



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

Distr.: General  
25 February 2026

Original: English

## Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

### Concluding observations on the combined fifth to seventh periodic reports of Lesotho\*

1. The Committee considered the combined fifth to seventh periodic reports of Lesotho ([CEDAW/C/LSO/5-7](#)) at its 2196th and 2197th meetings (see [CEDAW/C/SR.2196](#) and [CEDAW/C/SR.2197](#)), held on 13 February 2026. The Committee's list of issues and questions is contained in [CEDAW/C/LSO/Q/5-7](#) and the responses of the country are contained in [CEDAW/C/LSO/RQ/5-7](#).

#### A. Introduction

2. The Committee appreciates the submission by the State Party of its combined fifth to seventh periodic reports ([CEDAW/C/LSO/5-7](#)). It welcomes the oral presentation by the delegation and the further clarifications provided in response to the questions posed orally by the Committee during the dialogue.

3. The Committee commends the State Party on its high-level delegation, which was headed by the Attorney General, Thato Masiloane, Ministry of Justice, Law and Parliamentary Affairs, and included representatives from the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Social Development, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary and Permanent Representative, Tsiu Khathibe, and other representatives of the Permanent Mission of Lesotho to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva.

#### B. Positive aspects

4. The Committee welcomes the progress achieved since the consideration in 2011 of the State Party's combined initial to fourth periodic reports ([CEDAW/C/LSO/1-4](#)) in undertaking legislative reforms, in particular, the adoption of the following:

- (a) Tenth Amendment to the Constitution Act, 2025;
- (b) Labour Act, 2024, which reinforces the prohibition of gender discrimination in employment;
- (c) Administration of Estates and Inheritance Act, 2024, which promotes equal inheritance rights for women and girls;

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



- (d) Counter Domestic Violence Act, 2022;
- (e) Harmonization of the Rights of Customary Widows with the Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act, 2022;
- (f) Anti-Trafficking in Persons (Amendment) Act, 2021;
- (g) Persons with Disability Equity Act, 2021, which provides a legal framework promoting equality for persons with disabilities;
- (h) Eighth Amendment to the Constitution Act, 2018, which advances gender equality in nationality rights.

5. The Committee welcomes the State Party's efforts to improve its institutional and policy framework aimed at accelerating the elimination of discrimination against women and promoting gender equality, such as the adoption or establishment of the following:

- (a) Gender and Development Policy 2018–2030;
- (b) National Strategic Development Plan II 2018–2023 and the Extended National Strategic Development Plan II 2023–2028, which integrate a gender perspective into national development planning;
- (c) National Mechanism on Reporting, Implementation and Follow-Up, established in 2021.

6. The Committee welcomes the fact that, in the period since the consideration of the previous report, the State Party has ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, in 2013.

### **C. Sustainable Development Goals**

**7. The Committee welcomes the international support for the Sustainable Development Goals and calls for the realization of de jure (legal) and de facto (substantive) gender equality, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, throughout the process of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Committee recalls the importance of Goal 5 and the mainstreaming of the principles of equality and non-discrimination throughout all 17 Goals. It urges the State Party to recognize women as the driving force of the sustainable development of the State Party and to adopt relevant policies and strategies to that effect.**

### **D. Parliament**

**8. The Committee stresses the crucial role of the legislative power in ensuring the full implementation of the Convention (see [A/65/38](#), part two, annex VI). It invites the Parliament of Lesotho, in line with its mandate, to take the necessary steps regarding the implementation of the present concluding observations between now and the submission of the next periodic report under the Convention.**

## E. Principal areas of concern and recommendations

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

9. The Committee notes the measures taken by the State Party to disseminate the Convention and the Optional Protocol thereto, including awareness-raising activities, training of public officials and engagement with relevant stakeholders. Nonetheless, the Committee notes with concern that the visibility and effective implementation of the Convention remain limited and that insufficient information is available on the impact of dissemination campaigns.

**10. The Committee recommends that the State Party ensure the systematic dissemination of the Convention and the Optional Protocol thereto across the State Party, including in accessible formats and languages, particularly in rural and remote areas, and document and assess the scope and impact of the dissemination campaigns conducted.**

### **Constitutional and legislative framework and definition of discrimination against women**

11. The Committee notes the State Party's ongoing efforts to amend its Constitution and legal framework to address discrimination. However, it notes with concern that the Convention has been domesticated only partially, through sectoral legislation. It further notes with concern:

(a) The absence of a comprehensive definition of discrimination against women, in line with article 1 of the Convention;

(b) The exceptions allowed by section 18 of the Constitution to the principle of non-discrimination, including in respect of non-citizens and in matters relating to adoption, marriage, divorce, burial, devolution of property, death or other matters that fall within the provisions of personal law;

(c) The constitutional provisions exempting customary law from the non-discrimination clause, in contravention of articles 1, 2 and 16 of the Convention;

(d) The lack of coherent legislation on gender equality and the legal uncertainty and inconsistent application of protections for women arising from the dual legal system of statutory and customary law, enabling discriminatory outcomes, such as in family relations, land administration and tenure, particularly in rural areas where customary norms and practices prevail.

