



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

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

Addendum

Replies of Zimbabwe to the list of issues to be taken up in connection with the consideration of the combined second, third, fourth and fifth periodic reports*

General

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 1 of the list of issues (CEDAW/C/ZWE/Q/2-5)

1. The Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT) is a corporate body that was established under the Census and Statistics Act [Chapter 10:29], which came into effect in July 2009. ZIMSTAT is the official body that collects national data in Zimbabwe and is mandated to co-ordinate and supervise the National Statistical System. The Gender Statistics Unit within ZIMSTAT has a mandate to ensure that all statistics collected through various surveys are sex-disaggregated, as evidenced by the Demographic Health Survey that is carried out after every 4 years. The Survey has a separate module on gender based violence, indicating a gender sensitive approach to data collection

2. The Agency has developed the Zimbabwe Statistics Database (ZIMDAT) which contains prioritized national indicators to monitor progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. The statistics collected are sex-disaggregated in line with the National Gender Policy (2004) which mandates all sectors to generate sex-disaggregated data. The administrative data collected from the various sectors feeds into the National Statistics Agency.

* In accordance with the information transmitted to States parties regarding the processing of their reports, the present document was not formally edited before being sent to the United Nations translation services.

3. In 2010, the Government in partnership with UNICEF commissioned a research published as, “A Situational Analysis on the Status of Women and Children in Zimbabwe, 2005-2010”. The research captures the real situation of women and children across all levels in Zimbabwe. The situational analysis provides a comprehensive overview encompassing the latest data in critical social sectors including health, education and water and sanitation.

Constitutional, legislative and institutional framework

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 2 of the list of issues

4. The non-discrimination clause in section 23(1) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe and other relevant pieces of legislation do not reflect, *verbatim*, the definition of ‘*discrimination against women*’, as contained in the Convention. However, the clauses adequately cover all aspects of the definition, as they prohibit discrimination on such grounds as sex, gender, marital status and pregnancy.

5. Government recognizes that section 23(3) of the Constitution, on the other hand, encourages discrimination in matters of personal and customary law and has enacted various pieces of legislation to eliminate discrimination against women as already indicated in the Report. Further, under the Constitutional Review process that is currently underway, a Thematic Committee on Women was constituted to ensure that the rights of women are adequately enshrined in the new Constitution. The Committee has conducted various consultative outreach visits across the country and Section 23(3) of the Constitution was a talking point. Its repeal is therefore under consideration.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 3 of the list of issues

6. In addition to the Constitutional Review Process referred to above and the measures highlighted in the Report, the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development developed a family laws handbook that explains family related legislation in simplified form, as an awareness raising strategy. After the realization that the adversarial system of litigation was not user friendly in dealing with family law matters the High Court administratively established a specialized court in 2009 that deals with family law matters. In this family court, the processes and formalities are relaxed to allow for speedy, open and transparent dispute settlement appropriate to redress the issues before the court. The court has been focusing on divorce, judicial separation, nullity of marriages, custody, guardianship, international abduction and inheritance issues but not dealing with criminal aspects of family law. Processes are underway to legislatively establish the court. It is envisaged that the specialization will promote the effective application of the provisions of the Convention.

National machinery for the advancement of women

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 4 of the list of issues

(a) Definition of Discrimination against Women

7. The Constitution of Zimbabwe (Section 23) is clear that discrimination on the grounds of race, tribe, and place of origin, political opinions, colour, creed, sex, gender, marital status or physical disability is prohibited. The inclusion of ‘sex and ‘gender’ in the non-discrimination clause effectively prohibits discrimination against women. As a result, all persons in Zimbabwe, including women, are entitled to enjoy the rights provided in the Declaration of Rights on an equal basis. The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission

(ZHRC) is therefore obliged to investigate discrimination against women. Section 23 further protects women against other forms of discrimination, such as disability and marital status.

(b) Composition of the Human Rights Commission and its investigative powers, enforcement of its decisions, remedies

8. The Constitution was amended in 2007 (Amendment 18) to establish the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) in line with the Paris Principles relating to the status of national Human Rights institutions. One of the functions of the Commission is to “investigate the conduct of any authority or person, where it is alleged that any of the rights in the Declaration of Rights has been violated by that authority or person.” Further, the Constitution provides for the enactment of a law that will empower the Commission to secure or provide appropriate redress for violations of Human Rights. The Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission Bill is being considered in Parliament.

