



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

Distr.: General  
26 February 2007

Original: English

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**Committee on the Elimination of  
Discrimination against Women  
Pre-session working group  
Thirty-ninth session  
23 July to 10 August 2007**

**List of issues and questions with regard to the consideration  
of periodic reports**

**Belize**

1. The pre-session working group examined the combined third and fourth periodic report of Belize (CEDAW/C/BLZ/3-4)

**General**

2. Please provide information on the process of preparing the report, indicating, in particular, whether consultations were held with non-governmental organizations and women's groups and whether it was presented to Parliament or any designated high-level authority.

**Constitution, laws and national machinery**

3. In its previous concluding comments, the Committee urged the Government to ensure that the definition of discrimination is fully incorporated in Belize's legislation, and that women have effective remedies against direct and indirect discrimination. Please provide information on what steps the Government has taken in response to this recommendation, and the impact of such steps.

4. Please provide information about the impact of the case in which the Court of Appeal ruled in favour of the unmarried pregnant teacher who was dismissed (para. 101).

5. The report provides information on a number of laws that have been passed or amended since the submission of the last report, but states that women are not currently utilizing the laws (para. 25). Please provide specific information on any initiatives, including awareness-raising campaigns, being undertaken by the Government to ensure women's knowledge of their rights and of existing legislation, as well as capacity to claim their rights.



6. The report states that the Women's Department and the National Women's Commission are compromised by a number of factors: a lack of financial and human resources (para. 37), weak measures to evaluate the impact of laws and policies on the status of women, and insufficient monitoring to the implementation of the Convention (para. 36). Please explain the measures the Government is taking to address these problems, including technical training and enhancing the national machinery for the advancement of women with adequate decision-making capacity and financial and human resources.

7. In its previous concluding comments, the Committee recognized that the multi-ethnic and multicultural character of Belize presented a particular challenge to the Government for the achievement of equality for all women in Belize. Please explain how the Government has responded to this challenge, including the extent to which policies and programmes give targeted attention to women of different ethnic and cultural groups in areas such as education, health and employment, in line with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention which calls for temporary special measures to achieve the de facto equality between men and women.

#### **Violence against women, and trafficking**

8. The report points out that the pattern of increases for domestic violence is about 10 per cent per annum and that there is inadequate level of sensitivity to domestic violence in the judicial and social protection systems (paras. 201 and 209). Please provide information on the steps the Government is taking to ensure that the provisions of the Domestic Violence Act are utilized by women, and whether it has instituted training and awareness-raising for judges, social service providers and the general public. Also, are there any government-funded shelters for victims of domestic violence?

9. The report provides no information on other forms of violence against women such as rape and sexual assault. Please provide statistical data about such forms of violence, and describe the steps that are being taken to develop a comprehensive strategy to address all forms of violence against women, including prevention, capacity-building and awareness-raising programmes for various groups, such as the police, lawyers, health and social workers and the judiciary, and the general public.

10. The report states that Belize is a destination country for trafficking (para. 73). Please provide further details about trafficking of women, in particular, statistical data on women trafficked into Belize, traffickers prosecuted and punished, information about the rehabilitation and social services available to women and girl victims of trafficking, resources to support such services, as well as permits for women and girl victims of trafficking to stay in the country.

11. Please provide details on the Trafficking in Persons Study which was due to be conducted in 2004 (para. 76). In particular, please provide information on the purpose of the study, the implementation of policies resulting from the findings, and their impact on the elimination of trafficking.

#### **Temporary special measures**

12. The report notes that there are no official policies aimed at accelerating the de facto equality of women. In the light of the Committee's general recommendation 25 on article 4, paragraph 1 of the Convention, please indicate why quotas or targets

are not used to increase the number of women in all spheres, and what, if any, steps the Government is taking to make use of the provision of article 4, paragraph 1.

