



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.: General
22 February 2024

Original: English

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination

against Women

Eighty-seventh session

Summary record of the 2048th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 9 February 2024, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Peláez Narváez

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention (continued)

Sixth periodic report of the Central African Republic (continued)
(CEDAW/C/CAF/6; CEDAW/C/CAF/RQ/6)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of the Central African Republic joined the meeting.*

Articles 10–14

2. **Ms. Kirimat** (Central African Republic) said that there was no wage gap between men and women in the Central African Republic. The law on sexual harassment was being examined in the National Assembly and would soon be put to a vote.

3. **A representative of the Central African Republic** said that national labour legislation included provisions for addressing all forms of discrimination. Because of the country's serious resource challenges, labour inspectors struggled to find the resources they needed to ensure adequate health and safety conditions at the workplace. However, they carried out regular spot checks and did not hesitate to impose penalties on private sector employers who did not respect the Labour Code. While overtime was regulated by the law and employment contracts, there were no specific provisions on such work for the private sector.

4. **A representative of the Central African Republic** said that the Labour Code established a minimum wage for the private sector, including the domestic work sector. The President had handed down a decree to increase the minimum wage and an awareness-raising campaign was currently being conducted to inform the public about it.

5. **Ms. Kirimat** (Central African Republic) said that the delegation would provide a response in writing to the question on social protection.

6. **Ms. Reddock**, noting that the State party's comments about equal wages, said that studies had shown that, globally, women earned 77 per cent of the salaries that men did, because fields in which women predominated often had lower wages than those in which men predominated. Furthermore, it might be useful to conduct research to identify the sources and actual extent of the gender pay gaps, notwithstanding the legislation in place.

7. **Mr. Safarov** said that he would appreciate it if the delegation could provide statistics on women working in the public and the informal sectors, including any problems and restrictions that they experienced. Was there any information available on the gender gap in pensions, including women working in the informal sector, who did not have access to pensions?

8. **Ms. Kirimat** (Central African Republic) said that the delegation would provide statistics in a written response. The Government faced challenges with data collection due to the limited availability of the tools required to process data.

9. **Ms. Bonifaz Alfonzo** said that she would like to know how many health-care facilities had been renovated since the Plan for the Construction, Renovation And Equipment of Health Facilities for the period 2017–2027 had been introduced, and whether they were operating satisfactorily, particularly in rural and remote areas.

10. As only 53.4 per cent of deliveries in 2006 had been conducted by qualified personnel, the maternal mortality rate remained high. She wondered how many percentage points it had dropped by as a result of the most recent State party initiatives to combat it.

11. Noting that according to a United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) report a little over 82 per cent of women did not use any form of contraception, she asked what measures the State party was taking to improve sexual education and increase the use of contraception.

12. Although legislation permitted abortions in cases of rape, some women continued to resort to illegal and dangerous clandestine abortions. She wondered how the State party ensured that such women and the doctors who treated them were not subject to criminal

prosecution. She would like to know if the State party intended to amend the legislation to ensure women and girls enjoyed access to safe and legal abortion in other cases, such as when the health of a pregnant woman was in danger or when the fetus was non-viable.

13. Armed conflict in the Central African Republic had led to many cases of gender-based violence and exposed a great number of women and girls to sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. She wondered what actions the State party intended to take to ensure the effective implementation of the law on HIV, incorporating training programmes in key sectors and strengthening the national system for prevention and protection. What measures had been taken by the State party to ensure that women victims of rape received comprehensive care?

14. Malnutrition continued to be a problem among women and girls. She would welcome information on the continuation of the National Policy on Food Security and Nutrition and whether any programmes were specifically aimed at disadvantaged groups. Was there a health insurance system in place that targeted women and girls with disabilities?

15. **Ms. Kirimat** (Central African Republic) said that a national plan for health care was in place for the period 2022–2027. The delegation would provide statistics on the number of health-care centres that had been built or renovated in a written response.

16. Maternal mortality rates, while still high, had dropped significantly, from 800 per 100,000 births to 480 per 100,000 births. The Association Centrafricaine pour le Bien-Être Familial (Central African Association for Family Well-being) was providing free contraception to women and a law had been enacted to provide free services for pregnant women and women with children under 5.

17. The Ministry of Justice had launched an awareness-raising campaign on the legislation covering HIV/AIDS, which included primary school children among its target audience. A national multisectoral committee reporting to the Prime Minister was tasked with dealing with the challenges of food security and nutrition.