**12. The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Prioritize the adoption of comprehensive legislation to fully incorporate the Convention into domestic law and ensure its direct applicability in judicial and administrative proceedings;**

(b) **Incorporate into its legal framework a comprehensive definition of discrimination against women, encompassing both direct and indirect discrimination in the public and private spheres, as well as intersecting forms of discrimination, in accordance with articles 1 and 2 of the Convention, with a view to eventually including the definition in the Constitution;**

(c) **Expedite the constitutional review process to repeal provisions allowing for exceptions to the principle of equality and non-discrimination;**

(d) **Amend the constitutional and legislative framework to ensure that customary law is fully subject to the principle of non-discrimination, in accordance with the Convention and the Constitution;**

(e) **Ensure that any decisions of customary and local decision-making bodies are subject to judicial review to enable women, particularly rural women, to claim their rights under statutory equality guarantees.**

#### **Reservation to the Convention**

13. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution Act, 2025, which paves the way for women's succession to chieftainship. However, it notes with concern:

(a) That the State Party maintains its reservation to article 2 (e) of the Convention in relation to succession to the throne and chieftainship;

(b) That, following consultations, the State Party has indicated that it does not intend, at present, to withdraw the reservation or pursue constitutional change in relation to succession to the throne;

(c) That, notwithstanding the constitutional amendment, statutory and customary rules governing succession to chieftainship continue to prevent women from succeeding to chieftainship in their own right and that the legislative harmonization necessary to give effect to the constitutional change remains pending.

14. **The Committee recommends that the State Party withdraw its reservation to article 2, which is contrary to the object and purpose of the Convention and impermissible under article 28 (2) of the Convention, and:**

(a) **Adopt a time-bound road map, including renewed, broader and inclusive consultations and public awareness-raising, with a view to withdrawing the reservation;**

(b) **Repeal or amend statutory and customary rules governing succession to chieftainship to ensure that women and men have equal rights in relation to succession to chieftainship and that women are not limited to acting as regents or exercising derivative authority from their relationship to male chiefs.**

#### **Women's access to justice**

15. The Committee takes note of the ongoing justice sector reforms, including efforts to decentralize legal aid and expand access to courts. However, it notes with concern the limited implementation of its general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice, including:

(a) The limited availability of and geographical disparities in the provision of legal aid, and the long distances that women must travel to gain access to courts and survivor support services, particularly in rural and remote areas;

(b) The lack of institutionalized and systematic training on the Convention and general recommendation No. 33 for judicial personnel, local and customary courts, law enforcement officials, traditional leaders and other relevant stakeholders;

(c) The lack of sufficient programmes to increase women's awareness of their rights and the legal remedies available to claim them, including for rural women, women with disabilities and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women;

(d) The chronic underfunding of the judiciary, which undermines the consistent application of laws protecting women's rights;

(e) The absence of mechanisms to identify and address gender bias and discriminatory attitudes in court decisions rendered under statutory and customary law, and the lack of information on court cases in which direct reference is made to the Convention.

**16. The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Develop and guarantee the availability of adequate resources for a time-bound plan to implement general recommendation No. 33; ensure adequate human, technical and financial resources for the effective functioning of the judiciary, especially in rural and remote areas; and establish a comprehensive legal aid system ensuring women's legal representation in civil, family and criminal proceedings, including before magistrates, local courts and customary dispute settlement bodies;**

(b) **Introduce mandatory and continuous training for all justice sector actors, including those operating within customary and community-based mechanisms, on women's human rights, gender equality and survivor-centred approaches, supported by adequate budgetary allocations and subject to regular review to ensure its effectiveness;**

(c) **Allocate adequate human, technical and financial resources to increase women's legal literacy and strengthen awareness-raising and capacity-building programmes, particularly for rural women and girls, women and girls with disabilities, women and girls living in poverty and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women;**

(d) **Conduct a comprehensive assessment of women's access to justice in order to identify and address gender bias and discriminatory attitudes within the judiciary, including in customary forums, and document court decisions in which direct reference is made to the Convention or in which it is applied as an interpretative tool.**

**National machinery for the advancement of women**

17. The Committee takes note of the State Party's efforts to strengthen the national machinery for the advancement of women, including by adopting the Gender and Development Policy 2018–2023, and of its commitment to introducing gender-responsive budgeting. However, it notes with concern:

(a) The inadequate budgetary allocations and limited human and technical resources of the Gender Department, which constrain effective coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the Convention throughout the State Party, in particular in rural and remote areas;

(b) The delay in the adoption of the first gender budget statement, currently planned for 2027/28, which risks perpetuating chronic underresourcing and donor-driven programming.

**18. Recalling the guidance provided in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, in particular regarding the conditions necessary for the effective functioning of national machineries, the Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Allocate adequate human, technical and financial resources to the Gender Department, ensure predictable annual operating funds and recruit or second sufficient specialized technical staff to adequately match current needs, especially in rural and remote areas;**

(b) **Expedite the adoption and operationalization of an integrated gender-responsive budgeting process and institutionalize it across all government departments.**

#### **National human rights institution**

19. The Committee welcomes the strengthened constitutional provisions relating to the Human Rights Commission and takes note of bill before Parliament concerning the Commission. However, the Committee notes with concern that the State Party has not yet established a national human rights institution, in line with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles, General Assembly resolution 48/134, annex), as the enabling legislation required to operationalize the Commission remains pending.

