



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.: General
17 November 2020

Original: English
Arabic, English, French and
Spanish only

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

List of issues and questions in relation to the combined eighth to tenth periodic reports of Egypt*

Reservations

1. It is indicated in the report that the State party has submitted the requisite instrument to withdraw its reservation to article 9 of the Convention (CEDAW/C/EGY/8-10, para. 27).¹ Please provide information on specific measures taken or envisaged by the State party to withdraw its remaining reservations to articles 2 and 16 of the Convention.

Visibility of the Convention and its Optional Protocol

2. In the light of the Committee's previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/EGY/CO/7, para. 18), please indicate specific measures taken to raise awareness among women, including disadvantaged and marginalized groups of women, of their rights under the Convention. Please provide information on specific courses provided by the National Centre for Judicial Studies to train judicial officers on the application of the Convention and the interpretation of national legislation in line with the Convention, indicating the percentage of judicial officers having received such training.

Impact of the pandemic on women's rights and gender equality

3. In line with the Committee's guidance note on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and coronavirus disease (COVID-19) issued on 22 April 2020, please indicate measures implemented by the State party in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic to redress long-standing inequalities between women and men by placing women at the centre of the recovery as an economic diversification strategy; to meet the needs and uphold the rights of women and girls, including those belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized

* Adopted by the pre-sessional working group on 13 November 2020.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, paragraph numbers refer to the combined eighth to tenth periodic reports of the State party.



groups and women in conflict or other humanitarian situations; and to ensure that lockdown measures, whether partial or total, and post-crisis recovery plans do not see women and girls relegated to stereotyped gender roles. Please indicate measures in place to ensure that all COVID-19 crisis response and recovery efforts: (a) address and are aimed at effectively preventing gender-based violence against women and girls; (b) guarantee that women and girls have equal participation in political and public life, decision-making, economic empowerment and service delivery; and (c) seek to ensure that women and girls benefit equally from stimulus packages, including financial support for unpaid care roles, that are aimed at mitigating the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic. Please explain how the State party is ensuring that measures taken to contain the pandemic, such as restrictions on freedom of movement or physical distancing, do not limit access by women and girls, including those from disadvantaged and marginalized groups, to justice, shelters, education, employment and health care, including sexual and reproductive health services.

Legislative and institutional framework

4. It is indicated in the report that the State party has prioritized the legislative reform process to ensure the formal and substantive equality of women and men such that it has adopted several provisions concerning women's rights (para. 18). In accordance with the State party's obligations under articles 1 and 2 of the Convention and in line with target 5.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals, to end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere, please indicate whether measures have been taken or are envisaged to repeal all discriminatory laws, in particular the Penal Code and the Personal Status Law, through which women are denied rights equal to those of men, as recommended by the Committee in its previous concluding observations ([CEDAW/C/EGY/CO/7](#), para. 16).

5. In the light of the Committee's previous concluding observations, please provide information on specific measures being taken to ensure that the Office of the Ombudsperson is not only mandated to receive complaints and communications concerning discriminatory practices against women but also to undertake investigations into such allegations (*ibid.*, paras. 19–20).

National machinery for the advancement of women

6. As stated in paragraph 41 of the report, the mandate of the Egyptian Women's Observatory is to actively monitor indicators to measure the progress made towards achieving the objectives of the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030. Please provide information on the scope of responsibilities of the Observatory and how they are coordinated with those of the National Council for Women, which is the national machinery for the advancement of women in the State party (para. 39). Please provide information on the human, technical and financial resources allocated to the Observatory and how it engages with civil society organizations working on women's rights in the State party.

Temporary special measures

7. It is stated in paragraphs 44 and 45 of the report that Egyptian laws include permanent privileges and measures designed to meet women's needs and address their working conditions and the need to reconcile family duties and social expectations. Please provide a detailed overview of these measures and an update on their implementation in various areas, such as education, employment and the judiciary.

Please provide an update on the effectiveness of these and other such measures, in line with article 4 (1) of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures, in achieving the substantive equality of women and men in those areas under the Convention in which women are underrepresented or disadvantaged. Please also indicate whether the aforementioned measures apply equally to the public and private sectors and whether the State party envisages extending them to other areas in which women remain underrepresented.

Discriminatory stereotypes and harmful practices

8. In its previous concluding observations ([CEDAW/C/EGY/CO/7](#), para. 21), the Committee reiterated its concern about the persistence of adverse practices, traditions, patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes regarding the roles, responsibilities and identities of women and men in the family and in society. Please provide information on the impact that the “Ta’ al-Marbutah”, “Because I Am a Man” and “Do Not Let Me Stop You” campaigns have had on changing mindsets and negative attitudes in relation to women and girls in the State party. Please indicate specific measures taken to eliminate harmful practices in the State party, in particular female genital mutilation, child marriage, virginity testing and polygamy, 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.