18. **A representative of the Central African Republic** said that a national programme for combating gender-based violence was being carried out by the Government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and regional bodies. It included a pillar on holistic care for victims, which also covered care for HIV/AIDS patients.

19. Abortion could be authorized under the law by a panel of doctors in the event of rape, provided that the procedure posed no risk to the health of the woman.

20. **Ms. Kirimat** (Central African Republic) said that each government ministry had a specific budget earmarked for HIV/AIDS awareness-raising, as well as its own focal point.

21. **A representative of the Central African Republic** said that abortions were no longer criminalized, thanks to an overhaul of the Penal Code. Neither the patient nor the doctor were punishable by imprisonment, but the abortion had to be carried out in a hospital.

22. **Ms. Reddock** said that climate change, armed conflict, internal displacement, food insecurity and limited access to education continued to severely affect the socioeconomic conditions of women and girls in the State party. Women were predominantly employed in the informal economy and lacked any social protection. She asked if the delegation could provide details on specific programmes and policies focused on women's social and economic empowerment. Were there any specific programmes for economic and social stability and food security of internally displaced women and girls, especially those living in camps for internally displaced persons?

23. Noting that an amendment to the State party social protection policy proposed the provision of voluntary registration of self-employed persons, she asked if the delegation could provide details on the current status of the policy. What was the time frame for approval and implementation of the revised policy and would it be accompanied by an outreach programme to encourage uptake by women?

24. She would welcome information from the State party on measures to ensure the integration of gender equality analysis and planning in all social and economic programmes, plans and policy development, and the involvement of women in actions to address poor

governance in the management of policies and programmes. Were women involved in the oversight body for good governance to combat the misappropriation of funds and corruption?

25. She wished to know the extent to which women were involved in the economic recovery and national reconciliation efforts, social development, poverty eradication and economic and planning policies, and whether those policies included gender-based analyses.

26. **A representative of the Central African Republic** said that in addition to a national gender equity and equality policy, the Government had drafted a national strategy for the empowerment of women and girls. Women represented over 15 per cent of the workforce in businesses and more than 90 per cent of the informal economy workforce.

27. A Directorate General for Literacy and Non-Formal Education had been established, which worked closely with the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, the Family and Child Protection to help empower women. The Government was seeking to incorporate gender mainstreaming in all policies and programmes under its responsibility and gender focal points were in place within each ministry. A social protection policy was currently being drafted with the support of the World Bank, which would be implemented soon.

28. **A representative of the Central African Republic** said that the main purpose of the social protection policy document was to identify priority areas for intervention. The Government was currently updating the policy to take account of non-contributory aspects of social protection, which was particularly important for women. Some of the aims included providing additional assistance to persons with disabilities and the socially and economically vulnerable segments of the population. It was expected that the document would be finalized within around one month's time.

29. **A representative of the Central African Republic** said that, pursuant to the Gender Parity Act, the 35 per cent quota for the representation of women applied to all the country's government bodies and institutions, including the National Electoral Authority, the Economic and Social Council and the High Council for Communication. Eight of the 19 members of the High Authority for Good Governance were women, which exceeded the minimum quota of six.

30. **The Chair** said that it would be useful to have a written list of all the Government's strategies, policies and legislation related to women's rights.

31. **Ms. Reddock** said that she would appreciate some specific examples of programmes to promote women's empowerment, and she wished to know how many women were currently registered with the national social security programme.

32. **A representative of the Central African Republic** said that the national policy for the promotion of equality and equity offered guidance on women's empowerment and a programme was in place to promote women's leadership. Education was provided to women and girls who had left school early, a partnership programme had been launched to support female entrepreneurship and plans for the establishment of a women's bank were being developed. All the country's programmes for the empowerment of women were implemented with support from the country's bilateral and multilateral partner organizations and would be included in a sectoral policy of the Ministry for the Promotion of Gender and Protection of Women, Families and Children, which would be allocated funding from the Government. Returnees from internal displacement were given funding as part of a programme managed by the Ministry of Humanitarian Action and National Reconciliation, and a law had been passed to allow them to recover land that they had lost.

33. **Mr. N'Gbeng Mokoue** (Central African Republic) said that a project had been launched to promote women's empowerment with €4 million in financing from the Békou Trust Fund of the European Union. The International Rescue Committee, in partnership with Cooperazione Internazionale, had implemented a project for the integration and participation of women and girls in the economic, social and political life of the country, with the aim of creating community spaces in specific locations. Two centres for the socioeconomic empowerment of women had been established and another centre had been set up to offer temporary accommodation for highly vulnerable women and girls. Meetings had been held at the centres to raise awareness among adolescent girls of their rights and health-related issues. Measures had been taken to grant women access to economic opportunities by

distributing seeds, tools and agricultural equipment. Combating gender-based violence was an integral part of the Government's policy for women's empowerment.

