



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

List of issues and questions prior to the submission of the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Vanuatu*

General

1. Please provide information and statistics, disaggregated by sex, age, nationality, disability, ethnicity, geographical location and socioeconomic background, on the current situation of women and girls in the State Party to enable monitoring of the implementation of the Convention. In accordance with the State Party's obligations under articles 1 and 2 of the Convention and in line with target 5.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals to end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere, please indicate how the State Party intends to improve the collection and analysis of data pertaining to the areas covered by the Convention, so as to support policymaking and programme development and to measure progress towards the implementation of the Convention and the promotion of substantive equality between women and men, including with regard to the specific areas covered in the present document.

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

2. Please describe measures taken to address the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its long-term impact, and how those measures inform responses to future crises, such as conflict, food insecurity and energy shortages. Please explain how gender equality and women's empowerment are integrated into crisis response, recovery and policymaking and how the equal and meaningful participation of women is ensured to prevent backsliding on their rights.

Visibility of the Convention, the Optional Protocol thereto and the Committee's general recommendations

3. Please provide information on how courts are adopting the Convention and the Committee's concluding observations ([CEDAW/C/VUT/CO/4-5](#)) as part of judicial decision-making and constitutional interpretation. Please provide information on steps taken or envisaged to:

(a) Disseminate the Convention and the Optional Protocol in society and among women, in particular among women living in remote areas;

* Adopted by the Committee at its ninety-second session (2–20 February 2026).



(b) Integrate the Convention, the Optional Protocol thereto and the Committee's general recommendations, as well as the views adopted on individual communications, into training for judges, prosecutors, lawyers, police officers, civil servants and members of Parliament;

(c) Implement the Committee's concluding observations through the revision of the National Gender Equality Policy 2020–2030.

Constitutional framework and discriminatory laws

4. Please provide information on steps taken to:

(a) Adopt anti-discrimination legislation that integrates a comprehensive definition of discrimination against women, including the prohibition of direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of gender, marital status, sexual orientation or disability, and that addresses substantive equality in accordance with articles 1 and 2 of the Convention;

(b) Adopt a new federal constitution and ensure that, in line with the Convention and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, it contains a clause to repeal all legislation, including customary law provisions, that is incompatible with the principle of equality and non-discrimination, such as the ninth constitutional amendment, made in 2025, under which only two sexes are recognized at birth;

(c) Adopt a clear time frame in relation to the law reform process, including the amendments to the Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code, the Labour (Work Permits) Act and the Citizenship Act;

(d) Institutionalize gender-responsive budgeting across all ministries and local government bodies to ensure that public spending serves to promote women's rights and empowerment, including within organizations like the Law Reform Commission.

Access to justice

5. Please provide information on steps taken to:

(a) Provide effective remedies for the women who were victims of violence during the ethnic tensions in 2007, in line with international principles and standards of transitional justice and reparations, as well as any measures taken to establish victim protection programmes, such as temporary restraining orders and online complaints mechanisms;

(b) Provide adequate resources to the Supreme Court to address cases of violence against women during the tensions in 2007;

(c) Increase gender sensitivity in the criminal justice system, including among prosecutors, in order to avoid the double victimization of women and girls, provide free legal aid to women with a view to increasing their access to justice and train law enforcement officials on gender-sensitive responses to gender-based violence.

National human rights institution

6. Please describe any measures taken to establish a national human rights institution with a broad mandate to promote and protect women's rights, in full compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles).

National machinery for the advancement of women

7. Please provide information on efforts made to:

(a) Ensure adequate and sustainable resources and staffing for the Department of Women's Affairs at all levels, with a clear coordinating mandate;

(b) Promote the participation of women's civil society organizations, including in remote areas, in policymaking;

(c) Strengthen coordination among the Ministry of Justice, Youth and Community Services, gender focal points and mechanisms at all levels to address geographical challenges;

(d) Implement a monitoring and evaluation framework with measurable indicators and publish the results of a gender assessment concerning the five key areas of the National Gender Equality Policy 2020–2030.

Women and peace and security

8. Please provide information on measures taken to:

(a) Fully implement the women and peace and security agenda in line with Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) and other subsequent resolutions, and with general recommendation No. 40 (2024) on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems, including a parity approach and parity targets;

(b) Implement measures within the scope of the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2012–2015) and engage in regional processes in the Pacific region;

(c) Ensure that women are fully included in high-level track 1 and 2 dialogues on conflict resolution and in climate change and foreign policy negotiations in a changing development cooperation with regional partners and in a manner that supports women's civil society spaces and agency.

