



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

Distr.: General  
6 February 2020

Original: English  
English, French and Spanish only

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

**Seventy-fifth session**

10–28 February 2020

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under  
article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms  
of Discrimination against Women**

**Replies of Eritrea to the list of issues and questions in  
relation to its sixth periodic report\***

[Date received: 5 February 2020]

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\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



## **I. Introduction**

1. The Government of the State of Eritrea (GoSE) presents response to the list of issues/questions (reference numbers indicated) raised in relation to the Sixth Periodic National Report on CEDAW (CEDAW/C/ERI/Q/6). Note should be made that the list of issues and questions posed have been addressed in detail in the previous periodic reports. However, in compliance with its obligations, the State Party gives its response briefly herewith. Secondly, the document of the list of issues and questions was not communicated in due time; State Party confirms its receipt on January 17/2020. The submission is prepared by the inter-sector working group coordinated by NUEW and in collaboration with other national associations and civil society organizations.

## **II. Replies to the list of issues (CEDAW/C/ERI/Q/6)**

### **A. Reply to paragraph 1 of the list of issues**

2. Women equality and empowerment and their all-round participation and contribution in all aspects, including in peace and security is an essential dimension in the international architecture of peace, security and development. The UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) of 31st October 2000 remains an important instrument to promote women's human rights in times of war and peace as well as their contribution to the sustenance of global peace, security and development. It further underlines women's participation in the military and security institutions of States.

3. The Government of the State of Eritrea acknowledges the unprecedented heroic role of Eritrean women in peace building and conflict resolution during the liberation struggle and in the aftermath as an independent nation since May 24, 1991. Women constituted about 33% of the total force during the National Liberation Struggle. They occupy a significant role both in number and position in the military, security and other administrative institutions for upholding peace, security and development. Furthermore, the National Service Proclamation of 1994 has ensured equal participation of women in the overall nation building course including women's contribution in the processes of peace building, security and sustainable national development.

4. NUEW has remained an integral part of vital international and regional forums upholding the decisive role of women in peace and conflict resolution. The African Platform for Action, Dakar (1994), the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing (1995) and the Pan African Women's Conference on a Culture of Peace, Zanzibar (1999), are some significant examples.

5. In the above context, the Government of the State of Eritrea acknowledges Resolution 1325 an important instrument in ascertaining women's equitable participation in the promotion of peace and security. In Line with it a consultation workshop to discuss the essence, relevance and implications of its provisions was conducted in October 2018. An inter-sector training program has also been organized by the NUEW in partnership with UN Country Team in November 2018. The consultation workshop and the training revealed that more efforts has to be exerted to examine its conformity with national context and the current development of peace and cooperation dynamics in the region. Hence, it is the position of the State Party that that continuous inter-sector consultations that lead to a Framework for action continues until the end of 2020.

6. A new reality and dynamics of peace and cooperation for the people of Eritrea, Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa Region has emerged recently. This can be clearly manifested by the Peace and Cooperation Declarations signed between Eritrea and Ethiopia, and respective regional countries. In the new realities of peace and cooperation, Eritrea has taken the strategic initiative to redouble its efforts and promote viable regional peace, security and cooperation. Continuous effort is being made to build trust and atmosphere of confidence through normalization measures and a systemic preparation for advancing cooperation with implications to peace, security and development in the region. In this context, Eritrea's paradigm of development is focusing on two dimensions namely, consolidating the internal dynamics of development and engagement and international cooperation. Transitional measures to lay a foundation for the implementation of the comprehensive plan have been taken in 2019 and will continue in 2020.

## **B. Reply to paragraphs 2 and 3 of the list of issues**

7. The overall drive in nation building including in the administration of justice is the promotion of equal rights and opportunities sanctioned by national law. Accordingly, Eritrea's justice system is accessible to all. Thus no discrimination, exclusion, restriction or preferences are made on the bases of ethnicity, religion, social status, language, race or gender in enjoying the rights and freedoms guaranteed to everyone by law.

8. The essential rights of women contained in the Convention are duly addressed in Eritrea's major codes and other legislations:

- Article 8 of the Transitional Civil Code of Eritrea (TCCE) stipulates that every natural person shall enjoy the rights of personality, regardless of the race, color, religion or sex of persons. Article 837 of the TCCE also provides that the sex, age and nationality of an heir shall not affect in ascertainment of his/her rights to succession (inheritance);
- The principle of equality under Article 4 of the Transitional Penal Code of Eritrea (TPCE) asserts that the Penal Code applies to all without any discrimination. Articles 604-607 of the TPCE assert that exploitation of women and trafficking of women, infants and young persons are punishable offences;
- There is no discrimination against women to take part in public affairs and assume public offices under the Eritrean laws. Proclamation 86/1996 and Proclamation 140/2004 fosters women participation in regional assemblies by making 30% of the seats reserved to women. There is no discrimination against women, on access to land in Eritrea;
- The Land Proclamation 58/1994 Article 4 (4) clearly stipulates that nationals have access to land irrespective of their sex, religion, ethnicity or social position;
- Pursuant to the Labor Proclamation (118/2001), women may not be discriminated against as regards to opportunities or treatment in employment and remuneration, on the basis of their sex;
- Family law of Eritrea is based on equality of spouses in formation and management of their respective families. Article 580 of the TCCE stipulates that man and woman of full legal age (18 years) shall contract marriage freely. Moreover, pursuant to Article 637 of the TCCE, the spouses shall co-operate, in the interest of the family, to ensure the moral and material direction of the family, to bring up the children and to prepare for their establishment. Contrary undertakings made by the spouses in this regard shall have no legal effect.

9. Reviewing and rewriting of the new Constitution was initiated and going on since 2015 but will presently be seen in the overall context of the new national development dynamics and the ongoing political process of nation building.

10. As clearly stated in previous State Party reports, all colonial rules with discriminatory provisions were duly repealed. Eritrea is a civil law country, where the main sources of law are enacted legislations. The application of the customary laws, therefore, depends upon their conformity with the national laws and clear reference to the customary laws is made therein. The family law section of the Transitional Civil Code Eritrea extensively regulates matters concerning family relationship, betrothal, marriage, divorce, child custody, filiations, adoption and maintenance (support). The provisions of the Transitional Code on family do not apply to the followers of the Islamic faith. Sharia Courts composed of the regional and High Court levels do function in Eritrea. Therefore matters of Divorce, maintenance, paternity, child custody and inheritance for followers of the Islam Faith are adjudicated by Sharia court. However, if the parties consensually choose to celebrate marriage other than Sharia law, then the provisions of the National code are applicable.

11. Eritrea's national laws as well as policies and programs are in line with the provisions of CEDAW and SDG 5.1 and bestow responsibility for the elimination of all forms of discrimination. The implementation takes into consideration the context, needs and human better ideals of the Eritrean society in line to the nation building aims. Concerted effort with important achievement has been made in Eritrea. In this regard, multiple and intersecting forms of discriminations are addressed by taking multiple strategies combining the practical and strategic gender needs. These include promoting cultural transformation by raising consciousness to address the stereotypes and prejudices against women, economic empowerment, promotion of education and health services, as well as guaranteeing women's decision making roles and responsibilities.

### **C. Reply to paragraphs 4, 5 and 6 of the list of issues**

12. The issues in paragraphs 4, 5, 6 of the list of issues and questions relating to the general context and gender-based violence have been addressed by the State Party in its follow-up on the concluding observations of the fourth and fifth periodic report ([CEDAW/C/ERI/Q/5/Add.1](#)). Nevertheless highlighting the following issues in this response remains important:

- Participation in the national service is an obligation and duty of every citizen, both women and men vested by Proclamation No.82/1995 and any claim of forced recruitment is simply not true. As has been reported repeatedly, large scale demobilization practices have and continue to occur almost continuously on various grounds; especially for women. Demobilized women are being integrated into the civil service remuneration system as government employees, in private businesses, self-employment being provided access to credit and loan scheme as well as other employment opportunities including overseas employment through legal immigration;
- As a strong social institution, family is the most sacred unit in the Eritrean society that sustains the social fabrics and the relationship is based on mutual respect, understanding and support as well as duty of fidelity and cohabitation among spouses. Specifically, Art.640 of the TCCE stipulates that the spouse are bound to live together. They shall also have with one another sexual relations normal in marriage unless, this relations involve a risk of seriously prejudicing their health;

- The entire community bears responsibility in comforting, supporting, compensating the victim; while the criminal courts take legal measures on the criminal case according to the provisions of the Eritrean laws. Hence, providing shelter for victims of gender violence is not preferred as a remedy taking our values into consideration;
- In line to SDG 5.2 and the relevant provisions of CEDAW, the NUEW, Ministry of Health (MOH) and Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MOLSW), in collaboration with development partners have developed a comprehensive long term strategy. The strategy aims to combat gender based violence, namely, FGM, underage marriage, rape against women as well as stereotyping behaviors and attitudes that undermine women's role in society and gender power balances. The following are the main pillars:
  - Capacity building and institutional strengthening, including child and women protection system, and concrete planning based on evidence and verifiable data;
  - Community mapping, sensitization and mobilization on the transformation of social and gender norms that lead to collective and public decisions;
  - Promotion of life skills and parenting skills for FGM and UAM prevention, protection and care;
  - In this respect, the MOH has developed a Hand Book for Health Sector Response to Gender Based Violence and a clinical guideline.

#### **D. Reply to paragraph 7 of the list of issues**

13. Eritrea's justice system is equally accessible to all. Thus no discrimination is made upon sex, age, ethnicity, disability, language, religion etc. in the implementation of legal rights throughout the justice system. Continuous efforts are exerted to uphold the rule of law and treat persons in similar circumstance similarly. Moreover, courts proceedings are open to the public and maintain transparency and accountability.

14. Women and men are equal before the law and both enjoy equal access to the justice system at all levels. Cases of gender based violence are criminal offences adjudicated in the regular criminal courts not military courts, whether committed by public official or military personnel according to the penal and criminal procedure codes of Eritrea.

15. All nine ethnic groups are equal under the national laws and enjoy equal right and opportunity guaranteed by law. In the court proceedings, every citizen has the right for translations in their mother language or any local language that they understand. The MOJ with the support of all other institutions and national civic organizations and NUEW make concerted effort and campaign to instill legal knowledge and understanding through public seminars, media networks and through panel discussions.

#### **E. Reply to paragraph 8 of the list of issues**

16. Development perspectives on women equality are mainstreamed in national development in accordance to the National Charter and relevant government policies. Moreover, the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW), as reflected in Article 2 of its Constitution (reviewed in its 7th Congress - September 2014), is the national body mandated by the Government to promote gender equality. It coordinates with sector ministries, commissions, and other government agencies; and represents the

government and Eritrean women on matters relate to women's agenda. NUEW officially represents Eritrea at national, regional and international levels.

17. Eritrea's National Gender Action Plan (NGAP) covering the period 2015-2019 was developed in 2014 by the NUEW assisted by UNDP gender expert. The priority areas were education, health, economic empowerment, environment, politics & decision making and institutional mechanism for the advancement of women which are in line with the Beijing platform of action and critical areas of concern. NUEW annual activities as well as the regional administration five year action plans were in tandem with NGAP. Impact analysis of 2015-2019 will be conducted in 2020.

18. NUEW in coordination with all the regional Administrations organized regional workshops in 2017 and established regional committees to assess and evaluate the status of women in their respective regions, identify gaps and come up with five years regional action plans (2018-2022) that ensures the mainstreaming of women equality and empowerment in all aspects of development efforts in each region. In this vein, the provisions of CEDAW was presented and discussed in all six regional workshops. Consequently, regional action plans focusing on social (health /education); economic (land use and agricultural opportunities, employment, micro-credit and loan) political (empowering the organization of women, enhancing their role in decision making at all levels) and cultural (fighting against stereotyping and prejudice against women and all forms of violence) are being implemented. The regional administration committees have submitted their consecutive progress reports of implementation for the year 2018 and 2019 to the NUEW. In this regard, the monitoring & evaluation of the implementation of the regional action plan will constantly be followed by NUEW.

#### **F. Reply to paragraphs 9 and 10 of the list of issues**

19. The fundamental issue is that human right is mainstreamed at all levels, in all forms, all sector policies and programs of the nation building process and is predicated on equal rights and opportunities sanctioned by nation laws. In this respect one of the fundamental aspects is the responsible participation of the people both as participants and beneficiaries and the strategy remains the mobilization, organization and creation of capacity among the population. Continuous efforts continue to disseminate knowledge and understanding on the pertinent dimensions of the National Codes and ensure their responsible role to implement the provisions of the law and thereby defend their rights accordingly.

#### **G. Reply to paragraph 11 of the list of issues**

20. The national policy on affirmative action is clearly stated on the policy document, the National Charter of 1994, the Proclamation No.86/1996 and Proclamation No.140/2004 that confirmed a 30% quota in public office to promote substantive equality. Efforts are being taken to realize it on the ground especially during the election process in the regional and village assemblies. Various measures are also taken by many sector ministries as per the government policy as presented in detail in the 6th periodic report.

#### **H. Reply to paragraph 12 of the list of issues**

21. Proclamation No.158/2007 criminalizes FGM-C and persons who practice it are criminally charged. Extensive public awareness campaigns are conducted to ensure effective implementation of the Proclamation through massive mobilization of the community. As of 2006, the establishment of anti FGM-C committees throughout the

nation at grass root level has been successful to the extent that some villages have already declared zero FGM-C practice. As a result, a decline of the prevalence rate from 95% in 1995 to an average of 6.9% for under-five years and 18.2% for under-15 years. There are some areas, however, which have relatively high prevalence. Inter-sector focus to those localities is given by all relevant ministries, NUEW and the community at large.

22. In 2019, the National Steering Committee (NSC) through its national technical committee developed a five years strategic plan 2020-2024 with the main objective of eliminating harmful practice. The technical committee has also developed a training manual on the matter. In addition to this, impact assessment on the level of awareness and knowledge of the community was conducted. The assessment indicated that the level of awareness created is significant.

23. The legal age of marriage is 18 years for both sexes. Some deterrent measures are taken by village administration to the family who opt to marry their children outside the legal age. In 2019, 44 under age marriage schedules were cancelled through the efforts of the NUEW and village administrations. The capacity and awareness building efforts have eventually enabled our communities to understand the negative effects of early marriage (risk of health, drop outs from school, etc.) and protect girls from such harmful practices. In this regard, the stance taken and the support given by both Christian and Muslim religious leaders, in favor of the legal age marriage as well as the unprecedented beliefs on the matter has greatly helped in minimizing the practice.

24. The role of Eritrean women during the armed struggle for liberation has laid a solid foundation to bring a paradigm shift over the patriarchal attitudes and traditionally imposed gender based stereotyping role of women. The GoSE believes that the building of a inclusive and responsible state decisively rests on the broad participation of women and there shall not be any position exclusively reserved for men. Through continuous efforts in education and equal participation opportunities accorded at work, the remnants of such attitudes and prejudice will culminate.

## **I. Reply to paragraph 13 of the list of issues**

25. Women and girls are the main victims of the hideous crimes of illegal smuggling and human trafficking. Trafficking is criminalized in the Transitional Penal Code of Eritrea (Articles 605-07) and strong legal measures are taken in accordance to the law. Nonetheless, due to the transnational nature of human trafficking and smuggling which touches upon different territories and legal systems, it is sometimes challenging to apprehend and bring before justice perpetrators of such crimes. The Eritrean Government continues to intensify its efforts in combating trafficking in persons. Inter-sector, coordinated awareness programs continue extensively with particular focus being made on women, girls and the youth.

