

“Minority Women and effective participation in economic, social and cultural life”

Presented to: Forum on Minority Issues “Guaranteeing the rights of minority women”.

Presented by

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I would like to present to you from a Canadian Non for-profit organization that supports Multiculturalism and immigration, some concrete solutions to programs that have been developed and implemented within my region.

These practical and concrete measures I present to you today will also focus on comparatives to the Secretariats draft recommendations on guaranteeing the rights of minority women, specifically in economic, social and cultural life.

Statistics gathered by the National Anti-Poverty Organization in 2003 showed staggering results for new immigrants, who have been in Canada for less than 5 years. The rate of poverty for this group was 35.8%. The same report found the rate for visible minority groups to be 36%. The Greater Saint John Community Foundation issued a Vital Signs report in 2007, which stated the adult literacy rate is below the national average, with the skills most lacking being numeracy, problem solving and writing. It is clearly understood from these reports that there is a significant problem with poverty and literacy, and generally speaking these two barriers place women in vulnerable situations both socially and economically.

Most women introduced or referred to our organization are immigrant women who request our services to assist them as they try to adapt to their new culture and lives. In planned focus groups, women expressed some common barriers which impeded on their roles to participate socially and economically. Those opinions expressed stated that culture, discrimination, language, education, lack of job opportunities, expected roles within their own families, and lack of community involvement which they felt heightened their feelings of isolation.

The non-for-profit organization in which I'm involved was provided with the opportunity to plan and develop cultural and socially appropriate tools and resources that would address these issues. The programs would consist of an integrated approach to classroom instructions, meaning mainstream community women would learn alongside immigrant women.

I would like to take this opportunity to provide you with some concrete measures based on the results of these programs and compare these to **Sect. A – of the draft recommendations under National Regional and local governments**

Ref #17 Recommendation

Governments should undertake data gathering exercises that are designed and implemented in consultation with minority women.

Results

In 2010-2011 the Government of Canada (Status of Women) have made it policy that all funding requirements and guidelines will include funding for various comprehensive data collection methods, such as Gender Based Analysis (GBA) and evaluation that will help identify factors that may impede women, including minorities in decision making and leadership roles.

Ref # 14. Recommendation

The justice system, in particular at the local level, should be equipped to help ensure that minority women have full and effective access to justice. For example, legal aid could be targeted at and made more easily accessible to women from minority groups, including by means of outreach.

Results.

Our local NGO's developed and delivered a three(3) year **Leadership training & soft skills development program which presented topics on:** Canadian Charter of Rights & Freedoms, Human Rights, conflict resolution coping skills, women's safety, cultural awareness & Social/workplace sensitivity, health and wellness, self-esteem building and much more. Most minority women for various reasons expressed lack of knowledge of their legal rights, lack of trust and support within the justice system at the local level.

Solution

The program provided the opportunity for guests speakers within the community who represented the police force, legal aid, victims unit, child protection etc. to facilitate information sessions and create a forum for questions and answers that would provide these women with knowledge, networks and contacts should a situation arise. Translation services specifically in minority languages still remains problematic within government and local level.

Ref # 19. Recommendation

Decisions on policy choices should be fully transparent and made with the full and effective participation of minority women.

Results

Our NGO is currently delivering a 2 year "Mentorship for Visible Minorities & Newcomer Women" program to prepare approximately 60 women and girls from the various ethno-cultural communities within our region to become future community and business leaders by linking them with women mentors who have taken that path and are current decision makers actively involved within community based organizations, boards and advisory groups.

Ref # 20. Recommendation

Governments should systematically include principles of gender equality in their planning and budgeting processes and policies, and allocate adequate resources to projects to address the priorities of minority women.

Results

The Canadian Federal Government provides programs and funds that are specifically allocated to address the priorities of minority women. The issue being is that these programs are typically funded between a 2-3 year maximum regardless of successful outcomes.

Ref #24. Recommendation

Government and law enforcement officials, social workers, health professionals and other relevant actors should receive training on non-discrimination, women's rights and violence against women.

Results

In my region training sources are available for representatives within institutions that provide services and support of violence against women, specifically domestic. The fact remains because immigration is new to our region, these institutions, government, law enforcement, social workers, health professionals and others are not prepared, nor do they have access to resources that would provide them with the proper knowledge and information to support any non-discrimination and violence against women who are member of various ethnic communities.

Health

Minority women in Canada have equal access to support all their health care needs, huge efforts are made to ensure that minority women and newcomers fully understand their rights to health care immediately following their arrival and settlement into Canada.