34. **Ms. de Silva de Alwis** said that she wished to know whether the State party would consider creating a repository of victims' testimony of crimes that had recently been investigated by the International Criminal Court to memorialize women's accounts of the conflict and prevent reoccurrence. She wondered what steps the State party had taken to rehabilitate, provide restitution and assist with the recovery of women survivors of sexual violence, especially women with disabilities and rural and older women.

35. She would be interested to hear whether the State party used the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights to hold the extractive industries accountable for the impact of the exploitation of natural resources on rural and Indigenous communities. She would welcome information about the State's measures and indicators to monitor environmental and social governance and corporate social responsibility in the extractive industries. She wondered whether women were involved in dialogues with the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Section and other stakeholders, and whether the 35 per cent quota applied to bodies involved in those dialogues.

36. She wished to know how the State party used the Committee's general recommendation No. 37 (2018) on gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in a changing climate to ensure that all women and girls whose rights had been affected by disasters and climate change had access to legal remedies; whether women could bring court cases related to access to water or grazing lands in times of climate crisis; whether they were entitled to legal aid in such cases; and whether the Agropastoral Land Code that was still pending adoption would include legal remedies for women who were disproportionately affected. She would be interested to learn how the State party ensured that women had access to land; whether land could be registered in women's names; what the land registration policy was for women; how the State party ensured equal rights to the inheritance of land and the equal distribution of marital property upon dissolution of marriage; and how the Government addressed corruption and rent-seeking, given their impact on gender equality.

37. She wondered how the State party monitored prosecutions for witchcraft, which involved mainly older women, and whether it provided those accused with legal aid. She wished to know whether the two seats for persons with disabilities on the 2013–2015 National Transitional Council included a female representative, what steps would be taken to increase the number of women with disabilities in the civil service workforce and how the State party would use temporary special measures to ensure that women were not disadvantaged in terms of recruitment. Lastly, it would be helpful to learn whether the State party would consider applying the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules) and the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules) to improve the poor detention conditions of women.

38. **Ms. Kirimat** (Central African Republic) said that many rural women belonged to associations and were thus involved in the development of policies and programmes by various ministerial departments. Male and female prisoners were detained in separate prisons and measures had been adopted to monitor women's prison conditions.

39. **Mr. N'Gbeng Mokoue** (Central African Republic) said that the objectives of the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission were not only to reconcile victims and perpetrators and raise awareness of past atrocities, but also to ensure that such atrocities did not reoccur. Memorialization was very important to achieve those aims.

40. **A representative of the Central African Republic** said that United Nations personnel were deployed subject to an agreement with the Government, which provided that personnel who committed offences in the Central African Republic would be tried in their country of origin. All abuses committed by United Nations staff in Bangui had been documented and, given the zero-tolerance policy towards such offences, the perpetrators had been immediately repatriated for trial. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) followed up on the criminal proceedings. No distinction was made between survivors of acts committed by national or United Nations personnel and all

survivors were entitled to the same comprehensive health-care programmes in the Central African Republic. Some reparations had already been paid and many more cases were ongoing.

41. Before they could begin operations, mining companies signed contracts with the State, which contained provisions on environmental protection. Local authorities oversaw compliance with those agreements to ensure that the local population benefited from the mining operations and that environmental standards were respected. In the recent past, the permits of many mining companies had been withdrawn because the companies had breached their agreement.

42. To address prison overcrowding, the Ministry of Justice had issued an instruction for judges to refrain from using detention orders for non-violent crimes, which applied both to women and men, and sentence enforcement courts had been set up to assess the behaviour of inmates with a view to increasing the number of prisoners released early for good conduct. Criminal law was undergoing a major reform and alternatives would be established to avoid the systematic use of imprisonment. Existing prisons were being refurbished and new ones were being built across the country.

43. It was not known how many women in the Central African Republic held property titles. However, women faced no discrimination in terms of access to land. Under the country's inheritance law, no distinction was made between male and female heirs and, following dissolution of marriage, assets were divided equally between the two spouses. Since the end of the transitional period in 2016, all public bodies were required to meet the 35 per cent quota for the representation of women.

44. **A representative of the Central African Republic** said that a ministry responsible for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration worked in collaboration with all sectoral ministries. A programme to reduce community violence had been launched and the monitoring bodies established under the plan included female members. The requirement for candidates for political office to hold land titles had been removed from the Electoral Code, and new land titles would be issued in the name of the woman as well as that of her husband.