9. In terms of section 100R (1) of the Constitution, the ZHRC should consist of a Chairperson and eight other Commissioners, four of whom should be women. To that end, there are four women in the ZHRC. The Bill referred to above will provide that at any given time the Deputy Chairperson shall be of the opposite sex to the Chairperson. This has already been reflected in the current composition of the Commission where the Chairperson is male and the Deputy Chairperson is female.

10. In order to ensure sustained promotion of gender equality and the rights of women, the ZHRC Bill provides for the establishment of a working group on gender equality and women’s rights, among those that will be established in line with the different human rights thematic areas. The Working Group on Gender Equality and Women’s Rights will therefore perform the tasks expected of a Gender Equality Commission.

(c) Budgetary provisions

11. The budget of the Commission, as will fully be provided for under the Bill shall consist of:

(a) Monies appropriated by an Act of Parliament for the salaries and allowances payable to and in respect of members of the Commission and the recurrent administrative expenses of the Commission; and

(b) Any other moneys that may be payable to the Commission from moneys appropriated for the purpose by Act of Parliament; and

(c) Any donations, grants, bequests or loans made by any person or organization or any Government of any country to the Commission with the approval of the Minister; and

(d) Any other moneys that may vest in or accrue to the Commission, whether in terms of this Act or otherwise.

12. In the meantime, Government provides funds to the Commission under a specified budget line.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 5 of the list of issues

13. Since the launch of the National Gender Policy, various sectors have come up with gender specific interventions such as;

(a) The Land Reform exercise, which reserved 20% quota for women to enable them to access and own land in their own right;

- (b) The Tourism Policy, which promotes women's participation in the sector by reserving a 30% quota;
- (c) The Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Policy that provides for the reservation of 30% of its loan facilities for women;
- (d) The reservation of a 30% for women in the mining mechanisation that is run by the Ministry of Mines and Mining Development;
- (e) The Women's Development Fund and the Community Development Fund that were introduced in 2007 to assist women in various income generating projects;
- (f) The Medium Term Plan (MTP) (2012-2015), which highlights the need for gender mainstreaming in all the economic sectors such as manufacturing, tourism, mining and agriculture;
- (g) The reservation, by the Public Service Commission, of a 30% quota for women in all senior managerial posts in the public service;
- (h) The Government is implementing a programme on Gender Responsive Economic Policy Management (GREPM). The programme is aimed at strengthening capacity of economists, budget officers and policy planners to be able to formulate and implement economic policies and strategies that are gender sensitive.
- (i) Gender Focal Persons have been appointed at Director level in every line Ministry to spearhead gender mainstreaming in their respective Ministries.

14. The National Gender Policy is currently under review to align it to current developments such as the MDGs, Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development, Concluding Observations of subsequent meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women and national development frameworks such as the MTP.

Temporary special measures

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 6 of the list of issues

15. As of August 2010, 23.36% of the 30% quota reserved by the Public Service Commission had been achieved for women in senior management positions.

16. Constitutional Amendment No.17 provided for affirmative action for previously disadvantaged groups in any programme of Land Reform. Under the Land Reform programme, the Government set aside a 20% quota for women. As of 2009, 17% women were allocated A1 model farms and 12% were allocated under the A2 model.

17. As a result of the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Policy referred to above, 57% women benefitted from SEDCO funds, as compared to 43.5% men in 2010.

Education

18. Zimbabwe introduced an affirmative action policy at admission to colleges and technical and vocational training centers. The Affirmative Action Policy has resulted in much improved access to tertiary education by women between 2006 and 2010. From 2006 to 2010 the enrolment rates increased as follows;

- (a) 34% to 44.3% in Vocational Education and Training centers;
- (b) 36.9% to 39.5% in Universities;
- (c) 41.2% to 44.3% in Polytechnics; and

- (d) 56.7% to 69.4% in Teachers Colleges.

