



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

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**

**Information received from the Philippines on follow-up to
the concluding observations on its ninth periodic report***

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* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



I. Introduction

1. The Government of the Republic of the Philippines reaffirms its commitment to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and welcomes the Concluding Observations of the Committee adopted at its 2003rd and 2004th meetings, held on 11 October 2023.
2. This report is submitted in accordance with paragraph 58 of the Concluding Observations, requesting, within two years, information on measures to implement the recommendations in paragraphs 14 (a) and (b) on the legislative framework; 36 (a) and (b) on women human rights defenders, land and environmental defenders, and journalists; and 44 (c) on health.
3. The report was prepared by the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), together with the Presidential Human Rights Committee Secretariat, in its capacity as the National Mechanism for Implementation, Reporting, and Follow-up, and in close collaboration with the Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of Justice, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of Health (DOH), and Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines (CHR). Inputs were likewise solicited from the Bangsamoro Women Commission, Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).
4. In line with its obligations under Articles 2 and 3 of CEDAW to eliminate discrimination through legislative and policy measures, the Philippines has undertaken the following actions.

II. Follow-up information on the concluding observations (CEDAW/C/PHL/CO/9)

A. Information relating to paragraphs 14 (a) and (b)

Comprehensive Non-Discrimination Bill

5. During the reporting period, several bills were filed to strengthen protections against violence against women (VAW) and gender-based violence (GBV). Senate Bill No. 2766, the Comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Bill (CADB), reached Second Reading in the Senate as of August 2024. These measures support Articles 2 and 5(a) of CEDAW, requiring States to prohibit discrimination and address discriminatory social and cultural norms.
6. In the House of Representatives (HRep), the measure remained under review by the Committee on Human Rights. With the transition to the 20th Congress following the May 2025 midterm elections, pending bills from the 19th Congress, including those promoting gender equality and non-discrimination, are expected to be refiled for further deliberation.
7. In parallel with legislative efforts, the Stop the Discrimination Coalition, a network of human rights organizations, has been actively pushing for the passage of the CADB. Part of the Coalition's work is supporting the passage of local anti-discrimination ordinances and sustaining advocacy efforts to advance the legislation.
8. As of 2023, the State has mapped 73 enacted SOGIE-based anti-discrimination ordinances, with 69 operational across *barangays*, cities, and provinces. These measures protect about 36 million Filipinos, strengthening equality, human rights, and alignment with CEDAW commitments.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Expression Equality Bill

9. Aligned with the Magna Carta of Women (MCW), the SOGIE Equality Bill was filed and, in December 2022, gained support from 19 senators after passing the Senate Committee on Women, Children, Family Relations, and Gender Equality. Although still pending in Congress, the State continues to advance a whole-of-government approach to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression.

10. These efforts span multiple government agencies and civil society groups that have formed a watchdog network on SOGIE issues. On December 23, 2023, the State issued Executive Order No. 51, strengthening the Diversity and Inclusion Program, reconstituting the Inter-Agency Committee on Diversity and Inclusion, and creating a Special Committee on LGBTQIA+ Affairs, underscoring its commitment to combating discrimination and promoting the rights of all Filipinos regardless of gender or sexual orientation.¹

11. These initiatives are consistent with Article 2(d) of the CEDAW, which obliges States to refrain from engaging in any act or practice of discrimination against women, as well as with General Recommendation No. 28 (2010), which elaborates the core obligations of States under Article 2 of the CEDAW.

12. Through the CHR, the State intensified awareness efforts like the No More Missing Out Campaign, affirming that hate crime victims are not statistics but individuals with lives and voices. The campaign promotes recognition of all Filipinos, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation, and informs efforts to dismantle structures that enable persecution and victimization, thereby advancing the implementation of Article 5 of the CEDAW by challenging discriminatory stereotypes and social norms.

The CHR as the Gender Ombud

13. The State, through the CHR, upholds its mandate to safeguard the human rights of all persons, including the provision of effective measures to promote human rights and investigate all forms of violations. Through the MCW, the CHR established its Gender Equality and Women's Rights Center to develop and implement programs and activities that advocate for the protection of the dignity of all, as well as to monitor and combat other forms of VAW.

