



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women
Sixty-eighth session**

Summary record of the 1533rd meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 24 October 2017, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Leinarte

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention *(continued)*

Seventh periodic report of Burkina Faso (continued) ([CEDAW/C/BFA/7](#), [CEDAW/C/BFA/Q/7](#) and [Add.1](#))

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Burkina Faso took places at the Committee table.*

Articles 7 to 9 (continued)

2. **Ms. Zongo Hien** (Burkina Faso), responding to the request for statistics made at the previous meeting, said that there had been a total of 4,718 calls to the child trafficking helpline between January and June 2017. There had been 34 calls concerning female genital mutilation in 2015, 21 in 2016 and 15 in 2017, also to the helpline.

3. **Ms. Yameogo Sankara** (Burkina Faso) said that, currently, some 20 per cent of births went unregistered. The Government had been taking steps to improve the level of registration, including through projects run in cooperation with civil society. Birth registration by telephone was being piloted, but the real challenge lay in addressing basic infrastructure, as events such as power cuts rendered such technological solutions ineffective. The Ministry for Women, National Solidarity and the Family had launched a programme aiming to ensure that, in the two regions concerned, at least 150 women in each community were ensured the right to register their child and be given a national identity card. Similar projects had already been set up in the other regions. In addition, a technical cooperation project run in conjunction with United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in 2015 had resulted in the registration of some 330 births, and an awareness-raising campaign on the importance of birth registration had reached over 35,000 people.

4. **Ms. Zongo Hien** (Burkina Faso) said that the Government was taking steps to raise awareness among women who were considering taking up employment abroad about the risks of human trafficking and violence. It was also encouraging all those who left the country to keep the Government apprised of their whereabouts through its embassies and consulates.

5. **Mr. Sinka** (Burkina Faso) added that, unfortunately, the Government was often unaware of the situation of its nationals abroad as it was not informed of their whereabouts and was therefore unable to provide assistance. Whenever it received information concerning its nationals, including women who had been trafficked or had been victims of violence abroad, it did its utmost to assist through its embassies and consulates.

6. **Ms. Verges** asked whether the Act requiring all political parties to ensure that their candidate lists included at least 30 per cent of persons of either gender had proved effective in increasing women's representation in political and decision-making bodies, given that there appeared to be no requirement to truly promote their election by placing the female candidates at the top of the lists.

7. **Ms. Zongo Hien** (Burkina Faso) said that the female candidates were indeed often placed at the bottom of list. The Government was in the process of re-examining the Act in an effort to ensure that women had equal opportunities in practice.

Articles 10 to 14

8. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** said that she wished to commend the State party for the progress it had made on education. She would like to know how the remaining challenges listed in paragraph 103 of the periodic report had been taken into account when drawing up the National Strategy for the Acceleration of Girls' Education for the period 2012-2021. It would be useful to learn what special measures the Strategy included to overcome the gender disparity in the school dropout rate at the secondary level and to promote equal access to education for girls living in rural, remote and border areas and those in situations of risk. She asked what strategies were in place to ensure that children with disabilities were literate by the time they reached adulthood. The Committee would welcome

information on the outcomes to date for women of the National Literacy Acceleration Programme.

9. She would be grateful for updated statistics on the school dropout rate at the secondary level and additional information on the measures being taken to reduce it. The State party should include details of how it planned to encourage pregnant schoolgirls to go back to school after giving birth given that the administrative measures taken to date in that regard had not proved effective. Updated information on sex education in schools would also be useful, including details of the curriculum content at the different levels and of the training teaching staff received in order to deliver that education. Given that many young people started engaging in sexual relations long before they thought about getting married, she wished to know how all young people were included in the State party's awareness-raising campaigns.

10. She asked what measures were being taken to address sexual harassment and abuse of schoolgirls by boys and by teachers, which should in many cases be considered cases of rape, given that the girl victims were often not legally able to consent to sexual relations. It would be useful to know what administrative and criminal sanctions were in place to punish the perpetrators of such acts.

11. **Ms. Acosta Vargas** said that reports from international financial institutions indicated that the State party's economy was growing, based primarily on the development of agriculture and the extractive industries. The challenge facing the Government was how to guarantee women access to the formal labour market and to economic empowerment, even in the informal sector. In that regard, she welcomed the focus on young people and women in the National Economic and Social Development Plan for the period 2016-2020. It would be useful to know how the State party planned to monitor the implementation of the Plan and ensure that women could bring complaints concerning gender discrimination in employment before the relevant authorities. She would appreciate information on the percentage of female civil servants and asked whether the 30 per cent quota for places for women on skills training programmes had been achieved. She would also welcome updated information on how the State party was addressing the fact that only fathers were currently eligible for family benefits and the standard income tax allowance for dependents. She wondered when it expected that such concessions would be granted to women. She asked whether the State party had considered speeding up the process of ratifying the International Labour Organization Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189).

12. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** said that she welcomed the improvements that had been achieved in the State party in terms of health-care services for the general population. However, given the persistence of the alarming maternal mortality rate, she wished to know how the various development strategies and the national plans to reach the Sustainable Development Goals would help bring about a reduction in maternal mortality. Given the State party's acknowledgment that many cases of maternal mortality were the result of complications linked to abortion, she asked what steps it would take to remove the administrative, medical and other obstacles that prevented many women from being able to have safe abortions and how the authorities would raise women's awareness of the availability of safe abortion care. The Committee would appreciate information on the treatment afforded to women found guilty of having had recourse to illegal abortion. It would be useful to learn whether the State party would consider removing all obstacles to abortion.

13. She wished to know whether the State party ran awareness-raising campaigns and ensured access to relevant health services to combat the relatively high rate of HIV/AIDS among female sex workers. She enquired what measures were being taken to encourage people in rural areas and unmarried men and women to use contraceptives. It would be useful to know what steps were being taken from the perspective of the health sector to combat female genital mutilation, particularly in terms of awareness-raising campaigns run by medical professionals. She drew attention to the regrettable fact that the State party's Strategic Plan for Mental Health for the period 2014-2018 did not appear to include a gender perspective.

14. **Ms. Acosta Vargas** asked whether the State party planned to adopt any temporary special measures to encourage women to move into the formal sector by increasing their access to capital. It would be interesting to learn whether young people and women had taken full advantage of the line of credit of 500 million CFA francs at the Financing and Interbank Guarantee Company of Burkina Faso that the Government had made available in 2014. In what types of businesses had female entrepreneurs made use of that credit? Updated statistics on the credit available nationwide to women in the State party, disaggregated by economic sector, would be useful. She asked whether the finance system for women entrepreneurs was decentralized and whether it covered all areas of the country. She enquired whether women who worked in the informal sector had access to the voluntary insurance system, whether they could draw a pension once they retired and whether the universal health insurance system was fully functional nationwide.

15. **Ms. Gabr** asked whether the State party had updated statistics on the number of rural women who had benefited from the Government's programmes to improve access to basic social services, such as education, health and housing. She said she wished to draw the State party's attention to the Committee's general recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women. She would like to know what steps were being taken to reverse the dramatic fall in the number of women on regional and municipal decision-making bodies. Did those steps include efforts to change the traditional mindsets that were often entrenched in rural areas? She would welcome additional information on the measures being taken to monitor the implementation of the 2015 decision to grant at least 30 per cent of land set aside for development to women, as issues such as inheritance rights and access to water and to credit could sometimes hinder the fulfilment of such quotas.

16. The Committee would appreciate details of the programmes in place to address the difficulties facing albino women in exercising their rights. Had the State party managed to put a stop to the custom of accusing older women of practising witchcraft? She drew the State party's attention to the Committee's general recommendation No. 27 (2010) on older women and protection of their human rights. She wished to know whether the State party took steps to assist women who had been deprived of their liberty to reintegrate into society and build a better life once they had served their sentence. Given that rural communities were sometimes displaced by mining companies, as had happened in the case of the Essakane and Kounkoufouanou communities, she asked how the State party planned to assist and protect such rural populations in the future.

17. **Ms. Taonda Kantiono** (Burkina Faso) said that her country had made good progress in improving rural girls' access to education and had increased capacity in rural areas through building extra classrooms. The Ministry of Education and Literacy had developed a map to identify areas where the Government should intervene to address shortcomings. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had also played an important role in improving rural schools. Recent statistics indicated that the gap between the number of rural schools and urban schools was narrowing.

18. Sexual and reproductive health had been introduced into the curriculum, including in science courses. Sexual education was no longer a taboo subject, and girls were free to come forward with their concerns now that counselling services were offered at the secondary school level. Counsellors received regular training and provided practical advice and assistance for girls who encountered difficulties.