Stereotypes and cultural practices

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 7 of the list of issues

19. In order to change gender stereotypes a number of measures have been undertaken. These include:

(a) Gender clubs established in primary and secondary schools to sensitise pupils on gender issues so as to foster beliefs that are not stereotypical at a tender age. Government, with the support from UNICEF has developed gender awareness resource kits which have been distributed to the gender clubs. In addition, quiz and essay writing competitions have been introduced in schools to stimulate debate on gender stereotyping and how these could be addressed;

(b) Science and maths clubs that have been introduced to demystify the stereotype around technical subjects. These are run in all the 10 Provinces of the country during school holidays. In addition, female role models who have excelled in non-traditional careers such as pilots, engineers are invited to address and motivate the girls as part of mentorship;

(c) Gender awareness programmes that target chiefs as gate keepers of culture and tradition. The awareness campaigns target mainly those cultural practices that perpetuate gender stereotypes. The chiefs are, in turn, mandated to cascade the information to their communities;

(d) Media campaigns, through talk shows on various subjects, such as gender based violence, girl child empowerment, women's participation in politics and decision making;

(e) The engagement of men through men's organisation like Padare Men's Forum on Gender, to change men's perceptions on issues of gender equality and equity.

Violence against women

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 8 of the list of issues

20. Programmes on the prevention of violence against women have been undertaken Countrywide by Government and Civil Society. There is a Victim Friendly Unit at every Police Station countrywide. All personnel deployed to the Victim Friendly Unit (VFU) are trained on how to handle victims of sexual and domestic violence. In addition, Government, in a bid to provide integrated services to survivors of sexual violence, is piloting One Stop Centres for survivors of Gender Based Violence. The One Stop Centres are aimed at providing holistic services which include legal, psycho-social support, police and health services at one centre. Plans are underway to establish these in all the 10 Administrative Provinces of the country.

21. Magistrates, prosecutors and clerks of court have been trained on the effective implementation of the Domestic Violence Act and on handling survivors of domestic violence. Anti – Domestic Violence counsellors have been appointed at community level to provide psycho-social support to survivors of domestic violence.

22. Government has embarked on a Zero Tolerance Campaign to gender based violence focusing on Prevention, Protection, Participation by everyone in programmes aimed at eliminating gender based violence. As part of the campaign, information on Domestic

Violence Act and other laws have been translated in local languages and distributed to rural communities.

23. In terms of the Domestic Violence Act, not all acts of domestic violence are criminal, such as emotional abuse. Where such cases are reported to the Police, referrals are made to organisations offering psycho-social support.

(a) Concrete measures taken by the Ant-Domestic Violence Council to ensure and promote effective Implementation of the Domestic Violence Act

24. The Council with support from UNFPA has developed a Monitoring and Evaluation framework as a key component of the country's National Gender Based Violence Strategy for increased accountability and measuring program impact. The Monitoring and Evaluation framework will be used by all stakeholders to measure the impact of interventions in their sectors. The M&E system will contribute to the identification of best practices that can be promoted in future GBV prevention and response initiatives.

(b) Provision of Government shelters for victims of domestic violence

25. Plans are underway to establish at least one shelter in every Province with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

(c) Cultural norms and discriminatory customary rites and practices

26. In the past two years the VFU has dealt with very few cases involving harmful cultural practices. In 2009, only six cases involving pledging of women were recorded whilst in 2010, four cases were recorded. As a result of massive awareness campaigns, these practices are slowly dying out.

Trafficking and exploitation of women and girls

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 9 of the list of issues

27. The process of ratifying the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime is at an advanced stage. Although the research referred to in the State Party Report indicates Zimbabwe being used as a transit and source of human trafficking, indications are that this is more of irregular migration than human trafficking.

28. The reception and support centres at Beitbridge and Plumtree border posts as indicated in the State Party report are meant mainly for receiving returnees and deportees from neighbouring countries who would have migrated irregularly. It should be noted that due to the economic challenges that the country was facing as a result of the illegal sanctions, a number of Zimbabweans crossed into neighbouring countries to seek employment opportunities.