Temporary special measures

9. Please provide information on steps taken to:

(a) Strengthen the role of the task force to implement temporary special measures to accelerate substantive equality of women and men in all areas where women, in particular women with disabilities, older women, single mothers and adolescent mothers, are underrepresented or disadvantaged, such as political and public life, including in rural and remote areas;

(b) Disseminate information to all branches of government and the private sector, with a special focus on transnational corporations, on the nature and scope of temporary special measures, in order to familiarize them with the concept of those measures, demonstrate their value and encourage their application.

Stereotypes

10. Please provide information on efforts made to:

(a) Implement a strategy to combat gender stereotypes through targeted education and multimedia, including social media awareness-raising campaigns, aimed at women, men, girls and boys, with a particular focus on recognizing the contributions made by women and the global potential and value of their participation in decision-making processes within the community and society at large;

(b) Engage the media, civil society organizations and all stakeholders in combating harmful practices and discriminatory social attitudes towards women in public and private life, in particular in rural areas, including by clarifying the role played by community and religious leaders in protecting women and children from discrimination with regard to national and customary law;

(c) Integrate the principles of non-discrimination and equality between women and men into educational policies, the national core curriculum and related documents, as well as into basic and continuing education for teachers and healthcare professionals and other service providers;

(d) Establish justice sector mechanisms for women and girls who are victims of harmful practices, such as child marriage.

Harmful practices

11. Please provide information on efforts made to:

(a) Raise the minimum legal age for marriage from 16 to 18 years, repeal customary laws that provide for child marriages and the payment of bride prices and carry out campaigns involving community leaders on those practices as harmful practices contrary to the Convention, in line with joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2019) on harmful practices;

(b) Adequately integrate non-discrimination and equality between women and men and women's leadership into educational policies, the national core curriculum and related documents, as well as into basic and continuing education for teachers and healthcare professionals and other service providers.

Gender-based violence against women

12. Please provide information on steps taken to:

(a) Address sexual abuse and domestic violence, including in the logging, mining, forestry and fisheries industries, prosecute offenders and ensure corporate accountability through due diligence and environmental, social and governance policies;

(b) Develop a national strategy to eliminate gender-based violence, including by expanding services to rural areas, integrating contingencies for natural disasters and amending legislation to strengthen protections against intimate partner violence by clarifying that rape and sexual assault provisions apply irrespective of marital or other relationships;

(c) Improve safe and ethical monitoring and disaggregated data collection on gender-based violence and the use of services based on sex, age, disability and location, in order to inform policy and programming;

(d) Disseminate accessible information, including for women with disabilities, on offences under the 2014 amendments to the Family Protection Act 2008;

(e) Ensure and monitor the police response to complaints regarding violence against women, give women access to the formal justice system and ensure that perpetrators are prosecuted and punished;

(f) Eliminate the use of mandatory mediation in cases of domestic violence, monitor compensation and settlements under customary mechanisms and ensure that such mechanisms do not violate the Convention;

(g) Provide adequate support, including psychosocial support, for women and girls who are victims of violence both offline and online, including by strengthening referral systems and establishing shelters that are accessible to all women, including women with disabilities and their families, in all provinces, as well as by providing legal aid and improving inter-agency coordination among the police, the judiciary and health and social services for timely protection and responses based on child-inclusive and gender-responsive approaches;

(h) Allocate financial resources and strengthen the technical capacity of civil society organizations, in order to provide services and redress for women who are victims of gender-based violence.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

13. Please provide information on measures taken to:

(a) Ratify the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and enhance regional and international cooperation to prevent and combat trafficking and exploitation;

(b) Adopt a comprehensive anti-trafficking law that is aligned with international standards and supported by reliable data, and strengthen the capacity of law enforcement officials and service providers through gender- and child-sensitive procedures;

(c) Amend the Penal Code to criminalize sex tourism and other forms of sexual exploitation of women and girls, including the use of girls in pornography;

(d) Develop programmes to provide legal aid, translation services and victim-centred investigations, with a view to supporting women survivors in gaining access to justice and restoring legal identity and civil status;

(e) Prevent the exploitation of prostitution of women and girls, paying particular attention to the logging, mining and forestry industries and areas where large-scale projects are being developed, as well as the tourism industry;

(f) Provide training for judges and law enforcement officers on the Convention and counter-trafficking principles to ensure gender-sensitive legal responses, and strengthen the criminal justice system to prosecute and sentence the perpetrators of trafficking offences.