### **Stereotypes and education**

13. The report provides no details on the strategy the Government is taking to address the prevalence of stereotypes which inhibit the full participation of women in society, or the efforts the Government has taken to eliminate stereotypes across all sectors and spheres, in accordance with article 5 (a) of the Convention. Please provide details on any actions aimed at the elimination of stereotypes and also on the impact of gender mainstreaming in all Government policies and programmes conducted by the Gender Integration Committee (para. 54).

14. Please provide information about the portrayal of women in the media, including the Regional Project in which Belize participated to address sex role stereotyping in the media (para. 60). Please describe how the results of the project informed policy aimed at addressing sex role stereotyping.

15. The report provides information about the guidebook for Primary School Teachers (para. 57). Please provide details about the impact of the guidebook at primary school level, and how the education system at all levels actively promotes gender equality and the eradication of gender-based stereotypes.

16. The report notes that women are still concentrated in traditional careers such as nursing and teaching (para. 97). Please provide data on the number of women compared to men in traditional and non-traditional fields of study in tertiary institutions, and trends over time. Please describe what time-bound strategies and targets are in place for increasing the number of female students in non-traditional fields of study, and progress in achieving them.

### **Participation in public life**

17. Please provide information on the steps the Government has taken to address the under-representation of women in political and public life, including the reluctance of women to offer themselves as candidates for public office, taking into account general recommendation No. 25 on article 4, paragraph 1 of the Convention, and general recommendation No. 23 on women in public life.

### **Employment**

18. In its previous concluding comments, the Committee expressed its concern about the low and falling labour force participation rate of women. The report points out that the labour force participation of women is relatively low at 43.2 per cent (para. 123). Please clarify what steps the Government has taken to improve women's labour force participation, and the impact of such measures. Also please provide information on programmes for women entrepreneurs, including to enhance their access to loans and credit.

19. While there is legislation establishing one minimum wage in Belize, the report notes that male-dominated jobs continue to attract higher wage rates than female-dominated jobs (para. 136). The Committee, in its previous concluding comments, urged the Government to assess the reasons for women's lower earnings with a view to adopting adequate measures to reverse this trend. Please provide information on

the steps taken to implement the Committee's recommendation and the findings of any assessment carried out.

20. Please describe what steps are being taken to expand benefit coverage for maternity leave so that more women can take leave in accordance with article 11, paragraph 2 (b) of the Convention.

### **Health**

21. In its previous concluding comments, the Committee expressed its concern at the high incidence of teenage pregnancies in Belize. The present report states that the Church's high level of influence over education presents a hindrance to the implementation of sexual and reproductive education for teenagers (para. 175). Please discuss steps taken, or plans of the Government to overcome this problem and ensure effective implementation of the policies for sexual and reproductive education for teenagers.

22. The report refers to the Government's commitments in the Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy, including in regard to reduction of maternal mortality rates (para. 180) and abortion (para. 187). Regarding the latter, it also refers to the Government's commitments in the National Gender Policy (see para. 186). The report also notes (para. 181), that since the passing of the SRH Policy, only selected components of the Safe Motherhood Initiative were being implemented. Please provide information on the status of implementation of all the components of the SRH Policy, and in particular those listed in paragraphs 180 and 187, and results achieved so far.

23. The report states that gender-related issues would be addressed in the National AIDS Commission's Policy and Legislation Project which was due to be completed in 2004 (para. 198). Please provide the details of this Project, especially its gender dimensions, and any available information on its effectiveness in controlling the pandemic.

24. In its previous concluding comments, the Committee requested the Government to assess the mental health status of women in Belize. Please provide more information in this regard, including what steps have been taken to implement the National Gender Policy's commitments in this area.

### **Rural women**

25. Please elaborate on the National Gender Policy's approach to rural women, and in particular whether the policy covers the specific issues faced by Mayan women described in the report.

26. Please describe what measures the Government has in place to enhance rural women's access to credit.

### **Amendment to article 20, paragraph 1; and declarations**

27. Please indicate what progress has been made towards acceptance of the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1 of the Convention.

28. Please indicate what plans are in place towards withdrawing the declaration to articles 8 and 9 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention.