



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

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## Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Eighty-seventh session

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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 the Central African Republic to the list of issues and questions in relation to its sixth periodic report\***

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\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



## **I. General context**

1. The Central African Republic has experienced a series of unprecedented military-political crises over several decades; thanks to the support of the international community, the country has regained political stability and was thus able to hold post-crisis multiparty elections in 2015.
2. Beyond these crises, the country has remained faithful to its international commitments to respect human rights in general and women's rights in particular.
3. In this regard, its actions in support of women have been in full compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
4. The Government has amended its laws with a view to eradicating discrimination against women.
5. It has developed programmes and projects enabling women to benefit from basic social services, such as health, housing, food, health care, adequate water, sanitation and electricity, among others.
6. It undertakes outreach to technical and financial partners to seek support for the implementation of programmes and projects supporting the advancement of women and gender equality throughout the country.
7. In order to preserve women's human rights in relation to the articles of the Convention, the Government has also adopted various policy measures for the empowerment of women.
8. The extraordinary contribution of various non-State actors in general, and in particular women's civil society organizations and international organizations in the Central African Republic, has also helped promote women's rights under the Convention.

## **II. Women and peace and security**

9. The Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission is concerned with issues related to the rights of women victims of sexual violence and the combating of impunity as part of its mandate. Unfortunately, the Commission has encountered financing difficulties since its establishment.

## **III. Internally displaced and refugee women**

10. According to the 2022 government report, 482,816 persons are internally displaced as a result of armed conflicts. However, the report does not contain disaggregated data.
11. The International Organization for Migration indicated in its August 2023 report that, according to its Displacement Tracking Matrix, there are 440,840 internally displaced persons in the Central African Republic, 51 per cent of whom are women.
12. With regard to refugee women, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees states in its 2022 report that 6,681 women and 9,027 girls have been repatriated.
13. Internally displaced and refugee women have received the following types of support:

- Internally displaced women and girls: food support, shelter, dignity kits, psychosocial support
- Refugee women and girls: settlement kits.

14. Regarding the security of returned populations, the Government has introduced security measures at checkpoints to foster the peaceful return of refugees and displaced persons. Awareness-raising activities focused on social cohesion and coexistence have also been stepped up in order to facilitate the peaceful return of displaced and repatriated persons.

15. With regard to support for repatriated and returnee women, the Government has taken various measures through the Trust Fund for Victims to provide holistic care for women victims of conflict-related sexual violence, encompassing legal, medical and educational support.

#### **IV. Visibility of the Convention, the Optional Protocol thereto and the Committee's general recommendations**

16. With regard to the visibility of the Convention and the Optional Protocol thereto, only the training programmes for police officers have a specific module on gender. Such modules are not yet an integral part of the curricula for law officers and court officials, who, nonetheless, regularly receive capacity-building on gender issues.

17. There are some challenges in achieving ownership of the Convention and the Optional Protocol, which explains the limited numbers of court proceedings. This is also true of individual communications and inquiry procedures under the Optional Protocol.

#### **V. Women's rights and gender equality in relation to the pandemic and recovery efforts**

18. The strategic framework document for the Central African Republic is the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan, which provides for economic recovery based on three pillars through which the needs of women and girls, including those belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized groups, can be met; however, it has not been possible to fully implement the plan owing to the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on donor countries.

#### **VI. Legislative framework**

19. In order to fulfil its commitments under the Convention, the Central African Republic is in the process of revising the Family Code, in particular with regard to discriminatory provisions relating to, *inter alia*, polygamy, cohabitation, *de facto* unions, headship of the family, levirate and sororate, choice of residence and contribution to household expenses.

#### **VII. Parliament**

20. Under the Constitution of 30 March 2016, the Senate was part of the second chamber; however, that provision was abolished in the new Constitution of 30 August 2023.

