



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

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

Pre-session working group

Forty-fourth session

20 July-7 August 2009

**List of issues and questions with regard to the consideration
of periodic reports**

Liberia

The pre-session working group considered the combined initial to sixth periodic reports of Liberia (CEDAW/C/LBR/6).

General

1. The report states that it was written with the assistance of eight working groups. Please provide more information on the process of elaboration of the report specifying which Government departments and institutions were involved and the nature and extent of their participation, whether consultations were held with non-governmental organizations and whether the report was adopted by the Government and presented to Parliament.
2. Kindly describe the manner in which the provisions of the Convention are reflected in national development strategies and in instruments such as the 2008 Poverty Reduction Strategy and the Millennium Development Goals reports.
3. The report provides limited disaggregated statistical data by sex on the situation of women in areas covered by the Convention. Please provide information on the status of data collection in the country in general, and to what extent such data collection takes place on a sex-disaggregated basis. Please indicate how the Government intends to support the collection of data disaggregated by sex pertaining to the areas of the Convention so as to assist policymaking and programme development and to measure progress towards implementation of the Convention.

Constitutional, legislative and institutional framework and status of the Convention

4. The report indicates (para. 3.4) that the Convention has not yet been domesticated into the national legal system and that discrimination against women is not defined in the Constitution or in any other statutory laws. Please indicate if, as part of the Constitutional reform to be undertaken between 2008 and 2011, the Government intends to domesticate the Convention as well as take the necessary action to amend and/or repeal all discriminatory statutory provisions and reform the national legislative framework with the view to guarantee the equal rights and non-discrimination of women.

5. As the report states, the customary law (see. para. 4.4) legalized through the Revised Rules and Regulations Governing the Hinterland of Liberia discriminate in purpose or effect against women. Please provide information on the steps the Government has taken, or intends to take, to identify and amend all statutory and customary laws that are discriminatory against women and not in compliance with the Convention. In this connection, please indicate whether the Law Commission has been established, as mentioned in the report (para. 4.12), and what progress has been made up to date.

6. The report notes also (para. 4.7) that women's access to justice is very limited, particularly in rural areas. Please provide information on measures in place to enhance access to justice for women; encourage women to use the courts to enforce their rights; and to raise awareness and sensitize judges, lawyers and law enforcement officers with regard to the State party's obligations under the Convention to achieve gender equality. Please include details on any efforts to decentralize the judiciary, legal aid offered to women and measures in place to raise awareness among women of their rights under existing legislation.

7. According to the report, the State party has adopted a number of important policies and action plans for the promotion of gender equality. In this connection, what is the status of the drafting of the National Gender Policy mentioned in the report (para. 5.21)? Please provide more information outlining its goals, objectives and strategies. Please also provide information on the impediments to the effective achievement and implementation of the policies and action plans currently in place as well as on remedial measures undertaken.

8. The report indicates (para. 5.10) that the Ministry of Gender and Development is understaffed and lacks adequate resources. Please explain the measures the Government is taking, or intends to take, to provide the national machinery for the advancement of women with adequate decision-making capacity and financial and human resources.

Special temporary measures

9. According to information provided on the report (para. 6.2), the Government has adopted special temporary measures in the areas of education, political participation and in the security sector. However, also according to the report, the proposed 30 per cent quota for women representation in all political parties has not been fully adhered to. What specific enforcement mechanisms have been established to ensure that the special measures adopted effectively contribute to accelerate de

facto equality between men and women? Does the Government intend to enact legislation providing for quotas and thereby binding on all political parties?

Stereotypes and cultural practices

10. According to the information provided in the report (para. 7.1), women suffer from the pervasive impact of entrenched cultural stereotypes on the enjoyment of their rights protected under the Convention. Besides the work of the Ministry of Education on a revised curriculum to eliminate stereotyping, please provide information on other concrete measures that have been taken to address discriminatory practices and stereotypes as well as on their impact.

Violence against women

11. The report indicates (para. 7.11) that rape continues to be a problem even now that the conflict has ended. In addition, there are reportedly serious deficiencies in the implementation of the Rape Law, enacted in 2006, including failure to investigate allegations according to the law, failure to provide adequate medical and forensic services to victims of rape, possible inappropriate release of suspects on bail, imposition of illegal fees on victims and out-of-court settlements. Please provide information on the concrete measures taken by the Government to address this situation. In this context, please provide the Committee with details on the recent establishment of the national special court to deal with sexual offences.

12. Given the impact of the war on women and girls in Liberia, including their association to the fighting forces as sexual servants, please provide details on the steps that are being taken to provide rehabilitation and support programmes, including psychological recovery and social reintegration, for women and girls who were victims of violence. In this connection, has the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission integrated a gender perspective?

13. According to the report, a significant number of women (32 per cent) who experience sexual violence reported it coming from their husbands/partners. The report also indicates (para. 4.6) that statutory laws do not make specific provisions for the protection against discrimination in the private or domestic sphere. What steps has the Government undertaken or is planning to undertake to address the problem of domestic violence, including the drafting of a comprehensive domestic violence bill?

14. According to the information provided in para. 7.6 and paras. 14.37, 14.38 and 14.39 of the report, female genital mutilation is traditionally practised in certain regions of the country, particularly in the rural areas. Please inform the Committee about the specific measures undertaken by the Government to eradicate this practice, including the enactment of legislation to prohibit it.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

15. The report indicates in para. 8.5 that many women, especially girls, are forced into prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation. Please provide information on laws or measures adopted to prevent and punish the exploitation of prostitution as well as measures taken to provide rehabilitation and support for the social reintegration of women who wish to leave prostitution.

16. The report mentions in para. 8.1 that despite the Anti-Human Trafficking Act passed in 2005, police reports indicate that women are being trafficked within the country to engage in domestic work, labour and prostitution. What concrete measures has the Government undertaken or plans to undertake to ensure the effective enforcement of the Anti-Human Trafficking Act, including its dissemination among law enforcement personnel?

Participation in political and public life

17. According to information provided in paras. 9.7 to 10.3 of the report, women's participation and representation at various levels of political and public life remain very low. What concrete measures are envisaged to achieve women's full and equal participation and representation at all levels of Government, in Parliament and the judiciary, as well as at the international level? Are women's local groups receiving sufficient support and being effectively represented at the national level? Please provide information on awareness-raising and capacity-building programmes or policies in place or envisaged to encourage and facilitate women's further participation in public and political life.

Nationality

18. In connection to the information provided in para. 11.5 of the report, please clarify whether women of Liberian origin are able to pass on their citizenship to their children born abroad to a non-Liberian father.

Education

19. The report states (para. 12.5) that women are much less educated than men. Please provide information on measures taken by the Government to improve enrolment and literacy rates of girls as well as address the high drop-out rates, particularly in rural areas. In this connection, what has been the impact of the National Girls Education Policy launched in 2006 and the Free Compulsory Primary Education Policy?

20. According to para. 12.13 of the report, girls are exposed to sexual harassment on the part of male teachers who are the majority of the primary and secondary schoolteachers. What measures has the Government adopted or plans to adopt to protect schoolgirls from sexual abuse and harassment?

Employment

21. The report indicates (para. 13.11) that women are disproportionately clustered in the least productive sectors of the economy with 90 per cent of them being employed in agriculture or the informal sector. Please provide information on the measures that the Government has taken to promote equal employment opportunities for women and men. How does the Government ensure that opportunities are available for women in occupations that are not traditionally pursued by them?

22. What percentage of men's wages do women receive? How can women challenge discrimination in pay? Please provide information on the obstacles and challenges that affect the implementation of pay equity laws or regulations.

23. According to para. 13.7 of the report, at present, there are no childcare facilities available in places of employment. What types of childcare facilities are available in the country for working women? Does the Government support childcare, financially or otherwise?

Health

24. The report indicates (para. 14.14) that the high incidence of teenage pregnancy in the country is a cause of major concern. Please provide detailed information about women's access to affordable reproductive and sexual health services and educational programmes, including their content and their availability to particular groups, such as adolescent girls and rural women.

25. According to the information provided in para. 14.9 of the report, between 2000 and 2007 maternal mortality has increased due to, among other factors, the increasing number of illegal and unsafe abortions. What measures has the Government adopted to revert this negative trend?

26. The report indicates (para. 14.20) that HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections are on the rise and affect women, particularly girls, more than men. Please indicate whether there are any programmes to combat HIV/AIDS and, if so, whether they integrate a gender perspective. Please also provide information on the availability of antiretroviral medication and psychosocial services for women with HIV/AIDS and their children.

Rural women

27. According to the information in para. 14.2 of the report, health-care delivery is fragmented and uneven, particularly among rural women and girls. Please provide more information on the impact of the National Health Policy and Strategic Plan as well as on other concrete measures taken to improve the quality and accessibility of the health-care system and services, particularly for women and girls in rural areas.

28. According to the information provided in the report, rural women's involvement and participation at the community level is still very limited. Please provide the Committee with information on the specific measures adopted by the Government to enhance the participation of rural women in decision-making processes.

29. The report notes (para. 16.15) that, despite the enactment of the Inheritance Law in 2003, traditional customs restricts women, mostly in rural areas, from exercising their right to independently own property. Please provide more information on the measures taken to raise rural women's awareness and empower them to claim their rights, such as those to property and inheritance.

Equality before the law

30. The report states (para. 16.10) that in traditional courts, women are not allowed to appear before the court without their husbands. Also according to the report, this practice is contrary to the Constitution. Please update the Committee on the measures taken to address this problem particularly within the framework of the Constitutional reform currently under way.

Marriage and family relations

31. According to para. 18.3 of the report, in traditional settings, women are given into marriage by their parents at a very young age and without their consent. Please provide information on measures taken to bring the minimum legal age of marriage for girls into full conformity with article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and article 16, paragraph 2, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Please also provide information on measures adopted to eradicate the customary practice of early forced marriages.

32. Please provide information on the legal and administrative measures taken to address the problem of rape in marriage, which was not included under the 2006 Amended Rape Law.

Optional Protocol and Amendment to article 20, paragraph 1

33. Please indicate any progress made with respect to the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to which Liberia is a signatory since September 2004. Please also indicate when the State party intends to accept the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention pertaining to the Committee's meeting time.