19. To address the problem of school dropout, a range of new educational approaches had been introduced following the adoption of Act No. 013-2007/AN of 30 July 2007 on Education Policy, including methods to assist teachers in identifying children with learning difficulties and providing them with targeted assistance and a tutorial system that allowed more advanced students to help their classmates in the learning process. As a result, school dropout rates had significantly declined over the previous decade, while the enrolment and primary-school completion rates had increased, with girls coming out ahead of boys.

20. Considering that teenage pregnancy was a growing problem, for which girls and boys alike shared responsibility, the Government was attempting to improve the behaviours of young people, including through disciplinary measures. In addition, girls were provided

with information to prevent teenage pregnancy. Nurseries had been established to care for infants whose mothers were in school.

21. **Ms. Ouedraogo** (Burkina Faso) said that the Labour Code of 2008 prohibited all employment-related discrimination against women, including unequal pay. Labour inspectorates carried out checks to detect cases of discrimination and also investigated complaints. They had the power to convene employers and employees and, in the event of non-conciliation, could refer disputes to a labour court. Burkina Faso was not bound by any deadline for the ratification of the ILO Convention No. 189; however, the Government was due to discuss the matter with the relevant trade unions, which had included ratification of the Convention in a list of demands.

22. **Ms. Tamboura Dofini** (Burkina Faso) said that sexual harassment in the workplace was prohibited by the Labour Code and punishable under Act No. 061-2015/CNT on Prevention and Punishment in respect of Violence against Women and Girls and Reparation and Care for Victims.

23. **Ms. Lengani** (Burkina Faso) said that, in 2016, the Government had exceeded its goal of allocating 30 per cent of land earmarked for development to women. In 2014, with the support of the Millennium Challenge Account, the State had registered more than 1,200 applications from women for certificates of ownership and had issued 68 such certificates to women.

24. **Mr. Koudougou** (Burkina Faso) said that, in 2015 and 2016, women had accounted for about one third of employees joining the civil service. In terms of access to credit, the Fund to Support Income-generating Activities for Women had registered over 105,000 women beneficiaries, while, in 2015, women had accounted for 45 per cent of beneficiaries of both the Support Fund for the Informal Sector and the Fund to Support Youth Initiatives. As regards vocational training, in 2015, 2,877 people had completed skills training programmes and 1,714 of them had been women, thus exceeding the 30 per cent quota for places for women on skills training programmes.

25. **Mr. Nignan** (Burkina Faso) said that, according to a survey carried out in 2014 as part of a World Bank living standards measurement study, credit had been granted to over 89 per cent of the women who had requested it. The survey had found that 26.1 per cent of women aged over 15 years were able to read and write. The State increasingly used formal channels to promote adult literacy, including literacy and training centres and non-formal basic education centres.

26. **Mr. Kabore** (Burkina Faso) said that the Government had implemented a series of measures to reduce maternal mortality and had recently developed national plans to accelerate access to family planning — including measures to facilitate women's access to contraception — and to reduce and eliminate mother-to-child transmission of HIV. The financial barriers that prevented women from being able to access health care had been lifted. Moreover, midwives had been assigned to health and social promotion centres in rural communities, and community-based health workers had been trained in maternal health in order to assist and advise pregnant women. According to the national health information system, 76 women had died of complications arising from abortion in Burkina Faso in 2016, making abortion the fifth leading cause of maternal mortality. The Government was also implementing measures aimed at women who worked as prostitutes, such as providing information and advice to promote changes in their behaviour, supplying contraceptives and providing medical care and psychological support when needed. The Government regarded family planning as a priority for the country and envisaged holding a special family planning week in which district health authorities would distribute free contraceptives and disseminate information to promote their continued use. Community-based health workers had been authorized to offer longer term methods of contraception.

27. Concerning the fight against female genital mutilation, health authorities had already carried out a significant amount of awareness-raising, while practitioners performed postnatal check-ups that would allow them to identify whether newborn infants had been subjected to inappropriate practices. Lastly, while the Government recognized that mental health statistics were not disaggregated by sex, the national health information system would be adjusted to ensure that the requisite data were collected.

28. **Ms. Zongo Hien** (Burkina Faso) said that there was no discrimination against children with disabilities and that support programmes were in place to encourage them to remain in the school system. Women with disabilities and women with albinism benefited from measures to promote their education and participation in income-generating activities. Persons with albinism benefited from various health measures, including the provision of protective skin cream.

29. **Ms. Yameogo Sankara** (Burkina Faso) said that, although abortion had not been decriminalized, it was increasingly dealt with as a minor offence rather than a serious one.

