data on intersectionality, even when the national government cannot—or will not—act.

⁵ Cookson, Furentes, Kuss and Bitterly of Ladysmith, op.cit.

⁶ See the Feminist Framework for Our Common Agenda, online book, GWL Voices 2023.

<https://www.stimson.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Feminist-policy-briefs-on-OCA-1.pdf>

⁷ The 17 SDGs are “universal” and reset the obligations of industrialized as well as developing countries.

THE BEGINNINGS

In 1998, San Francisco became the first city in the world to adopt a human rights treaty, notably the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women ([CEDAW](#)) as an ordinance. The architect of this historic event was Krishanti Dharmaraj, then Executive Director of the Women's Institute for Leadership Development for Human Rights (WILD for Human Rights). After the UN Fourth World Conference on Women, she led a team that was determined to bring women's human rights home but saw little chance for CEDAW ratification by the US government.⁸

A broad coalition included Amnesty International, the Women's Foundation, La Casa de las Madres, and the San Francisco Commission on the Status of Women and Human Rights Commission. This group endeavored to work closely with city officials such as Barbara Kaufman, president of the board of supervisors, the mayor's office, and Mayor Edwin Lee. The two-year strategy that started in 1996 included public hearings on CEDAW articles, briefings to city departments and commissions, advocacy with the media, education and awareness programs for NGOs, the private sector, and students and youth leaders.

Implementation and accountability were ensured through a CEDAW implementation task force that included government officials, union representatives, and community-based organizations. Also, because of the ordinance, the city allocated \$200,000 for a rights-based gender analysis of all city departments. Soon after, Berkeley and Hawaii followed suit with their own CEDAW ordinances.

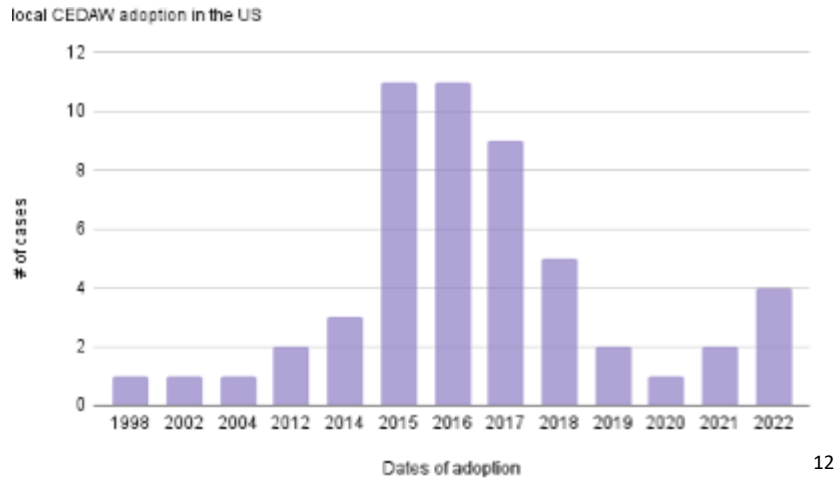
From 1998 to 2014, a handful of cities signed onto CEDAW. Then, in 2014, Soon-Young Yoon, who was Chair of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women/New York (NGOCSW/NY), saw the potential in a Cities for CEDAW campaign to commemorate Beijing plus 20.⁹ The NGOCSW/NY executive committee requested that Mayor Edwin Lee be the peer leader for the United States mayors to pass a resolution in support of CEDAW at the US mayor's conference held in San Francisco that year. More than 200 mayors signed on to a [CEDAW resolution](#) which set the stage for a national campaign. The San Francisco Commission on the Status of Women worked hand in hand with the Women's Intercultural Network (WIN) to join the Cities for CEDAW campaign.¹⁰ Following the UN Commission on the Status of Women NGO Forum in the 2014 launch of the campaign, there was a dramatic spike in local actions by international NGOs in collaboration with activists and governments.¹¹

⁸ Patti Chang (President of the Women's Foundation of California) and Cosette Thomson (Director of Amnesty International, Western Region) were other partners who wanted to respond to the negative impact on women of California's propositions 187 and 209 that violated the rights of immigrants and rolled back affirmative action.

⁹ Members of the NGOCSW/NY Executive Committee at the start of the Cities for CEDAW campaign included Houry Geudelekian, Ivy Koek, Bette Levy, Susan O'Malley, Angeline Martin, Padmini Murthy, and Mary Ann Tarantula.