14. The 2023 Gender Ombud Report assessed first-semester women's human rights under the MCW, highlighting Republic Act 11313 or the Safe Spaces Act (SSA), which broadened protections against gender-based sexual harassment in streets, public spaces, and online platforms.² It establishes stronger legal protections for women and extends these safeguards to members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

15. As of 2023, 473 SSA violations were recorded from 2019 to 2022.³ Implementing bodies have strengthened their efforts in localizing guidelines and mechanisms to address gaps, including the establishment of VAW/Anti-Sexual Harassment Desks in 37, 686 (89.6%) of 42,045 *barangays*, dissemination of information, education, and communication materials, and the strengthening inter-agency referral and coordination.

¹ PCO, PBBM issues EO creating special LGBTQIA+ Committee, December 2023.

² Final draft of the GAD Ombud Advisory on the Full and Effective Implementation of the SSA.

³ Ibid.

16. The SSA is also consistent with CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35 (2017) on GBV, which urges States to criminalize and address sexual harassment in all settings.

17. As Gender Ombud, the CHR conducts fact-finding on cases handled by its 16 regional offices. CHR Resolution No. A96-005 mandates it to investigate civil and political rights violations and identify perpetrators, in line with its investigation guidelines and case management manual, which outline procedures for redress in cases involving women and LGBTQIA+ persons.⁴

The PCW as a Policymaking and Coordinating Body

18. During the 19th Congress, the State, through the PCW, pushed for the SOGIE Equality Act under the Women's Priority Legislative Agenda (WPLA). PCW issued data- and rights-based policy briefs to lawmakers, civil society, and other stakeholders, outlining the bill's rationale, the need to penalize discrimination, and recommendations for enforcement and redress.

19. With the transition to the 20th Congress after the May 2025 elections, the State remains committed to the bill's timely refiling and passage. The State also continues building government capacity on SOGIE issues, including implementing a Gender Sensitivity Training module for SSA perpetrators. These efforts advance CEDAW Articles 10(c) and (h) by promoting education to eliminate gender stereotypes across institutions.

20. A three-day training engaged 20 Philippine National Police officers, 12 Men Opposed to Violence Against Women Everywhere (MOVE) Aklan members, and PCW representatives to expand the pool of Gender Sensitivity Training (GST) trainers for SSA violators. It strengthened facilitation skills, refined the draft module, developed resource materials, and produced a roll-out plan for implementation within the PNP and MOVE Aklan.

21. These initiatives form part of the government's ongoing gender mainstreaming efforts, ensuring that policies and programs are responsive to the full spectrum of gender identities and expressions.

B. Information relating to paragraphs 36 (a) and (b)

On the protection of women human rights defenders, women journalists and activists, including Maria Ressa from harassment, surveillance or undue restrictions, arbitrary arrest and arbitrary prosecution

22. In 2020, Maria Ressa was convicted of cyber libel for an investigative report published in 2012. Two weeks later, Rappler's license was revoked. These matters have been subjected to judicial processes, with various appeals filed by Ms. Ressa, with several watchdogs and coalitions⁵ joining her in appealing the court's decision.⁶ In 2023, the courts acquitted Ressa and Rappler on the fifth and final tax evasion charges, dismissing all related civil and criminal aspects of the case.⁷ This outcome demonstrates the independence of the judiciary and the rule of law in the Philippines.

⁴ As cited in Investigation System: Final Report and User's Guide (CHR, 2013), Mission-Critical Systems Reengineering and Installation, Multi-Donor Programme Phase 3.

⁵ Including the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and its affiliate, the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP), and the Hold the Line Coalition.

⁶ IFJ, Philippines: Appeals court confirms Maria Ressa's libel conviction, July 2022.

⁷ As cited in IFJs, "Philippines: Final tax charge against Maria Ressa dropped," 2023.

23. These protections are linked to Article 7 of CEDAW, which guarantees women's participation in public life, including freedom of expression and association, and General Recommendation No. 33 (2015) on access to justice.

24. In the 19th Congress, the State has introduced key measures to protect human rights defenders and journalists. Notably, Senate Bill No. 2521 aims to decriminalize libel, particularly to support community journalism in vulnerable settings.

25. The abovementioned Senate Bill eliminates imprisonment for libel and clarifies the venue for related civil actions to align Philippine law with international press freedom standards. Senate Bill No. 2335 also proposes mandatory insurance and benefits for journalists, including freelancers, to provide protection and support in hazardous conditions.

26. The Human Rights Defenders (HRD) Bill, filed in 2021 and referred to the Senate Committee on Justice and Human Rights in 2023, seeks to protect HRDs and address impunity. Consistent with the MCW and the Anti-Enforced Disappearance Act, it affirms the State's duty to protect human rights defenders in line with CEDAW Article 15. A counterpart bill filed in the HRep in 2022 remains pending before the Committee on Human Rights.⁸

27. BARMM lawmakers have filed a bill to protect the rights of HRDs, outlining their rights and freedoms, including the right to an effective remedy and access to full monetary and non-monetary reparation in cases of violations. It also seeks to establish an HRD Protection Committee to ensure accountability, foster inter-agency coordination, and create mechanisms for systematic monitoring and reporting.⁹

28. In 2023, the State adopted a 10-year National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (NAPWPS) to proactively address armed conflict drivers while responding to the intersecting needs of women, girls, and youth.¹⁰ The Philippines is the first in Asia to adopt a comprehensive plan integrating national and local government interventions into Gender and Development (GAD) plans, budgets, and accomplishment reports, as required under the MCW.

29. The NAPWPS outlines actions to support women peacebuilders and HRDs. Action Point 8 strengthens the capacities of grassroots women's organizations, peacebuilders, and HRDs in cybersecurity and digital peacebuilding. Action Point 12.8 provides legal assistance to women HRDs who are accused or detained and ensures the protection of witnesses testifying on their behalf.

30. The NAPWPS is structured around two primary outcomes drawn from United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) 1325 and 1820: (1) protection and prevention, and (2) empowerment and participation. These are supported by two enabling outcomes: (a) promotion and mainstreaming, and (b) monitoring and evaluation.

31. Building on the NAPWPS, the State developed the BARMM Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security, highlighting women's role as effective peacebuilders, peacemakers, and peacekeepers, prioritizing conflict prevention by framing WPS as a human rights concern, promoting transitional justice, and combating extremism by supporting women peacebuilders.

⁸ HB No. 02484, Introduced by Representatives France Castro, Arlene Brosas, and Raoul Manuel in 2022.

⁹ Bangsamoro Transition Authority Bill No. 165, Introduced by MP Amilbahar Mawallil in 2022.

¹⁰ Philippine NAPWPS 2023-2033.

32. The NAPWPS operationalizes CEDAW Article 3 (development and advancement of women) and Article 7 (participation in public life), while integrating UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820.

On the observance of due process of the law in the investigation and prosecution of all acts of harassment, gender-based violence, discrimination, intimidation, and reprisals against women human rights defenders

33. The State underscores due process under Article III, Section 1 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, which guarantees life, liberty, property, and equal protection of the law, in alignment with CEDAW Article 15 and General Recommendation No. 33 on women's access to justice.

34. In line with the provisions of the MCW, the CHR has adopted the Gender Ombud Guidelines in 2016, which set the three major Protocols in the implementation of the MCW and related women's rights laws, specifically on the investigation of cases to protect women's rights.¹¹

35. The 4th Philippine Human Rights Plan underscores the State's priority of strengthening domestic accountability mechanisms to address grave human rights violations such as extralegal killings, enforced disappearance, and torture, as well as the improvement of prison conditions and reformation programs for persons deprived of liberty.

36. The State has issued a Regional Guidance Note on Prevention and Response to GBV. It outlines guiding principles for key actors, emphasizing respect, confidentiality, safety, and non-discrimination. The GBV survivor disclosure protocol provides a survivor-centred, step-by-step approach for law enforcement: 1) Prepare, 2) Welcome, 3) Listen, 4) Provide Information, 5) Referral, and 6) Close.

37. Additionally, the multi-disciplinary referral pathway underscored in the document aims to provide direction and guidance to survivors and/or witnesses of child protection issues and GBV by outlining the types of abuses, neglect, and exploitation that should be reported by the community.

C. Information relating to paragraph 44 (c)

38. The Philippines notes the Committee's recommendation to amend Articles 256-259 of the Revised Penal Code to legalize abortion under specific grounds: risk to life or health, rape, incest, severe fetal impairment, and to decriminalize it in other cases.

39. The Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012 ensures access to family planning, modern contraceptives, and post-abortion care, while the Universal Health Care Act expands maternal and reproductive health services, including antenatal and postnatal care, to support women's and families' well-being.

40. The abovementioned measures fulfil Article 12 of CEDAW, which requires States to eliminate discrimination in healthcare access, including family planning services, and are reinforced by General Recommendation No. 24 (1999) on women and health.

41. Abortion, when carried out by the woman herself or by others with her consent, remains punishable under existing laws of the Philippines. Despite this prohibition, the 1987 Constitution mandates the equal protection of both the life of the mother and the life of the unborn from the moment of conception.