29. As indicated in the State Party Report, Zimbabwe will soon undertake an independent study on human trafficking in order to ascertain its existence, extent and the gender dimensions.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 10 of the list of issues

30. Prostitution is illegal in Zimbabwe and therefore any activity that is associated with prostitution is criminalized. According to our own cultural systems, values and beliefs, prostitution is also not acceptable. The most common aspect of prostitution in the country is that of soliciting; whereby women accost men for sex.

31. Indeed, Government embarked on a 'No to Prostitution' campaign in 2004 to discourage prostitution, in the wake of HIV and AIDS. In order to reduce the negative effects of the Campaign on the welfare of the women involved, Government initiated a rehabilitative and economic empowerment project targeting women in prostitution in 2007 to enable them access to business loans. However, the funds reserved for the loans were affected by the high inflationary tendencies that characterized the economy during that period. The programme was, therefore not ran to conclusion.

Political participation and participation in public life

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 11 of the list of issues

32. The Women in Politics and Decision Making Project referred to in the State Party Report, was funded by NORAD (Norwegian Government funding). However, after the imposition of sanctions on the country the funding ceased. The Government, in partnership with local NGOs, made sustained efforts to continue taking measures to promote gender parity in politics and other levels of decision-making as stipulated by the African Union and SADC Gender Protocols. These efforts include:

(a) Capacity building programmes for seating and aspiring Members of Parliament and Local Government Councillors. The training focused on preparing them for election campaigns, sensitising them on national and international instruments on gender and general leadership skills;

(b) The "Women Can Do It Campaign" which ran from the period 2007-2008, encouraged women to participate in the 2008 election as both candidates and voters;

(c) The Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development's campaign for the inclusion of a 50% quota in the new Constitution.

Education

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 12 of the list of issues

33. The Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) was established in 2000 targeting poor and vulnerable children in both primary and secondary schools. In 2009, alone 600 000 children benefitted from BEAM of which 56% were girls. The dropout rate was 30% and slightly higher for boys than it was for girls.

Sexual harassment

34. The administrative measures taken against perpetrators of sexual harassment in schools are disciplinary in nature and have no bearing on the criminal consequences of the case. What was stated as a challenge in the State Party Report, was the separation of the administrative measures from the criminal proceedings, in terms of Misconduct Procedures. The obligation of reporting the matter to the Police therefore lies with the victim and the family. School authorities engage the family of the victims and advise them of the criminal procedures. Where evidence is required by the courts from the school authorities, it is duly provided. The administrative procedures and the criminal proceeding are therefore, parallel processes.

Employment

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 13 of the list of issues

35. As indicated in the State Party Report, the Labour Act [*Chapter 28:01*] prohibits the demand for sexual favours in return for recruitment for employment, promotion or any other related activities. The prohibition extends to any form of unwelcome sexually determined conduct towards an employee. This protects employees from potential discrimination on the grounds of gender.

36. In addition, the Public Service Regulations (Statutory Instrument 1 of 2000), recognise sexual harassment in the workplace as an act of misconduct, attracting punitive measures, such as suspension or dismissal from work. Sexual harassment is not only dealt with administratively but the aggrieved can also approach the Court and lay criminal charges against the perpetrator.

37. In order to effectively deal with issues of sexual harassment, private companies have been encouraged to come up with Codes of Conduct for settling internal disputes at the workplace. The Labour Relations (Employment Codes of Conduct) Regulations (Statutory Instrument 379 of 1990) obliges the companies to register their Codes of Conduct with the Ministry of Labour and Social Services.

Health

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 14 of the list of issues

38. Government has embarked on the Maternal and Newborn Health Programme that seeks to facilitate the attainment of quality sexual and reproductive health status for women, men and young people. It also seeks to ensure that every pregnancy is safe, intended and it results in a positive outcome, a healthy mother and baby, through addressing the three delays, namely:

- (a) The delay in deciding to seek care and treatment;
- (b) The delay in reaching a treatment facility; and
- (c) The delay in getting adequate treatment at the facility.