Participation in political and public life

14. Please provide information on steps taken to:

(a) Increase the number of women in the judiciary, the executive branch and the public and foreign services, as well as in the private sector;

(b) Enact legislation aimed at ensuring parity for women in Parliament, encourage the creation of a special parliamentary committee on equality between women and men, establish a mechanism to monitor the effective implementation of such legislation and consider sanctions against political parties that do not comply with parity quotas;

(c) Develop structured mentorship, leadership and capacity-building programmes for women, including young women and adolescents, who aspire to become candidates at the national and local levels, in order to guarantee the equal participation of women in political and public life;

(d) Offer campaign financing and mentoring to women as an incentive to run for office, particularly in rural communities;

(e) Conduct public awareness-raising activities on the value of the equal participation of women in leadership and decision-making, including male allyship programmes for the participation of women in leadership positions;

(f) Implement monitoring and reporting systems to track the participation of women across political, public and international leadership roles, disaggregated by sex, age and location.

Nationality

15. Please provide information on steps taken to enforce the Citizenship (Amendment) Act No. 39 of 2013, which guarantees gender equality in citizenship eligibility, concerning the acquisition, transmission, retention and loss of nationality and, in particular, to ensure that both mothers and fathers are able to transmit their nationality to their children, in compliance with article 9 of the Convention.

Education

16. Please describe measures put in place to:

(a) Increase funding for education and digital literacy, improve school sanitation and safety for girls and expand dormitories and affordable transport, especially in rural areas, to boost the enrolment and retention of girls;

(b) Ensure security for girls on school premises, including dormitories, investigate allegations of sexual abuse and rape of schoolgirls and prosecute offenders;

(c) Make primary education compulsory for all children and reduce the indirect costs of schooling, such as the costs of school transport, textbooks, menstrual products and school-imposed charges, with a view to eliminating them;

(d) Compile and use good practices from other States Parties in the Pacific region aimed at encouraging girls to choose non-traditional career paths that encourage innovation in the employment sector, such as a programme to encourage girls to participate in science, technology, engineering and mathematics;

(e) Adopt teacher training tools that ensure that the curricula respond to the demands of the labour market, by using adaptive information technologies;

(f) Close the gender digital divide in rural areas;

(g) Strengthen efforts to retain girls in school, including pregnant students and young mothers, by adopting a second-chance education policy, providing childcare facilities and prohibiting expulsions due to pregnancy, with sanctions for violations;

(h) Continue to develop and promote age-appropriate education on sexual and reproductive health rights;

(i) Eliminate gender stereotypes in textbooks, curricula and pedagogy materials and provide symbols of women in leadership in textbooks, murals and portraiture;

(j) Develop context-specific women's and girls' leadership programmes and curricula from kindergarten to university;

(k) Incentivize educational programmes on new technology, mobile money and financial inclusion for women and girls and encourage the participation of women

in new technologies, including agrotechnology, blue technology and automation, as well as in the arts and sports.

Employment

17. Please provide information on the measures put in place to address forced labour and the high burden of care work carried out by women compared with men, including on steps taken to:

(a) Amend and pass the Employment Act to guarantee equal pay for work of equal value, classify sexual harassment as misconduct warranting dismissal and ensure that women have equal opportunities and adequate maternity protections. Please provide additional information on any safe and accessible complaints mechanisms available to women in the workforce, both for sexual harassment and for incidents of discrimination in the workplace;

(b) Reform recruitment practices to ensure the equal participation of women through clear inclusion targets, transparent selection processes and strengthened accountability, and negotiate and strengthen bilateral agreements with destination countries to guarantee gender equality, non-discrimination, the prevention of gender-based violence and the provision of safe accommodation and transport for women workers, in line with International Labour Organization standards to expand fair employment opportunities;

(c) Address barriers to women's access to credit that are linked to restrictive financial requirements and offer programmes or training to help women, young people and people with disabilities to achieve economic independence;

(d) Implement mandatory gender and inclusion training for labour agents, employers, labour inspectors and government officials.

Health

18. Please provide information on steps taken to:

(a) Amend the Penal Code to ensure women can access to life-saving abortion services and post-abortion care and ensure that they are not liable to prosecution for seeking such care, in particular by decriminalizing abortion in cases of rape or incest. Please provide additional data, disaggregated by age and region, on the incidence of unsafe abortions and the impact on women's health, including maternal mortality;

(b) Implement the Vanuatu Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal, Child and Adolescent Health Policy, Strategy and Implementation Plan 2021–2025, which sets out national maternal and child health priorities, in particular for making cervical and human papillomavirus screenings available to women and for training healthcare workers in newborn and premature infant care;

(c) Implement adolescent- and youth-friendly health services guidelines to ensure access to family planning, treatment for sexually transmitted diseases and HIV and services to address gender-based violence, and introduce a family life education curriculum on sexual health and contraception;

(d) Prevent teenage pregnancy, improve access to affordable contraception and ensure adequate sanitation and menstrual facilities in schools and communities;

(e) Implement the Vanuatu Mental Health Policy and Strategic Plan 2021–2030, in which mental health is established as a key part of healthcare and prevention and treatment is prioritized, and address challenges relating to infrastructure needs

and community-led support, especially as climate change intensifies mental health burdens;

(f) Reduce maternal, child and infant mortality, improve breastfeeding, combat malnutrition among vulnerable groups and reduce the prevalence of and mortality rates associated with cervical cancer.

19. Please provide information on the progress made in updating the Public Health Act and list of essential drugs to afford protections to people with HIV and other sexually transmitted infections and provide access to pre-exposure prophylaxis kits for HIV exposure.

Rural women

20. Please provide information on measures taken to:

(a) Address the specific needs of rural women, including access to credit, services and employment, and reduce their higher unemployment rates by promoting participation across all sectors;

(b) Ensure equal landownership and inheritance rights for women and girls, including the elimination of discriminatory customs, train customary leaders and Island Court magistrates and enforce legal protections at the community level;

(c) Implement safeguards in future development decisions to prevent environmental harm and human rights concerns that could have a heavy impact on rural women's reliance on subsistence farming, as recognized in the Agriculture Sector Policy 2016–2030;

(d) Invest in agriculture, infrastructure, technology and commercialization to improve food security and create more value-added products.

Disaster risk reduction and climate change

21. Please describe measures taken, in line with the Committee's general recommendation No. 37 (2018) on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change and International Court of Justice advisory opinion of 23 July 2025 on the obligations of States in respect of climate change, to integrate a gender perspective into national climate change, disaster response and risk reduction policies and action plans, with a view to ensuring the meaningful participation of women and girls and the inclusion of their specific needs and capacities in preparedness efforts.

22. Please provide information on:

(a) The composition of the State Party's delegation to the thirtieth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, disaggregated by sex and seniority level, and measures taken to ensure that women leaders shape negotiating positions on incorporating the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice into the cover decision, including accountability mechanisms for the gendered impacts of fossil fuel subsidies and licenses, which the Court found might constitute internationally wrongful acts;

(b) The role of women in drafting a General Assembly resolution to operationalize the advisory opinion, including proposed mechanisms for gender impact assessments and reparations that address the disproportionate harm experienced by women in climate-vulnerable States;

(c) Gender quotas or parity requirements established for climate governance bodies, the development of nationally determined contributions and climate litigation strategies;

(d) The percentage of women, including Indigenous and outer island women, in climate leadership positions, disaggregated by location and ethnicity;

(e) Budgetary allocations for capacity-building to enable women's leadership in implementing obligations under the advisory opinion.

Women with disabilities

23. Please provide detailed information on efforts made to:

(a) Adopt a new disability policy and plan of action that guarantees inclusive education, health services and employment for women and girls with disabilities, ensures accessible complaints and protection mechanisms and establishes formal consultation processes in order to include women's voices and representative organizations in all decisions;

(b) Strengthen the decentralization of services to communities and villages to give women with disabilities access to public services, including services relating to gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health and rights and to the exercise of their right to participate in electoral and democratic processes;

(c) Reform disability-inclusive legislation guaranteeing autonomy and legal capacity in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, and address constitutional gaps in the prohibition of disability discrimination.

Marriage and family relations

24. Please provide information on measures taken to:

(a) Repeal all discriminatory provisions, including those relating to marriage, family relations, property rights, nationality and inheritance, by amending the Control of Marriage Act to align with national law and the Convention to set the minimum marriage age at 18 for all, prohibit polygamy, ensure the registration of customary marriages, raise awareness to discourage bride price practices and reform family law to guarantee equal rights and responsibilities during marriage and upon dissolution, with particular emphasis on women's equal access to land and inheritance;

(b) Eliminate discriminatory provisions against same-sex relationships related to the right to marriage and the age of consent, including the 2024 amendment to the Marriage Act, under which marriage is defined as the union of a male and female.

Additional information

25. Please provide any additional information deemed relevant with regard to legislative, policy, administrative and other measures taken to implement the provisions of the Convention and the Committee's concluding observations since the consideration of the previous combined periodic reports ([CEDAW/C/VUT/4-5](#)), in 2016. Such measures may include recent laws, developments, plans, programmes and ratifications of human rights instruments, as well as any other information that the State Party considers relevant. Please note that, further to the issues raised in the present document, the State Party will be expected, during the dialogue, to respond to additional questions relating to areas covered by the Convention.