¹⁰ Emile Murase, Director of the San Francisco Department on Women and Marilyn Fowler, Chair of the Women's Intercultural Network were key players in helping the mayor's office at this time.

¹¹ The NGO CSW/NY gave two Cities for CEDAW awards during CSW sessions to mayor Edwin Lee of San Francisco and mayor Eric Garcetti of Los Angeles.



12

Since then—due to the efforts of feminist and women leaders in cities across the US—about 70 jurisdictions—cities, counties, and states—have adopted CEDAW as an ordinance or resolution. This includes Los Angeles, Salt Lake City, Toledo, Ohio, Louisville, Kentucky, and Cincinnati, as well as Santa Clara and Miami-Dade counties, and all counties in the state of Hawaii. Statewide support came from California, Kentucky and Hawaii which strengthened local momentum. By 2024, ordinances and resolutions covered more than 80 million people in the US.¹³

Priorities differed from one place to another and included a wide range of issues from sexual and reproductive health and rights, economic justice, racial and ethnic discrimination, LGBTQ and disability rights, trafficking, and equal pay in the private as well as public sectors. The adoption of CEDAW also fostered a culture of gender justice in city departments, changed gender-responsive budgeting accountability, and nurtured innovation in the arts, public-private partnerships, housing, transport, and infrastructure planning, as well as delivery of education, health, and social services. Despite these advances, the US has yet to ratify CEDAW.¹⁴

¹² Source: “Network Dynamics of Grassroot Activism: The Case of “cities for CEDAW” in the United States,” Sarah Kimiko Ernst, B.Sc. Thesis, University of Twente, 2022.

¹³ The Cities for CEDAW History and Futures Project has discovered other attempts to localize women’s human rights. For example, the World Without Genocide, founded by Ellen Kennedy, has worked in Minnesota for 10 years to bring CEDAW to cities and towns, working with law students, local coalitions and city officials.

¹⁴ In 1979, the United Nations General Assembly adopted CEDAW and as of August 2023, 189 member states have ratified this treaty. The United States remains the only industrialized country that has yet to ratify CEDAW.



(blue = ordinance and yellow=resolution)

POLITICAL CULTURE

The key to making the global local is to change the political culture within and outside government. The following are some lessons learned:

1. *International feminist organizations and NGOs active at the UN are critical to link the local to the global.*

Large international networks have been among the most active leaders in the campaign. The NGO CSW/NY is the official counterpart to UN Women as the organizer of NGOs around the CSW. After initiating the campaign, it continues to promote CEDAW at CSW such as giving Cities for CEDAW awards. Trainings and strategy meetings were often held at the NGO Forum by organizations such as the Columbia Human Rights Institute as well as the International Alliance of Women. Organizations like the Women's Intercultural Network (WIN) have mobilized resources to be information centers through websites, national reports and hosting events at the CSW. Most recently, UNA/USA has held monthly virtual meetings on CEDAW ratification, inviting experts to provide updates on the Cities for CEDAW campaign. UNA was also the lead organization to spearhead the historic Washington DC ordinance.

Other examples can be cited where international feminist organizations have supported coalitions and worked across state lines, city to city, through sister organizations. For example, Zonta in Pittsburgh helped to mentor Toledo, Ohio's CEDAW Task Force that ultimately established a new post within the city department of Diversity and Inclusion to implement the newly established CEDAW women's

commission. In Kansas City, organizations like the League of Women Voters, UNA, the Coalition and the Loretto group worked together for the CEDAW resolution.

In Fairfax County, the community coalition included the League of Women Voters - Fairfax Area, Fairfax County Commission for Women, Zonta Club of Fairfax, AAUW of Virginia, American Association of University Women of Virginia, United Nations Association of the United States of America - National Capital Area, Reston-Dulles Section National Council of Negro Women, Inc., ReflectUS, and ASHA for WOMEN/ Ashiyanna. Also active was the Delta Kappa Gamma Society International for Key Women Educators, Beta Delta Chapter, Fairfax County NAACP, and the Human Rights Special Interest Group.

