



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.: General
4 November 2022

Original: English
English, French and Spanish only

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

List of issues and questions in relation to the sixth periodic report of Singapore*

Visibility of the Convention and the Optional Protocol thereto

1. Please provide information on efforts to give visibility to the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations, so that they are made an integral part of the training of judges, lawyers, prosecutors, police officers and other law enforcement officials. Please also provide information on the measures taken to disseminate the Committee's previous concluding observations ([CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/5](#)).

Women's rights and gender equality in relation to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, recovery efforts and global crises

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

Legislative framework and definition of discrimination against women

3. In view of the constitutional guarantee in article 12 of equality for all persons and equal protection of the law but the absence of explicit recognition of equality on the basis of sex; the decision of the Court of Appeal of 28 October 2014, in which the Court ruled that the Constitution prohibited discrimination on the grounds listed explicitly in article 12 (2) only, namely religion, race, descent or place of birth, and thus excluded the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of sex or gender; and the absence of any legal provisions prohibiting all forms of discrimination against women, encompassing both direct and indirect discrimination, please indicate whether any steps are in place to incorporate into the Constitution or other appropriate legislation a definition of discrimination against women and provisions to prohibit all

* Adopted by the pre-session working group on 3 November 2022.



forms of such discrimination, encompassing direct and indirect discrimination in the private and public spheres as well as intersecting forms of discrimination, in line with article 1 of the Convention, as recommended by the Committee in its previous recommendations ([CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/5](#), para. 11).

4. Please indicate whether the white paper on Singapore Women's Development, which outlines policy recommendations with a road map towards gender equality, includes specific provisions that will address the circumstances of women in vulnerable and marginalized situations, notably migrant women, women belonging to ethnic minority groups, women belonging to religious minorities, domestic workers, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women and undocumented women.

Access to justice

5. Please inform the Committee about access to quality legal aid and services for all women in the State party, in particular for women in vulnerable situations, including migrant women, women belonging to ethnic minority groups and women with disabilities. Please also provide information about any measures taken to address gender stereotypes in the judiciary, including whether there is systematic capacity-building for judges and prosecutors in this regard and whether it is included in the training for law students.

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

National human rights institutions

7. In view of the previous recommendations by the Committee to establish an independent national human rights institution ([CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/4/Rev.1](#), para. 36, and [CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/5](#), para. 15) and in view of the indication in the State party report ([CEDAW/C/SGP/6](#)) that even without a specific national human rights institution, there were multiple robust mechanisms in place for Singaporeans to have their concerns addressed directly and expeditiously, please clarify whether there are any plans to establish a national human rights institution with a broad mandate to promote and protect women's rights and gender equality.

Women human rights defenders

8. Please provide detailed information on:

(a) How the State party promotes women human rights defenders' activities and civil society organizations, meaningfully consults with them and integrates their views into national strategies on gender equality;

(b) Measures taken to ensure freedom of expression and a safe and enabling environment for women human rights defenders, women activists and civil society organizations to carry out their work and activities on women's rights and gender-related issues.

Stereotypes

9. In the light of a 2022 study conducted by Ipsos and the Global Institute for Women's Leadership at King's College London which yielded concerning results,

including that 24 per cent of participants in Singapore denied the existence of gender inequality, 33 per cent of men and 14 per cent of women believed that “feminism does more harm than good”, 19 per cent agreed that “violence against women is often provoked by the victim”, 15 per cent of men considered it acceptable to send someone unrequested explicit images and 39 per cent believed that many women overreacted to the things people sent them or said to them online, and 28 per cent of men and 15 per cent of women thought that feminism had resulted in men losing out in terms of economic or political power or socially, please provide information on how the State party intends to strengthen measures to effectively combat gender stereotypes, including whether there are large-scale awareness-raising measures in place and whether the school curriculum contains content on gender equality and gender sensitivity.

10. In view of the indication in paragraph 60 of the State party report that the concept of “reference persons” has been adopted in place of “head of household” for the purpose of the State party’s 2020 census, please clarify if this replacement has been done for the purpose of the census only and how the State party defines “reference person”.