26. Eritrea is also engaged in international (UNODC) and regional (AU-Horn of Africa Counter Trafficking Initiative) efforts to tackle illegal migration coupled with combating human trafficking and smuggling. Focused training is being conducted for the Eritrean Police Force and Security and other law enforcement agencies in partnership with UNODC.

27. In accordance to article 604 of the Transitional Penal Code of Eritrea, procuring prostitution or other immoral activity for gain is a punishable offence. However prostitution is not a criminal offence.

28. Various measures are taken to change the life style including Behavior Change Communication (BCC) of the commercial sex workers. In 2019 females at risk and

commercial sex workers participated BCC activities and vocational training in the areas of driving, catering, sewing, hairdressing, snack bars, vegetable shops etc. Micro credit and loan was also provided by the local administrations to help open own business and thereby change their life style.

#### **J. Reply to paragraph 14 of the list of issues**

29. To vote, elect and be elected in political and public life is inalienable right of Eritrean women. Measures taken to increase the representation of women at the regional, *Kebabi* (localities) and village levels primarily focuses on raising awareness of women to present the best candidate at respective levels and training for potential women candidates by the NUEW and the local government. Similar training, highlighting the importance of promoting gender balance in political representation is also given to all members of the community. The result of the local elections held in 2019 at village and locality levels compared with the previous 2015 data showed commendable results in the gender representation. At Village level it has increased by 51.8% (from 37% to 56.2%); at locality level it has increased by 0.8% (from 37% to 37.8%) and the increase in the gender representation of elected Community Court Judges was 33.5% (from 37% to 49.4%).

30. The number of female appointees in the judiciary and the executive is increasing. The highest level of courts in Eritrea, the Final Appellate Court is composed of five Judges two (40%) of which are women; 12.5% in the High Court; 14% in the Regional Courts and 35.8% in public prosecutor's office is held by women. In 2018/2019, female appoints for higher position include a Minister of MLSW, Ambassador heading the Eritrean Permanent Mission to the UN in NY and a *Charge de affair* to the United Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

#### **K. Reply to paragraph 15 of the list of issues**

31. The Nationality proclamation No.21/1992 does not make any distinction, exclusion or discrimination based on sex. Every Eritrean male or female has the same and equal rights to the acquisition, changing and retention of nationality. Transmitting their nationality to their children and to their foreign spouses is allowed under Article 6 of the same Proclamation.

32. Concerted efforts to register children in their respective villages especially in the rural and remote areas is undergoing by the ministries of health, education and local government each in relation to their respective functions. The Ministry of Health issues nation-wide vaccination certification card for every immunized child which is mandatory. The vaccination card is a required reference for registration in pre-primary education and other social services. In addition to this, the Ministry of Local Governments through its administrative structures registers the newly born child and issues registration numbers. The mandatory registration of birth, death and marriage is in place.

#### **L. Reply to paragraph 16 of the list of issues**

33. The Government's education policy states that the mother tongue is used as medium of instruction at primary level. Beyond the primary levels English is used a medium of instruction. Various innovative approaches and best practices have been introduced for equity considerations and includes the focus on nomadic and semi-nomadic areas, the provision of mobile schools, expansion of boarding schools and hostels, Complementary Elementary Education (CEE) programs for out of school

children, a long term strategy of voluntary resettlement of scattered villages to provide social services including education and awareness raising and incentives for girls. In general, girls are the primary beneficiaries of these interventions. Consequently, the gender parity index (GPI) in 2016/17 reached 0.93 at pre-primary, 0.82 at primary 0.85 at middle and 0.91 at secondary levels.

34. Often, distance of schools, early marriage, migration and socio-economic factors are still mentioned as obstacles to continuity of education at secondary school level and part of the cause for girls' dropout. Hence, dropouts and repetition remains a challenge and continuous effort is made to tackle the problem.

35. Life skills education is provided and includes important areas relating to FGM, UAM, HIV/AIDS as well as menstruation. In addition age-appropriate sex education is also incorporated in life skill education at the middle and secondary levels of education.

36. In 2017, a study on Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) in Eritrean Middle Schools was conducted in collaboration with UNICEF through the global WASH Girls project. The project identified the challenges girls face during menstrual period in schools and recommendations to address the challenges are made. A printed material was sent to all schools in addition - and is being used as a reference and awareness raising material for teachers and other stakeholders. Furthermore, in each middle and secondary school a female teacher is assigned to guide female students in need of support with menstruation during their stay in school.

37. The total number of schools in 1991(at the time of Eritrea's independence) was 132 and in 2016/2017 academic year reached 1987 schools (524 preprimary, 970 elementary, 371 middle and 108 secondary and most of the educational provisions are in the rural areas.

#### **M. Reply to paragraph 17 of the list of issues**

38. Considering the under representation of female workers in the male dominated jobs, the government took drastic measures (affirmative action) to increase female participation in higher education such as science and technology, agriculture, medicine, marine science, technical vocational etc. which currently constitutes an average of 42.4% (12.8% in 1999-2001) and in the technical vocational education 47.1%. The young female graduates from higher education are deployed by the government in their respective fields with their male peers, thus changing the gender composition and balance.

39. The Labor law ensures the principle of equal pay for work of equal value and equal opportunity and treatment of women. To this end the MOLSW has been offering training and awareness raising programs in all establishments including employers of private companies. Private enterprises are under obligation to formulate collective agreements as per the Labor Proclamation and minimum wages in the private sector is based on collective agreement and varies according to the company scales.

40. Sexual violence against women is extremely condemned by the custom and values of the Eritrean people. In the national laws, it is one of the serious offences enshrined under the TPCE, entailing rigorous punishments. Sexual outrages of any sort or magnitude are punishable offences. Article 593 of the TPCE states that sexual intercourse or any other indecent act against woman, by taking advantage of her material or mental distress or of the authority he exercises over her by virtue of his position, function or capacity as protector, teacher, master or employer, or by virtue of any other similar relationship, is punishable.

**N. Reply to paragraph 18 of the list of issues**

41. The MOH has developed a handbook on Health Sector Response to Gender Based Violence and a clinical guideline which has been reviewed by experts from various disciplines. It describes the role of health workers and women centered care and is now being finalized.

42. The National Clinical Protocol for Safe Motherhood and New Born Care was updated in 2018. It elaborates the need for pre-conceptual care by both partners for optimal fetal outcome. In addition, the involvement of men beginning during the pre-conceptual period to the post-partum period as well as their active participation in family planning activities has been given emphasis. Moreover, due consideration has been given to paternal health in terms of physical, mental and psychological fitness as it influences maternal and fetal outcomes. The National Clinical Protocol stated that "... in addition, preconception care for men should include counseling on the timing of pregnancy and on fathering children when he and his partner choose to do so; on overcoming fertility issues; and on ensuring healthy pregnancy for his partner and optimal post-partum outcomes for both his partner and their child or children."

43. The need for access to modern contraceptive methods with adequate counseling and free of charge has been underlined. It is stated that, "If a woman is sexually active and wants to prevent or delay pregnancy, comprehensive contraceptive services should be offered. All women who wish to delay or prevent pregnancy should be offered the following:

- A full range of Eritrean Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved contraceptive methods;
- An assessment to identify safe methods using medical eligibility criteria;
- Counseling to help choose a contraceptive method;
- Prompt provision of the contraceptive method selected by the client (preferably on site; by referral-if necessary)."

44. The establishment of Adolescent friendly health services was another key strategy to increase access to family planning methods, irrespective of marital status, thereby reducing the incidence and risk of unsafe abortion. The policy guideline of 2017-2021 on the Reproductive Maternal Neonatal Adolescent Child Health and Aging (RMNACH) states that "Adolescent friendly health services will be available to all adolescents: married and unmarried, girls and boys, and will be further expanded and strengthened. Special focus will be given to establishing linkages with Voluntary Counseling and Testing Centers (VCTCs) and making appropriate referrals for HIV testing and RTI/STI management; providing comprehensive abortion care; and provision of information, counseling and services for contraception to both married and unmarried adolescents. The provision of contraceptives is to be made through adolescent friendly health services, while ensuring continuous contraceptive supplies and services. These services will be linked to a strong community-based component for generating demand and mobilizing adolescents to the Adolescent friendly Health services".