2. *The media, public education and movement building are as important as passing an Ordinance.*¹⁵

To ensure sustainable, effective implementation, building consensus through community consciousness-raising is critical.¹⁶ Feminist and women leaders are most successful if they use the campaign to build strong coalitions around activities such as school programs, youth education, media campaigns and outreach to city officials.¹⁷ Activists used petitions, briefings for mayors, as well as demonstrations and marches.

For example, in Boulder County, Colorado Business and Professional Women of Colorado in partnership with United Nations Association-USA of Boulder County met with city council members in Lafayette, Louisville and Boulder to obtain Resolutions. CEDAW T-shirts were created and handed out to stakeholders and Mayors. The Midwest Coalition 4 CEDAW developed a PowerPoint “CEDAW 101” that was used for community education at the public library and for women’s organizations in Kansas City, Laurence, Lee’s Summit and other regional cities. In Washington DC, the coalition worked for more than 2 years; UNA/DC held public hearings, reached out to media, and held briefings and meetings with local officials. Fairfax county Special Interest Group published a CEDAW guide, addressing local opposition to passing a county resolution. The same group wrote and performed a Trilogy on CEDAW presented virtually during the CSW NGO Forum.

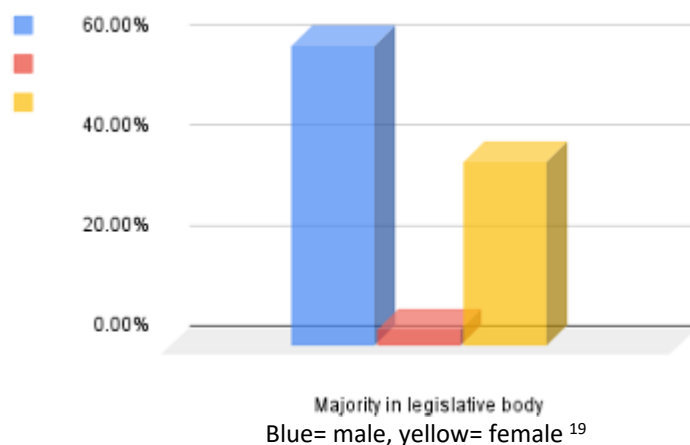
3. *Mayors and City Councils can be CEDAW champions of change.*

Support by mayors for CEDAW helps to set the tone and can be critical in changing the political culture within government administrations. It is worth noting that only a fraction of the US mayors or city councils are women. Thus, male leaders have been critical to establishing CEDAW’s visibility and

¹⁵ Cookson, Fuentes, Kuss and Bitterly of Ladysmith report that in other countries, the media such as TV shows and radio programs are effective levers for shifting discriminatory social norms. op.cit.

¹⁶ It is noteworthy that some campaigns as in Santa Clara County and Washington DC were started decades ago, but only recently revived as part of a push back against opposition to women’s human rights. The longest reported gap between initial and final stages in the campaign was Santa Clara that began more than 20 years ago; the campaign in Washington DC started in 2015 but the ordinance was passed in 2024.

importance. Indeed, a UN Women study notes that “...men and boys need to be involved in dialogue and the construction of new norms, rather than simply lectured to”.¹⁸



For example, in 2015, mayor Eric Garcetti in Los Angeles issued an executive directive on gender equity which called on every City Department to help Los Angeles fulfill its responsibilities under the CEDAW ordinance. The city now includes a Gender Equity Liaison from every City Department and heads must prepare a Gender Equity Action Plan. Public events organized by the Los Angeles mayor’s office such as the Youth Women’s Assembly and LAFD (firefighters) camp for girls further highlighted the importance of leadership at the very top using the mayor’s convening power. Similarly, when mayor Wade Kapszukiewicz of Toledo commemorated the CEDAW ordinance, he welcomed a newly founded Women’s Business Council, drawing attention to the importance of CEDAW to women’s businesses and economic growth. In cities like Washington DC and Durham, male heads of city council (see figure above) led the way to champion CEDAW, sometimes in the face of strong opposition.

4. Counties and States can use levers to change social norms and political culture.

Women’s commissions in counties and states can have important roles in widening the campaign’s outreach. Often working hand in hand with county supervisors, these commissions provide a much-needed liaison with politicians within and outside government.²⁰ For example, Susan Ellsberg, County supervisor in Santa Clara county, in collaboration with the women’s commission, introduced a “[CEDAW Challenge](#),” to be signed by public officials.²¹ This campaign has successfully mobilized numerous state senators and public officials widening the political circle of influence to other counties and upward to the state level.