Harmful practices

11. Please inform the Committee of steps taken towards the eradication of female genital mutilation and to set a timeline to adopt a law to fully criminalize the practice. Please also:

(a) Indicate whether any awareness-raising measures and education measures at school are in place to inform the larger public about the harmful effects of female genital mutilation and to cooperate with traditional and religious leaders, social workers, teachers and police to end this practice;

(b) Provide data on the number of women and girls who have been subjected or are at risk of female genital mutilation;

(c) Provide information on any reporting pathways for victims of female genital mutilation and for women and girls at risk;

(d) Indicate whether victims of female genital mutilation have access to quality social and rehabilitation services.

Gender-based violence against women

12. Please inform the Committee about any efforts made to address the increasing rates of gender-based violence against women and girls online. Please indicate whether any steps have been taken to amend provisions such as sections 375, 376 and 376 A of the Penal Code with a view to abolishing marital immunity and removing any provisions that allow for sexual activity with a child with or without so-called consent. Please also clarify whether domestic violence is fully criminalized and whether the definition of rape includes any non-consensual sexual act, as recommended in the Committee’s previous concluding observations. Please also provide information on efforts made to implement the recommendations made by the Committee in its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/5, para. 21), notably to:

(a) Provide systematic and recurring capacity-building to all relevant professionals to apply relevant criminal law provisions strictly in cases of gender-based violence against women and to treat victims in a gender-sensitive manner;

(b) Ease the burden of proof for married or divorced women applying for personal protection orders and extend the applicability of personal protection orders to protect unmarried women from intimate partner violence;

(c) Revise section 89 of the Penal Code, section 64 of the Women's Charter, section 27 of the Children and Young Persons (Licensing of Homes) Regulations 2011 and section 24 of the Children and Young Persons (Government Homes) Regulations 2011 to prohibit and eliminate corporal punishment in all settings and under all circumstances.

13. Please clarify the indication in paragraph 179 of the State party report that "the Family Court can also order individuals affected by violence (victims, perpetrators and/or other family members) to undergo compulsory counselling under the Mandatory Counselling Programme" and indicate whether there have been cases in which victims or witnesses of gender-based violence against women have been forced to attend counselling against their will and if they are subjected to any consequences if they refuse. In view of the indication in paragraph 195 of the State party report about the development of recommendations to better support victims and rehabilitate perpetrators of family violence, please indicate how the safety of victims is ensured in the context of the rehabilitation.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

14. Please indicate whether steps have been taken to remove remaining legal obstacles to bringing perpetrators of trafficking to justice. Please also indicate measures taken:

(a) To abide by the commitments under the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and, in view of the continued absence of a definition in the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act 2014 of key terms relating to trafficking, such as forced labour, deception and coercion, please indicate whether any efforts are under way to adopt definitions in line with international standards;

(b) To implement the national approach against trafficking in persons for the period 2016–2026 referred to in paragraph 9 of the State party report, and resources allocated to it;

(c) To socially and financially support women exiting prostitution.

Education

15. Please provide information on measures taken to ensure that all women and girls have full access to education, with a particular focus on women and girls in vulnerable and marginalized situations, including women and girls who are migrants, who belong to ethnic minority groups and who have disabilities, and any specific support provided to them.

16. In view of the indication in paragraph 114 of the State party report that topics on the consequences relating to abortion and premarital sex are covered in secondary-level syllabuses, please provide information on steps taken towards:

(a) Introducing age-appropriate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights which fully informs women and girls about these topics;

(b) Ensuring that such education is not based on abstinence until marriage and teaches about responsible sexual behaviour and important concepts such as consent, gender-based violence and the prevention of early pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases;

(c) Ensuring that such education addresses negative stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes with regard to the sexuality of adolescents, as recommended by the Committee in its previous concluding observations.

Employment

17. Please provide information on the measures taken to increase the number of women within the labour force. Please indicate whether any steps have been taken to adopt legislation explicitly and comprehensively prohibiting discrimination against women in employment, including in the area of equal pay for work of equal value, on the basis of marital status, pregnancy or family status, or in promotions, in addition to at the recruitment stage, according to the Tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment Practices to be codified according to the information provided in paragraph 116 of the State party report. Please provide the Committee with a timeline for the codification of the Guidelines. Please also indicate any efforts made towards reviewing the obstacles to obtaining protection orders under the Protection from Harassment Act and provide the Committee with data on sexual harassment, notably the number of reported cases, the number of prosecutions, the outcome of these prosecutions and the number of protection orders issued.