**20. The Committee recommends that the State Party prioritize the adoption of the bill before Parliament concerning the Commission; expedite the establishment of an independent national human rights institution, in line with the Paris Principles (General Assembly resolution 48/134, annex); and provide it with adequate human, technical and financial resources, and a robust mandate to protect and promote women's human rights and gender equality, ensuring that it is accessible in rural and remote areas.**

#### **Temporary special measures**

21. The Committee notes that the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution Act, 2025, establishes an obligation for the State to take affirmative action, including on the basis of gender, and requires Parliament to enact implementing legislation to give full effect to the Act. However, it notes with concern:

(a) The limited use of temporary special measures to achieve substantive equality of women and men in areas where women are underrepresented or disadvantaged, such as in strategic economic sectors and technology-driven fields, and in relation to access to productive assets, and to harness the human capital of women to achieve national development targets;

(b) The absence of adequate measures to promote understanding among State officials, members of Parliament, traditional and community leaders and the private sector of the non-discriminatory nature and importance of temporary special measures for achieving substantive equality of women and men.

**22. In line with article 4 (1) of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures, the Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Adopt and implement temporary special measures, such as strengthened gender-responsive public procurement, the preferential treatment, targeted recruitment, retention and promotion of women, as well as quota systems, including in key sectors such as science, technology, engineering, mathematics, energy, finance, industry and technology, and in relation to access to land, credit, productive resources and new technologies, accompanied by clear benchmarks and with particular attention to rural women, women with disabilities and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women;**

(b) **Provide systematic training and raise awareness among State officials, members of Parliament, traditional and community leaders and the private sector on the non-discriminatory nature and value of temporary special measures in accelerating substantive equality of women and men, including on the economic and social cost of failing to use such measures.**

### **Gender stereotypes and harmful practices**

23. The Committee acknowledges the State Party's efforts to address gender stereotypes through awareness-raising initiatives and programmes. It also notes the criminalization of forced child marriage under the Counter Domestic Violence Act, 2022, and the ongoing consideration of the Children's Protection and Welfare (Amendment) Bill, 2023. However, it notes with concern:

(a) The persistent and deeply entrenched gender stereotypes and patriarchal norms, including in customary law, that subordinate women and girls, promote male dominance and reinforce unequal power relations between women and men;

(b) The absence of comprehensive and adequately funded strategies to eradicate gender stereotypes and patriarchal norms, and the limited evaluation of existing awareness campaigns;

(c) The persistence of child marriage, which is tolerated under the inconsistent legal framework of the State Party, including under statutory exemptions allowing marriage under the age of 18 with parental or guardian consent and under customary law permitting marriage after puberty without a clearly defined minimum age;

(d) The lack of comprehensive data on child marriage, disaggregated by age, sex, district, disability, socioeconomic status and rural/urban location;

(e) The persistence of harmful practices, including the use of bride price (bohali/lobola) to settle cases of abduction and rape;

(f) The absence of legislation regulating digital technology and artificial intelligence and mitigating the potential of such technologies to perpetuate gender stereotypes and gender inequality.

### **24. The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Develop and implement comprehensive strategies – targeted at women, men, girls and boys, particularly in rural and remote areas – to eliminate patriarchal attitudes and gender stereotypes, underpinned by sufficient resources and measurable targets subject to monitoring;**

(b) **Harmonize statutory and customary law to set the minimum age of marriage at 18 years for both women and men, without exceptions, 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, enforce that requirement through age verification and by requiring prior civil registration of religious and traditional marriages, and stipulate adequate penalties for facilitators of child marriages;**

(c) **Set up a centralized system to collect disaggregated data on child marriage and harmful practices and use it to monitor trends and assess the effectiveness of relevant measures;**

(d) **Adopt legislation to criminalize the use of bohali/lobola payments in order to settle cases of abduction and rape, stipulate adequate penalties for such offences, ensure that victims have effective access to justice and support services, and conduct awareness-raising and education campaigns on the harmful effects of such practices, with a focus on rural and remote areas;**

(e) **Establish a legislative and regulatory framework governing digital technologies and artificial intelligence to prevent and remedy gender-based discrimination and incitement to gender-based violence online, as well as gender stereotypes in automated decision-making.**

**Gender-based violence against women and girls**

25. The Committee takes note of the measures taken by the State Party to address gender-based violence, including the adoption of the Counter Domestic Violence Act, 2022, and the strengthening of multisectoral coordination. However, it notes with concern:

(a) The high incidence of gender-based violence, including sexual and domestic violence, against women and girls in the State Party;

(b) The uneven implementation of the Counter Domestic Violence Act, 2022, the disparities in the delivery and quality of support services across districts and the limited operational capacity of specialized mechanisms, including family courts, to handle gender-based violence cases effectively;

(c) The lack of sufficient access for women survivors of gender-based violence to shelters, legal aid, psychosocial counselling and other support services;

(d) The persistent impunity for gender-based violence, reflected in limited investigations, prosecutions and convictions as well as lenient sentencing policies, and compounded by the absence of publicly available disaggregated data.