(a) Key programmes on the reduction of maternal mortality

- (i) *Life saving skills in emergency obstetric and neonatal care (EmONC) and cervical cancer screening*

39. The programme has since 2006 been providing Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care trainings. The trainings mainly targets midwives, doctors and obstetricians and gynaecologists. Since 2009, the trainings integrated PMTCT. The programme is also developing guidelines for integrating ART in Maternal and Child Health settings. To date, an average of 2 health workers per every secondary level health facility have been trained in EmONC. The Ministry of Health and Child Welfare has also opened up two cervical cancer screening sites and to date, the centers have screened more than 5000 women.

- (ii) *Revitalization of maternity waiting homes (MWH)*

40. The Reproductive Health Unit, located in the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, has embarked on the revitalization of MWHs. In 2008, a rapid assessment on MWHs was conducted, leading to the development of operational guidelines and procurement of equipment and supplies, to facilitate the process. The project was commissioned in March

2010. The target has been to revitalize at least one MWH per district in the initial phase of the programme. To date, 62 MWHs have been revitalised and Government is currently on the planning stage for the second phase of the revitalization process. Revitalization of MWHs is anticipated to improve institutional deliveries as well as increase skilled attendance at birth.

(iii) *Adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH)*

41. The Reproductive Health Unit facilitated the development of an ASRH Strategy: 2010 – 2015. To date over 250 youth friendly corners and centers have been established at health facilities and in the communities across the country.

(iv) *Rolling out CARMMA in Zimbabwe*

42. On the 30th of June 2010, the Government launched the Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality (CARMMA) under the theme: “Zimbabwe Cares: No Woman Should Die While Giving Life”. CARMMA’s main objective is to accelerate the availability and use of universally accessible quality sexual and reproductive health services that are critical for the reduction of maternal mortality, through co-ordination and effective implementation of existing plans and strategies.

(v) *Blood coupons project*

43. About 14% of all maternal deaths in Zimbabwe are due to post partum haemorrhage. The Ministry of Health and Child Welfare has commissioned a Blood Coupon/Voucher programme to improve the supply of affordable blood and its related products to women in need. The programme has gone a long way in saving the lives of pregnant women in need of blood and its related blood products.

(vi) *Programme to strengthen transport and communication to improve patient referrals*

44. The Government is strengthening transport and communication system to reduce delays for pregnant women to reach health care facilities.

(vii) *Antenatal and post natal care (ANC) Services*

45. There are more than 1500 sites offering ANC services in the country. The Ministry revised the Post Natal Care Guidelines to ensure that mothers receive post natal care within the first 48 hours of birth (before discharge), at seven days (instead of the old ten day visit) and at 42 days (six weeks).

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 15 of the list of issues

46. The State Party Report indicated that Government established the National AIDS Council (NAC) to co-ordinate, monitor and evaluate the national response to HIV and AIDS. NAC has a Board comprising 14 members. Its activities are conducted through AIDS Action Committees which are set up at the Provincial, District, Ward, and Village levels, thus ensuring accessibility to all members of the public.

Impact of the Activities of the National AIDS Council

47. Due to the concerted efforts of the National AIDS Council, Zimbabwe has made significant progress in its HIV response with a decline of the HIV prevalence rate by almost 50% from 29% in 1997 to 14,26% by 2009. Evidence confirms that Zimbabwe’s prevention strategies have been a success. Social and behavior change communication programmes have been rolled out to all 72 districts of the country. In 2010, 56% of pregnant HIV positive women accessed PMTCT services, a multifold increase from 5% in 2005. The

coverage of infant antiretroviral prophylaxis has also increased. In 2008, 80% of infants born to HIV positive mothers were provided with ARV prophylaxis for PMTCT at birth, up from 60% in 2006.

48. In terms of Provision of Anti- Retroviral Therapy (ART), Zimbabwe is now at 60% of those who urgently require ARVs. The number of children on ART increased from 18,954 in 2009 to 31904 in 2010.

Economic empowerment

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 16 of the list of issues

49. In 2010, Government, through the Ministry of Finance allocated US\$1 000 000 to the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development to economically empower marginalized women at grassroots level through the Women's Development Fund. Cognisant of women's living realities and the challenges thereof, no collateral security was required in accessing the loans. Women formed groups of at least five (5) members and guaranteed each other. From the 10 Provinces, a total of 509 groups of women (2545 women) benefitted from the Fund. Of the 10 Provinces, 8 are rural and two are urban.

