



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.: General
14 November 2023

Original: English
English, French and Spanish only

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

List of issues and questions in relation to the tenth periodic report of the Lao People's Democratic Republic*

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

1. Please describe efforts made and mechanisms put in place to respond to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its long-term impact, and ways to apply these in the State party's response to current and future crises, such as armed conflict, food insecurity, the energy crisis and other relevant areas. Please provide information on strategies taken to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment are a fundamental requirement in addressing such crises and in elaborating adequate responses, such as policies, assistance programmes, recovery efforts and the consolidation of the rule of law. Please also provide information on measures taken to ensure the equal and meaningful participation of women in these processes and to ensure that such crises will not lead to a reversal of progress made in the protection and promotion of women's rights.

Constitutional, legislative and policy framework

2. Please clarify whether any steps have been taken to include a specific provision in the Constitution prohibiting gender-based discrimination, which is similar to the provision prohibiting discrimination among ethnic groups enshrined in article 8 of the Constitution. Please also provide updated information on the human, technical and financial resources allocated to implement legislation that prohibits discrimination against women, in particular the 2019 Law on Gender Equality, especially in rural and remote areas. Please also specify efforts to implement the third national strategy for gender equality 2016–2025.

Access to justice

3. In the light of the Committee's previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9, para. 10), and the information provided in paragraphs 13 and 15 of the State party's report (CEDAW/C/LAO/10), please outline any specific measures taken to enhance awareness among all women, including women living in rural areas, women belonging to ethnic minority groups, Indigenous women, women migrants, older women and women with disabilities, of their rights under the

* Adopted by the pre-sessional working group on 2 November 2023.



Convention and domestic legislation prohibiting discrimination against women, and describe how they can seek justice in the State party. Please also describe the legal aid regimes in place for women who need them. Please provide information about capacity-building for law enforcement officials, the judiciary and prosecutors on the Convention and domestic legislation prohibiting discrimination against women, as well as about specific capacity-building to counter possible gender bias.

4. Please provide information on the cases of women who are currently sentenced to death in the State party and on whether and how gendered vulnerabilities, such as trauma, gender-based violence against women, coercion and dependency, were taken into consideration in their cases and whether such mitigating factors can be taken into consideration. Please also clarify whether the death penalty is applied to women who acted in self-defence. Furthermore, please indicate whether any procedures are in place to consistently provide women with adequately resourced and qualified legal defence with prior expertise in capital punishment cases. Please indicate any steps taken towards instituting a moratorium on the death penalty with a view to abolishing it.

Women and peace and security

5. Please provide updated information on the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) and subsequent resolutions on women and peace and security both at the national and regional levels. Please also indicate the steps taken towards adopting a national action plan on women and peace and security.

National human rights institution

6. In the light of the Committee's previous concluding observations ([CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/7](#) and [CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9](#)), please update the Committee on any steps taken towards establishing an independent national human rights institution, in accordance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles), with a broad mandate to promote and protect, inter alia, women's rights and gender equality.

Women human rights defenders

7. Please provide any information on steps taken to review the registration requirements for civil society and non-governmental organizations, to ensure that organizations, in particular women's rights organizations, can undertake their activities without undue restrictions. Please also describe any steps taken to review and amend any existing laws, regulations or decrees that are reportedly unduly restricting freedom of expression and the activities of the media and civil society organizations, with a view to ensuring that women human rights defenders and civil society in general can operate in an accommodating environment, in line with international human rights standards and principles. Furthermore, please provide detailed information on:

(a) Measures taken to ensure that women human rights defenders can peacefully carry out their advocacy work for women's human rights without facing the risk of criminal prosecution and a prison sentence;

(b) Steps taken towards releasing former women migrant workers, who were detained for posting messages on social media in which they criticized the Government in relation to alleged corruption, deforestation and human rights violations and whose detention has been declared arbitrary by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention ([A/HRC/WGAD/2017/61](#) and [A/HRC/WGAD/2021/6](#));

(c) Measures taken to protect Indigenous women human rights defenders against human rights violations, including gender-based violence.

Temporary special measures

8. Please provide updated information on measures taken to raise awareness on gender equality among politicians, in particular parliamentarians, community leaders and the general public, especially men, and to promote an understanding of the importance of temporary special measures and establish a legal basis for the implementation of temporary special measures, namely that they are an important means of achieving substantive equality. Please also indicate whether any steps have been taken to set the target for women's representation in all decision-making systems at 50 per cent. Please specify any steps taken towards adopting temporary special measures at the local level in particular, notably in the areas of education, employment and political participation, to address intersecting forms of discrimination against women, especially women living in rural areas, women belonging to ethnic minority groups, Indigenous women, women living in poverty, female heads of household and women with disabilities.

Gender stereotypes

9. Please indicate the measures taken to eradicate patriarchal attitudes and gender stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and girls, which, among other things, hinder their access to education, economic participation and decision-making roles and increase their risk of gender-based violence. Please indicate how community leaders are sensitized to, and included in efforts to address, gender stereotypes. Please also provide information on measures taken to promote the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men and to promote the recognition of the value of care work in society. Please also describe any specific measures that have been introduced in the school curriculum at all levels to sensitize girls and boys to gender equality in all areas of society. In the light of reports that women who are single mothers, divorced or widowed are particularly subject to gender stereotypes, please provide information about any specific measures taken to address this phenomenon. Please also comment on reports that single women who are pregnant are not permitted to give birth in their family's home.

Gender-based violence against women

10. Please specify any efforts made and resources allocated to ensure the full implementation of the 2015 Law on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Children and the national action plan on the prevention and elimination of violence against women and children 2021–2025. Please also provide updated information on:

(a) Awareness-raising efforts to foster zero tolerance for gender-based violence against women within society, while emphasizing that it is not a private matter and is never justified under any circumstances, and to increase the reporting thereof;

(b) Measures to protect victims of gender-based violence against women against reprisals for reporting such violence and to strengthen victims' trust in the justice system;

(c) Safeguards in place to ensure that victims of gender-based violence have a real choice between mediation and the formal complaint mechanism;

- (d) Sensitization efforts targeting village authorities, among whom the attitude reportedly prevails that women should endure violence to keep the family together;
- (e) Specific measures in place to ensure the protection of Indigenous women and women from ethnic minority groups against gender-based violence, and reports that intersectional discrimination against them may constitute an obstacle to their access to protection;
- (f) Specific measures in place to protect women and girls with disabilities against gender-based violence and ensure the accessibility of reporting avenues;
- (g) The definition of rape in the State party's Penal Code.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

11. Please provide detailed information on the human, technical and financial resources allocated to implement the 2016 Anti-Trafficking Law and relevant articles in the Penal Code, including article 215 on the criminalization of sex and labour trafficking. Please also provide updated information on steps taken to:

- (a) Prevent the sale and kidnapping of girls for forced marriage, in particular girls from ethnic minority groups and girls living in poverty, punish perpetrators and provide the assistance necessary for the reintegration of victims;
- (b) Conduct awareness-raising campaigns about the risks associated with trafficking and to prevent women and girls from falling victim to trafficking;
- (c) Offer vocational training and alternative income opportunities, as well as economic support, to women at risk of trafficking, in particular women in poverty, to decrease their risk of falling victim to trafficking;
- (d) Conduct awareness-raising campaigns about the criminal nature of trafficking and ensure the investigation, prosecution and adequate punishment of the perpetrators of trafficking, including officials, who are bribed into facilitating trafficking;
- (e) Ensure the early identification of victims of trafficking and their referral to appropriate assistance and rehabilitation services, including shelters, medical care, psychosocial counselling and legal aid, irrespective of their willingness to cooperate with the authorities and rehabilitation and reintegration services, and indicate the resources allocated to services for victims;
- (f) Address human trafficking, forced labour, forced prostitution and other human rights violations within the Golden Triangle special economic zone, and provide data on criminal charges in connection with human trafficking and other human rights violations in the special economic zone and the support services currently in place for victims of trafficking and exploitation of prostitution.

