



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Concluding observations on the tenth periodic report of the Lao People's Democratic Republic*

1. The Committee considered the tenth periodic report of Lao People's Democratic Republic ([CEDAW/C/LAO/10](#)) at its 2091st and 2092nd meetings (see [CEDAW/C/SR.2091](#) and [CEDAW/C/SR.2092](#)), held on 8 October 2024. The list of issues and questions raised by the pre-sessional working group is contained in [CEDAW/C/LAO/Q/10](#), and the responses of the Lao People's Democratic Republic are contained in [CEDAW/C/LAO/RQ/10](#).

A. Introduction

2. The Committee appreciates the submission by the State party of its tenth periodic report. It also appreciates the State party's follow-up report to the previous concluding observations of the Committee ([CEDAW/C/LAO/FCO/8-9](#)) and its written replies to the list of issues and questions raised by the pre-sessional working group. It welcomes the oral presentation by the delegation and the further clarifications provided in response to the questions posed orally by the Committee during the dialogue.

3. The Committee commends the State party on its multisectoral delegation, which was headed by the Vice-President of the Lao Women's Union and Vice-President of the National Commission for the Advancement of Women, Mothers and Children, Chansoda Phonethip, and included representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Lao Women's Union and the National Commission for the Advancement of Women, Mothers and Children, as well as the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Latsamy Keomany, and other representatives of the Permanent Mission of the Lao People's Democratic Republic to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, and interpreters.

B. Positive aspects

4. The Committee welcomes the progress achieved since the consideration in 2018 of the State party's combined eighth and ninth periodic reports ([CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9](#)) in undertaking legislative reforms, in particular the adoption of the Law on Gender Equality in 2019.

* Adopted by the Committee at its eighty-ninth session (7–25 October 2024).



5. The Committee welcomes the State party's efforts to improve its institutional and policy framework aimed at accelerating the elimination of discrimination against women and promoting gender equality, such as the adoption and establishment of the following:

- (a) National Action Plan for Gender Equality (2021–2025);
- (b) Vision 2030 and Strategy on Gender Equality (2016–2025);
- (c) National Action Plan on Mothers and Children (2021–2025);
- (d) National Action Plan on the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and Children (2021–2025);
- (e) National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2021–2025);
- (f) National Action Plan on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in 2019;
- (g) National Plan of Action on Anti-Trafficking in Persons, Phase III (2021–2025);
- (h) National Strategy and Action Plan for Integrated Services on Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health, 2016–2025;
- (i) National Strategy (2021–2030) and Action Plan (2021–2025) for the Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections;
- (j) Lao Women's Union's Vision 2035;
- (k) Strategic Development Plan for Lao Women to 2030 and Lao Women's Development Plan (2021–2025).

C. Sustainable Development Goals

6. **The Committee welcomes the international support for the Sustainable Development Goals and calls for the realization of de jure (legal) and de facto (substantive) gender equality, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, throughout the process of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Committee recalls the importance of Goal 5 and of the mainstreaming of the principles of equality and non-discrimination throughout all 17 Goals. It urges the State party to recognize women as the driving force of the sustainable development of the State party and to adopt relevant policies and strategies to that effect.**

D. Parliament

7. **The Committee stresses the crucial role of the legislative power in ensuring the full implementation of the Convention (see [A/65/38](#), part two, annex VI). It invites the National Assembly, in line with its mandate, to take the necessary steps regarding the implementation of the present concluding observations between now and the submission of the next periodic report under the Convention.**

E. Principal areas of concern and recommendations

Visibility of the Convention

8. The Committee welcomes the campaigns conducted to raise awareness of the Convention. It is concerned, however, about the limited reach of such activities and that women, in particular rural women, have limited knowledge of their rights under the Convention.

9. The Committee recommends that the State party intensify its efforts to widely disseminate, including online, and raise awareness of the Convention, the Committee's general recommendations and concluding observations and relevant national legislation in local languages.