50. Further the Ministry introduced an Internal Lending and Saving Scheme. A total of 329 Saving and Credit groups were established throughout the country with a total of 2096 membership. Of these, 1796 are women. The scheme is meant to build a capital base, where participants are able to access loans at very low interest rates and with no collateral security required.

51. In addition, the Ministry economically empowered women through various programmes which included poultry where 2 420 boschveld chicken layers for egg were loaned to 34 women groups. Further, trainings on food processing and entrepreneurship were conducted in all the ten provinces and a total of 1888 participants took part and of these 1788 (95) were women.

52. A Broad Based Women's Economic Empowerment Framework has been developed to ensure that women effectively participate in key sectors of the economy such as mining, manufacturing, tourism and agriculture.

Disadvantaged groups of women

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 17 of the list of issues

(a) Older women

53. Government is currently providing care for the needy elderly persons through the public assistance programme whereby they are granted a monthly payment per individual. Older persons aged 65years and above do not pay medical fees at Government health institutions.

(b) Women with disabilities

54. A legal framework that offers social protection to people living with disabilities is in place. The framework provides for direct budgetary allocation of resources into the Disabled Persons Fund. In an effort to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities, Government formulated a policy on the Equalisation of Employment Opportunities for Disabled Persons in the Public Service, in line with the United Nations Standard Rules on Equalisation of Employment Opportunities for the Disabled Persons of

1993. Furthermore, the Constitution of Zimbabwe prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability.

55. In addition, the Social Welfare Assistance Act [*Chapter 17:06*] provides for health and education assistance, maintenance allowances, cash transfers, purchases of assistive technologies and special equipment for the disabled.

(c) Refugee women

56. Zimbabwe is a party to the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1969 Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. These instruments have been domesticated into national law through the enactment of the Refugees Act [*Chapter 4:03*]

57. Zimbabwe operates a refugee camp in Manicaland Province called Tongogara Refugee Camp which has been designated by Government as the official home for Refugees. It is in this camp that refugees' basic needs such as food, shelter, education and health services are met. Refugees are allowed to find employment and work like any other non-nationals in terms of Zimbabwean Laws.

58. Refugee status determination is done by the Zimbabwe Refugee Committee which is comprised of relevant Government Ministries. The UNHCR seats as an observer and provides technical advice. Women refugees enjoy the same rights that are accorded to women in Zimbabwe.

Rural women

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 18 of the list of issues

59. The thrust of Government is on Rural Development and to that effect, a number of programmes implemented in rural areas have benefitted women. Most programmes as reflected in the responses to question 8, 14 and 16 on violence against women, access to health and economic empowerment have benefitted largely rural women.

60. Two training centres for rural women (Rodger Howman and Jamaica Inn) have been established to promote skills development for rural women. The trainings offered include, food processing and entrepreneurship development, garment making and business management. In 2010 a total of 2 125 rural women were trained.

61. The rural electrification programme has resulted in a substantial number of rural households and service centres being electrified. The programme has seen an increase in the establishment of agricultural enterprises by women. In 2009, the numbers of people employed in these enterprises rose by 270 percent, and 41 percent of these were reported to be female. The rural electrification program in Zimbabwe has also increased the number of income-generating activities carried out by local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The income-generating projects have proved instrumental in reducing poverty in the country

62. Zimbabwe celebrates Rural Women's Day every year, whereby the contribution of rural women to development is acknowledged.

Marriage and family relations

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 19 of the list of issues

63. On this issue, the following is noted:

(a) As indicated in the State Party Report, the marriage law reform process will have the effect of aligning all types of marriage with the Convention. The reform process is on-going and will pass through various stages, such as Cabinet and Parliament before it is brought to conclusion. A timeline is therefore difficult to determine;

(b) Early marriages have been criminalized under the Domestic Violence Act and the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act;

(c) No measures have been taken to prohibit polygamy.

Optional Protocol

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 20 of the list of issues

64. The Government is considering the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention and the Committee will be appraised of the developments in this regard.

65. Zimbabwe supports the amendment of Article 20 paragraph 1 of the Convention pertaining to the Committee's meeting times.