30. **Ms. Gabr** said that she would appreciate figures on the proportion of agricultural land owned by men and women respectively. She wished to draw attention to the Committee's general recommendations Nos. 27 on older women and protection of their human rights and 34 on the rights of rural women.

31. **Ms. Schulz** said that the Committee was concerned about women in detention and, in particular, the conditions in which they were held, including the lack of separation of untried prisoners from convicted prisoners and adequate hygiene and food. What was the Government doing to improve conditions of detention in keeping with international standards and to prepare women for social reintegration?

32. Regarding the land that reportedly had been expropriated from the communities of Essakane and Kounkoufouanou for the purpose of gold mining, she asked what measures had been adopted or were planned to compensate women for damage incurred and to remedy the situation. Had an investigation been conducted into the allegations of violence during the evictions of the women at Kounkoufouanou?

33. **Ms. Acosta Vargas** asked whether, in practice, women working in the informal economy had any access to social protection or to the universal health insurance mentioned in the report.

34. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** said that she would be grateful if the delegation could explain what progress it had achieved in eliminating administrative obstacles to legal abortion. While welcoming the importance that the Government attached to family planning, she was concerned that its efforts in that sphere would be futile unless young people were provided with adequate sex education. She asked what role was played by the Ministry of Education and Literacy and the Ministry of Health in delivering sex education programmes. Lastly, she asked what was being done to combat sexual harassment in schools by teachers and fellow students.

35. **Ms. Zongo Hien** (Burkina Faso) said that the delegation would provide statistics on the amount of new public land for development that had actually been made available to women in accordance with the 30 per cent target set by her Government. A law on the social exclusion of women accused of practising witchcraft had been adopted. The Government was working with traditional and religious leaders to raise awareness of the issue, which particularly affected older women, and was carrying out mediation work to promote the social reintegration of such women. It was expected that 15 per cent of them would be socially reintegrated by 2020. Steps were being taken to ensure that Act No. 24-2016/AN on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Older Persons was fully implemented. With regard to women in prison, the Government had placed officers tasked with providing psychological support to women in all the prisons in Burkina Faso. It had also taken steps to improve the nutritional quality of the food in prisons, particularly that provided to women prisoners, and to provide for items such as soap and mosquito nets. Her Government was continuing its efforts to ensure that as many vulnerable women as possible were covered under the national health insurance scheme, although more needed to be done.

36. **Ms. Tamboura Dofini** (Burkina Faso) said that, in 2017, the Government had adopted a law on the prison system that took into account various recommendations made by international organizations in relation to conditions for women prisoners, particularly pregnant women and nursing mothers. The law made it possible for such prisoners to be released temporarily while serving their sentences or to have their sentences reduced. The law also provided for education and vocational training for women prisoners to improve

their chances of reintegrating into society when they were released. All prison facilities in Burkina Faso, aside from the remand prison in Douré, contained separate wings for women.

37. Before any expropriation was carried out, consultations would be held with the individuals concerned to discuss their relocation or the damages to which they might be entitled. The population of Kounkoufouanou had settled illegally in an area that had been set aside as pastoral land. The State had informed the people of the situation and asked them to move elsewhere. Discussions had taken place over a period of eight years before the State had taken steps to remove them from the land.

38. **Ms. Ouedraogo** (Burkina Faso) said that a voluntary insurance scheme was available for women working in the informal sector. Furthermore, in accordance with Act No. 015-2006/AN of 11 May 2006, the social security system had been extended to cover women working in the informal sector. Women whose income was around 30,000 CFA francs or lower could contribute a certain amount to enable them to enrol on the national social security scheme. Benefits amounting to 1,000 CFA francs per month per child were paid to families until the dependants reached the age of 21. In the case of couples in which the man and the woman were both civil servants, either the man or the woman could claim family benefits. If the woman wished to claim them, she was required to obtain her husband's authorization.

39. **Ms. Taonda** (Burkina Faso) said that, in order to address the question of school dropout, girls were provided with free food, books, educational materials and, in some cases, money to help them to support their families. Although some girls dropped out as a result of pregnancy, measures had been put in place to make it easier for them to return to school. A programme had been established to enhance literacy rates. According to the studies that had been conducted to date, the programme was achieving positive results. Efforts were currently being made to improve the provision of sex education to girls between 11 and 16 years of age.

40. **Ms. Zongo Hien** (Burkina Faso) said that, in order to make it easier for girls who had dropped out of school as a result of pregnancy to return to school once they had given birth, childcare services were made available and measures had been taken to ensure that scholarship holders could retain their scholarships.

