

Turning Dayton, Ohio into a Human Rights City



By Alex Mueller

What is a Human Rights City?

Human Rights City - A municipality where government officials and public administrators shape policy and laws in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights documents.

- “Human rights cities represent an important innovation in the human rights movement, and it engages local activists in the work of translating and implementing international human rights in local settings. Human rights cities help create an infrastructure for the universal realization of the full spectrum of human rights by deepening democracy and promoting social justice.”
(ushrnetwork)

Localizing Human Rights Standards

- ❑ To incorporate human rights norms into law and become a human rights city, the policies and social behavior of Dayton, OH must strive to be in accordance with the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals.
- ❑ The UN SDGs are a collection of 17 goals with specific targets that serve as a model to all countries to strive for to urgently create a better more prosperous planet.

- ❑ This requires the analysis of each SDG as well as the subsequent targets of each goal to determine what is acceptable and what reforms are needed to better protect human rights in Dayton, OH.



Analysis of SDG 11

- SDG 11 - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
- Several targets are used as a guide to determine if this goal is being met
- One is 11.1 - That by 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgraded slums
- Another is 11.6 - That by 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management.

Challenges and opportunities of SDG 11 Targets in Dayton

- Target 11.1
 - Homeless population of 4,000 in Montgomery County
 - Economic disparities greatly vary among races - 32.5% of black residents in Montgomery County live in poverty while only 12.3% of white residents live in poverty - Unemployment for black residents - 13.1% white residents - 5.7%
 - **Opportunity** - Real Change Dayton - a campaign encouraging people to donate to programs instead of directly to the homeless
 - Programs like Miami Valley Homeless Opportunities - a nonprofit to work to provide rehabilitation and basic necessities to the homeless. Could result in more residents contributing to the local Dayton society and economy.
- Target 11.6
 - In 2012, Dayton metro area was ranked 17th in the United States for worst year-round particle pollution.
 - **Opportunity** - improving air quality can improve the health of many Dayton residents lowering health care costs.

Connection to International Human Rights Law

SDG target 11.1 - Universal Declaration of Human Rights 25.1

- Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

SDG target 11.6 - International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights 21.1

- The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

Advocacy Campaign

- Create a collaboration between elected officials, public administrators, and non-profit organizations to develop an understanding of the root of the issues and what is needed to be reformed.
- Outreach campaign to ask and listen to marginalized communities in Dayton - homeless population, African Americans living in low-income neighborhoods to directly discover obstacles and root causes that contribute to homeless and poverty.
- Have elected officials then analyze the findings and implement policy changes that address and decrease root causes of generational poverty and homelessness. Ex. Provide more economic opportunities - school funding

Reflections

This project forced me to view human rights standards, particularly the UN SDGs with a localized perspective. As the SDGs serve as a global blueprint that applies to every country, I commonly view them through an international lens. Conducting this research challenged me to view and then analyze them with a local perspective and see how they can be applied at the local level. In doing this, I gained a better understanding that for international human rights standards to be most fully normalized and advanced, they must be prioritized at every level of governance.

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