Constitutional and legislative framework

10. The Committee notes with appreciation the inclusion of the principle of gender equality in article 37 of the Constitution of the State party and welcomes the adoption of the Law on Gender Equality in 2019. However, it notes with concern:

(a) The lack of implementing provisions to ensure the applicability of the Law on Gender Equality at the provincial, district and municipal levels;

(b) The lack of an explicit constitutional provision to prohibit gender-based discrimination and of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation;

(c) Despite the criminalization of discrimination against women in article 224 of the Criminal Code, no cases have been brought before the courts due to a cultural preference to resort to mediation.

11. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) **Adopt provisions to ensure the applicability of the Law on Gender Equality at the provincial, district and municipal levels and allocate adequate human, technical and financial resources for its implementation;**

(b) **Amend the Constitution to incorporate a provision to prohibit gender-based discrimination and adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, covering direct and indirect discrimination in the public and private spheres, as well as intersecting forms of discrimination, in accordance with articles 1 and 2 of the Convention;**

(c) **Raise awareness and ensure that women victims of discrimination are not compelled to resort to mediation and can take their cases to court.**

Women's access to justice

12. The Committee notes with appreciation that the State party has provided some capacity-building for law enforcement officers on the Convention, the Law on Gender Equality and the Law on Combating and Preventing Violence against Women and Children. It also welcomes the availability of legal aid schemes. However, it notes with concern that such schemes are often underresourced and notes:

(a) The need for strengthened capacity-building on the Convention and relevant national legislation for the judiciary and law enforcement officers;

(b) Persistent barriers, including stigma, fear of retribution, deep-rooted discriminatory gender stereotypes and limited legal literacy, that are deterring women and girls from bringing complaints about violations of their rights, and that their access to justice is further restricted by the frequent use of mediation.

13. **The Committee recalls general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice and recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Allocate adequate funding for legal aid schemes and ensure their accessibility for all women;**

(b) **Institutionalize systematic capacity-building on the Convention and the application of legislation on women's rights for the judiciary and law enforcement officers, including for law students, and address judicial gender bias and gender stereotypes among law enforcement personnel;**

(c) **Conduct awareness-raising campaigns and disseminate information on the remedies available to women and girls to claim their rights and ensure that mediation is not given priority over court proceedings;**

(d) **Ensure that women who are victims of gender-based discrimination can file complaints without fear of retribution or stigma and have access to effective remedies.**

Women and peace and security

14. The Committee notes that the State party has integrated the matter of women and peace and security into its National Action Plan on the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and Children for the period 2021–2025, and welcomes that the next national action plan, currently being developed for the period 2026–2030, will cover climate change. It regrets, however, the lack of information on the inclusion of a parity approach and parity targets in the plan.

15. **In line with its general recommendation No. 40 (2024) on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems, the Committee recommends that the State party adopt a national action plan on women and peace and security and ensure the equal representation of women in all their diversity and men in its development and implementation, and that the plan include a parity approach and parity targets for women's representation in the implementation of peace and security measures.**

National machinery for the advancement of women

16. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the Fourth National Strategy for Gender Equality 2016–2025. It is concerned, however, about insufficient systematic and comprehensive data collection, disaggregated by sex, age, disability, ethnicity, location and socioeconomic status, which is crucial to effectively develop and coordinate policies for the advancement of women.

17. **The Committee recommends that the State party establish a systematic and comprehensive data collection framework that is disaggregated by sex, age, disability, ethnicity, location and socioeconomic status and utilize such data for evidence-based policymaking, ensuring that policies and programmes aimed at advancing gender equality respond to the specific needs of diverse groups of women.**

National human rights institution

18. The Committee notes the role of various governmental bodies, including the National Steering Committee on Human Rights, the National Commission for the Advancement of Women, Mothers and Children and the National Committee for Persons with Disabilities in promoting and protecting women's human rights. It remains concerned, however, about the lack of a national human rights institution in

accordance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles) in the State party.