21. Women parliamentarians have organized several forums and capacity-building sessions.

## **VIII. Access to justice**

22. The joint rapid response unit to prevent sexual violence against women and girls is well established in Bangui and Bouar and the plan is to deploy it throughout the country.

23. However, owing to a lack of resources, the unit is finding it difficult to discharge its assigned functions.

24. There is only one women's prison, located in Bimbo, Bangui prefecture. The country's prison policy is to build women's prisons in all prefectures and sub-prefectures, in partnership with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and technical and financial partners.

25. The special criminal court has been operational since 2018, and perpetrators of violence against girls and women are among those who have been prosecuted; some of those perpetrators were sentenced by the special criminal court in its judgment of 31 December 2022.

26. In the process of integrating ex-rebels into the national security and defence forces, the Government has taken measures to exclude perpetrators of abuses against girls and women.

27. There are no official training curricula for magistrates, and other officials and staff of the judiciary that integrate a gender dimension; however, in all ministerial departments there are gender focal points who provide regular capacity-building on the concept of gender.

## **IX. National machinery for the advancement of women**

28. The Ministry for the Advancement of Women, the Family and Child Protection, which is now the Ministry for the Promotion of Gender and Protection of Women, Families and Children, has taken a range of measures to facilitate its work throughout the country at the institutional and legislative levels; it has also taken measures at the sector-specific level relating to children and women in various areas, following the example of the national observatory for parity.

29. Despite the political will expressed by the Government, the country has been faced with a lack of financial resources that has prevented almost all institutions from effectively carrying out their work. The situation is compounded by difficulties in terms of human resources.

30. The Ministry for the Promotion of Gender and Protection of Women, Families and Children has put in place, among others, the following measures to ensure the effective implementation of the national policy for the promotion of equality and equity and its action plan:

- Organization of national days to promote ownership of the national policy for the promotion of equality and equity and its action plan
- Organization of outreach to technical and financial partners for implementation of the national policy for the promotion of equality and equity and its action plan

- Strengthening of partnerships with women's civil society organizations to promote ownership of the national policy for the promotion of equality and equity and its action plan.

## X. Temporary special measures

31. With regard to temporary special measures, the Government has amended certain provisions of the Electoral Code, in particular article 91, introducing electoral lists for municipal elections, and article 281, requiring all political parties to meet a quota of 35 per cent for the representation of women in legislative elections, with sanctions for non-compliance.

32. Another temporary special measure has been the establishment of the national observatory for parity, pursuant to article 10 of the Gender Parity Act.

## XI. Stereotypes and harmful practices

33. The question of stereotypes related to transgender practices is not yet a major concern for the people of the Central African Republic, as would need to be the case in order for the legislature to be able to legislate on that issue.

34. As for harmful practices (female genital mutilation, widowhood rites, levirate and sororate), they are prohibited under national law:

- The Bangayassi Act on the protection of women in the Central African Republic
- Child Protection Code
- Family Code-Penal Code.

35. However, all victims of these practices are able to initiate legal proceedings.

36. As the Penal Code is under revision, information will be provided at a later date with regard to the decriminalization of witchcraft.

## XII. Gender-based violence against women

37. Reference is made to the 2019 national strategy to fight gender-based violence and traditional practices, including child marriage.

38. The aim of this strategy is to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls, by means of:

- Prevention
- A favourable legal environment
- Holistic and multisectoral support
- Justice and measures to combat impunity
- Coordination.

39. Domestic violence and sexual harassment are punishable under the Penal Code. However, marital rape is not yet criminalized in the Central African Republic.

40. As part of the gender action plan II financed by the European Union under the Békou Fund, two centres for the socioeconomic empowerment of women, and one temporary shelter, have been built in Bangui to temporarily receive women and girls who are victims of gender-based violence.

41. Because of cash flow pressures, the Central African Republic is unable to provide compensation for victims of sexual violence.