Gender-based violence against women

9. In its previous concluding observations (*ibid.*, para. 23), the Committee expressed its concern about the lack of a holistic approach to the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls in the State party. In the light of the Committee's general recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19, and the adoption of a national strategy to combat violence against women for the period 2015–2020, please provide information on:

(a) Steps being taken to adopt a comprehensive law on combating domestic violence in the light of the limitations of the Penal Code, which requires that battery exceed “accepted limits of discipline” for it to be successfully prosecuted, and to repeal article 60 of the Code, which provides for the “good faith” defence that absolves men from criminal responsibility in domestic violence cases;

(b) Measures to amend the Penal Code to, *inter alia*, criminalize marital rape, revise the definition of rape to include non-vaginal penetration and remove grounds for leniency for so-called “honour crimes”, including the discriminatory application of sanctions for adultery under *zina* laws, which perpetuate gender-based violence;

(c) Steps taken to adopt a comprehensive and robust national action plan on the eradication of female genital mutilation that builds on the National Female Genital Mutilation Abandonment Strategy, 2016–2020, in the light of reports that about 90 per cent of all married women in the State party have undergone the procedure;

(d) Measures in place to address the medicalization of female genital mutilation, including through the prosecution of medical doctors and personnel, in particular those who commit it under the guise of performing cosmetic surgery;

(e) Programmes in place to modify public perceptions and the mindset of the acceptability of gender-based violence against women and girls in society, including through media and outreach advocacy, and to address prejudices and negative

stereotypes, including victim-blaming, by law enforcement and judicial personnel handling such cases;

(f) Progress made towards prosecuting the perpetrators in the “Fairmont” and “Zaki” cases, including by providing assistance and protection to victims and witnesses and ensuring that there are proper safeguards under criminal law that protect victims from revictimization during trials;

(g) Steps taken to prevent and respond to gender-based violence against women and girls, targeting in particular disadvantaged groups of women, such as asylum-seeking and refugee women, including non-Muslim women who are allegedly targeted for not wearing a hijab.

10. The State party indicates in paragraph 22 of the report that it has established 14 shelters operated by civil society organizations and that it has service centres that raise awareness of abused women’s rights. Please provide information on the total number of shelters in the State party for women and girls who are victims of gender-based violence, including domestic violence, and their funding status. Please also indicate the number of service centres at the national and local levels and the human and financial resources allocated to them. Please also specify measures taken to ensure that Syrian and other asylum-seeking and refugee women and girls who have no State-issued temporary or permanent stay permit or national identity document can obtain access to such centres.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

11. It is indicated in paragraph 50 of the report that Act No. 64 (2010) on combating trafficking in persons, which criminalizes all forms of such trafficking, has been adopted and that special criminal chambers have been established within the State appellate courts to handle cases of trafficking in persons. In the light of the Committee’s general recommendation No. 38 (2020) on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration, please provide information on:

(a) The number of cases of trafficking in persons that have been prosecuted in the special criminal chambers and the penalties imposed on perpetrators thereof;

(b) Progress made towards developing an integrated database to collect, analyse and share accurate information on the extent of trafficking in persons (para. 64);

(c) Specific steps taken to combat trafficking in persons for the purpose of removal of organs and the phenomena of “tourist” and “temporary” marriages, which are allegedly contracted for purposes of trafficking in women and girls from the State party;

(d) Measures aimed at the early identification and referral of, and the provision of assistance and support to, women and girls who are victims of trafficking, as well as the reported targeting of Coptic women and girls for trafficking;

(e) Measures taken to improve international, regional and bilateral cooperation with countries of origin, transit and destination to prevent trafficking through the exchange of information and the harmonization of legal procedures aimed at the prosecution and punishment of perpetrators.

Women human rights defenders

12. According to information before the Committee, civic space for women human rights defenders is shrinking, given that women human rights activists and journalists continue to be subjected to threats, arrests and prosecution on arbitrary charges, in particular for offences related to morality. Please provide information on specific steps being taken to investigate and address allegations of threats against, attacks on and unlawful prosecution, restrictions on the movement and travel and the freezing of the bank accounts of women human rights defenders in the State party, as well as on the persecution of social media influencers, in particular those known as “TikTok women”.

Participation in political and public life

13. As stated in paragraph 67 of the report, the State party has made significant strides to increase the representation of women in the parliament following the elections held in 2015. Nevertheless, women continue to be underrepresented in decision-making positions in both the public and private sectors. Please provide information on specific measures being taken to increase the representation of women at all levels of government, in the parliament (the People’s Assembly and the Shura Council), on local councils and in the judiciary (the State Council), academia and the foreign service, taking into account the Committee’s general recommendation No. 25, as well as its general recommendation No. 23 (1997) on women in political and public life.

Nationality

14. It is indicated in paragraph 27 of the report that the right of non-Egyptian men to acquire nationality from Egyptian women through marriage is subject to the general provisions governing naturalization that are set out under Act No. 26 of 1975, which require foreign male spouses to have habitually resided in the State party for at least 10 consecutive years to be eligible for citizenship. Please explain whether the requirement is applicable to foreign female spouses married to Egyptian men and, if it is not, indicate specific measures being taken to ensure the equal rights of men and women to transmit nationality to their spouses as provided for under article 9 of the Convention. Please also indicate specific measures in place to eliminate statelessness among women and girls.