19. The Committee encourages the State party to establish an independent national human rights institution in accordance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles, adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 48/134), with a broad mandate to promote and protect women's rights and gender equality.

Non-governmental organizations

20. The Committee notes with concern undue restrictions on the work of non-governmental organizations and women activists. In particular, the Committee notes with concern that Decree No. 238 (2017) and Decree No. 13 (2010) restrict civil society and non-governmental organizations, in particular women's rights organizations, to undertake their activities. It is further concerned about cases of reprisals against women activists.

21. The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that all women can exercise their rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association in accordance with international law without interference. It also urges the State party to:

(a) **Review the registration requirements for civil society and non-governmental organizations, to ensure that organizations, in particular women's rights organizations, are able to undertake their activities without undue restrictions;**

(b) **Provide financial and other forms of support for the operation and activities of civil society and women's organizations, in particular grass-roots organizations that assist women and girls who are victims of gender-based discrimination and violence;**

(c) **Investigate and punish acts of reprisals against women human rights defenders and other activists.**

Temporary special measures

22. The Committee notes the application of general temporary measures in the areas of education and employment for disadvantaged groups. However, it notes with concern that despite persistent discrimination against women and girls in all areas of life, the State party has not adopted any specific temporary measures to accelerate substantive equality of women and men in areas where women are traditionally underrepresented or disadvantaged.

23. The Committee recalls its general recommendations No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures and No. 28 (2010) on the core obligations of States parties under article 2 of the Convention, and recommends that the State party:

(a) **Develop, in consultation with women's organizations and based on disaggregated data on intersecting forms of discrimination against women, targeted temporary special measures, such as quota systems, systems that alternate male and female candidates and subsidies, to achieve substantive equality of women and men in all areas where women are traditionally underrepresented or disadvantaged, including in political and public life, education, employment, economic life, the agricultural sector and climate change adaptation policies;**

(b) **Take specific steps to promote a comprehensive and systematic understanding among State officials and the general public of the non-discriminatory nature and transformative value of temporary special measures and of the consequences of a failure to use such measures as a tool to advance substantive equality and national development;**

(c) **Incorporate temporary special measures into the current national action plans and legislation;**

(d) **Pay special attention to women facing intersecting forms of discrimination, including women with disabilities, women belonging to ethnic or linguistic minority groups, rural women and women living in poverty.**

Gender stereotypes

24. The Committee welcomes the integration of education on gender equality into the school curriculum at the secondary level, qualifications and citizenship education. It also notes with appreciation training sessions for university students to address gender stereotypes. However, it notes with concern that such training has been provided to a very limited number of women and men. It also remains concerned that gender stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society persist in the State party and are a root cause for other human rights violations against women.

25. **The Committee recommends that the State party adopt a comprehensive strategy, with a dedicated budget and regular evaluation and monitoring, to eliminate patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes about the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society, and promote understanding of the negative impact of gender stereotypes on the exercise by women of their human rights, including through awareness-raising campaigns and the increased coverage of training sessions on preventing gender stereotypes at all levels of education.**

Gender-based violence against women

26. The Committee notes with appreciation the measures taken to address gender-based violence against women, including the dissemination of relevant legislation, training for village heads and male-dominated governing bodies, the operation of a special hotline to report gender-based violence and the provision of reasonable accommodation for victims with disabilities. It also notes with appreciation that corporal punishment was prohibited by law in April 2024. However, the Committee notes with concern:

(a) Alarming rates of gender-based violence against women in the public and private spheres, including the increased incidence of rape and domestic violence in the context of economic crises, disproportionately affecting disadvantaged and marginalized groups of women;

(b) Underreporting by women who are victims of domestic violence due to the social stigma associated with it;

(c) Insufficient investigation of gender-based violence against women, including in the Golden Triangle special economic zone;

(d) The absence of a definition of rape based on the absence of consent, as well as the absence of legislation specifically criminalizing marital rape, sexual harassment and obstetric violence;

(e) Cases of technology-facilitated violence;

(f) The limited number of shelters for women and girls who are victims of gender-based violence, in particular domestic violence, particularly in rural and remote areas;

(g) The lack of data on the number of cases of gender-based violence against women investigated and prosecuted and on the penalties imposed on perpetrators, disaggregated by age and relationship between the victim and the perpetrator.

27. The Committee recalls its general recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19, and recommends that the State party:

(a) **Strengthen awareness-raising for the general public, in cooperation with the media, and include education on gender equality, the criminal nature of gender-based violence and the need for victims and witnesses to report it in school curricula at all levels of education;**

(b) **Apply a zero-tolerance policy to all forms of gender-based violence against women and girls and adopt prevention measures, with special attention to women belonging to marginalized groups;**

(c) **Allocate the necessary human, technical and financial resources, and provide mandatory training, to the judiciary and law enforcement officers to ensure that cases of gender-based violence against women are effectively investigated in a gender-sensitive manner;**

(d) **Make the necessary legal amendments to the Penal Code to specifically criminalize all forms of gender-based violence against women, including marital rape, sexual harassment and obstetric violence, and adopt a definition of rape that is based on the absence of consent;**

(e) **Implement the Guiding Principles of Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations “Protect, Respect and Remedy” Framework (endorsed by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 17/4) and environmental, social and governance criteria in order to ensure that transnational corporations address the gendered risks and gender-based crimes against women in the Golden Triangle special economic zone, and fight impunity for such crimes in the zone;**

(f) **Ensure that social media companies are held accountable for user-generated content in cases of online violence and harassment targeting women and the prompt removal of such content, and that effective reporting mechanisms are in place to bring perpetrators of online violence and harassment to justice;**

(g) **Ensure adequate funding for shelters and victim support services for women and girls who are victims of gender-based violence, and their children, with special attention to women from marginalized groups, and that shelters and services are accessible across the State party, including for women with disabilities;**

(h) **Adopt legislation providing for effective protection orders, including expulsion orders, against violent partners and family members, allowing women victims of domestic violence to stay safely in their home;**

(i) **Regularly collect, analyse and publish statistical data on gender-based violence against women, disaggregated by age and relationship between the victim and perpetrator, to strengthen the formulation of tailored measures to prevent and combat gender-based violence against women.**

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

28. The Committee welcomes the State party's efforts to address trafficking in women and girls, including the National Plan of Action on Anti-Trafficking in Persons, Phase III (2021–2025), as well as the establishment of the National Committee on Anti-Trafficking in Persons, the Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone Security Command and the Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone Labour Office, to prevent and address human trafficking, forced labour, forced prostitution and other human rights violations in the zone. It also notes the adoption of a Guideline for Victim Identification and a National Guideline on Protection, Assistance and Referral of Victims of Trafficking in Persons. The Committee notes with concern, however, that trafficking in women and children, including for purposes of sexual exploitation, is increasing. It also notes with concern:

(a) The low number of prosecutions of perpetrators of trafficking successfully accomplished and the inadequate human, technical and financial resources allocated to the implementation of the States party's laws and policies to combat trafficking in persons;

(b) Insufficient victim-centred and rights-based procedures, early identification and referral of victims to support services and rehabilitation programmes in cases of trafficking in women and girls.