¹¹ CHR, Gender Ombud Guidelines, 2016.

42. In *Imbong v. Ochoa* (G.R. No. 204819, 08 Apr. 2014), the Philippine Supreme Court held that when a mother's life is at risk, physicians must strive to save both lives, but may proceed with necessary procedures that endanger the child's life, even if these conflict with the practitioner's religious beliefs.

43. Under the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Law, the State adopted a National Policy on the Prevention and Management of Abortion Complications to reduce maternal mortality and ensure safe, humane post-abortion care. It guides the integration of PMAC into public and private reproductive health services.¹² Post-abortion care initiatives also respond to CEDAW's emphasis on maternal health and Article 12's guarantee of services to women, particularly in cases of complications.

44. In 2018 the DOH issued Administrative Order No. 2018-0003, the National Policy on the Prevention of Illegal and Unsafe Abortion and Management of Post-Abortion Complications, allowing primary care facilities to manage abortion-related cases, provide life-saving drugs and immediate post-abortion care, and refer patients to higher-level hospitals when needed, while strengthening family planning services and offering technical guidance to public and private providers to prevent unsafe abortion and ensure quality post-abortion care.

45. As part of its continuing efforts, the State is engaged in consistent review and research of policy options and health measures that would safely ensure the protection of both the life of the mother and the child.

D. Follow-up on other Committee recommendations

46. Beyond these follow-up areas, the State continues to address other recommendations of the Committee, including:

(a) Strengthening the Philippine Commission on Women. The appointment of a full-time PCW Chairperson at Undersecretary level, after a two-year vacancy, marks a significant step in strengthening the Council's institutional capacity. Measures are underway to return PCW supervision to the Office of the President from the Department of the Interior and Local Government to strengthen policy influence, improve coordination, and reaffirm the government's commitment to gender mainstreaming. This shift will also bolster the Philippines' international representation and support its commitments to CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Sustainable Development Goals, and its membership in the UN Women Executive Board;

(b) Supporting rural, Indigenous, and Bangsamoro women. The BARMM Sustainable Livelihood Program, led by the Ministry of Social Services and Development, supports sustainable livelihoods through "Punla" (seedling), providing skills training, support groups, micro-enterprise planning, grants, and technical assistance.¹³ Beneficiaries include Tadoray women, farmers' and fishers' wives, and widows of Moro Islamic Liberation Front members.¹⁴ An assessment by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies found the program to have increased the labour force participation, income, consumption expenditure, and food security of target women.¹⁵ These initiatives directly implement CEDAW Article 14, which calls on

¹² DOH Administrative Order No. 2016-0041.

¹³ As cited in Unson, 691 small-scale BARMM entrepreneurs receive capital support, 2023.

¹⁴ As cited in article on 1,290 BARMM residents to receive microenterprise support, 2023.

¹⁵ PIDS, Impacts of the Sustainable Livelihood Program's Microenterprise Development Assistance with Seed Capital Fund on poor households in the Philippines, December 2020, p. 3.

States to address the particular problems of rural women and ensure their participation in development;

(c) Integrating gender into climate change and disaster risk reduction programs. From 2021 to 2022, the PCW and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) have partnered to institutionalize GAD across DENR programs, focusing on collaboration, capacity development, technical assistance for its GAD Agenda, and integrating gender perspectives in Supervisory and Management Courses.¹⁶ In addition, the International Development Law Organization, with the Climate Change Commission, DENR, and PCW, conducted a legal review of climate and environmental laws to identify discriminatory provisions and address gaps, ambiguities, and inconsistencies affecting women and girls.¹⁷

47. These actions operationalize CEDAW General Recommendation No. 37 (2018) on gender and climate change, which emphasizes integrating gender perspectives in environmental law and policy.

III. Conclusion

48. The State reaffirms its commitment to the Convention and the Committee's recommendations, advancing substantive equality for women and girls under the MCW, Philippine Development Plan, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Plan, and SDGs, while engaging the Committee, UN bodies, civil society, and stakeholders for inclusive, sustainable progress.

49. In particular, the Philippines reaffirms its obligations under Articles 2, 12, and 14 of the Convention and will continue reporting on measures taken to address the Committee's Concluding Observations.

¹⁶ PIA, DENR, PCW ink partnership to boost women empowerment in environment sector, 2021.

¹⁷ Advancing Gender Equality in Climate Action: Gender Assessment of Climate and Environmental Laws in the Philippines, 2024.