**26. Recalling its general recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19, as well as target 5.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals, on the elimination of all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, the Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Strengthen specialized capacities for investigating and prosecuting gender-based violence cases; provide mandatory and systematic training for judges, prosecutors, the police and law enforcement officers on survivor-centred approaches and gender-sensitive investigation and interviewing methods; and ensure effective enforcement and monitoring of protection orders;**

(b) **Allocate adequate budgetary resources for the implementation of the Counter Domestic Violence Act, 2022, particularly in rural and remote areas; operationalize and provide adequate resources for family courts; and strengthen coordination and referral pathways across the health, social services and justice sectors and the police force;**

(c) **Expand the availability of shelters, psychosocial counselling and legal aid for survivors of gender-based violence, particularly for rural women, women with disabilities and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women;**

(d) **Provide mandatory and regular capacity-building for judges, prosecutors, the police and law enforcement officers in relation to the strict application of criminal law provisions punishing gender-based violence against women and girls, including sexual and domestic violence, and raise awareness to address gender bias and victim-blaming attitudes in the judiciary, with a view to ensuring that all reports of gender-based violence against women and girls are effectively investigated and that relevant offences are prosecuted and punished;**

(e) **Establish a centralized and coordinated system for the collection of disaggregated data on gender-based violence, including the number of complaints, investigations, prosecutions and convictions, the sentences imposed on perpetrators and any compensation provided to survivors.**

### **Trafficking in women and girls and exploitation of prostitution**

27. The Committee acknowledges the State Party's efforts to combat trafficking in women and girls, including by adopting the Anti-Trafficking in Persons (Amendment) Act, 2021, and the National Strategic Framework and Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons 2021–2026, as well as conducting training and awareness-raising initiatives. Nevertheless, it notes with concern the high prevalence of trafficking in women and girls in the State Party and:

(a) The high risk of exposure to trafficking for sexual exploitation, pornography and forced labour faced by women and girls, especially those affected by intersecting forms of discrimination, such as those living in rural areas and in poverty;

(b) The limited human, technical and financial resources allocated to the operationalization of the national anti-trafficking framework and the absence of targeted measures to address the risk of technology-facilitated trafficking;

(c) The limited availability and geographical coverage of support services for victims of trafficking, including shelters, psychosocial support and legal assistance;

(d) The lack of comprehensive data, disaggregated by age and forms of trafficking, on the number of reported cases and of prosecutions and convictions, and on the sentences imposed in trafficking cases, as well as estimates of the number of women and girls who are victims of trafficking.

**28. Recalling its general recommendation No. 38 (2020) on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration, the Committee recommends that the State Party:**

**(a) Ensure adequate human, technical and financial resources for the effective implementation of anti-trafficking legislation and policies; strengthen specialized law enforcement and prosecutorial capacities to reduce case backlogs; and adopt legislation to prevent and respond to technology-facilitated trafficking, including guidance for the detection of online recruitment and the handling of digital evidence;**

**(b) Address socioeconomic factors exposing women and girls to trafficking and exploitation in prostitution, including through dedicated social protection and prevention programmes, particularly for rural women and women living in poverty or at risk of poverty;**

**(c) Expedite the expansion of State-run shelters, ensure the early identification of trafficking victims and refer them to specialized and gender-responsive support services, including safe accommodation, legal assistance, medical and psychosocial care and sustainable reintegration support, including in rural areas and remote areas;**

**(d) Establish a centralized system to collect data, disaggregated by age, forms of trafficking and the exploitation of women in prostitution, including on the number of investigations, prosecutions and convictions and on the sentences imposed on traffickers, as well as estimates of the number of women and girls who are victims of trafficking.**

### **Equal participation in political and public life**

29. The Committee notes the appointment of the first woman Deputy Prime Minister and the first woman Major General, as well as the fact that women account for the majority of the judges on the High Court. It also takes note of the legislative measures taken to increase women's representation in the National Assembly and local

councils, as well as the collaboration between the Government and the Independent Electoral Commission through equality-focused training and outreach programmes. However, it notes with concern that these measures remain insufficient to ensure women's equal political participation, especially at the national level. The Committee further notes with concern:

- (a) The absence of a formal policy to achieve gender parity in political representation;
- (b) The continued underrepresentation of women in the National Assembly, the Senate, the Cabinet and high-level positions in the foreign service;
- (c) The persistence of patriarchal stereotypes and structural barriers within customary governance, including legal restrictions preventing women from becoming chiefs in their own right and the reservation of Senate seats for chiefs;
- (d) The lack of targeted measures to enable more women facing intersecting forms of discrimination to participate in governance and decision-making.

**30. Recalling its general recommendations No. 40 (2024) on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems and No. 23 (1997) on women in political and public life, as well as target 5.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, on ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life, the Committee recommends that the State Party:**

- (a) Adopt a comprehensive policy to achieve gender parity, including time-bound targets, monitoring mechanisms and parity quotas, foster a safe and enabling environment for women's political participation, increase women's representation in the National Assembly, the Senate, the Cabinet, senior public service positions, local government and the foreign service, and promote women's participation in customary leadership and governance structures;**
- (b) Remove legal and structural barriers to women's political participation, including restrictions linked to customary leadership and Senate representation, and provide targeted support for women candidates, including political leadership training and targeted campaign financing;**
- (c) Adopt targeted measures to increase the participation in governance and decision-making of rural women, young women, women with disabilities, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and women, and other disadvantaged groups of women, including through tailored outreach, mentorship and leadership programmes, and support for the candidacies of women from all the above-mentioned groups;**
- (d) Publicly recognize women's crucial role as a driving force of sustainable peace in conflict prevention, management and resolution, and ensure parity at all stages and levels of decision-making on peace and security, including in the context of the upcoming national action plan on women and peace and security, guaranteeing broad consultation with women and girls.**