¹⁸ Cookson, Fuentes, Kuss and Bitterly of Ladysmith, op.cit. p. 26

¹⁹ Sarah Kimiko Ernst, op.cit.

²⁰ 12 counties have ordinances or resolutions, notably Miami-Dade, Alameda, Broward, Bozeman, Charlestown, Contra Costa, Dane, Durham, Los Angeles, Santa Clara, Sonoma, and Westchester in 7 different states. See: Cities for CEDAW Annual Report 2022-2023, WIN, 2023.

²¹ Nancy Brebeau, Santa Clara County women’s commissioner, launched this campaign which is based on mayor Lee’s challenge to mayors at the 2014 US mayors’ conference. See: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1JbFa278BmssgieiQmQMAMIWQSt-mgJefgy_z7BBv-LU/edit

Another example of county influence is from Alameda County—one of the largest counties in California. When county officials and the women’s commission began their campaign, they reached out to the mayors and women’s commissions in their district to build up political support for CEDAW. Their “First 5” plan sets an example of a comprehensive framework that includes Birth Equity and Reproductive Justice, Child and Family Health and Well-Being, Economic Justice, Early Care and Education, Parent and Community leadership, and Immigration and Equity. Similar county-level actions are now in place in Durham and Santa Clara counties.

FINANCING

As a bottom-up, grass-roots campaign, most of the Cities for CEDAW are funded through voluntary and local resources. Women’s funds, university research centers and law schools, along with NGO support have jumpstarted many campaigns. One of the most innovative strategies was in Cincinnati where the CEDAW coalition raised money first, then approached the city to commit funds. According to their 2018 report, the coalition raised \$12,500 from NGOs and the University of Cincinnati. Then, they succeeded in getting a commitment of \$8000 in the CEDAW ordinance.

At the same time, it is essential to ensure regular funding from public funds, including gender budgeting mainstreamed throughout city and county departments. One interesting trend is for ordinances to include funding in the body of the ordinance text. For example, in Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Palo Alto and Santa Clara County, the ordinances included budgeting for new CEDAW task forces or commissions for women and gender equality.

One of the best examples of using ordinances to guarantee funding is found in the Washington DC ordinance which requires the DC government to conduct a gender analysis every four years, ensure training on gender equity and human rights and a citywide action plan to eliminate discrimination against women. Under the Mayor’s Office of Women’s Policy and Initiatives, the CEDAW (called EDAW in DC) ordinance will be monitored in its 80 plus agencies so that resources are allocated throughout departments.

Similarly, San Francisco has one of the few women’s departments in the country that can raise its own funds. It has raised millions of dollars, focusing on violence against women and trafficking. Moreover, the department has the mandate to require all city departments (as in Los Angeles) to use their resources towards citywide goals.

Signs that the campaign is gaining increasing visibility among private foundations and donors are evident from the 2023 Annual Conference of Women’s Funding Network, the largest philanthropic alliance in the world. At that conference, a Cities for CEDAW panel presented the campaign at the official meeting. Cities for CEDAW awards were also presented at the reception. ²²

²² The WFN mission statement states, “When philanthropy invests in women’s foundations and gender justice funders, we empower a deeply intersectional movement that fights for policies and standards across lines of race, class, and gender.”

CEDAW covers compliance by the private sector which can be a catalyst for changes in social norms governing flexible work hours, equal pay, and support for women’s care work. Reaching the private sector may occur through business councils, but NGOs can also be spaces for private sector leadership. For example, San Francisco’s [Friends of the Commission on the Status of Women](#) leadership included many women executives from local companies and businesses. That organization held CEDAW awards fund-raising events for several years. In 2017, they gave eight awards in areas such as environment, girl’s empowerment and education, community, and arts and culture. And hundreds of attendees—from diverse branches of city and state government learned more about CEDAW at these fund-raisers. At one event, Akiko Yang, Chair of the Board of the Asia Museum, received a Cities for CEDAW award. Her husband, Jerry Yang—founder of Yahoo—turned to me and asked, “Can you tell me why the US has never ratified CEDAW”?