29. **The Committee, recalling its general recommendation No. 38 (2020) on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration, recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Ensure the allocation of adequate human, technical and financial resources to law enforcement agencies and the judiciary for undertaking effective programmes to strengthen the implementation of anti-trafficking legislation and policies and to bring perpetrators to justice;**

(b) **Strengthen cooperation with neighbouring countries and relevant international organizations to effectively combat trafficking at the regional level through joint investigations, intelligence-sharing and coordinated efforts to dismantle trafficking networks;**

(c) **Take immediate steps to strengthen its regulatory and law enforcement capacity to effectively monitor and control activities in the Golden Triangle special economic zone to prevent and prosecute cases of trafficking and related crimes and establish the necessary rehabilitation and reintegration measures for victims;**

(d) **Strengthen early identification and referral of women and girl victims of trafficking to adequate support services, including rehabilitation programmes, medical, psychological, legal and social assistance and economic support mechanisms to prevent re-trafficking.**

30. The Committee notes with concern the exploitation of women in prostitution and that women in prostitution are criminalized in the State party.

31. **The Committee recommends that the State party conduct educational and awareness-raising campaigns targeted at men and boys to address the objectification of women and reduce the demand for prostitution. It also recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Make the necessary legal amendments to decriminalize women in prostitution;**

(b) **Provide educational and alternative income-generating opportunities, exit programmes and access to social benefits for women in or at risk of entering prostitution who wish to leave it.**

Equal participation in political and public life

32. The Committee welcomes the measures taken by the State party to increase the representation of women in leadership positions. It notes with concern, however, that women remain significantly underrepresented in decision-making systems at all levels, and that women from marginalized groups are essentially excluded from representation.

33. **In line with its general recommendation No. 40 (2024) on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Take immediate steps to reach parity in all decision-making systems, including by adopting temporary special measures, such as systems that alternate between women and men candidates, and ensuring equal access to and transparency of nomination processes;**

(b) **Conduct awareness-raising campaigns to promote understanding that women's equal representation in decision-making is a human right and an essential condition for achieving social stability and sustainable development in the State party;**

(c) **Pay particular attention to the representation of disadvantaged groups of women, such as ethnic minority groups, women with disabilities and women living in poverty.**

Nationality

34. The Committee notes with concern the low birth registration rates in the State party. It also notes the lack of information about whether children of migrant women born in the State party have access to Lao nationality.

35. **The Committee recommends that the State party take immediate measures to increase access to and facilitate birth registration procedures, particularly for rural women, through accessible and affordable procedures, including online, and mobile registration units. It also recommends that the State party ensure that children born in the Lao People's Democratic Republic to migrant women, including undocumented migrant women, have adequate access to Lao nationality.**

Education

36. The Committee notes with appreciation the measures taken to increase school enrolment of girls, including by providing 2,000 scholarships to girls belonging to ethnic minority groups, offering free school lunches and establishing dormitories for rural girls from remote areas. It is concerned, however, about the underrepresentation of women and girls at the tertiary level of education, in vocational training and in non-traditional fields of study, such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The Committee notes with concern that such disparities are rooted in gender stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes prioritizing boys' education over that of girls, high drop-out rates among girls, in particular girls from ethnic minority groups, due to child marriage, long distances to schools and domestic responsibilities. It also notes with concern:

(a) **Girls' limited access to education in native local languages;**

- (b) Inadequate school infrastructure in rural and remote areas;
- (c) The absence of inclusive education for women and girls with disabilities.

37. Recalling its general recommendation No. 36 (2017) on the right of girls and women to education, the Committee recommends that the State party promote the importance of girls' education at all levels as a basis for their empowerment, and that it:

(a) **Undertake awareness-raising measures to ensure that parents recognize education as the basis for girls' future employment and economic independence and encourage them to send their daughters to school, and provide subsidies for girls' education to families in need, with particular attention to girls from marginalized groups;**

(b) **Adopt temporary special measures and conduct public awareness-raising campaigns to ensure parity in fields of study where girls are traditionally underrepresented, such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics and information and communications technology;**

(c) **Allocate the necessary resources for education in native local languages, adequate school infrastructure and access to inclusive education for women and girls with disabilities, in particular in rural areas.**

Employment

38. The Committee notes with appreciation the State party's efforts to reduce the gender wage gap and the integration of a gender perspective in the National Socio-Economic Development Plan. It notes with concern, however:

(a) The decrease in the percentage of women in formal employment from 81 per cent in 2012 to 47 per cent in 2022 and that only 52 per cent of women are currently employed in the formal sector, where they are concentrated in low-skilled occupations;

(b) Women's overrepresentation in the informal economy;

(c) The persistent gender wage gap, with women in the capital earning only 77 per cent of men's wages on average;

(d) The disproportionate burden of unpaid care work on women;

(e) Women's limited access to emerging sectors, including the digital economy;

(f) The lack of legislation specifically criminalizing sexual harassment in the workplace;

(g) Women's inadequate protection from labour discrimination based on family status;

(h) The lack of information on measures taken by the State party to support Lao women migrant workers abroad.

39. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) **Adopt a comprehensive strategy and programme to promote women's employment, including temporary special measures to reach women's equal participation in sectors where they are underrepresented and their transition from informal to formal employment;**

(b) **Address the persistent gender wage gap by effectively enforcing the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, recognizing the value and promoting the higher remuneration of occupations where women are**

overrepresented, and promote women's access to higher-paid and non-traditional jobs, including in emerging sectors;

(c) **Conduct awareness-raising campaigns on the importance of equal sharing between women and men of domestic and family responsibilities, ensure legal protection from labour discrimination based on family status and adopt measures to promote the reconciliation of work and family life, such as paternity leave or shared parental leave and the provision of affordable childcare facilities across the State party, for both women and men;**

(d) **Adopt and effectively enforce legislation to criminalize sexual harassment in the workplace;**

(e) **Collect and provide data on Lao women migrant workers abroad and adopt measures to protect their rights, including through bilateral agreements with destination countries.**

Health

40. The Committee notes with appreciation the establishment of the National Health Insurance Fund, as well as the Law on Public Health, which provides for universal healthcare. It also welcomes the provision of sexual and reproductive health services, including treatment for sexually transmitted infections, under the National Strategy and Action Plan for Integrated Services on Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health 2016–2025 and its revised version for the period 2020–2025. However, the Committee notes with concern:

(a) The limited access to health services for women and girls without sufficient resources;

(b) Significant discrepancies in access to health services, including sexual and reproductive health services, between rural and urban areas, which disproportionately affect women from marginalized groups;

(c) The persistently high maternal mortality rates due, in part, to societal pressure on women to give birth outside hospitals and the limited access to affordable sexual and reproductive health services for pregnant women, in particular in rural and remote areas;

(d) Malnutrition and limited access to prenatal and obstetric health services of women from ethnic minority groups, resulting in high maternal and child mortality rates in their communities.

41. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Ensure affordable access to adequate health services, including sexual and reproductive health services, by eliminating financial barriers and expanding the coverage of the National Health Insurance Fund to all women and girls, particularly rural women and those from marginalized groups;**

(b) **Redress discrepancies between rural and urban areas in women's access to health services, in particular sexual and reproductive health services, with particular attention to women and girls from ethnic minority groups;**

(c) **Reduce maternal mortality by addressing societal beliefs that force women to give birth outside hospitals and by ensuring access to adequate prenatal care and obstetric services for rural women and women from marginalized groups;**

(d) **Ensure that women from ethnic minority groups have access to adequate nutrition, health services and essential medicines and address their**

high maternal and child mortality rates by ensuring their access to prenatal and obstetric health services.

42. The Committee notes with concern that abortion is legal only in cases of medical complications, rape, contraceptive failure, having more than four children, poverty, or young age. It also notes with concern the lack of safe abortion services in the State party and stigmatization of women and girls seeking an abortion.

43. In line with its general recommendation No. 24 (1999) on women and health and targets 3.1 and 3.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals, to reduce global maternal mortality and ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services, the Committee recommends that the State party legalize and decriminalize abortion in all cases and ensure that women and adolescent girls have adequate access to safe abortion and post-abortion services.