#### **Nationality**

31. The Committee welcomes the 2018 constitutional amendments that removed discriminatory provisions preventing Basotho women from transmitting citizenship on an equal footing with men, enabled dual citizenship and provided for the restoration of citizenship for women who had lost it under the previous regime. However, the Committee notes with concern:

(a) The absence of comprehensive implementing legislation and the insufficient harmonization of older laws and regulations with the amended Constitution, undermining the operationalization of the reforms;

(b) The limited information available on and outreach to women eligible for restoration of citizenship in order to ensure that they are aware of their rights and the procedures required to claim them;

(c) The lack of adequate procedures for the recognition of gender markers in civil registration and identity documentation, which prevents non-cisgender women, including transgender women, from obtaining identity documents consistent with their self-identification and may hinder their access to health and other services.

**32. In line with general recommendation No. 32 (2014) on the gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality and statelessness of women, the Committee recommends that the State Party:**

**(a) Adopt the necessary implementing legislation to give full effect to the constitutional amendments in order to ensure that women and men have equal rights in relation to the acquisition, modification and retention of their nationality, and to its transmission to their children and foreign spouses;**

**(b) Conduct a comprehensive review of all regulations, procedures, administrative guidance and citizenship application forms to harmonize them with the amended Constitution; establish clear, practical and accessible administrative procedures to ensure equality in nationality acquisition and enable the affected women to have their citizenship restored; and provide adequate training for immigration officials, civil registry staff, local authorities and other service providers;**

**(c) Implement targeted programmes focused on outreach – including at the district level and in rural areas – and legal literacy relating to women’s nationality rights and related procedures, accompanied by measurable targets, and put in place mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the outcomes of those programmes;**

**(d) Adopt administrative regulations and clear and accessible procedures for the legal recognition of gender self-identification in civil registration and identity documentation without discrimination.**

### **Education**

33. The Committee notes the State Party’s efforts to enhance access to education, including legislative and policy measures providing for free and compulsory basic education. It also notes the high literacy rate among women and girls and the initiatives taken to strengthen sexuality education, financial support for rural and vulnerable learners, digital inclusion and education-related governance. However, it notes with concern:

(a) The persistently high dropout rates among girls, particularly those in rural areas, due to financial constraints, early pregnancy and child marriage;

(b) The continued horizontal gender segregation of fields of study and the underrepresentation of girls and women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics and other non-traditional fields, including information and communications technology (ICT), as well as in technical and vocational education and training programmes, despite efforts to strengthen career guidance;

(c) Reports of gender-based violence in educational settings, including sexual harassment and violence in schools, on the way to school and online, and the lack of

adequate prevention and response mechanisms, as well as insufficient measures to ensure safe travel to and from school, particularly in rural and remote areas;

(d) The insufficient implementation of legislation and policies providing for the inclusion of women and girls with disabilities at all levels of education, including the limited resources available to provide reasonable accommodation and tailored support.

**34. Recalling its general recommendation No. 36 (2017) on the rights of girls and women to education, the Committee recommends that the State Party:**

**(a) Strengthen and implement policies to prevent girls from dropping out of school, including programmes to address early pregnancy and motherhood and child marriage and to ensure the retention in or reinsertion into the education system of pregnant students, young mothers and married girls, supported by financial, psychosocial and childcare assistance, flexible learning arrangements and monitoring of compliance by schools, particularly in rural and remote areas;**

**(b) Update the life skills-based sexuality curriculum in line with the International technical guidance on sexuality education of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and integrate comprehensive sexuality and gender equality-focused education into pre-service and in-service teacher training at all levels;**

**(c) Revise the policy on technical and vocational education and training to incorporate a gender-responsive approach in order to facilitate equal opportunities in training choices; adopt time-bound measures to eliminate gender segregation in fields of study and increase girls' participation and completion of schooling in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, ICT and other non-traditional fields, including through targeted incentives, mentoring and strengthened career guidance;**

**(d) Enhance school-based prevention and other measures to eliminate gender-based violence in educational settings, including confidential reporting channels, mandatory referral procedures, protection and support services for survivors and clear digital safety standards for schools;**

**(e) Adopt and provide adequate resources for the implementation of measures to ensure reasonable accommodation, accessible infrastructure and learning materials, assistive technologies and individualized support for women and girls with disabilities, and collect education-specific disaggregated data on enrolment, retention and completion to assess progress.**

### **Employment**

35. The Committee takes note of the enactment of the Labour Act, 2024, and the Occupational Safety and Health Act, 2024, which strengthen the legal framework prohibiting labour discrimination. However, it notes with concern:

(a) The low labour force participation and high unemployment rates among women, particularly young women, notwithstanding women's educational achievements;

(b) The persistent gender pay gap, reflecting weak enforcement of the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value in both the public and private sectors;

(c) The continued horizontal and vertical occupational segregation, including women's concentration in lower-paid jobs and their underrepresentation in senior and

middle management positions and in higher-paying and non-traditional sectors, including science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and ICT;

(d) Women's concentration in informal and precarious work, their unequal burden of unpaid domestic and care work, and the limited access to social protection for women in the informal economy;

(e) The lack of paid maternity leave and the short duration of paternity leave, together with limited family-friendly workplace policies, including for lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women.