MEASURING IMPACT

Data and measurement of progress is not possible without baseline studies, progressive indicators and impact assessment. Fortunately, many campaigns relied on such tools as part of their advocacy. For example, in Oregon, the CEDAW coalition spent a year traveling around the state to gather qualitative data through interviews with diverse women’s groups, including American Indians, to produce a savvy state-wide report called [“Count Her In”](#). This helped the coalition gain momentum to propose action at the state level. One result was a Senate Bill declaring November 29 of each year to be International Women Human Rights Defenders and CEDAW day in Oregon. Many cities included budgeting for a Gender Study as baseline data in their ordinances as well as funding for accountability mechanisms.

Statistics coming out of Los Angeles are good examples of strengthening gender assessment training and tools.²³ The city currently reports that they have reached 50 percent gender parity on all boards and commissions and that over 50 percent of the deputy mayors are women. Furthermore, women hold leadership positions in diverse fields such as the Department of Transportation, Office of Finance, and Sanitation Department. Los Angeles has also established the first countywide Racial Equity Strategic Plan that includes reducing maternal mortality rates by Black people, Latinos, American Indians and Pacific Islanders.

San Francisco’s Department on the Status of Women’s study reported that there were no domestic violence related homicides for 14 consecutive months (June 2010 – January 2014). It became the first municipality to provide 12 weeks of 100 percent paid parental leave to City male and female employees as well as flexible workplaces. The department also tracks data on appointees to the city commissions and board by gender, LGBT status, disability and ethnicity/race.

Academic institutions and law firms have provided expertise and research and connected the campaign to students. In North Carolina, WomenNC offers a fellowship program. Students present their research findings on inequalities in the county to Durham County Commissioners and Durham City Council during their regular meetings. Another example is in Santa Monica where the Commission on the Status of Women mentors a young woman from a local high school to encourage them to run for office. In many

²³ LA county Gender Assessment Toolkit (<https://go.slalom.com/gender-equity-toolkit>) and Gender analyses Framework available from the Women and Girls Initiative: <https://ceo.lacounty.gov/wgi/>.

cities, law schools and specialized programs on women's studies, international affairs, and political science have provided valuable additional human resources and expertise.

The campaign has stimulated city governments to improve their monitoring and gender budgeting tools. The Women and Girls Initiative at LA county has been critical to providing much needed support for county employees through their Gender Assessment Tools. These are used in training and are well integrated into performance evaluations which, hopefully in the future, can be shared with cities and counties elsewhere.

A noteworthy trend is for jurisdictions to enact follow-up legislation or ordinances based on an original CEDAW measure such as in Miami-Dade County where several ordinances were passed to support CEDAW's original mandate. This seems to indicate how CEDAW can begin a process of successive evolution towards more specific outcomes.

PUSHING FORWARD

The following are actions that can help to accelerate and scale-up localization of CEDAW.

1. Goal: to strengthen the gender architecture at the UN at the Summit of the Future:
 - a) Mobilize the Cities for CEDAW campaign to support reforms: 1. Creating stronger roles for CEDAW at CSW by making it a standing agenda item in regional preparatory meetings as well as at CSW, 2. Upgrade the CSW to a Council, following the precedent of the Human Rights Council.²⁴
 - b) Lobby the CSW bureau and governments to allow feminist NGOs to participate in the negotiations of the Agreed conclusions at the CSW, thus assuring stronger integration of CEDAW at CSW.
 - c) Better integrate CEDAW with the UNFCCC, UN Habitat and the World Urban Campaigns during the regional preparatory meetings of the CSW, HLPF and World Urban Summits.²⁵
2. Goal: to strengthen the voices of Local Authorities committed to CEDAW at the UN:
 - a) Include feminist mayors and city council representatives on delegations to the High-Level Political Forums reviewing the SDGs.
 - b) Ensure that feminist international NGOs engaged in the campaign are included in preparation of the Local Voluntary Reports submitted by cities.
3. Goal: to identify innovations to improve partnerships nationally and at a global level:
 - a) Form Counties for CEDAW through peer leadership. LA county, for example, could help to network the other 9 counties currently engaged and help the CEDAW Challenge reach more through the county national association meetings.

²⁴ See excellent recommendations by Dubravka Simonovic, former CEDAW chair, former special rapporteur on violence against women and former chair of the CSW in her article "The UN Commission on the Status of Women", publication pending 2024. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dubravka_Šimonović

²⁵ Habitat as well as its civil society counterpart, the World Urban Campaign, have supported the Cities for CEDAW campaign and should have a greater role in shaping the Pact for the Future. See: <https://unhabitat.org/topic/gender> and <https://www.worldurbancampaign.org>.