Participation in political and public life

12. Please provide information about specific efforts in place to achieve parity in all decision-making systems, including the National Assembly, where women's representation has decreased since 2015. In the light of the information provided in paragraph 38 of the State party's report (CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/10), please also provide detailed information on specific measures taken to achieve parity in government positions at the local and national levels and to ensure that parity is inclusive and in particular that women from ethnic minority groups, Indigenous women, rural women, women with disabilities and other women from groups in disadvantaged situations have access to decision-making roles. Furthermore, please describe the measures in

place to address gender stereotypes about women's leadership capacities and to promote an understanding of women's and men's equal capacity to hold leadership positions.

Nationality

13. In the light of the information provided in paragraphs 59 and 60 of the State party's report ([CEDAW/C/LAO/10](#)), please indicate the resources allocated for measures to increase birth registration and specific measures to encourage birth registration among ethnic minority groups, Indigenous women and women in rural areas, in particular in view of reports that the absence of birth registration has meant that the age of a child can be concealed, which has facilitated cases of child marriage.

Education

14. Please provide updated information on measures taken to:

- (a) Increase girls' access to education, in particular girls from ethnic minority groups and Indigenous girls, and encourage families to send their daughters to school;
- (b) Prevent school dropouts among girls, in particular by addressing child marriage and child labour;
- (c) Build the capacity of teachers and other school personnel to provide intercultural education for children from ethnic minority groups and Indigenous communities;
- (d) Increase girls' enrolment in secondary education, as well as women's and girls' enrolment in vocational and higher education, in particular in non-traditional fields, such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics;
- (e) Increase resource allocation to education infrastructure.

Employment

15. Please provide information on measures taken to:

- (a) Increase women's representation in the labour force, which has been declining steadily, from 81 per cent in 2012 to 47 per cent in 2022;
- (b) Eliminate the gender pay gap caused by horizontal and vertical segregation in the labour market, as well as the large concentration of women in the informal labour economy and low-income jobs, in particular in rural areas, including by regularly reviewing wages in sectors where women are concentrated and adopting measures to close the gender pay gap;
- (c) Encourage women and men to follow non-traditional career paths;
- (d) Recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work and home-based labour carried out by women, by investing in infrastructure and social services, such as childcare, elderly care, health care, education and transportation;
- (e) Enact legislation that explicitly prohibits gender-based discrimination and discrimination based on family, pregnancy and marital status in employment, including with regard to promotions, demotions, remuneration and terminations;
- (f) Strengthen access for women with disabilities to the formal labour market.

16. In the light of reports of cases where women on maternity leave did not receive their salary payments, please provide the Committee with detailed information about the maternity leave regime in the State party and the safeguards that are in place to ensure that it is respected by employers. Please also describe any steps that have been

taken towards enacting paid paternity leave, with a view to promoting the equal sharing of caretaking responsibilities. Furthermore, please clarify whether article 83 of the Labour Law has been amended to include a definition of sexual harassment and impose sanctions for perpetrators, and describe which measures have been adopted to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace.

Women migrant workers

17. In the light of the Committee's previous concluding observations ([CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/7](#) and [CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9](#)), please provide updated information on progress made towards:

- (a) Adopting a comprehensive gender-sensitive migration policy to protect Lao migrant workers abroad effectively;
- (b) Reviewing and renewing existing bilateral agreements and memorandums of understanding with countries to which Lao women migrate in search of work, in order to bring them into line with the Convention and to protect women migrant workers against exploitation and bring the perpetrators of exploitation to justice;
- (c) Strengthening efforts to raise awareness among women migrant workers about their rights, the potential risks they face and the remedies available to them in case of rights violations;
- (d) Developing and implementing regulations concerning employment agencies for migrant workers, with sanctions for non-compliance, while ensuring that migrant women are protected from exploitation;
- (e) Providing gender-sensitive support to returning women migrant workers for their reintegration, including through the provision of income-generating opportunities.

Health

18. Please provide updated information on access to adequate sexual and reproductive health services, including notably maternal health services, throughout the State party, in particular for women in rural areas, Indigenous women and women from ethnic minority groups. Please clarify whether patients need to pay or make any advance payments for health services and medication, including sexual and reproductive health services. Please also describe how women can obtain medication under the health insurance support fund scheme. Furthermore, please provide updated information on any steps taken towards passing HIV-related legislation to strengthen protection against discrimination and broaden access to services.