45. **Mr. N'Gbeng Mokoue** (Central African Republic) said that the rights of persons with disabilities, regardless of gender, were enshrined in the Constitution. A 30 per cent quota for persons with disabilities in public sector recruitment had been established under the Act of 20 December 2000 on the Status, Protection and Advancement of Persons with Disabilities, and all administrative buildings constructed within the previous decade were accessible for persons with reduced mobility. A study had been conducted in three regions of the country in collaboration with Humanity and Inclusion, an NGO, to identify barriers to the inclusion of men and women with disabilities, including those from Indigenous communities. The Government regularly organized campaigns to inform persons with disabilities of their rights and to combat stereotypes.

46. **The Chair** said that, in some parts of the Central African Republic, people reportedly believed that sexual intercourse with a virgin could cure HIV/AIDS, which exposed women and girls with disabilities in particular to sexual violence. She therefore wished to know what measures had been taken to protect women and girls with disabilities from such violence. She wondered whether women and girls with disabilities were taken into consideration in HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment programmes.

47. **A representative of the Central African Republic** said that one of the aims of the ongoing reform of the Agropastoral Land Code was to resolve problems of access to land and water, including the conflicts that often arose between crop farmers and livestock herders. The delegation took note of the Committee's concern regarding access to justice and remedies for victims of climate change and natural disasters.

48. The Government had drawn up and implemented a policy for the care of persons living with HIV/AIDS with the support of partners including the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. He had not heard of the belief that the Chair had described; however, the deliberate transmission of AIDS was an offence under the Penal Code.

49. **Ms. Kirimat** (Central African Republic) said that the Ministry of Justice had begun to raise awareness of a new law on the rights of persons living with HIV/AIDS, in both French and Sango.

Articles 15 and 16

50. **Ms. González Ferrer** said that the Committee welcomed steps to eliminate discrimination in the area of marriage and family relations, including the ongoing process of revising the Family Code. However, the Committee remained concerned that, although the minimum legal age for marriage had been set at 18 years, minors were still authorized to marry in exceptional circumstances and that high rates of child marriage had been reported in recent years. Moreover, the Family Code provisions that permitted polygamy had not yet been repealed.

51. She would therefore be interested to know whether the law was effectively implemented, whether any relevant amendments had entered into force, and what progress had been made in revising the Family Code. She would like to know whether the State party intended to repeal discriminatory laws in the area of family relations, including the provision that authorized child marriage in exceptional circumstances. Did the State party plan to enact laws to eliminate polygamy and to prohibit the corporal punishment of children in family settings?

52. Furthermore, she would be interested to know what steps had been taken to eliminate forced marriages and sham marriages that concealed the sexual exploitation of women and girls. She would be grateful for information on any educational activities carried out, including among traditional and religious leaders, to discourage forced marriage and early pregnancy and to raise awareness of their harmful impact on young women and girls. It would be useful to know whether any research had been conducted into social perceptions of polygamy.

53. She wondered to what extent property acquired during marriage was protected in the event of separation and divorce, and how the authorities ensured the payment of alimony and child maintenance in such cases. In the light of research by the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, which had revealed discriminatory provisions in the State party's laws, she wished to know what measures were being taken to build the capacity of institutions, justice officials and law enforcement officers to take account of gender issues and to effectively apply a gender perspective when dealing with conflicts within the family. She would appreciate information on the role of traditional leaders in family justice, including whether they received any training on women's rights and gender equality. Lastly, noting that the law did not discriminate between children born in or out of wedlock, including in respect of inheritance, she asked whether that principle was observed in practice.

54. **Ms. Kirimat** (Central African Republic) said that, although the Government was investing enormous efforts in the reform of the Family Code, social and cultural pressure continued to represent an obstacle to progress.

55. **A representative of the Central African Republic** said that, before embarking on the reform of the Family Code, the Government had conducted a nationwide survey to collect information on the views of the population, particularly women, regarding the discriminatory provisions that had been identified. According to the findings, rural women did not object to polygamy.

56. The provision whereby children under the age of 18 years, including pregnant girls, could marry under certain circumstances, was being revised in the light of the Child Protection Code. Under the proposed amendment, pregnant girls would no longer be able to receive parental authorization for marriage. During the revision process, the technical partner had been requested to comprehensively examine the law in its entirety to ensure that the reform covered all discriminatory provisions. All policy instruments, including the national policy for the promotion of equality and equity and its action plan, sought to encourage responsible parenting and strengthen family relations.

57. The Government conducted advocacy and awareness-raising among traditional leaders so that they understood the harmful impact of child marriage. An awareness campaign conducted in 2017 had focused on rural areas, where rates of child marriage were thought to be particularly high.

58. **A representative of the Central African Republic** said that the survey conducted prior to the revision of the Family Code had shed light on attitudes towards certain issues, including polygamy, dowries, inheritance and the authorization of child marriage. Given the large number of discriminatory provisions that had been detected, it had been decided to revise the Code in its entirety, a process which was taking some time; however, the draft revised Code had already been approved by several committees.

59. The survey had revealed different attitudes towards polygamy among different groups of women. Indigenous women, including pygmy and Fulani women, were more likely to regard a polygamous marriage as a stroke of fortune, whereas rural women thought that polygamy had no impact on women, and urban and intellectual women rejected it. Given those findings, prohibition alone would not be sufficient to eradicate the problem. Therefore, the Government planned to carry out education and awareness-raising activities to change peoples' mindsets, in the hope that eventually communities themselves would reject the practice. Incest was prohibited and punished under Act No. 06.302 of 27 December 2006 on Protecting Women against Violence.

60. The new Constitution recognized the role of traditional leaders. The Government was working on a law that would establish a new body, or house of chiefs, in order to work with traditional leaders on specific measures to deliver improvements at the community level. A study was being conducted to gather information on the country's traditional leaders and to determine how they could contribute to the country's development.

61. **A representative of the Central African Republic** said he wished to clarify that the Family Code provided for exceptions to the minimum legal age for marriage for reasons such as the emancipation of the child or the protection of a pregnant girl. On the other hand, the Child Protection Code prohibited child marriage without exceptions. The Family Code was now being brought into line with the Child Protection Code, removing the exceptions.

62. The judiciary was responsible for ensuring the payment of alimony and child maintenance. Thus, where a court had issued a decision ordering an ex-husband or father to pay alimony or child maintenance, the authorities worked with the banks to collect the corresponding amount and pay it directly to the beneficiary.

63. The law no longer made any distinction between legitimate and illegitimate children in matters of inheritance. The notion of legitimacy had its origins in the legal tradition of France, the former colonial Power, but had long since disappeared following a several reforms. All children were equal when it came to inheriting property from their parents.

64. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that the decision to amend the law on polygamy should not depend only solely social attitudes. The Government should recognize that polygamy was inherently discriminatory and that permitting one man to take several wives undermined equality in the family – the basic unit of society. The law should be used to advance the understanding that polygamy was no longer acceptable.

65. **Ms. González Ferrer** said that she fully agreed that the law had an important educational function; moreover, legal amendments could give impetus to awareness-raising efforts. She would appreciate further information on whether the corporal punishment was prohibited under the Family Code or the Act on Protecting Women against Violence and whether it had been eliminated in practice.

66. **The Chair** said that she would be interested to know what status the customs of levirate and sororate would have under the revised Family Code. As it seemed that the Government was counting on the revised Code to resolve a number of problems, she asked when it was likely to be adopted.

67. **Ms. Kirimat** (Central African Republic) said that the draft revised Family Code was currently before the Economic and Social Council. It was expected that the Council would

finish working on the draft by the end of its current session, in March 2023, before sending it to the National Assembly for adoption.

68. As levirate and sororate were among those practices that drew on social and cultural tradition, they could not be eliminated simply by passing a law; the change would have to be accepted and implemented by families and individuals. For that reason, the Government conducted awareness campaigns.

69. **A representative of the Central African Republic** said that it could not be denied that levirate and sororate were harmful practices that continued to exist in the Central African Republic. They had not been prohibited by law and had persisted in spite of education and awareness-raising efforts. However, under the revised Family Code, they would be expressly prohibited and thus discouraged. Awareness-raising efforts would continue.

70. Corporal punishment had been prohibited in schools for over two decades. Schools had established their own structures for dealing with reported cases and could impose administrative sanctions on staff members who were violent towards children. In family settings, corporal punishment was treated no differently to any other form of violence.

71. **Ms. Kirimat** (Central African Republic) said that the Government and the Head of State devoted great attention to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. Nevertheless, the Central African Republic continued to face constraints in a number of areas, including capacity-building, data management and financing for the implementation of measures. Promoting the ownership of policies by their beneficiaries was also a challenge. Her delegation appealed for the Committee to take those constraints into account and for the international community to support the Government's efforts to build capacity. She thanked the Committee for its attention and for the advice provided during the constructive dialogue.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.