Education

15. It is stated in the report (para. 24) that enrolment rates for women and girls at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education have increased significantly. However, overall enrolment rates remain low, and illiteracy is high among women and girls. Please provide information on specific measures to increase the enrolment and literacy rates of women and girls at all levels of the education system, in Upper Egypt in particular. Please also indicate school dropout rates, disaggregated by sex, race, ethnicity, age, socioeconomic status and geographical location, and measures being taken to address the problem. Please provide information on the delivery of comprehensive and age-appropriate sexuality education at all levels of the education system in the State party.

16. Please indicate measures taken to ensure that girls and young women benefit as much as boys and young men from technical and vocational training, including for

purposes of pursuing careers in traditionally male-dominated sectors, such as construction and mining. Please provide data on enrolment in vocational training, disaggregated by sex, age, sector and geographical location. Please also respond to reports that, on 17 December 2017, armed groups opened fire on a bus that was transporting teachers in North Sinai Governorate. Please indicate specific measures in place to protect schools, teachers, girls and boys from attacks by armed groups, as well as to ensure that school infrastructure is not unlawfully used for military purposes.

Employment

17. Please indicate specific measures being taken to address the high levels of unemployment among women in the State party. Please also provide specific information on measures taken:

- (a) To amend the Labour Code to introduce and enforce the principle of equal pay for work of equal value in order to close the gender pay gap in the State party;
- (b) To extend the applicability of the Labour Code to domestic workers who currently fall outside the protection of the law, as well as to ratify the International Labour Organization Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189);
- (c) To repeal ministerial decrees that restrict women from performing night work and working in certain occupations such as mining and construction;
- (d) To ensure that women in the private sector are entitled to at least 14 weeks of maternity leave, in line with international human rights standards and the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), of the International Labour Organization;
- (e) To extend the applicability of article 306 of the Penal Code to the offence of sexual harassment in the workplace;
- (f) To address the horizontal and vertical segregation of women, in particular in areas of employment in which women are underrepresented.

Health

18. As stated in paragraph 97 of the report, the State party has made considerable efforts towards increasing budget allocations for the health sector. Please indicate the percentage of the national budget that is allocated to that sector and specifically targeted to improving access to health care by women and girls in the State party. Please provide specific information on measures:

- (a) To improve health insurance coverage for women and girls in the State party in the light of reports that approximately 80 per cent of women do not have such insurance;
- (b) To address high rates of non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes and hypertension, among women and to improve women's access to health services, in Upper Egypt in particular;
- (c) To address challenges of gaining access to modern contraceptives for women, in particular unmarried women and girls, owing to societal prejudices and stereotypes, which could be a cause of the increased fertility rate in the State party;
- (d) To legalize abortion, at least in cases of rape, incest, threats to the life or health of the pregnant woman or severe fetal impairment, and to decriminalize it in all other cases.

Disadvantaged groups of women

19. Please provide information on specific measures taken to ensure access to education; health care, including sexual and reproductive health care; basic services; housing; food; employment; and identity cards for disadvantaged groups of women and girls, such as asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant women, in particular undocumented migrant women and women with disabilities. Please address reports of abuse of women and girls in detention, including ill-treatment of transgender women, by security and prison personnel. Please indicate steps taken to ensure that conditions for women and girls in places of detention meet international human rights standards.

Rural women

20. It is indicated in paragraph 112 of the report that the State party supports rural women through a national development programme that includes the provision of concessional loans through the Local Development Fund. Please provide data on the number of rural women who have benefited from the Fund, which should be disaggregated by loan amount, age, ethnicity and geographical location. Please indicate specific measures taken to improve land ownership by women, given that they own only 1 per cent of agricultural land in the State party. Please provide information on measures to ensure that: (a) a gender perspective is integrated into agriculture and renewable emergency projects and investment policies, in both their formulation and implementation; and (b) the expansion of the Takaful and Karama social safety net programmes effectively mitigates the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 on rural women. Please indicate specific measures taken to improve access by rural women to basic services, such as health, food, housing, electricity, transportation, water and sanitation, in line with the Committee's general recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women.

Marriage and family relations

21. According to information before the Committee, women continue to be subjected to discrimination in matters of marriage and family relations under the State party's personal status legislation. Please indicate steps taken to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women in the areas of marriage and family relations. Please provide information on specific measures taken to review and amend legislation related to personal status in order:

(a) To prohibit and eradicate the pervasive phenomenon of polygamy in the State party;

(b) To enforce, without exception, Law No. 126 of 2008 amending the provisions of the Child Law, under which the minimum age of marriage for women and men was established at 18 years to ensure that child marriages – including customary *urfi* marriages, through which children can contract a marriage, but it is announced only when they attain the age of 18 years – are not contracted;

(c) To amend the Inheritance Law (No. 77 of 1943) to ensure that the right of daughters to inheritance is equal to that of sons;

(d) To abolish guardianship for women in matters of marriage, which grants men the right to object to a marriage of a woman;

(e) To ensure equality in matters of custody of children and divorce, including by repealing the Personal Status Law provision under which the testimonies of two female witnesses are equivalent to that of only one male witness.