Economic and social benefits

19. Please provide updated information on the measures taken to:

- (a) Ensure that all women engaged in unpaid work or in the informal sector, both in rural and urban areas, have access to non-contributory social protection schemes, and introduce, for women in the informal and rural economies, the maternity, disability and old age cash benefits that are available under the formal economy social security scheme;
- (b) Increase the number of, and access to, social security provision centres, in particular for women who rely on family members for transportation, as well as women with disabilities, including by providing remote access to services;
- (c) Strengthen the support provided to single mothers who, according to reports, are often subject to discrimination and economic destitution;

(d) Remove barriers that prevent migrant women from availing themselves of social protection benefits;

(e) Adopt gender-responsive social protection floors to ensure that all rural women have access to essential health care, childcare facilities and income security;

(f) Implement targeted measures to increase women's access to financial services, including low-interest credit and savings schemes, and promote their entrepreneurial activities by providing technical assistance, counselling and training in enterprise development and management.

Rural women

20. Please indicate any steps taken to adopt specific legislation on women's right to land, ensure women's equal access to land and prevent their discrimination, including in the application of customary law. Please indicate the measures taken to strengthen access to education, health care, competitive markets and income-generating activities for rural women. Please also update the Committee on whether the ownership of key assets by rural women in the agricultural sector has increased and whether a gender perspective has been duly integrated into all national policies concerning the agricultural sector. Please also clarify how women's agricultural collectives avail themselves of economic benefit arrangements. Please also indicate the measures taken to increase the number of women village chiefs, as well as any measures in place to facilitate women's access to credit.

Women facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination

21. Please provide information on measures taken to:

(a) Ensure that the Convention is equally implemented for women and girls from ethnic minority groups, who are particularly vulnerable to poverty and other rights violations;

(b) Ensure that Indigenous women who have been affected by land concessions receive compensation, in line with international law, and that women are protected against land occupation and eviction from lands traditionally occupied or used by them, strengthen legal and procedural safeguards against forced evictions, and ensure benefit-sharing and the meaningful participation of women in decision-making processes regarding the use of traditional lands;

(c) Amend Law No. 57 on persons with disabilities and legislation on gender equality to ensure that they include a gender and disability perspective, respectively;

(d) Ensure that non-Lao-speaking women from ethnic minority groups have access to services, including education and economic and social services, and access to justice.

Marriage and family relations

22. In the light of paragraph 107 of the State party's report ([CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/10](#)), please inform the Committee about efforts made to implement the prohibition on child marriage. Please also indicate whether any steps have been taken to amend the Family Law to remove the exception allowing marriage under the age of 18 years and to amend the Penal Code to ensure that the legal age for marriage is explicitly set at 18 years of age therein. Furthermore, please provide information about the resources in place to implement the prohibition on polygamy, in accordance with the Family Law. Please also provide information about awareness-raising programmes, including those for traditional leaders, to end child marriage and polygamy, as well as campaigns on the negative health, education and livelihood consequences of child

marriage and pregnancy for girls, in cooperation with women's organizations and the communities and their leaders concerned. Please also describe the measures that are in place to protect girls who are already in child marriages and unions and help them to leave them and live autonomously with income-generating opportunities. Please also clarify whether gender-based violence against women in the domestic sphere is taken into account in child custody and visitation decisions. In the light of reports that women who are divorced are not entitled to inheritance, please clarify whether this is a customary practice or enshrined in law, and indicate what steps have been taken to prohibit this form of discrimination and ensure that women are not discriminated against in matters of inheritance, irrespective of their status.

Disaster risk reduction and climate change

23. Please provide information on efforts made to ensure the equal and inclusive representation of women, in particular rural women, Indigenous women, women from ethnic minority groups and women with disabilities, in the preparation, adoption and implementation of national policies and programmes on climate change, disaster response and risk reduction, and in related bodies. Please provide specific information on women's representation in the ongoing revision of the nationally determined contribution and the associated implementation plan, as well as the preparation of the national strategy on climate change. Please specify the resources, including financial resources, allocated to implement these plans. Please also indicate whether a methodology is in place to systematically introduce a gender perspective into these policies and programmes.