42. A bill to protect women and girls against harassment in workplaces, schools and universities is under consideration.

### **XIII. Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution**

43. Based on the document produced by the Government of the United States of America on the prevalence of trafficking in the Central African Republic, the Central African Government has adopted Act No. 22.015 of 20 September 2022 on combating trafficking in persons in the Central African Republic. The Government has also drafted a 2020–2024 action plan on combating trafficking, with the aim of establishing a mechanism for the prevention and prosecution of trafficking and protection of the victims. The main pillars of the action plan are to:

- Strengthen measures to prevent trafficking in persons
- Strengthen the mechanism for protecting and assisting victims of trafficking in persons
- Strengthen a mechanism for prosecuting the perpetrators at all levels of the criminal justice system
- Strengthen coordination and cooperation in combating trafficking in persons.

44. A national strategic committee to combat trafficking has been established and is chaired by the Head of State.

45. A minister counsellor attached to the Office of the President of the Republic coordinates this committee.

46. Cross-border cooperation activities are carried out with other States in the subregion, specifically Gabon, in order to combat and prevent trafficking in persons.

### **XIV. Participation in political and public life**

47. At least 18 women are members of the National Assembly, in other words, 8.6 per cent of the total; two commissions are headed by women. Act No. 19-0012 concerns the Electoral Code of the Central African Republic.

48. With regard to government institutions:

- National Electoral Authority
- High Authority for Good Governance
- High Council for Communication
- Economic, Social and Environmental Council.

49. The representation of women on the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission and the National Commission on Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties is also approximately 35 per cent.

50. At the national level, some posts are reserved exclusively for women and in certain institutions there is a 50 per cent quota.

## **XV. Nationality**

51. Central African refugee children born in foreign countries are registered by the civil registry services of the host countries.

52. The children retain Central African nationality until the age of majority and are entitled to apply for the nationality of the host country.

53. With regard to the transfer of Central African nationality to a foreign husband, the Nationality Code, which is currently being amended, takes account of that concern.

## **XVI. Education**

54. The National Educational Research and Teaching Institute (INRAP), which is responsible for the design of educational materials, has integrated a gender perspective into teaching manuals for elementary school children.

55. Since the return to peace, the temporary childcare facilities established under the transition plan for 2017–2018 have been closed as formal education has been resumed.

56. The Government has established schools close to places of residence so as to protect girls from possible violence and facilitate access by girls with disabilities.

57. In order to protect girls from gender-based violence on their way to and from school, as well as in school, a country-wide early warning mechanism has been set up; reports can be made to the competent authorities by calling the phone number 4040.

## **XVII. Employment**

58. The national policy for the promotion of equality and equity established by the Government is being taken into account in the implementation of economic recovery and employment strategies. However, a lack of ownership of this policy by women has been noted, despite the adoption of the Parity Act of 24 November 2016.

59. There are projects to provide holistic care for victims of gender-based violence (SENI project implemented by the Ministry of Health in Bambari, Kaga Bandoro, Nola, Paoua and Alindao, and other holistic care centres in the Hôpital de l’Amitié and in Zemio). As for the strategies that are in place to ensure women’s access to formal labour, the Government is implementing the Parity Act and more strongly encouraging applications by women. In the informal sector, the Government has established a policy for the empowerment of women through a fund to support women entrepreneurs.

## **XVIII. Health**

60. The Government of the Central African Republic, together with partners, has built and restored maternity clinics in region 7, providing an operating theatre in the Bimbo district hospital. Two referral hospitals in Bangui have been furnished with the equipment and supplies necessary to provide essential gynaecological and obstetric care, and 57 per cent of community basic reproductive health centres are operational.

61. Furthermore, the Government continues with its efforts to mobilize the resources needed to restore and equip health facilities in the country's other regions, while integrating a gender perspective.

62. The issue of health sector financing is a major concern for the Government. The coordination and planning of action by donors, the Government and non-governmental organizations, focused on development and emergency situations, remains a challenge for the Ministry of Health and Population.

63. The State is no longer the main source of health-care financing. In fact, health financing comes from three main sources, namely, the State budget, external financing and direct payments by households per episode of illness.