HIV/AIDS

44. The Committee welcomes the National Strategy 2021–2030 and Action Plan 2021–2025 on the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections. It notes with concern, however, the continued increase of HIV in the State party, including among women.

45. The Committee recommends that the State ensure free access to antiretroviral medicines, introduce age-appropriate sexuality education in school curricula, including on responsible sexual behaviour, and strengthen awareness-raising campaigns to destigmatize women and girls with HIV and encourage HIV testing.

Economic empowerment of women

46. The Committee notes the Law on the Promotion of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, the rural microfinance project to promote financial inclusion, the Poverty Reduction Fund and low-interest loans to promote women's economic empowerment in the State party. It notes with concern, however, the feminization of poverty and that women continue to have unequal access to economic opportunities. The Committee also notes with concern:

(a) The lack of targeted measures to promote women's economic empowerment, especially for rural women and marginalized groups of women;

(b) Women's unequal access to financial products, services, competitive markets, digital business skills, gadgets and income-generating opportunities, particularly in the emerging digital economy;

(c) The lack of gender disaggregated data on the scope, range and reach of financial institutions, their effectiveness on women's entrepreneurship and their accessibility to the poor.

47. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) **Adopt temporary special measures, such as subsidies and credit guarantees for start-ups and scale-ups by women and quota regulations for the inclusion of women-owned businesses in public procurement processes, and dismantle structural barriers that prevent women from accessing economic opportunities on an equal basis with men;**

(b) **Ensure women's equal access to financial products, services, competitive markets and income-generating opportunities, and provide targeted support to women entrepreneurs, including on digital business skills critical for**

participating in the evolving digital economy, with special attention to women from marginalized groups;

(c) Review regulatory policies on banking and microfinance institutions to improve data collection on product beneficiaries and the impact of lending on women's entrepreneurship and the reduction of feminized poverty.

Economic and social benefits

48. The Committee notes with appreciation the inclusion of the right to social security in the National Social Protection Strategy 2025 and the establishment of social protection systems for women working in the informal economy and rural women. It notes with concern, however, the feminization of poverty, including through the economic crisis, rising inflation caused by structural adjustment policies and debt restructuring. It also notes with concern that women's access to social protection remains inadequate, in particular for rural women and women in the informal economy. The Committee also notes with concern that geographical, linguistic and educational barriers prevent women from marginalized groups, such as women from ethnic minority groups, women with disabilities and migrant women, from accessing social protection centres and social protection benefits, especially in rural areas.

49. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Make priority efforts to eliminate poverty among women, with a particular focus on disadvantaged groups of women, and promote their access to low-interest loans without collateral and their participation in entrepreneurial initiatives to empower them economically and provide them with opportunities to acquire the skills necessary to participate fully in economic life;

(b) Ensure that women, including rural women, women in the informal economy, women belonging to ethnic minority groups, women with disabilities and migrant women, have adequate access to social protection, including by facilitating their enrolment in social protection schemes;

(c) Remove geographical, linguistic and educational barriers that prevent women from accessing social benefits, including through the establishment of accessible and mobile social protection centres, outreach programmes and the provision of information in local languages.

Rural women

50. The Committee notes with appreciation the training of rural women and female migrant workers in modern agricultural production techniques, as well as the provision of grants to out-of-school girls to support livestock farming. However, it also notes with concern:

(a) That only 1.6 per cent of village chiefs are women;

(b) That the 2019 Land Law no longer requires that land titles are allocated to both spouses, which can lead to discrimination against women in land ownership.

51. **The Committee, recalling its general recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women, recommends that the State party:**

(a) Adopt targeted measures to ensure that women have equal access to agricultural, fisheries and livestock support programmes and benefit equally from economic opportunities in these sectors;

(b) **Conduct awareness campaigns and adopt temporary special measures, such as alternation between women and men candidates, to achieve gender parity in village leadership positions;**

(c) **Amend the 2019 Land Law to ensure women's equal rights to land ownership and equal access to land titles and ensure the availability of legal aid to help rural women claim their rights.**

Climate change

52. The Committee notes the efforts of the State party to integrate a gender perspective into climate change and disaster risk reduction strategies. It notes with concern, however:

(a) That women, in particular ethnic minority women as well as women with disabilities, are starkly underrepresented in the development, adoption and implementation of climate change and disaster risk management strategies;

(b) The absence of gender-responsive climate financing in the national budget.