Women migrant domestic workers

18. Please indicate whether any steps are under way towards:

(a) Strengthening the protection provided to women migrant workers under the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act to ensure that they are fully and adequately protected against discrimination and gender-based violence against women;

(b) Extending the Employment Act, which guarantees basic labour rights with regard to issues such as working hours, paid sick leave and paid annual leave, to women migrant domestic workers;

(c) Significantly strengthening legal protection of domestic workers in the light of abuse and exploitation that has been reported to the Committee, including non-payment of salary, deprivation of food, abusive dismissal and expulsion in the event of pregnancy, denial of adequate rest, confiscation of personal items, such as mobile telephones and passports, restrictions on freedom of movement and refusal to pay medical expenses, as well as sexual, physical, verbal and psychological abuse, and whether confidential reporting mechanisms are in place;

(d) Making legislative changes to allow women migrant domestic workers to change their employer without their current employer's consent, independent of whether they have encountered issues in employment as described in paragraph 152 of the State party report;

(e) Ratifying the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), of the International Labour Organization.

Health

19. Please inform the Committee of measures in place to address linguistic barriers faced by certain ethnic groups when accessing health-care services and to ensure that women belonging to these groups have access to all necessary health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health and rights services. In the light of reports that persons belonging to ethnic minorities are statistically more likely to suffer chronic illness and have higher mortality rates than persons belonging to the majority, please inform the Committee if any analysis has been conducted on the root causes of this phenomenon, including on the specific impact on women, and which steps are being taken to avoid any discriminatory treatment in access to health-care services.

Economic empowerment of women

20. Please clarify whether single parents can access the same social benefits for their children as married parents, notably the Baby Bonus cash gift and Child Development Account grant. Please inform the Committee about any steps taken towards extending the application of the Home Ownership Plus Education scheme, which provides low-income families with housing grants and financial aid on the condition that they do not have more than two children, to families with more children, as the current regulation affects Malay women in particular.

Disadvantaged groups of women

21. Recalling general recommendation No. 27 (2010) on older women and the protection of their human rights, please indicate whether the State party plans to collect, analyse and disseminate data, disaggregated by age and sex, in order to assess the situation of older women, including those belonging to minority groups and older women with disabilities, focusing on poverty, illiteracy, violence, unpaid work, including caregiving, and access to health care, housing, social and economic benefits and employment, with a view to using those data for the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of laws, policies and programmes, and ensure that policies and measures targeting older women take into account their specific needs. Please also provide information on any steps taken to combat discriminatory stereotypes about older women's roles as caregivers, and to encourage more men to take on increased caregiving responsibilities for older persons, as also recommended by the Committee in its previous concluding observations.

Marriage and family relations

22. In the light of the three-year minimum period before a divorce procedure can be finalized and in the light of the Mandatory Parenting Programme, which is aimed at ensuring the well-being of children in divorce proceedings, please clarify whether the Programme also applies in cases in which there is a history of gender-based violence or threats thereof against the mother. Please also specify which measures are in place generally to ensure the safety of women in the period between separation and divorce, in view of reports that this period is particularly dangerous. Please also indicate whether there are any steps in place towards revoking the three-year minimum period before a divorce procedure can be finalized. In view of the Committee's previous concluding observations ([CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/5](#), para. 37), please indicate the measures taken to provide the Long-Term Visit Pass-Plus, ensuring the right to work and to access health-care subsidies, to all foreign spouses of Singaporean citizens. Please also specify any measures taken to establish clear qualifying criteria for obtaining permanent residency and automatically grant that status to all foreign spouses who qualify.

23. Please inform the Committee of measures taken regarding the State party as a whole and with respect to every community to:

- (a) Abolish any exceptions to the prohibition of marriage of girls under 18 years of age and to ensure the full consent of the woman in all marriages;
- (b) Intensify its efforts to discourage and prohibit polygamy;
- (c) Ensure that women and men have equal rights to divorce, including with regard to grounds for divorce and standards of proof;
- (d) Ensure equal rights of women and men in all matters regarding inheritance;
- (e) Ensure the inclusion of women in key positions and professions within the Registry of Muslim Marriages.