**36. The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

**(a) Develop and implement a gender-responsive employment strategy underpinned by measurable targets, clear timelines and adequate resources to increase labour force participation and reduce unemployment among women, particularly young women, including through skills development, apprenticeships, job-placement support and targeted measures to address structural barriers to entry into and retention in decent work;**

**(b) Ensure the effective enforcement of domestic legislation on equal remuneration for work of equal value in order to narrow and eventually close the gender pay gap by: (i) conducting regular labour inspections and applying sanctions for non-compliance; (ii) conducting regular pay surveys; (iii) assisting employers in submitting their gender pay gap data to the authorities and making voluntary efforts to close the gap; and (iv) establishing pay transparency mechanisms, with a view to better understanding the reasons for the gender pay gap and gender pension gap, and adopting targeted and concrete measures to increase women's access to formal and higher-paid employment;**

**(c) Put in place time-bound measures, including temporary special measures, to address horizontal and vertical occupational segregation, including targeted recruitment, retention and promotion strategies, gender-responsive career guidance and financial incentives to increase women's participation in higher-paying sectors and positions, including managerial roles;**

**(d) Extend social protection coverage to women in the informal and precarious economy, including by adopting and implementing a comprehensive social security framework covering women in informal employment and measures to support their transition to formal employment;**

**(e) Ensure paid maternity leave, extend the duration of paternity leave and promote child- and family-friendly workplace policies, including accessible and high-quality childcare services, care-related leave arrangements for dependants and gender-responsive parenting programmes, including for lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex employees.**

**Health**

37. The Committee notes the reported reduction in maternal mortality and the efforts made by the State Party to strengthen primary health care, including expanded community-based services. It also welcomes progress in the national HIV response and the State Party's transition to epidemic control. However, it notes with concern:

(a) The fact that, although maternal and neonatal mortality rates have steadily declined, they remain high, reflecting gaps in timely access to high-quality maternal and newborn care;

(b) The elevated early pregnancy rate and insufficient access to adolescent-friendly sexual and reproductive health information and services to prevent early and unintended pregnancy;

(c) The continued criminalization of abortion and the absence of clear, widely disseminated and effectively implemented clinical guidance for timely access to legal and safe abortion and post-abortion services, the existence of burdensome and unclear procedural requirements and the impact of conscientious objection on women's access to abortion, resulting in unsafe abortion and hospital admissions for abortion-related complications;

(d) The persistent geographical disparities in the coverage and quality of essential health services for women, particularly in rural, remote and mountainous areas, and the significant reliance on non-State providers, amid declining external funds;

(e) The high prevalence of HIV and its disproportionate impact on women and girls, including pregnant women and adolescent girls, and the insufficient attention paid, in the context of prevention efforts, to gendered risks of infection, particularly in rural and remote areas.

**38. The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Allocate adequate human, technical and financial resources to maternal and newborn health services and expand timely access to high-quality antenatal, intrapartum and postnatal care and emergency obstetric and newborn care, ensuring skilled birth attendance and effective referral and emergency transport systems throughout its territory;**

(b) **Expand accessible, confidential and adolescent-friendly sexual and reproductive health services and information, ensuring access to modern contraceptives, and strengthen comprehensive, age-appropriate sexuality education and targeted outreach and support to prevent early and unintended pregnancy, especially in rural and remote areas;**

(c) **Set a clear timeline to legalize abortion in all cases and, pending legalization, ensure timely access to lawful abortion by removing unnecessary procedural requirements, adopting and disseminating clear clinical guidance and establishing effective referral obligations in case of conscientious objection;**

(d) **Improve the geographical distribution of skilled health personnel, strengthen health facility infrastructure and referral and emergency transport systems in rural, remote and mountainous areas, and enhance regulatory oversight over and accountability for services delivered by non-State providers;**

(e) **Strengthen gender-responsive HIV prevention and services for women and girls, particularly adolescent girls and young women in rural areas, women with disabilities and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women, by addressing gendered risks of infection, including age-disparate relationships and unequal power relations, through integrated HIV and sexual and reproductive health services and measures to prevent gender-based violence as a driver of infection.**

**Women's economic empowerment**

39. The Committee notes the State Party's initiatives to improve women's economic inclusion, including the adoption of the National Financial Inclusion Strategy II 2024–2028, the National Strategic Development Plan II 2018–2023, the Extended National Strategic Development Plan II 2023–2028 and the Public Procurement Act,

2023, as well as projects to support women-led enterprises. However, it notes with concern:

(a) The persistence of significant barriers to women's access to formal finance and credit for entrepreneurship and business growth, including the limited use of bank loans by women and women-owned microenterprises; of burdensome documentation and collateral requirements, which disproportionately affect rural and self-employed women; and of structural constraints within the financial system;

(b) The limited scale and profitability of women-owned enterprises, including women's concentration in low-earning sectors and smaller businesses, undermining their economic autonomy and resilience;

(c) The existence of multiple levies and fees affecting women-owned informal businesses and microenterprises, particularly at the local level, and the insufficient integration of a gender perspective into macroeconomic and fiscal policies relevant to women's economic empowerment.