53. **The Committee, recalling its general recommendation No. 37 (2018) on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change, recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Ensure parity, with particular attention to disadvantaged groups of women, including rural women, ethnic minority women and women with disabilities, in the design, development and implementation of climate change and disaster risk reduction strategies;**

(b) **Integrate a gender perspective in all climate change and disaster risk reduction strategies and include specific indicators to monitor women's participation and leadership in their implementation;**

(c) **Integrate gender-responsive climate financing into the national budget to ensure that sufficient resources are allocated to support women in adapting to climate change and natural disasters.**

Marriage and family relations

54. The Committee is concerned about forced marriages in the State party. It also notes with concern the lack of economic protection of women abandoned by their husband, as the Family Code does not provide for child maintenance and alimony.

55. **Recalling its general recommendation No. 29 (2013) on the economic consequences of marriage, family relations and their dissolution, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Prohibit forced marriage, provide adequate income-generating opportunities and social benefits to women to address poverty as a root cause of forced marriage and raise awareness on risk factors driving women into forced marriage;**

(b) **Amend the Family Law to ensure that under all circumstances women have access to child maintenance and alimony payments upon dissolution of marriage and establish effective mechanisms to ensure compliance with these obligations.**

Child marriage

56. The Committee notes with concern that despite the prohibition of marriage below 18 in the Penal Code, 30.5 per cent of women are married before the age of 18

in the State party. It is further concerned that article 9 of the Family Code provides for exceptions allowing marriage from the age of 15 years in “special and necessary cases”, without defining these cases.

57. The Committee recommends that the State party amend article 9 of the Family Code to remove any exceptions from the minimum age of marriage of 18 years, and:

(a) **Conduct public awareness-raising campaigns to delegitimize and dismantle the social norms that justify child marriage, engaging with traditional leaders and the media;**

(b) **Criminalize the betrothal of a child, prosecute perpetrators and ensure that victims of child marriage have access to adequate support services, in line with joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2019) on harmful practices.**

Optional Protocol to the Convention and amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention

58. The Committee encourages the State party to ratify, as soon as possible, the Optional Protocol to the Convention and to accept the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee.

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

59. The Committee calls upon the State party to use the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to further evaluate the realization of the rights enshrined in the Convention in order to achieve substantive equality between women and men.

Dissemination

60. The Committee requests the State party to ensure the timely dissemination of the present concluding observations, in the official languages of the State party, to the relevant State institutions at all levels (national, regional and local), in particular to the Government, National Assembly and the judiciary, to enable their full implementation.

Technical assistance

61. The Committee recommends that the State party link the implementation of the Convention to its development efforts and that it avail itself of regional or international technical assistance in this respect.

Ratification of other treaties

62. The Committee notes that the adherence of the State party to the nine major international human rights instruments¹ would enhance the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms in all aspects of life.

¹ The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Committee therefore encourages the State party to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, to which it is not yet a party.

Follow-up to concluding observations

63. **The Committee requests the State party to provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 11 (c), 37 (a), 39 (d) and 49 (a).**

Preparation of the next report

64. **The Committee will establish and communicate the due date of the eleventh periodic report of the State party in line with a future predictable reporting calendar based on an eight-year review cycle and following the adoption of a list of issues and questions prior to reporting, if applicable, for the State party. The report should cover the entire period up to the time of its submission.**

65. **The Committee requests the State party to follow the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties, including guidelines on a common core document and treaty-specific documents (see [HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6](#), chap. I).**