64. The Government has shown its goodwill in the allocation of approximately 8 per cent of its budget to the health sector (2013 Finance Act).

65. The Government has taken measures to ensure that women who are victims of rape receive holistic care, through several projects:

- the Nengo project, which provides victims of sexual violence and gender-based violence in Bangui and the provinces with a coordinated pathway for access to high-quality holistic care;
- the SENI-Plus project, through which victims of gender-based violence and rape receive holistic care in Bambari, Kaga Bandoro, Nola, Paoua and Alindao and other care centres.

66. The Government, through its National Health Policy 2019–2030, has taken measures to reduce by two-thirds the maternal mortality rate through targeted free health care projects where pregnant women receive appropriate treatment and girls are provided with contraceptives.

## **XIX. Economic empowerment and social benefits**

67. To ensure good governance in the management of projects, the State has established an oversight body, the High Authority for Good Governance, to combat the misappropriation of funds and corruption, in conjunction with the inspectorates of sectoral departments, the General State Inspectorate and the General Inspectorate of Finance.

68. Self-employed women have been taken into account in the national social protection policy currently being drafted.

## **XX. Rural women**

69. The issue of access to land ownership for rural women does not arise in the Central African Republic, owing to its land area and population.

70. Rural women acquire land ownership through inheritance or marital status.

71. There is no violation of gender equality in the protection and management of natural and other assets.

72. The State has established programmes to educate rural women on their rights, resource mobilization, management of tontines, and new communication technologies.

73. These programmes are implemented by the regional directorates of sectoral departments and rural women's organizations.

## XXI. Women with disabilities

74. Persons with disabilities are a population category that is particularly vulnerable to discrimination. For that reason, in 2006 the Central African Republic ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Optional Protocol thereto.

75. As part of its non-discrimination policy, the Government promulgated Act No. 00.007 of 20 December 2000 on the status, protection and advancement of persons with disabilities, and the related implementing decree.

76. The Government of the Central African Republic is in the process of developing and improving the learning environment for all children living with disabilities, in particular girls. With the return to constitutional order, the new authorities are ready to work to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 regarding the right to inclusive quality education by taking into account the needs of girls with disabilities in specialized schools, such as the schools for signing deaf and blind persons in Benz-Vi. The Government, in its plan of action, is also promoting the teaching profession to girls and women, taking account of specific educational requirements:

- Vocational training and literacy centres for women and girls have been developed and established in some school administration districts, including technical and vocational schools such as training, integration and apprenticeship centres (CFIA), girls' vocational schools (LPF) and other technical schools.
- It has introduced a policy of equity and inclusion by transforming the school environment, with the support of actors in the educational system such as the World Bank/emergency basic education support project (PUSEB) and the Maïng project, which recognizes the specific needs of girls by awarding scholarships;
- There are also associations of mother-educators (AMEs), which have been established to promote early childhood development;
- The Ministry is carrying out a major campaign to raise awareness in the community about the education of girls, through non-governmental organizations and other actors in the education system.

77. In addition:

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- The 1966 ordinance concerning the protection of girls
- The existence of Act No. 00.007 on the status, protection and advancement of persons with disabilities in the Central African Republic
- Appointment of a gender and disabilities focal point in the Ministry of Education
- The results of studies regarding barriers to access to education for children with disabilities, in the process of being finalized
- The existence of specialized centres in Bangui for children with visual and auditory disabilities
- Inclusive education targeted in corporate social responsibility;
- High importance given to the education of girls with disabilities by technical and financial partners.

## **XXII. Marriage and family relations**

78. In the revision of the Family Code currently under way, the provisions allowing polygamy have been retained. However, those indicating that the man is the head of the family, as well as those allowing child marriage (under 18 years), have been removed.

79. There is no discrimination in the Family Code between children born outside of marriage and legitimate children, including with regard to rights of inheritance and nationality.

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