



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.: General
13 March 2023
English
Original: Spanish
English, French and Spanish only

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination

against Women

Eighty-fourth session

6–24 February 2023

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under
article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms
of Discrimination against Women

Replies of Costa Rica to the list of issues and questions in relation to its eighth periodic report*,**

[Date received: 15 July 2022]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

** The annexes to the present document are available on the Committee's website.



Report on the list of issues and questions in relation to the eighth periodic report of Costa Rica¹

Visibility of the Convention and the Optional Protocol thereto

1. The programme for the advancement of women consists of 16 sessions for individual and collective empowerment that cover topics related to human rights, sexual and reproductive rights, violence, economic empowerment, organization and leadership, among others. The programme operates at the regional level in the seven provinces of Costa Rica and trains more than 10,000 women per year as part of the Bridge to Development strategy led by the Joint Institute for Social Aid. The methodology of the sessions has been adjusted to gear them towards different populations, including indigenous women (with a translator being provided for these groups), women of African descent and adolescents.
2. Part of the programme known as the “life plan” building process encourages women to include needs and interests in their life project, which are then addressed in coordination with the National Training Institute, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Housing and Human Settlements, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and other private entities that address issues related to cyberviolence and trafficking in persons, among other issues.
3. In addition, at the regional level the National Institute for Women participates in various advocacy forums aimed at improving the living conditions of programme participants, including an indigenous round table in the Brunca region, a migrant round table in the Northern Huetar region and Chorotega region, and forum for women of African descent in the Huetar Caribbean region.
4. In the area of political rights, a project entitled “Education in the exercise of indigenous women’s rights: indigenous women replicating their knowledge” made it possible to provide workshops for other women in indigenous communities. In 2020 and 2021, virtual training sessions were conducted for 69 indigenous women on political participation in municipalities and indigenous development associations, in coordination with the National Directorate for Community Development and the Office of the Deputy Minister for Political Affairs and Citizen Dialogue. In particular, the Political Training Centre of the National Institute for Women conducted courses for indigenous women on political rights with the aim of getting them involved in decision-making forums such as municipalities, committees, social organizations, women’s organizations and integrated development associations. In the period 2018–2021, six courses were held for 51 indigenous women.
5. A course entitled “Indigenous multipliers” enabled trained leaders to provide training in political rights to another 914 indigenous women from the territories and communities of Bribri, Guatuso, Cabécar, Alto Chirripó, Térriba, Altos de San Antonio, Conte Burica, Coto Brus and Abrojo Montezuma. The training was conducted in their native languages and was grounded in the knowledge of their cultures, which facilitated learning and the practical application of some of the content; this also made it possible to build the capacities of the multipliers and enhance their visibility in the community. Progress is being made in developing a coordinated institutional strategy for political training aimed at diverse groups of women, which will be finalized in 2022.
6. Also noteworthy is the preparation of the national agenda for women of African descent, the purpose of which is to set out the progress, gaps, challenges and proposals for political advocacy by women of African descent in four areas: specific public

¹ The acronyms used in this report are shown in annex 1.

policies, health, labour and political participation. The goal is to develop and implement a proposal to strengthen the capacities of women and men of African descent through contextualized and culturally appropriate training and information for their effective participation in decision-making.

7. In the judicial sphere, from 1 January 2021 to 30 March 2022, 29 judgments in which the Convention is mentioned or applied were issued by the First, Second, Third and Fourth Chambers, as well as by the Cassation Chambers, the Courts of Appeal and the Disciplinary Court of the Judicial Inspectorate (annex 2). Specifically, the rulings of the First, Second, Third and Fourth Chambers refer to cases related to sexual crimes, sexual harassment, agrarian and civil matters, unlawful dismissals of pregnant women and migration, among others matters (annex 3). The rulings are published on the NEXUS-PJ website (<https://nexuspj.poder-judicial.go.cr/>).

Women's rights and gender equality in relation to the pandemic and recovery efforts

8. Following the declaration of a national emergency in 2020, the National Institute for Women issued a press release to inform the population about the strengthening of different types of services responding to violence against women. A toll-free telephone line 800-INAMUCR (800-462-68-27) was set up to enhance information and assistance services for women nationwide. In addition, the Government ordered that the fines for leaving an isolation site established to contain the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) be waived in situations of urgent need, for example, in the event of domestic violence. If a woman is found outside her isolation site because she is fleeing a situation of violence, the health authorities must coordinate with other institutions such as the National Institute of Women, the Domestic Violence Court, law enforcement agencies, or the competent authorities (Executive Decree No. 42293-S of 3 April 2020). The general guidelines for daily care in temporary shelters for women affected by violence, issued in 2020, provided that hearings in the Domestic Violence Courts on matters of maintenance payments, and criminal hearings to set or extend protective measures, would continue to be held.

9. In view of an increase in unemployment, underemployment and informal employment that is exacerbating the inequality gap for women, medium-term strategic actions were incorporated into the action plan of the national policy for effective equality between women and men 2019–2022. These actions are aimed at promoting women's entry into the labour market through salaried work or self-employment (business activity and entrepreneurship). The national job placement system of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security will monitor women's entry into the workforce, especially for women who have been trained in the Find a Job programme, including women living in poverty and women with disabilities. In addition, strategic actions have been included in the entrepreneurship programmes of the National Bank of Costa Rica and two programmes of the National Forestry Financing Fund with an environmental dimension: (1) the Gender Equality Award for Productive Units and (2) the environmental services payments and credit programme. The environmental services payment for women is an affirmative action that grants 25 percentage points to female owners who submit an application. The credit programme offers special terms for women in various productive activities related to the forestry sector. These actions will be continued in the next plan of action for 2023–2026.

10. With respect to paragraph 2 (c) of the report on the list of issues and questions, no progress has been reported.

11. In the area of health, the Costa Rican Social Insurance Fund prepared several guidelines to set out the care to be provided to all women during the pandemic,

including the following: technical guideline LT.CM.DDSS.040520 on health care for pregnant women during the COVID-19 pandemic in the health services of the Costa Rican Social Insurance Fund; guideline GM-DDSS-0579-2020, which amend the regulations on support to persons giving birth in institutional maternity wards, owing to the national emergency; and guideline GM-MDE-7506-2020, which contains a reminder about and prioritization of regulations on actions involving counselling and prescription of contraceptive and protective methods in outpatient, emergency and inpatient services at the three levels of care of the Costa Rican Social Insurance Fund during the COVID-19 pandemic. With regard to the care of indigenous women, the Costa Rican Social Insurance Fund carried out a cross-sectoral project of the Costa Rican Social Insurance Fund and the National Institute for Women to enhance health care in the Talamanca Bribri-Cabécar area.

12. Specifically in the area of access to mental health services, the Technical Round Table on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support was created as an interinstitutional body operated by the Health Committee and coordinated by the Ministry of Health as part of the response to the COVID-19 health emergency. In late 2020, the Round Table conducted an analysis of the work completed and developed a work plan for the coming years, and it has been preparing guidelines on mental health recovery following the COVID-19 health emergency that take a gender mainstreaming approach and are being finalized for approval by Ministry of Health officials.

Legislative framework and definition of discrimination

13. Act No. 10120, the Affirmative Action for Persons of African Descent Act, came into effect on 2 February 2022. It provides that the National Institute for Women will incorporate into existing programmes, or by means of new programmes, specific affirmative actions related to political participation, economic empowerment and access to health care for women of African descent, and will measure their results (art. 7).

14. With respect to rural women, the executive branch is taking specific action through the approval of Executive Decree No. 43436-MAG-MCM of 17 May 2022 on the establishment and declaration of the public nature of the Interinstitutional Commission for land access, use and management for rural women, the purpose of which is to establish and regulate the organization and functioning of the Commission.

15. A noteworthy measure taken to compensate women victims of gender discrimination is the adoption of Act No. 10263 on comprehensive reparation for survivors of femicide, which entered into force on 6 May 2022, establishing a process for the comprehensive reparation of family members who are survivors of femicide. A proposal was immediately made to amend the Act to correct some of the gaps identified.

16. On 27 January 2022, Act No. 10081 on the rights of women to high-quality, dignified and respectful care during pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum and newborn care came into force, aimed at giving pregnant women the central active role throughout the process from prenatal check-ups to childbirth and postpartum care. In addition, it provides for improved treatment through high-quality medical and nursing care, as well as the caring relationship necessary to guarantee respect for women's human rights. This type of care makes the pregnant woman's family a fundamental part of the process, thus promoting the involvement and shared responsibility of everyone in the household. The Act also sets out an intercultural vision that ensures respect for the traditions of different population groups without undermining proper care in health centres.

Access to justice and legal complaint mechanisms

17. Since the promulgation of Act No. 9593 on access to justice for indigenous peoples (in effect since September 2018), free legal aid, which must be provided by a public defender specialized in indigenous law and competition, has been provided to indigenous persons who are unable to afford the costs (art. 7). In order to ensure the availability of the human resources required, an organizational and budgetary impact study was conducted for the Public Defence Service, which concluded that the human resources of the Public Defence Service of Buenos Aires and Bri bri should be strengthened with the addition of one public defender position and that the other offices that serve the indigenous population have the necessary organizational structure to support the demand in their local areas.

18. Furthermore, the National Institute for Women has a free legal representation service provided by the Women's Delegation; however, due to human resource constraints, legal representation is mainly provided to women involved in proceedings under the Domestic Violence Act and in qualifying cases in other family law proceedings. In 2019, the National Institute for Women started an administrative process to request the establishment of seven positions for legal professionals to represent women in criminal proceedings, and in November 2021 the recruitment process for seven female lawyers was concluded, five of whom work in the five regional units outside the greater metropolitan area (Brunca, Chorotega, Huetar Norte, Pacífico Central and Huetar Caribe) and two of whom work in San José with the Women's Delegation.

19. In 2021, group activities were conducted to build the capacities of women served by the Information and Guidance Centre of the National Institute for Women, including through workshops on labour and sexual harassment, grief processes, parenting, workplace harassment and conflict resolution, and through participation in activities to promote rights as part of the interinstitutional work being carried out by the support network for women involved in criminal proceedings and their dependent family members in vulnerable situations. In addition, between January 2021 and April 2022, legal advice was provided to labour unions on labour rights and women municipal politicians from various parts of the country were assisted in cases of political violence against them.

20. In 2021 the 800-INAMUCR line was launched to provide free telephone assistance to women. The service is currently maintained and linked to the telephone exchange of the Information and Counselling Centre. The number of telephone and email consultations increased significantly, with 5,944 new consultations provided in 2020 and 8,373 in 2021. As of April 2022, 2,591 new clients have been served.

21. Since May 2021, the Judicial Training College has held five sessions of a course entitled “An approach to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention of Belém do Pará” for male and female judges and judicial support personnel. This training strategy is being continued in 2022.

22. The Office of the Public Prosecutor, seeking to better support victims with sensitivity, specialization, speed and humanity, has maintained ongoing training over the years for professional and support staff, in which the Office of the Deputy Prosecutor for Gender and the training unit of the Public Prosecutor's Office provide training on various topics related to handling cases of sexual crimes and criminal violence in a manner free of stereotypes and prejudice.

23. The Judicial Investigation Agency is committed to training its personnel and raising their awareness of sexual harassment and reporting mechanisms, and

improving the investigation of crimes committed against women and girls. Also noteworthy is the preparation and implementation of a standardized joint protocol for the investigation of missing and unaccounted-for women of legal age, with a differentiated gender-based approach.

24. As part of the strategic actions included in the National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women (2017–2032), under pillar IV “Effective protection, real access, due diligence, punishment and non-revictimization”, in 2021, 66 officials from the judiciary and law enforcement were trained in due diligence.

25. The Judicial Subcommission on Access to Justice for Migrants and Refugees has promoted the implementation of guidelines approved by the High Judicial Council to guarantee access to justice for these groups, with special consideration for women, as follows: (a) Guideline on the validity of identity documents for access to judicial proceedings for migrants, refugees and applicants for refugee status, which has a special section on the fundamental right of migrant and refugee women to live free from violence and to have access to legal protection mechanisms; (b) Circular No. 220-2014 on provisions for giving these groups effective access to legal proceedings in the area of labour, which considers the feminization of migration a major element in analysing labour rights violations, vulnerabilities and the judicial response; (c) High Judicial Council Agreement No. 39-16 on guidelines for the application of article 72 and article 94, paragraph 5, of the Migrants and Aliens Act No. 8764, which provides for a procedure by which to request temporary residence for migrants as a measure to ensure due process in judicial proceedings; (d) Circular No. 207-2021 on guidelines to guarantee the right of access to justice for migrant, refugee and stateless children and adolescents, with particular care for unaccompanied or separated children and adolescents.

26. With respect to indigenous women, a project for establishing a policy on indigenous peoples' access to justice is noteworthy; this project has been staffed with professionals since August 2021 and has received technical assistance through international cooperation. Multiple work sessions have been held with community members in indigenous towns and territories so that the policy takes their vision and needs into account. Internal circulars on services to be provided and guaranteed to indigenous users, promoted by the Commission on Access to Justice and approved by the High Judicial Council, have also been prepared and disseminated. Coordination is taking place with the statistical unit of the judiciary to move forward with establishing indicators for indigenous peoples, which will make it possible to develop affirmative actions to guarantee them effective access to justice while ensuring the protection of sensitive data.

27. With respect to the right to an interpreter or translator, when an indigenous user requires translation services, it is the responsibility of each judicial office to manage the relevant contract, which is paid for from the budget allocated to the judiciary. Recently, an indigenous person was appointed to the circuit court of Turrialba as a permanent judicial officer in order to meet the high demand for translation services required in that region.

28. With respect to women of African descent, the Subcommission on Access to Justice for persons of African descent has conducted virtual courses and training sessions, issued circulars, had surveys done by the Office of the Judicial Comptroller of Services, and held talks, lectures and conferences aimed at the public and judicial experts to identify areas in which discrimination continues to be experienced and to take action in that regard. To address language barriers, the search for more translators able to work with Creole English has been stepped up.

National machinery for the advancement of women

29. In May 2022, the President of the Republic made official the appointment of Ms. Cindy Quesada Hernández as Minister for the Status of Women, who will be a member of Cabinet in the executive branch for the next four years. This will enable coordination within the State of the commitments undertaken over the past decade.

30. Among the mechanisms created to ensure coordination between the Minister for the Status of Women and other national mechanisms for the implementation of equality legislation and policies, the National Institute for Women plays a particularly important role of institutional liaison in the Legislative Assembly's Commission on Women, to which it provides technical criteria and follow-up on the legislative agenda. Specifically, with respect to the equality policies coordinated by the Institute, of particular note is the High-level Interinstitutional Policy Council under the national policy for effective equality between women and men. The Council was established by Executive Decree No. 41115 MP-MCM of 30 July 2018 as a decision-making body and to monitor the institutions responsible for the actions set out in the policy. This Council is comprised of the heads or representatives of the National Institute of Women, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of the Economy, Industry and Trade, the Ministry of the Environment and Energy, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Planning and Cooperation, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, and the governing council for the social sector. The National Council of the National System for Addressing and Preventing Violence against Women, established by Act No. 8688 of 19 December 2008 with relevant regulations issued under Executive Decree No. 39208 MP-MCM of 8 October 2015, is the highest policy-making body of the National System and is made up of the heads or representatives of the National Institute of Women, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Public Security, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, the Costa Rican Social Insurance Fund, the judiciary and the Patronato Nacional de la Infancia (National Child Welfare Institute). Its functions include: (a) approving the annual plan and semi-annual reports of the System; (b) submitting a semi-annual report to the Cabinet on the progress of the sectoral and national policies approved by the System; and (c) reporting to the public, within the first two weeks of November each year, on the situation of violence against women and domestic violence. It also has the functions established under article 8 of the regulations governing the System.

31. The measures implemented by Costa Rica to strengthen the capacity of the national gender unit network include the following: (a) an assessment has been prepared of the current status of institutional gender mechanisms and the results have made it possible to follow up on such aspects as formalizing the mechanism within institutions, increasing their operating budget and addressing the need to train institutional personnel; (b) the network's member institutions have participated in webinars on shared social responsibility for care, domestic violence in the workplace, prevention of sexual harassment, the Gender Equality Seal of the National Institute for Women and the impact of COVID-19 on women's lives; (c) educational tools developed by the National Institute for Women on various topics of interest in the areas of public policy and fundamental rights have been made available; (d) the National Institute for Women has been made part of the network's political advocacy subcommittee, thus facilitating communication between the Minister for the Status of Women and the heads of institutions that require it; as part of the work of this group and with the participation of the Directorate-General for the Civil Service, a guide on positions was prepared to improve the profiles of the teams that make up the gender units in public institutions; (e) technical assistance sessions are conducted bilaterally; (f) a strategic alliance has been established between the National Institute for Women

and the United Nations Development Programme on the Gender Equality Seal programme to strengthen institutional gender equality mechanisms in the process of mainstreaming this approach. The purpose of the alliance is to leverage the resources of both organizations, including both human and electronic resources (a digital platform to diagnose gender gaps inside and outside an institution).

32. An assessment of municipal offices for women determined that most of them have a structured work plan with a budget that they consider inadequate; their main activities are participation in various forums for coordination (networks and committees), prevention of violence and care for victims, public awareness-raising on women's rights, promotion of entrepreneurship and training in gender equality and equity. To strengthen them, the Regional Development Department of the National Institute for Women is using a strategy of communication with the national network of municipal offices for women that enables direct coordination between the regional networks of those municipal offices and the regional units of the National Institute for Women to facilitate and strengthen the implementation of joint projects and optimize conditions for fulfilling the work strategy. Along the same lines, support is being given to the process of developing and signing a letter of understanding between municipal offices for women, the Institute of Municipal Development and Assistance and the National Institute for Women to coordinate strategic processes for the promotion of women's rights at the local level and to strengthen the mandate and capacity of the programme on municipal offices for women or the unit in charge of gender issues within municipalities. As part of this work, and in order to unify and strengthen the work with the municipal offices for women in the country's regions, the National Institute for Women has begun to offer advice, support and technical assistance in the area of cantonal policies on gender equality and entrepreneurship, as well as updates and information.

33. Pursuant to the Act establishing the National Institute for Women (Act No. 7801 of 18 May 1998), the Women's Forum was created as a consultative body comprising representatives of duly accredited social organizations working on behalf of women, who are empowered to be informed about and give their opinion on the Institute's work. Currently, 33 organizations are participating and have been allocated a National Institute for Women budget line to support the Forum's plan of action. Furthermore, in 2019 a strategic alliance was launched between the National Institute for Women and the Women in Political Parties Front (three political parties represented in the Legislative Assembly), an independent body for gender representation of several political parties whose members serve as official representatives. This alliance has had an impact through actions that include the positioning of women's political rights, press releases, legislation and prevention of violence against women in politics, to ensure the exercise of the constitutional right of women to participate actively in electoral politics in conditions of equality. There has also been training on and advocacy for women's political rights at the national and local levels, and progress has been made through the alliance with other organizations that defend these rights, for example, the Forum of Women Politicians for Costa Rica, the Women in Political Parties Front, the Costa Rican Network of Women Municipal Leaders, the Union Round Table for Women, and the Secretariat for Women of the Confederation of Community Development Associations. Joint legislation sponsored by several female and male members of the Assembly was adopted for an Act adding article 14 bis to the Municipal Code (Act No. 7794, 30 April 1998) and an Act to strengthen deputy mayors and municipal deputies (Act No. 10188, 21 June 2022), thereby giving greater powers to these municipal representatives, whose specific duties must be explicitly set out in the municipal development plan and in the record of accountability provided through an annual report made by the person holding that position in the mayor's office or municipality.

34. Following the preparation of the eighth periodic report of Costa Rica, the need was identified to include in the interinstitutional platform for the Convention other institutions that are also responsible for following up on the obligations under the Convention. Therefore, in early 2022 the Office of the Executive President of the National Institute for Women officially requested that 18 further institutions be added, 13 of which proceeded with the appointment of their respective liaison persons. In order to improve the process of coordination and follow-up within institutions it was requested that, whenever possible, the same person be appointed to other committees coordinated by the National Institute for Women, such as the gender policy monitoring committees of the national policy for effective equality between women and men and the National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women. The interinstitutional platform currently comprises a total of 50 institutions (annex 4).

35. With respect to mechanisms to promote the participation of and consultations with women's organizations, the National Forum of Indigenous Women and the National Forum of Women of African Descent are especially important. These are independent bodies and the National Institute for Women provides support, training and facilitation of forums for organizational strengthening, the preparation and prioritization of agendas setting out their demands and needs, and dialogue and negotiation with public institutions, authorities and international organizations.

36. According to the report on the plan of action for 2015–2018 of the national policy for a society free of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia, gender equality is specifically included in matters pertaining to civil and political rights, education and culture, health and social security, decent work and economic rights. A total of 41 actions for indigenous persons, persons of African descent, migrants and refugees have been carried out by the relevant public institutions.

37. With respect to policies promoted by the agricultural sector, by Agreement No. CAN 02–03-22 of the ordinary session No. 04-22 of the National Agricultural Council, held on 21 April 2022, the Council agreed with the content proposed in the public policy for the agricultural, fishing and rural sector to 2032, one pillar of which is inclusion, to promote actions aimed at improving the opportunities and conditions of participation of women, young people and other vulnerable groups, in order to improve their socioeconomic situation and, in the specific case of young people, find alternatives for professional development in the rural environment.

Temporary special measures

38. Regarding the affirmative measure reported in the eighth periodic report (directive PE-464-2017 issued by the National Training Institute), no additional information is available.

39. Costa Rica recently adopted the Affirmative Action for Persons of African Descent Act (Act No. 10001 of 10 August 2021), which makes it a matter of national interest to develop, implement and disseminate affirmative action for persons of African descent in Costa Rica and makes it obligatory for various institutions to implement actions in the areas of employment, education and culture, based on their areas of responsibility. Article 7 of the Act specifically refers to the obligation of the National Institute for Women to incorporate affirmative measures into existing programmes and/or new programmes to be defined with respect to political participation, economic empowerment and access to health care for women of African descent, and to measure the results.

Stereotypes and harmful practices

40. Under pillar 1 of the national policy for effective equality between women and men 2018–2030, 880 capacity-building activities and training sessions in gender equality and human rights were conducted in 2021 for the staff of 33 State institutions. Twenty-one of these institutions carried out a total of 673 activities for the general public, taking into account their respective target groups. The subjects of the training activities related to the prevention of sexual harassment and violence against women, positive masculinities, shared social responsibility for care, gender equality policies and women's employment. In addition, under the plan of action for the aforementioned policy, 14 institutions promoted institutional services through information and communications technologies using messages, content, language and images sensitive to gender equality and women's human rights. The themes of these communications were related to the contribution of women in emergency care; youth (employment, sports, leadership, human rights and gender in the civil service); celebrations related to gender equality; pathways for addressing sexual harassment; positive masculinities; sexual diversity; discrimination in different forums; the national science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics education strategy with a gender perspective; digital skills for girls and safe digital environments; prevention of violence; women's health; and cultural diversity and eliminating sexist advertising. In 2021, a guide for non-sexist and inclusive communication was developed that will be delivered to the institutions of the National System for Addressing and Preventing Violence against Women in 2022.

41. Other actions implemented include a declaration by the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica of 14 women as national heroes, which represents a historic milestone in the recognition of women's contributions to building Costa Rican society. The National Institute for Women has carried out campaigns in social networks and conversations open to the general public (Facebook live) that promote and make visible the contributions of women in science, culture, sports and politics, among other areas. In addition, in 2022 the Women's Gallery will be awarded, a form of recognition awarded every two years whose purpose is to give visibility to the contributions of outstanding women in different areas of social life who have dedicated their lives to the struggle for women's human rights in Costa Rica, overcoming barriers and paving the way for new generations.

42. With respect to the Committee's comments on the existence of high rates of teenage pregnancy and child marriage in the country, it is important to mention that, according to data from the National Statistics and Census Institute, births to girls 14 years of age or younger as well as births to adolescents between 15 and 19 years of age have been decreasing in Costa Rica. In 2000, there were 611 births to girls age 14 years or younger (0.8 per cent of total births), a figure that decreased to 222 births in 2020 (0.4 per cent of total births). Between 2000 and 2020 there was a reduction of two births to girls age 14 years or younger for every 1,000 girls of this age. In addition, in 2000, 15,999 births were registered for adolescents 15 to 19 years of age (20.5 per cent of the total), while in 2020 this figure decreased to 5,920 (10.7 per cent of the total) (annex 5).

43. The Ministry of Education decided that the strategy to reduce gender gaps and violence against women (formerly known as Schools for Change) would be included in a cross-cutting manner in the Living Together programme. In 2021, progress was made in the production and dissemination of educational materials and resources, as well as in carrying out activities aimed at informing teachers and the general public about gender and human rights.

44. In December 2021, a procedure for the promotion of equality between women and men and the prevention of violence for persons assisted by Education and Nutrition Centres and Children's Comprehensive Care Centres, under code AT-PIHM-PVACC-01 of the National Directorate for those Centres, for use by the gender and rights training advisors in local offices and regional directorates. The procedure brings together the gender-mainstreaming work that has been implemented jointly by the Education and Nutrition Centres and Children's Comprehensive Care Centres and the National Institute for Women, as well as the actions contained in the national policy for effective equality between women and men and the National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women, in order to set out a clear organizational road map and facilitate the monitoring and reporting of achievements, progress, and regional and local challenges in the provision of services to children and their families.

45. With respect to paragraphs 10 (b) and 10 (c) of the report on the list of issues and questions, no progress has been reported.

Gender-based violence against women

46. In its resolution No. 00749-2021 of 14 July 2021, the Third Chamber found that the term “woman”, in a broad sense, as used in subparagraph 71 (g) and paragraph 72 of the Criminal Code, should include transgender women, and therefore applied the Belem do Pará Convention to grant them access to reduced prison sentences, on an equal footing with cisgender women, in relation to the crime of bringing drugs into prisons.

47. With respect to indigenous women, a protocol for taking complaints was designed that seeks to promote, protect and guarantee the right of access to justice for indigenous peoples in criminal matters, ensuring that proper assistance is provided to indigenous persons who bring matters to the Public Prosecutor's Office. Officials in national prosecutors' offices are required to apply the parameters established in the protocol, thus ensuring that these offices are inclusive spaces that take into account the indigenous world view of the region in which they are located.

48. With regard to women of African descent, actions have been taken to inform the public about their rights and the legal resources available to them to report any type of infringement. Campaigns, talks, virtual courses, radio programmes, lecture series, forums and other activities have been carried out to promote respect for this population group.

49. For women with disabilities, judges must give priority to implementing international standards for the protection of the human rights of persons with disabilities, such as the Inter-American Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities and the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, among others. Judges must take into consideration the general principles of interpretation of the law for persons with disabilities and the inequalities they face, in order to eliminate any bias based on disability that produces a discriminatory effect or outcome against this group of persons in all legal spheres or matters. Moreover, in carrying out analyses and assessments they must refrain from making assessments based on cultural or ideological considerations that could lead to prejudice and have adverse impacts involving discrimination or subordination. In order to meet the constitutional requirement of prompt and thorough justice, priority must be given to cases evincing inequality imposed on persons with disabilities, such as situations of domestic violence, discrimination based on disability and other such cases. Judicial decisions must be drafted in language that is inclusive and respectful of the human

rights of persons with disabilities, and must ensure that at the enforcement stage decisions do not lead to adverse effects based on prejudices against persons with disabilities that undermine the enjoyment of the rights upheld or actions ordered in the decisions. The social work and forensic medicine departments of the judiciary have personnel specialized in disability to provide the relevant expert opinions. Lastly, the judicial information system makes available to those involved in the administration of justice a methodology by which to incorporate a human rights and disability perspective into judicial decisions, using a document database that includes legislation, judicial decisions and doctrine.

50. The judiciary has focused on addressing the backlog in criminal proceedings involving sex crimes. As a result, at session No. 71-2021 of 18 August 2021, it was agreed that the coordinating judges of the country's criminal courts would be requested to prepare work plans with their teams with the objective of assigning a priority to pending cases within two months and making referrals within two years of the date of the agreement.

51. Services for assistance to victims of violence (Domestic Violence Courts, Family Maintenance Courts) were declared essential services and therefore continued to operate throughout the pandemic, providing all services already established for ordinary and extraordinary shifts, including during evenings and holidays.

52. With respect to paragraphs 11 (c) and (d) of the report on the list of issues and questions, no progress has been reported.

53. During the period from January 2021 to March 2022, the Crime Victim Support and Protection Office served 7,371 women nationwide: 5,653 in the support programme and 1,718 in the protection programme. The Integrated Victim Services Platform reports that 2,338 women have been assisted (692 in Pavas, 829 in La Unión, 61 in San Joaquín, and 756 in Siquirres). To strengthen the service provided by the Crime Victim Support and Protection Office, a response protocol has been developed to ensure confidentiality when dealing with representatives and family members of underage victims. The Integrated Victim Services Platform is working on producing informational material on the work of this entity in the Cabecar dialect, to facilitate access to the Nairi Awairi indigenous community.

54. Between January 2021 and March 2022, the judiciary's social work and psychology department served 10,808 girl victims of violence; 367 of them were cared for by the judiciary's rapid response teams for comprehensive care for victims of rape; 5,631 were assisted through the immediate care programme; 2,005 girls were assisted through the programme on child-youth violence and 2,805 girls through the crime programme (annex 6).

55. The country recently approved the Comprehensive Reparation for Survivors of Femicide Act (Act No. 10263 of 6 May 2022, Official Gazette No. 99) for the purpose of establishing a system of comprehensive reparation through priority allocation of benefits already granted through some State institutions and a financial reparation fund for survivors of femicide. Comprehensive reparation is defined as “the duty of the State to provide and the right of the surviving victims of femicide who have suffered physical, psychological, emotional and financial harm to receive (...) comprehensive reparation for the harm caused by the femicide” (art. 2). Beneficiaries under the Act are the sons and daughters of women victims of femicide, up to 18 years of age, or 25 years of age for students, and family members up to the first degree of consanguinity or affinity who lived with the woman victim, as well as elderly persons of the first degree of consanguinity or affinity or persons with a permanent disability who were dependents of the woman victim of femicide. The remedy provided for by the Act consists of monthly payments; unrestricted access to State services, such as student scholarships, medical care, housing vouchers, and legal advice and

representation; and symbolic reparations. As mentioned in paragraph 15 of this report, a reform was proposed to address the gaps identified in this Act.

56. In 2019, an interinstitutional strategy for mobile care was launched, which consists of the implementation of a coordinated interinstitutional care model in remote areas in designated priority cantons, where women receive specialized services for violence in their own communities without the need to travel. The institutions that participate in this strategy are: courts that handle domestic violence cases, Public Prosecutor's Offices (for criminal complaints of violence against women), public defence services for family maintenance, the Patronato Nacional de la Infancia, the Joint Institute for Social Aid, the National Institute for Women, the Ministry of Public Security, and in some communities the municipal offices for women. This strategy was paused in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and mobility restrictions, with only telephone contact maintained to follow up on some of the highest risk situations that had been detected in 2019. Community-based care was resumed in 2021, with a total of 165 women served: 32 in Garabito, 40 in Talamanca, 85 in La Cruz and 8 in Golfito.

57. Data on violence against women in Costa Rica by year, type of crime, age of victim, relationship between perpetrator and victim, and sentence handed down are available on the website of the judiciary's Observatory on Gender-based Violence and Access to Justice: <https://observatoriodegenero.poder-judicial.go.cr/index.php/soy-especialista-y-busco/estadisticas/femicidio>.

58. The services of the National Institute for Women to address violence against women provide accessible information to women with disabilities and coordinate with the National Council for Persons with Disabilities when required.

59. The judiciary has disseminated internally among judicial personnel information on the policy on equality for persons with disabilities and judicial decisions with a disability rights perspective. In addition, training and awareness-raising has been carried out in the services provided by the judiciary. Outreach activities aimed at persons with disabilities are also being carried out, including programmes with information on institutional services for equal access to justice and processes for filing claims in case of infringement, and the creation of informational material in accessible formats for this population group.

60. Costa Rica has three State-run temporary shelters for women affected by violence located throughout the country. In 2021, the remodelling of one of the shelters was completed, expanding the occupancy capacity to 14 family groups (previously it could accommodate 10).

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

61. As part of the measures adopted to prevent and eliminate trafficking in persons, in 2021 the guidelines on interinstitutional coordination on crimes of trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants in Costa Rica and the related road maps were updated. This process was completed thanks to the support provided by the International Organization for Migration to the National Coalition against the Smuggling of Migrants and Trafficking in Persons with the goal of updating and reprinting the institutional mechanism that ensures implementation of the necessary measures for the detection, referral and care of victims of trafficking in persons. The protocol for the detection and referral of possible situations of trafficking in persons was also updated and approved through joint efforts of the Ministry of Public Security, the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations Latin American Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, the National Coalition's technical secretariat and the Office of the Deputy Prosecutor for

Combating Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants. On the basis of this protocol other materials were developed for use by the police, such as pocket guides and road maps for the detection and referral of possible trafficking situations. In addition, the Directorate-General for Migration and Alien Affairs established regulations for the administrative management of applications for and payment of the social benefit to individuals, under the strategy for comprehensive care and mobilization of support resources for survivors of trafficking in persons and their dependents: integration, reintegration, repatriation, voluntary return and resettlement, which was approved by the National Coalition. An amendment to the regulations for the creation and use of the Contingency Trust Fund was also approved, increasing the use to three debit cards each with the amount increased to 2,000,000.00 colones (\$2,958.31).² This will make it possible to address situations requiring immediate and emergency care, both in the area of trafficking in persons and in cases of smuggling of migrants.

62. In 2021, the Standing Technical Committee on Prevention of Trafficking in Persons focused on prevention activities through the creation of audiovisual and social media materials on the issue of trafficking in persons. Awareness-raising campaigns were also conducted, including the “A mí no me traman” (They cannot get me) campaign, coordinated together with the School of Communication Sciences and the Women’s Studies Research Centre of the University of Costa Rica, and the Blue Heart Campaign, and other material published on Facebook was produced by the Standing Technical Committee, with the special support of the Communication Unit of the Directorate-General for Migration and Alien Affairs, in order to strengthen a culture of reporting incidents and inform the general public about this crime. Other activities to disseminate information on trafficking in persons to the tourism sector include the updating and printing of flyers on trafficking in persons and tourism, carried out by the International Organization for Migration, the National Training Institute, the Directorate-General for Migration and Alien Affairs and the National Coalition against the Smuggling of Migrants and Trafficking in Persons, and a virtual course developed by the International Organization for Migration, the Directorate-General for Migration and Alien Affairs and the Costa Rican Tourism Institute. Awareness-raising workshops were held with the tourism sector, with staff of the Family Excellence Foundation, the local governments of Mora, La Cruz, Desamparados and Cartago, and the National Coast Guard Service of the Ministry of Public Security in Caldera, Puntarenas.

63. With respect to training carried out by the bodies that make up the National Coalition against the Smuggling of Migrants and Trafficking in Persons, a total of 1,434 people were trained through virtual and face-to-face sessions. The Management of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants section of the Directorate-General for Migration and Alien Affairs trained a total of 976 people in 2021. Awareness-raising, sensitization and training on trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants was provided to an average of 300 judicial officials in collaboration with the Judicial Training College and the Observatory of Mass Media on Migrants and Refugees, and the training could continue in 2022.

64. Costa Rica is not only part of the Regional Coalition against Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants but is also currently responsible for its technical secretariat, which is resulting in the development of different strategies for care, prevention, resource mobilization, communication and visibility, as well as repatriation protocols. The country also participates in the Ibero-American Network

² To convert figures from Costa Rican colones to United States dollars, the exchange rate for 26 May 2022 established by the Central Bank of Costa Rica was used, with \$1 equivalent to 676.06 colones.

of Specialized Prosecutors against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants and in the bilateral meetings of the Costa Rica-Panama Standing Commission on Protection and Assistance for Vulnerable Migrants, a forum that addresses all situations related to the vulnerable population on the border, including the crime of trafficking in persons. Achievements include a joint working table and a 2021 regional agenda on risks and threats to the Central American integration system, where the Central American Security Commission and the Regional Coalition against Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants maintain forums for discussion of security issues, including strategies related to the prevention of and coordinated approach to the crime of trafficking in persons.

65. The International Organization for Migration and the Deputy Prosecutor's Office to Combat Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants have provided in-person training to 15 police officers from the National Coast Guard Service; 20 persons from the Directorate for Legal Support; 30 persons stationed in Crucitas and 9 persons from the Directorate of Preventive Police Programmes, under the protocol for the detection and referral of possible situations of trafficking in persons. In addition, the Directorate of Preventive Police Programmes provided virtual training to 347 police officers located in different police stations throughout the country (238 men and 123 women). There is also coordination among the National Institute for Women, the National Commission to Combat the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents and the National Coalition against the Smuggling of Migrants and Trafficking in Persons for training on sexual violence, conducted in coordination with the National Committee on Enhancement of the Administration of Justice, in order to generate training programmes for personnel serving with the offices of the public defender and public prosecutor, the judiciary and the judicial investigation service, as well as coordination with the Directorate of Border Police for the development of training programmes for the personnel of this Directorate.

66. Women who engage in prostitution in Costa Rica are not subject to criminal penalties or administrative fines for prostitution. In Costa Rica, conduct that is freely and individually engaged in by adults in the context of sex work or prostitution is decriminalized. Prostitution itself is not criminalized, and therefore a person who engages in it is not committing a crime, but a crime could be involved if third parties commit criminal acts such as procuring and trafficking in persons.

67. With respect to access to comprehensive health care for individuals, specifically in the area of early detection of HIV infection, the Costa Rican Social Insurance Fund regulations on access to screening tests/confirmatory diagnostic tests for early detection of infection and prescription of antiretroviral treatment do not make any distinctions by gender, sexual orientation or type of activity. From January to December 2021, 43 pregnant women with HIV received care, all with antiretroviral treatment, in the seven HIV clinics. There is currently no statistical information on HIV care disaggregated by sex and specifically for persons employed in sex work.

Participation in political and public life

68. In the national elections of February 2022, for the second time in the history of Costa Rica the parity principle and alternation mechanism were applied in the registration of candidates. The highest number of women assembly members ever was attained, with 27 women elected (47.7 per cent), including the first indigenous woman assembly member in the history of the country, Ms. Sonia Rojas Méndez. In these same elections, the largest number of candidates ran for President of the Republic: 25 candidates, including only 4 women, none of whom went on to the second round of voting (annex 7). Also for the first time in Costa Rica and in the indigenous

ancestral lineage of Alto de Conte Burica, a woman was officially named Ngäbe-Buglé community leader (cacique).

69. On the total number of career civil servants in the foreign service, as of January 2022 the total is 167 individuals – 85 women and 82 men. Also in 2022, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reports that with respect to career diplomats in leadership positions, there are 10 female ambassadors and 5 male ambassadors; 3 female and 0 male deputy ambassadors; 2 women and 3 men in management positions; 3 female directors and 2 male deputy directors; 11 female and 2 male chiefs, including bureau chiefs; and 1 woman and 1 man in deputy ministerial positions.

70. With respect to the national elections, in September 2021 the Supreme Electoral Court issued resolution No. 4757-E8-2021 on the scope of ruling No. 3671-E8-2010 of 13 May 2010 regarding the application of the alternation mechanism in the presidential ticket and the alternation by gender between candidates for first and second Vice-President of the Republic. This resolution determined that the list of candidates for President and Vice-Presidents of the Republic must respect the parity principle but that the alternation mechanism is not applicable because, given that there are three persons on the ticket, two of them would represent the same sex and therefore regardless of their location or order of listing there is no obstacle to registering the candidates.

71. On 19 April 2022, a document was signed that formalizes the road map towards a gender equality policy in the external affairs of Costa Rica, the purpose of which is to guide, prevent and eradicate any act that limits women officials from having the same opportunities and conditions, both in offices inside the country and in the diplomatic missions and consular offices of Costa Rica abroad.

72. With respect to women leaders of social organizations, as of February 2022 there is a practical guide for compliance with the Act on Minimum Proportions of Women in Leadership Positions in Associations, Trade Unions and Social Organizations (Act No. 8901 of 27 December 2010), which requires parity membership on the boards of directors of these social organizations. It is thus a requirement that, before they can be legally registered, social organizations must comply with gender parity, both horizontally and vertically, in leadership positions on boards of directors (art. 7).

73. With respect to the question raised in paragraph 15 of the report on the list of issues and questions, specifically on measures taken to ensure the implementation of gender parity in executive posts, no progress has been reported.

74. By 2022, the chambers of the Supreme Court of Justice will comprise 7 women justices and 13 justices in total. The appointment of a member of the judiciary to the Constitutional Chamber is currently under discussion in Congress. In that connection, civil society organizations, prominent politicians and academics, and the National Institute for Women have advocated with female members of parliament to have a woman appointed to the Constitutional Chamber.

75. With respect to police appointments, there are currently 2,882 women police officers; However, the number of men in leadership posts far exceeds the number of women, with men occupying 77 per cent and 82 per cent of posts in directorates and subdirectorates, respectively; this means that only 3 out of 10 posts in directorates and 2 out of 8 posts in subdirectorates are held by women.

76. Through the adoption of the Act amending article 14 of the Municipal Code and its reforms (Act No. 21810 of 29 March 2020), a limit was placed on the indefinite re-election of local authorities, that is, mayors may be re-elected for only one consecutive term. In addition, a person is prohibited from running for mayor and for other elected municipal offices for a period of eight years after they have left the mayor's office.

77. To better understand and address the barriers to women's representation in community organizations, in 2021 the National Institute for Women published research entitled "Political participation and community: women exercising citizenship for local development", which explores the main features of and barriers to women's effective participation in community development associations in different regions of the country. The results of this research were widely disseminated through digital mechanisms, reaching approximately 600 people. It is available at: <https://www.inamu.go.cr/documents/10179/1385759/PARTICIPACION-POLITICA-Y-COMUNIDAD.pdf/e367ce0c-5ccc-4266-a8f2-c6f6bd11ffa2>.

78. With respect to paragraph 16 of the report on the list of issues and questions, no progress has been reported.

79. Costa Rica has the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women in Politics Act (Act No. 10235 of 17 May 2022), which broadly defines what is understood by violence against women in politics, its different manifestations, the responsibilities of political parties for preventing cases and addressing those that occur in the exercise of elected office, including in municipal government, the Legislative Assembly, community associations and other institutions, and establishes the due process for the investigation of complaints, deadlines, measures to support victims, and the political, ethical and administrative penalties that apply. Another recent change in national regulations is the adoption of the Act adding article 14 bis to the Municipal Code (Act No. 7794, 30 April 1998) to strengthen the municipal offices of deputy mayor and deputy municipal manager (Act No. 10188 of 21 June 2022). This Act provides for specific duties to be included for both positions in the municipal development plan and in the record of accountability in the annual report made by the person holding the position in the office of the mayor or municipal manager.

80. With respect to the training of women candidates for the 2020 municipal elections, the Supreme Electoral Court implemented a strategy to support nearly 500 women candidates for municipal elections in all cantons nationwide, through training on topics such as political communication, violence against women in politics, leadership and electoral participation, among others.

81. The process of providing training on gender equality has mainly focused on working with women leaders of all ages and from different decision-making forums. Specifically, in the area of women's political rights and parity, processes have been carried out that incorporate means of preventing and addressing political violence against women, aimed at courts, student governments, political parties, local governments and social organizations. In 2021 approximately 1,550 women attended training activities on various topics concerning electoral logistics geared towards political parties. In 2020 and 2021, distance courses on political participation of young women leaders in the Costa Rican educational system were conducted for interdisciplinary teams of the Ministry of Education, with the aim of providing tools to strengthen political participation in decision-making forums for young women, identifying situations of violence against women in politics and strengthening transformational leadership with a human rights and gender approach. A total of 54 social science professionals participated.

Education

82. With respect to paragraph 17 (a) of the report on the list of issues and questions, on enrolment rates in primary and secondary education, no progress has been reported.

83. The Ministry of Education, in coordination with the Office of the Deputy Minister for Political Affairs and Citizen Dialogue of the Ministry of the Office of the President, evaluated the status of literacy among indigenous women in the country with the objective of defining pathways for reducing educational gaps through the development of public policies and the provision of budgetary allocations. In addition, the evaluation included consultations about the opportunities and conditions for women to engage in formal educational, availability of time, proximity to educational centres, caregiving roles and other data, which is contributing to the development of an educational strategy that will take into account each of the specificities of indigenous women and reduce the dropout rate of this population group.

84. With respect to enrolment in State universities, from 2017 to 2019, 27,526 new students (51 per cent female) were enrolled at the University of Costa Rica. Almost all the campuses of this university have gender-balanced enrolment, except for the Santa Cruz campus (71 per cent women) and the Siquirres campus (75 per cent men). For graduate studies, in 2017–2019, 51 per cent of graduate students enrolled were women and 49 per cent were men. At National University of Costa Rica, from 2017 to 2020, first-time female enrolment was 53.7 per cent of the total. Among newly enrolled students, 14.9 per cent were from rural areas and 38.7 per cent from urban areas. At the State Distance Learning University, in 2016–2020, women made up 64.3 per cent of enrolments in undergraduate and graduate degrees. The distribution of indigenous persons enrolled in 2019 was 62 per cent female and 38 per cent male. The percentage of women enrolled in science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics programmes was 41.6 per cent in 2017, 42 per cent in 2018 and 43.4 per cent in 2019. Lastly, in 2021 and 2022, enrolment in the Institute of Technology of Costa Rica was made up of 36.9 per cent women and 63.0 per cent men.

85. With respect to paragraphs 17 (b), 17 (c) and 17 (d) of the report on the list of issues and questions, no progress has been reported.

86. Under the national policy for effective equality between women and men, the Ministry of Education in 2021 provided training sessions on the protocol for addressing bullying against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender/transsexual persons in schools in Turrialba, Nandayure and Pococí. In addition, training on human rights and gender and on positive masculinities was provided at the regional directorate of education of San José Oeste.

87. With respect to State tertiary schools, in 2020 the National Council of Public University Rectors approved the national plan for higher education 2021–2025, establishing two strategic goals for the five-year period: (1) implement an inter-university plan for attracting and retaining high school students for careers in science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics and (2) develop an inter-university research plan on access, training and retention of women in fields in science and technology. The figures on first-time enrolment and regular enrolment for the year 2021 indicate that there were 122,880 persons enrolled, 55.8 per cent of whom were women (16 per cent from rural areas and 38 per cent urban). The field in which women are most represented is economics with 26 per cent (annex 8).

88. At the University of Costa Rica, first-time enrolment of women in industrial engineering reached 40 per cent in 2020 and increased to 50 per cent in 2021, followed by agricultural and biosystems engineering, which increased from 41 per cent women in 2020 to 47 per cent in 2021. A project on attracting women to science, technology, engineering and mathematics, aimed at female high school and university students, improved strategies and mechanisms for attracting, providing access and orienting women to higher education programmes in science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics in the Costa Rican educational system. At the Technological Institute of

Costa Rica, academic offerings are dedicated primarily to programmes in non-traditional fields of study, which is why women are enrolled in these types of programmes, especially in engineering and economics. Regarding the measures adopted by the Technological Institute of Costa Rica in 2021 and the first quarter of 2022 to encourage women and girls to choose non-traditional fields of study, the project on women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (W STEM) is especially noteworthy. It is funded under the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union for capacity-building in higher education, which seeks to improve strategies and mechanisms for attracting, providing access to and orienting women towards science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics programmes in higher education in Latin America.

89. The national education strategy on science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics promotes the development of twenty-first century skills and competencies in students, from a gender perspective, so that they can explore and value science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics fields in their vocational plans.

90. In 2020, the University Council of the University of Costa Rica issued a statement on the contribution of women to the generation of knowledge and its dissemination in the academy, and urged academic staff to include work produced by women in the bibliographies of curricula for courses taught at the university. In addition, at the State Distance Learning University, institutional cross-cutting themes (including human rights, cultural diversity and gender equity) must be included when designing and updating curricula. At the Institute of Technology of Costa Rica in 2021, an institutional process known as the code of good practices for gender equality and equity was expanded and adopted for some programmes, such as computer engineering and information technology administration. With respect to specific measures to address gender stereotypes in textbooks, no progress is reported.

91. With respect to paragraph 17 (g) of the report on the list of issues and questions, no progress has been reported.

Employment

92. The National Institute for Women designed the women's employment strategy, which is in effect until 2027, with the goal of combating the main economic and labour gaps that affect women: inequality in the use and monitoring of time; labour market segregation; a digital divide in terms of the fourth industrial revolution and the future of employment; a gap in personnel recruitment and selection; a pay gap; discrimination in human resources management; manifestations of discrimination in the workplace; and inequality in social welfare benefits, among others. Progress has been made in putting the strategy into action and in the system for monitoring and following up on actions aimed at women from diverse groups in the different regions covered by the National Institute for Women.

93. The Ministry of Labour and Social Security and the National Institute for Women developed a guide for labour inspection with a gender focus, which facilitates the inspection of gender violations. There is now a group of female inspectors trained in gender, the first group of its kind to be formed in Central America. Their mission is to disseminate knowledge, raise awareness and inform employers and workers about the new inspection method, and to serve as a vehicle for the promotion of good practices in companies, with the aim of providing advice to assist them in adopting a culture of gender equality in the workplace and making significant progress in the implementation of women's rights. The inspectors are stationed in inspection offices

throughout the country and as a result they cover women working in rural and urban areas under diverse conditions.

94. In addition, gender mainstreaming has been achieved at the operational and strategic level of the national employment system, which is the national mechanism that coordinates employment services and the network of employment units and maintains a one-stop shop throughout the country, with telephone, in-person or virtual services. There are cross-cutting guidelines and guidelines specifically for women, ensuring inclusive job placement services for diverse groups of women.

95. In 2020, the Interinstitutional Commission on Paid Domestic Work was created as a forum for interinstitutional coordination (among the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, the National Institute for Women, organizations of women domestic workers and the International Labour Organization), which addresses issues such as the occupational profile of domestic workers; certification of qualifications; a campaign to protect labour rights; a differentiated insurance model; and the strengthening of labour inspections.

96. The National Institute for Women is promoting a process of interinstitutional coordination in favour of women in the fisheries value chains that seeks to make their living conditions visible, promote public policies to influence their recognition and strengthening, and support the formalization of these women's employment. In particular, work is under way with 200 fisherwomen who depend on this resource for their livelihoods in the Barra de Colorado area.

97. To achieve progress in the formalization of women's employment, the National Institute for Women also has an entrepreneurship strategy that is currently under review. One of the projects it promotes is the national programme on women entrepreneurs, which is a comprehensive programme developed in partnership with the Ministry of the Economy, Industry and Trade and the National Training Institute that seeks to promote the economic empowerment of women by building their skills to develop new sustainable and competitive businesses through an entrepreneurship ecosystem geared towards a gender approach and coordinated interinstitutionally. With respect to the Fomujeres fund, in 2021 the tenth, eleventh and twelfth calls for proposals were carried out, representing an investment of 2,509,838,439 colones (\$3,712,449.24) in 1,224 projects in activities related to agriculture, agro-industry, crafts, livestock, services, textiles, projects in defence of women's rights and product manufacturing, benefiting women of highly diverse backgrounds, particularly in the twelfth call for proposals, which was aimed at rural women.

98. In addition, a training programme for women entrepreneurs known as "Unveiling gender" was implemented with the aim of deconstructing gender stereotypes that women encounter in their lives and that constitute barriers to developing their entrepreneurial potential and asserting themselves as persons with rights, and economic rights in particular. Virtual and/or in-person advisory sessions were also conducted with the aim of identifying obstacles within the value chain for companies led by women.

99. A project promoted by the Paniamor Foundation has become a model for intervention that enables young women to strengthen their personal agency, based on the reaffirmation of their identity and personal value. This programme has an impact on the subjective and interpersonal wellbeing of its participants and contributes to the closing of gaps in the development of independence, self-esteem, and personal and socioeconomic agency, and the transformation of relationships and opportunities. In addition, it promotes the recognition of human rights as a way to identify situations of violence and leads to actions to address those situations. This model has had an impact, for example, in the Safe and Strong programme of the Paniamor Foundation, of which the Sunflower project is a part, and in partnership with the Patronato

Nacional de la Infancia, the Sowing Sunflowers project was rolled out in Heredia. Its objective is to strengthen the capacities of staff in the programme for the re-enrolment and retention of adolescent mothers in the educational system, based on the guiding principles and premises of the Sunflower model. The Office of the Deputy Minister for Peace also appointed a person to support the social manager working in Desamparados, with the aim of extending the implementation of the Sunflower model to other regions in the future. Approximately 225 young people between the ages of 15 and 21 have benefited throughout the country. For more information, please access the following link: <https://paniamor.org/Product/detail/9/modelo-girasoles->.

100. With respect to paragraph 18 (c) of the report on the list of issues and questions, no progress has been reported.

101. The National Network for Care and Development of the Child has conducted studies on the shared payment model for the care of children, in support of the work of the Network's members, the consultative commission and the interinstitutional technical commission. The implementation of training and personal development plans for representatives of childcare alternatives is thus constantly monitored in order to have an impact on the quality of care services provided. Awareness-raising campaigns have also been promoted on the subject of care and the positioning of issues of inclusion.

102. In 2021 the Joint Institute for Social Aid, under the social protection and promotion programme, provided benefits to a total of 122,546 female-headed households, which amounts to an investment of 106,175,148,090 colones (\$157,049,889.19). As of the first quarter of 2022, 164,220 female-headed households received social benefits of 33,121,991,955 colones (\$48,992,681.05), which represents 68 per cent of all households covered by the programme. The child care and development benefit seeks to promote access to childcare alternatives for early and secondary childhood (0 to 12 years of age) through a financial grant added to the household income to contribute to the cost of part-time or full-time care in the alternative service chosen by the family; benefits for the period 2021 amounted to 32,593,975,702 colones (\$48,211,661.24), with coverage for 17,419 beneficiary households and 26,004 minors. As of the first quarter of the year 2022, a total of 22,827 people were granted the benefit for a total expenditure of 8,298,936,316 colones (\$12,275,443.47) nationwide.

Health

103. In Costa Rica, abortion is decriminalized if it is performed by a duly authorized medical or obstetric professional in the event that a physician is not available and it is done to avoid danger to the life or health of the mother. Whatever the case, it must be demonstrated that the danger in question could not have been avoided by other means. In 2019, a technical standard was issued for the medical procedure linked to article 121 of the Criminal Code (Therapeutic abortion), thereby standardizing the criteria for enforcement of that provision of the Criminal Code. To date, there have been no legislative reforms that include other grounds for decriminalization. Article 93 of the Criminal Code provides for the possibility of granting a judicial pardon, subject to a report by the Criminology Institute on the individual's personality and other factors, to a convicted woman who has caused her own abortion if the pregnancy was the result of rape, or to a person who has caused an abortion to save her own honour or has procured it for that purpose for an ascendant or descendent by blood or a sister.

104. Recently the Costa Rican Social Insurance Fund, in conjunction with the judiciary, held videoconferences for all personnel on rapid response teams for the care

of rape victims in the first 72 hours. Training was also provided on the protocol for the care of rape victims in the first 72 hours and the protocol for the comprehensive care of victims of the crime of trafficking in persons in the health services of the Costa Rican Social Insurance Fund.

105. In 2021 the clinical care protocol for the medical procedure linked to article 121 of the Criminal Code, referring to therapeutic abortion, was disseminated.

106. With respect to the supply of contraceptives, in 2020 the Costa Rican Social Insurance Fund conducted training on strengthening and expanding the supply of contraceptives and methods of protection. In addition, a web symposium was held on protection methods in sexual and reproductive health and condoms for men and women. The condom for women has been adopted as a contraceptive method and a method of preventing sexually transmitted diseases, as has medication for emergency contraception to be provided to users of the health services of the Costa Rican Social Insurance Fund.

107. In the various maternity wards of the public health system, improvements have been made to care provided during and after childbirth and for pregnant families. The changes include approaches that strengthen the quality and warmth of services, for example, creating conditions for greater privacy, supporting the emotional state of women in care and respecting the specificities of women with disabilities as well as interculturality. In this regard, the Regional Hospital of Ciudad Neilly of the Costa Rican Social Insurance Fund, located in the province of Puntarenas, offers women the opportunity to use different methods of childbirth suited to the cultural practices of the Ngäbe indigenous population.

108. In 2021, research on mental health and interpersonal relations during the COVID-19 pandemic was published as part of a coordinated effort by the State Distance Learning University, the National University of Costa Rica, the Ministry of Health and the Costa Rican Social Insurance Fund to learn about the cognitive, emotional, physical, interpersonal and behavioural consequences linked to the pandemic. The results reflected significant gender differences, showing that women (10.3 per cent) had a higher degree of symptoms before a possible depression than men (9.4 per cent).

Disadvantaged groups of women

109. Care for women facing situations of violence in the country is provided to all vulnerable women. Temporary shelters for women affected by violence receive a budgetary allocation for the management of immigration procedures for women users who require them.

110. In 2021, a specific cooperation agreement was signed between the National Institute for Women and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock to contribute to the reduction of poverty and inequality among women working in the agricultural sector, in order to promote the participation of women in the Fomujeres fund and to provide them with advice, training and technical assistance in their activities. Through a joint effort between the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, the National Institute for Women, the National Council of 4-H Clubs and the Fishing and Aquaculture Institute of Costa Rica, the twelfth call for proposals of the Fomujeres fund was carried out in 2021, through which 572 projects were supported for a total investment of 1.150 billion colones (\$1,701,032.45), while the eleventh call for proposals led to support for 150 projects for a total investment of 300 million colones (\$443,747.59), with both calls benefiting a total of 1,050 women engaged in productive activities in agriculture, livestock, fishing and agro-industry. In addition, in 2021, the Food Production and Security Service of the Rural Development Institute allocated

non-reimbursable resources to 639 women beneficiaries for a total investment of 1.501 billion colones (\$2,220,217.14). The resources used to finance the development of productive activities through the rural credit programme of the Rural Development Institute also benefited 38 women, with an investment of 196 million colones (\$289,915.09) along with technical assistance from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock. In 2021, through a programme for the integration of a group of women and young people from rural areas into the agricultural production sector with the development of income-generating activities by the National Council of 4-H clubs, 225 women received benefits amounting to 35 million colones (\$51,770.55). In addition, Executive Decree No. 43436-MAG-MCM was signed on the establishment and declaration of the public nature of the Interinstitutional Commission on rural women's access to, use and management of land, in order to promote the economic empowerment of women and give them a more active role in rural land development.

111. With respect to paragraph 20 (c) of the report on the list of issues and questions, no progress has been reported.

112. With regard to equal employment opportunities, in 2021 the National Council for Persons with Disabilities and Fundación ONCE signed an agreement, under Decree No. 43025-MP-MTSS, declaring the Inserta programme of Fundación ONCE and the Inter-American Development Bank to be of public and national interest, with the aim of highlighting and promoting the participation of women with disabilities in the labour market. Training activities were also conducted for officials of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and the National Insurance Institute aimed at the inclusion of persons with disabilities in public and private workplaces, especially small and medium-sized enterprises.

113. On equal opportunities in access to justice, the National Council for Persons with Disabilities coordinated an interinstitutional commission to prepare a draft regulation of chapter VIII: Access to justice, under part II of the Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities Act (Act No. 7600 of 2 May 1996) (Act No. 9714 of 30 September 2019), which includes major provisions on women, girls and boys with disabilities, and on the issue of violence. Regarding access to sexual and reproductive health care services, training activities were carried out in 2021 and a review was conducted of proposed workshops entitled "Towards menstrual awareness: breaking down myths and strengthening our independence" together with the National Institute for Women and the United Nations Population Fund. In addition, a study on sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence against women with disabilities was published in the light of the 2018 national survey on disability. This document was prepared jointly by the National Council for Persons with Disabilities, the United Nations Population Fund and the Latin American Alliance of Women with Disabilities in order to analyse the statistical data collected by the survey, together with the experiences of women with disabilities from different regions of the country.

114. The technical directorate of the National Council for Persons with Disabilities issued the criterion CONAPDIS-DT-CT-019–2021 related to accessible gynaecological beds for the care of women with disabilities in hospitals of the Costa Rican Social Insurance Fund. The criterion covers the following: (a) the restarting of services provided at the National Rehabilitation Centre, which were halted during the COVID-19 emergency in Costa Rica; (b) statistical data on gynaecological consultations performed in national and regional hospitals as opposed to the number of women with disabilities residing in each of the country's regions, together with their insurance coverage and income level, reiterating the need to decentralize gynaecological care services; (c) the actions required for interinstitutional coordination among the National Council for Persons with Disabilities, the National Institute for Women and the Costa Rican Social Insurance Fund, together with women

with disabilities and their organizations, to ensure access to effective sexual and reproductive health consultations in the same conditions as for other women.

Climate change and disaster risk reduction

115. In 2021, the National Institute for Women together with the Ministry of the Environment and Energy and the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) Support Programme of the United Nations Development Programme launched a process to identify and analyse gender gaps in six sectors prioritized for climate action: agriculture, forestry, mobility and transportation, tourism, infrastructure and energy. A draft plan of action was then prepared and in February, March and April 2022 consultations on the plan were held with institutions linked to these sectors, women and women's organizations in all regions of the country, international cooperation agencies, regional development councils and the Women's Forum of the National Institute for Women.

116. In accordance with the commitments made by the National Institute for Women and the National Risk Prevention and Disaster Response Commission in the plans of action for the national policy for effective equality between women and men and the national risk management policy, the strategy for training on gender and risk management is ongoing for the staff of the National Risk Prevention and Disaster Response Commission and for women connected with the Alliance of Costa Rican Women, as part of the community approach strategy on gender and risk management.

117. By 2022, a work plan was developed with municipal and community emergency committees and women's organizations in three priority cantons, Osa, Cañas and Alajuelita, in order to strengthen gender mainstreaming and women's participation in the local risk management system and its three areas: risk reduction, preparedness and response, and recovery. This experience will be used to validate a methodology of work that will be taken to other cantons in the country.

118. With respect to paragraph 21 (c) of the report on the list of issues and questions, no progress has been reported.

Marriage and family relations

119. The Patronato Nacional de la Infancia implements a care management model that establishes the procedure for dealing with situations involving a violation of the rights of minors. When it is determined through a preliminary investigation that there is a risk to the minor (due to domestic violence or for any other reason), a special protection process pursuant to articles 128 to 140 of the Code on Children and Adolescents, or the appropriate process for the case, is launched. In the case of the special protection process, the resolution order that is issued must include one of the measures provided for by the aforementioned Code, article 131 of which empowers the Patronato Nacional de la Infancia to rule on the suspension of visitation or the suspension of care or foster care of either of the parents in the absence of a court ruling on the matter. Once the relevant protection measure has been ordered, a response plan will be drawn up to restore the rights of the minor and his or her family.

120. Based on technical criteria, the working group convened by the National Commission on Children and Adolescents, comprising representatives of the Patronato Nacional de la Infancia, the judiciary, the Costa Rican Federation of Non-Governmental Organizations for the Defence of Children's and Adolescents' Rights and the Ministry of Health, responded to the consultations made by the Family, Parenting and Child Rearing Association on "de-parentalization practices", stating

that the term lacks a scientific basis to support its use, among other considerations detailed in the document (annex 9).

121. With respect to paragraphs 22 (c) and 22 (d) of the report on the list of issues and questions, no further progress has been reported beyond what was indicated in the eighth periodic report.