41. **Mr. Kabore** (Burkina Faso) said that the Ministry of Health had established a department responsible for ensuring the provision of sex education. A programme known as the sexual health guidance programme had been established that addressed adolescent issues, reproductive health and abortion, among other areas. The managers of youth counselling centres had been given training that enabled them to visit secondary schools and provide sexual education to young people. Young people could also obtain guidance and documentation on sexual education from youth counselling centres. Information on that area was also provided through a number of media outlets.

42. **Ms. Zongo Hien** (Burkina Faso) said that school social services established in secondary schools were responsible for raising students' awareness of matters related to sexual and reproductive health. Such matters could also be discussed at youth clubs established in secondary schools.

Articles 15 and 16

43. **Ms. Schulz** said that she was concerned about the extent to which girls in the State party were made responsible for ensuring that they did not become pregnant. In view of the fact that some 10 per cent of girls were married before the age of 15, and 50 per cent of girls before the age of 18, the Committee had doubts about the effectiveness of the Government's national strategy on child marriage, which aimed to bring about a 20 per cent reduction in the number of early marriages by 2025. As Amnesty International had stated, that target was insufficiently ambitious. She wished to know how the Government would take advantage of its so-called demographic dividend when the excessively high rate of early marriage meant that girls were becoming mothers when they were still children themselves.

44. **Ms. Zongo Hien** (Burkina Faso) said that the delegation held more up-to-date statistics on child marriage than those cited by Ms. Schulz. Recently, the question of how best to address the issue of early marriage by improving the school retention rate had been discussed at a high-level advocacy event attended by a number of ministers.

45. **Mr. Koudougou** (Burkina Faso) said that, according to a study carried out for the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Social Institutions and Gender Index, the rate of early marriage in Burkina Faso had stood at 46 per cent in 2016. In addition, the statistics on forced and early marriage collected by the Government's social services indicated that the rate of such marriages was falling.

46. **Ms. Chalal** said that the Committee was concerned about the continued presence of discriminatory provisions in the Personal and Family Code. For example, article 238 of that Code stipulated that the legal age of marriage was 17 for girls and 20 for boys. Furthermore, when sufficiently serious grounds existed, a civil court could grant a dispensation allowing girls to marry at the age of 15 and boys at the age of 18. In the event that a couple could not agree about where to live, article 294 of the Code provided that the decision should be taken by the husband or, as a last resort, by a judge. In accordance with article 741 of the Code, a legally separated spouse could not inherit the assets of a deceased spouse, in violation of article 411 of the Code, which provided for the retention of that right following separation.

47. In accordance with article 233 of the Code, only those marriages that took place in civil registry offices were officially recognized. However, a study carried out by the Government in 2012 had indicated that 75 per cent of the married population had not been formally married in a registry office. Although article 232 of the Code provided that marriage should be monogamous, polygamy was widely permitted not specified in legislation. According to a Demographics and Health Survey carried out in 2010, around 42 per cent of married women were in polygamous marriages. In rural areas, the rate of polygamous marriage was significantly higher.

48. She wished to know whether the State party had raised the legal age of marriage for girls to 18 years of age, whether the State party intended to apply article 238 of the Personal and Family Code to all forms of marriage, including religious and traditional marriages, and whether all discriminatory provisions had been removed from that Code.

49. **Ms. Zongo Hien** (Burkina Faso) said that her department was working to increase the number of couples who married in civil registry offices, including by making it easier for couples to obtain the documents required for a civil marriage. By way of example, the Ministry for Women, National Solidarity and the Family had recently helped 200 couples to celebrate civil marriages in a rural community.

50. **Ms. Tamboura Dofini** (Burkina Faso) said that the Personal and Family Code was in the process of being reviewed but had not yet been adopted by the Council of Ministers and the National Assembly. It was not yet possible to state whether all the discriminatory provisions cited by the Committee would be removed from the Code. However, the minimum legal age for marriage had been harmonized at 18 years of age for men and women. Although polygamy was a deeply entrenched practice in Burkina Faso, the Government was taking steps to raise public awareness about the provisions on marriage set out in the Personal and Family Code.

51. **Mr. Chalal** said that she would welcome further information on the conditions in which a civil court could grant a dispensation for girls to marry at the age of 15.

52. **Ms. Tamboura Dofini** (Burkina Faso) said that such dispensations were normally granted in cases where girls had become pregnant. However, it would not be possible for such dispensations to be granted once the amended Personal and Family Code was adopted.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.