- b) Expand the Cities for CEDAW campaign globally. City officials, women’s commissions, and feminist international NGOs can reach out to model cities in countries that have already ratified CEDAW (e.g. Vienna, Reykjavik and Bogota) to network with the Cities for CEDAW campaign to exchange global experiences and share training and toolkits.
 - c) Replicate [CEDAW Youth](#) from Miriam college, Philippines, in other schools, including in high schools to connect with the Secretary-General’s new Youth Office.
 - d) Promote the “CEDAW Challenge” in US cities, counties and states as the national association of counties meetings as well as at meetings at the UN such as the CSW, High Level Political Forum and regional preparatory meetings for the Summit of the Future.
 - e) Partner with city networks like UCLG, Metropolis and ICLEI to engage global cities with the Cities for CEDAW campaign.
 - f) Invite CEDAW experts to awards ceremonies, media events and other UN-related activities in the US that increases public awareness.
4. Goal: to diversify the financial resources for CEDAW implementation and data collection/research:
- a) Mobilize more legal expertise through peer leadership to network law schools and other university departments in support of CEDAW ordinances and resolutions. For example, Santa Clara Law school’s International Human Rights Clinic could reach out to other already engaged in the campaign such as Mount St Marys and Cincinnati Law schools.
 - b) Establish more “Friends of women’s commissions”, “Friends of the Department of Inclusion and Diversity” or other city or county-associated mechanisms where corporate and small business leaders can contribute financial support.
 - c) Follow-up with the Women’s Funding Network that is the umbrella for private family foundations, international foundations and individual donors to fund the feminist and women’s movements.
 - d) Engage schools of women’s studies, international studies, journalism and communications to help gather and publicize data and research results during the campaign and in support of city government efforts.

POSTSCRIPT

The UN has a critical role to play in the Cities for CEDAW movement because of its historic responsibility as standard bearer for human rights and gender equality. At the Summit of the Future, the UN must put forth bold reforms in the gender architecture at the UN, opening more spaces for local authorities, feminist and women’s movement leaders and youth groups to influence its outcome.

What happens at the global level affects grass-roots campaigns and vice-versa. The Cities for CEDAW is like an innovation lab that can bring CEDAW to life in diverse settings in real time. As Runya and Sanders noted “...the practical interactions among policymakers and CEDAW activists that occur through these processes (localization of CEDAW) contribute to the vitality of CEDAW norms themselves, which are

given life and meaning through practical enactment and social grounding”²⁶ If the US ratifies CEDAW, this campaign will have helped lay a foundation for rapid and sustainable change. Indeed, national governments are more likely to step up to the challenge when the values of global citizenship and human rights thrive in communities and the UN’s goals are pursued locally.²⁷

POSTSCRIPT

On 14 February, 2024, the Cities for CEDAW History and Futures Project did an informal briefing to the CEDAW committee at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. Using a PowerPoint presentation, Soon-Young Yoon shared the findings of this report to the 23-member committee. Jessica Pierson, co-director of the project, captured some of the comments below:

"Cities for CEDAW is an entry point for everyone where CEDAW is addressed at every level." -Hilary Gbedemah, Ghana

"Cities for CEDAW is bringing visibility to CEDAW. How can we continue to bring visibility of CEDAW to the CSW sessions?" - Bandana Rana, Nepal

"It is important for the CEDAW Committee to support Cities for CEDAW. With CEDAW supporting 80 million people, this could put political pressure on a ratification vote." Elgin Safarov, Azerbaijan

"Cities for CEDAW is not a substitute for ratifying CEDAW; it is only complementary and creates a groundswell support for ratification. The Dobbs decision can create the momentum for greater urgency for ratification and drive home the point that CEDAW is good for domestic policy." - Rangita De Silva De Alwis, Sri Lanka

"Cities for CEDAW is an important model even for States that have ratified CEDAW." - Rhoda Reddock, Trinidad and Tobago

²⁶ Anne Sisson Runya and Rebecca Sanders, “Prospects for realizing international women’s rights law through local governance: the case of Cities for CEDAW, in Human Rights Review (2021), 22:303-325.

²⁷ This point is noted in the C4UN Strategic Plan 2021-23, adopted December 8, 2020.