**40. The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Introduce targeted, accessible financing schemes for women entrepreneurs, in partnership with financial institutions and regulators, including low-interest loans without collateral, simplified documentation requirements, gender-responsive financial products and expanded digital and mobile financial services, accompanied by financial literacy programmes and business support, particularly for rural women;**

(b) **Provide targeted business development support to increase the profitability and growth of women-owned enterprises, including mentoring, coaching and market linkage-related programmes; facilitate women's entry into higher-value sectors by helping them to develop relevant skills and increase their access to productive inputs and technology; and ensure the transparent implementation of the provisions of the Public Procurement Act, 2023, reserving tenders for women-owned enterprises, including through the publication of disaggregated data;**

(c) **Review and rationalize local levies and fees affecting women-owned informal businesses and microenterprises and conduct gender-responsive impact assessments of fiscal measures to ensure that macroeconomic and taxation policies support women's entrepreneurship and the sustainability of women-led enterprises.**

**Women facing intersecting forms of discrimination**

*Rural women*

41. The Committee notes the State Party's efforts to improve the living conditions of women in rural, remote and mountainous areas, including through initiatives and investments to extend basic services. However, it notes with concern that rural women, particularly those living in poverty or facing intersecting forms of discrimination, remain among the most disadvantaged groups in the State Party. It further notes with concern:

(a) The high poverty among and limited sustainable livelihood opportunities for rural women, including insufficient access to decent work and income-generating opportunities, exposing them to a heightened risk of food insecurity and market shocks, and the limited participation of rural women in community decision-making and leadership structures;

(b) The persistence of geographical disparities in the coverage and quality of basic services and infrastructure for rural women and girls, particularly in remote and mountainous areas, including in relation to timely access to high-quality health services, safe water and sanitation, affordable and reliable electricity, clean energy and safe and accessible transportation;

(c) The existence of discriminatory customary practices, norms and procedures affecting rural women's equal access to and control of land and productive resources, including in matters of inheritance and in land administration and dispute resolution processes based on customary laws;

(d) The limited access of rural women to timely, accessible information on their rights, including in relation to labour rights, land administration and economic empowerment, undermining their ability to claim entitlements and benefit from reforms and policies;

(e) The lack of gender-responsive approaches to climate action and disaster risk reduction, which disproportionately affects rural women, as well as barriers to the equal and meaningful participation of rural women in the design, implementation and monitoring of climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction measures.

**42. The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

**(a) Scale up targeted programmes to improve rural women's livelihoods and ensure their economic empowerment, with a focus on sustainable, income-generating activities and income diversification, and adopt measures to enhance their representation in leadership positions in local decision-making bodies, including in development and cooperative structures;**

**(b) Accelerate investment to reduce the disparities faced by rural women and girls in gaining access to services and infrastructure, including by expanding mobile health services in rural, remote and mountainous areas; strengthening access to safe water, sanitation and affordable clean energy solutions; and ensuring safe and accessible transport for women and girls, including to schools, health facilities and markets;**

**(c) Ensure that land administration and customary dispute-resolution procedures are in full compliance with statutory equality guarantees, and ensure that rural women can effectively register, inherit, own, control and use land and other productive assets on an equal basis with men, including through: (i) strengthened oversight and monitoring mechanisms; (ii) capacity-building for local courts and traditional and community leaders; (iii) accessible remedies; and (iv) simplified land administration and registration procedures;**

**(d) Strengthen the dissemination of information at the district and community levels on legal reforms, land administration procedures, labour rights and regulations, and economic, development and social programmes, including in local languages and accessible formats, to enable rural women to claim their rights;**

**(e) Operationalize gender-responsive approaches to climate action and disaster risk reduction in rural, remote and mountainous areas by adopting practical guidance and accountability mechanisms at the national and local levels; integrating gender equality budget tagging and tracking mechanisms into climate financing and budgeting; and ensuring the equal and meaningful participation of rural women in the design, implementation and monitoring of adaptation and disaster risk reduction measures.**

*Women and girls with disabilities*

43. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the Persons with Disabilities Equity Act, 2021, which promotes the inclusion of persons with disabilities in key areas, including employment, education, health and access to justice. However, it notes with concern that the Act lacks specific provisions for the protection of women and girls with disabilities. It further notes with concern:

(a) The existence of legal provisions allowing decisions to be taken on behalf of women with disabilities, including in relation to institutionalization in residential care facilities;

(b) Reports of women and girls with disabilities, including those living with HIV, being subject to forced or coerced sterilization and other non-consensual medical interventions, as well as the absence of sufficient safeguards to ensure the free, prior and informed consent of women and girls with disabilities in all health-related decisions;

(c) The fact the State Party has not yet ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, limiting avenues for international remedies.

**44. The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

**(a) Adopt implementing regulations and operational guidance under the Persons with Disabilities Equity Act, 2021, in order to integrate gender-responsive safeguards to address the specific forms of discrimination and barriers faced by women and girls with disabilities and provide for meaningful consultation with women and girls with disabilities in the development and implementation of disability policies;**

**(b) Review legislation and practices governing institutionalization, substituted decision-making and admission to residential care facilities in order to ensure respect for the rights of women and girls with disabilities to autonomy, legal capacity and free and informed consent, including by strengthening safeguards, independent oversight and access to effective remedies;**

**(c) Strengthen the health-sector protocols on free, prior and informed consent by women and girls with disabilities for all medical interventions and promptly investigate, prosecute and punish forced or coerced sterilization and other non-consensual interventions;**

**(d) Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.**

*Lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women*

45. The Committee notes the existence of sector-specific regulations prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation and the State Party's reported collaboration with civil society organizations that promote the rights of lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women. It also notes the State Party's stated intention to develop legislation to address hate crimes. However, it notes with concern:

(a) The fact that the State Party's Constitution and legislation do not comprehensively prohibit discrimination against lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women;

(b) Reports of harassment, gender-based violence and intimidation of lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women and the absence of legislation explicitly

criminalizing hate crimes and other forms of gender-based violence against such women;

(c) The stigmatization and stereotyping of lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women and the absence of sufficient measures to counter such discrimination and promote positive social perceptions;

(d) The barriers faced by lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women in gaining access to non-discriminatory and gender-affirming health services, including services relating to sexual and reproductive health and HIV, as well as the serious mental health impacts of the stigma faced by such women, including reported suicidal behaviour, and their high level of vulnerability to HIV.

**46. The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

**(a) Enact comprehensive legislation prohibiting discrimination in law and practice against lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women;**

**(b) Adopt legislation explicitly criminalizing hate crimes and gender-based violence against lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women, establish confidential and survivor-centred reporting and referral pathways, ensure prompt investigations and prosecutions and provide protection and gender-responsive support services to victims;**

**(c) Adopt and implement targeted measures to counter stigma and discriminatory stereotypes and promote positive images of lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women, including through public awareness campaigns, education and systematic training for the judiciary, prosecutors, law enforcement officials, health personnel and educators;**

**(d) Ensure non-discriminatory access for lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women to health services, including services relating to sexual and reproductive health and HIV, by training health personnel, establishing stigma-free service protocols, strengthening targeted HIV prevention measures and ensuring access to appropriate mental health and psychosocial support services.**

**Marriage and family relations**

47. The Committee notes the recent steps taken to strengthen women's legal capacity and equality in family relations and to promote equal rights to marital property and inheritance, including the adoption of the Harmonization of the Rights of Customary Widows with the Legal Capacity of Married Person Act, 2022, and the Administration of Estates and Inheritance Act, 2024. However, it notes with concern:

(a) The fragmentation and incomplete harmonization of the legal framework governing family relations, and the continued reliance, in law and practice, on customary norms, resulting in uncertainty as to the applicable law, uneven implementation of reforms and inconsistent protection of women's rights in civil and customary settings;

(b) The persistent application of discriminatory customary norms and procedures in the dissolution of marriage and its consequences, including unequal property division and dispute resolution, as well as in burial-related disputes handled in customary forums;

(c) The barriers faced by women in unregistered customary marriages and unions in proving their marital status and effectively claiming economic protections linked to marriage, including property-related rights;

(d) The persistence of polygamous marriages under customary law, which violates women's rights to equality in marriage and family relations;

(e) The limited dissemination of information on recent reforms, especially among rural women, and the lack of systematic training and practical guidance for local justice actors and traditional and community authorities to ensure consistent implementation.

**48. The Committee recommends that the State Party:**

(a) **Complete the harmonization and consolidation of family law to ensure legal clarity and full compliance with article 16 of the Convention, including by adopting a unified family code applicable to civil and customary marriages and their dissolution, and guarantee the supremacy of statutory equality provisions in all family law matters, including before customary bodies;**

(b) **Remove barriers linked to the non-registration or contested status of customary marriages and unions, including by making prior civil registration compulsory, accessible and affordable, while enabling late registration, accepting alternative forms of proof where appropriate and undertaking targeted outreach and awareness measures, particularly in rural and remote areas;**

(c) **Take effective measures to eliminate polygamy and repeal customary provisions permitting it, in accordance 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;**

(d) **Provide systematic training and practical guidance on women's equal rights in marriage and family relations for judges, magistrates, local court personnel, traditional and community authorities and other officials responsible for family matters.**

**Data collection and analysis**

49. The Committee notes with concern the absence of comprehensive and disaggregated data covering all areas of the Convention.

50. **The Committee recommends that the State Party avail itself of technical assistance to develop a system for the collection of comprehensive, sex-disaggregated, intersectional, geographically disaggregated and disability-inclusive data covering all areas under the Convention and include such data in its next periodic report.**

**Amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention**

51. **The Committee encourages the State Party to accept the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee.**

**Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**

52. **Following the thirtieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Committee calls upon the State Party to reaffirm its implementation and to re-evaluate the realization of the rights enshrined in the Convention in order to achieve substantive equality between women and men.**

**Dissemination**

53. The Committee requests the State Party to ensure the timely dissemination of the present concluding observations, in the official languages of the State Party, to the relevant State institutions, in particular to the Government, Parliament, the judiciary and customary and community authorities, to enable their full implementation.

**Follow-up to the concluding observations**

54. The Committee requests the State Party to provide, within two years, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 12 (b), 24 (b) and 26 (b) and (c).

**Preparation of the next report**

55. The Committee will establish and communicate the due date of the eighth periodic report of the State Party in line with a future clear and regularized schedule for reporting by States Parties (see General Assembly resolution [79/165](#), para. 6) and following the adoption of a list of issues and questions prior to reporting, if applicable, for the State Party. The next periodic report should cover the entire period up to the time of its submission.

56. The Committee requests the State Party to follow the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties, including guidelines on a common core document and treaty-specific documents ([HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6](#), chap. I).

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