45. Data from the Family and Community Health Department suggests that there were 11 maternal deaths due to unsafe abortion reported in the last five years at the national level as verified through the Maternal and Peri-natal Death Surveillance and Response (MPDSR).

46. Abortion is a criminal offence pursuant to article 528 of the Transitional Penal code of Eritrea (TPCE), however there are certain exception in which abortion is not

punishable. Article 534 of the TPCE as amended by proclamation 4/1991 states as follows: Abortion is not punishable if it is carried on under the following conditions:

- To avoid grave and permanent danger to the life or health of the pregnant women/girl;
- If the pregnancy resulted from rape or incest;
- If the pregnancy is believed to cause a grave mental and psychological problem to the pregnant women/girl.

## **O. Reply to paragraph 19 of the list of issues**

47. The national economic development objective of GoSE is based on the principles of bridging the development gap between rural and urban areas, ensuring equitable distribution of wealth among all citizens and balanced and fair economic development in the whole country. One of the main economic strategies is based on self-reliance and the full participation of the people.

48. Eritrea's promising initiatives in poverty elimination and food security have particularly focused on introducing model initiatives for the structural transformation of the agricultural sector, the Minimum Integrated Household Agriculture Package (MIHAP), transformation of life of communities living in isolated settlements and villages and establishing saving and micro-credit schemes for the poor and the vulnerable. Soil and water conservation is a critical issue and considerable numbers of check dams and mega dams have been built to facilitate sustainable economic development.

49. The GoSE in collaboration with development partners has a plan to conduct the fourth round demographic and health survey; household income and expenditure survey (National Accounts System) and establishment of a functional civil registration and vital statistics system. This major intervention is expected to facilitate the availability of unified and reliable data and information.

50. Eritrean women enjoy equal and easy access in Saving & Micro Credit program (SMCP). The number of women beneficiaries has grown from 458 in 1996 to 33,874 women beneficiaries in the year 2016, of which 70% are women involved in farming. In 2018, the number of female clients has reached 39,912 with an increase of 17.8%, constituting 66% of the total beneficiaries of the micro credit and loan programs across the nation.

51. SMCP provides various types of loans i.e. Micro Business Loan (with a loan size of 6,000 up to 20,000), Small Seasonal Agricultural Loan (with a loan size of 6,000 up to 15,000), Small Business Loan (with a loan size from 30,000 up to 150,000) and Irrigation Agricultural Loan (with a loan size from 30,000 up to 80,000) in Nacfa. Women beneficiaries are key players in all types of this loan program. In 2019 a business empowerment initiative was taken by the Eritrean Women in Agribusiness Association (EWAA) in partnership with SMPC, to provide loan and build the capacity of Small Seasonal Agricultural clients towards export oriented Irrigation Agriculture businesses.

52. MoA's commitment on the role and contribution of women in agricultural development has been made explicit in the "Eritrean National Agricultural Development Strategy and Policy, Volumes I and II, October 2016" and encompasses the following:

- Addresses the need of unleashing the true potential of women to contribute in the household and national food security strategies, as well as poverty elimination and economic growth goals in Eritrea;

- Integrates policies and programs at ensuring equitable opportunities that deliver benefits to the women of the target communities;
- Acknowledges that gender mainstreaming is a fundamental commitment taken as a necessity and continuously works for the implementation of an effective legal and institutional basis to ensure equal access and ownership of land, property, credit and other financial services;
- Encourages the organization of women entrepreneurs to obtain necessary assistance from the Ministry and other stakeholders.

53. The land proclamation No.58/1994 in Article 4/4 guarantees equal access and opportunity to land use, both for habitat and subsidiary as well as commercial farming irrespective of their sex, religion, ethnicity and social status. The Government also, provides farming tools, selected seeds, fertilizers and conducts outreach services and training to all needy farmers including women farmers without any distinction. In the land allocation program conducted in 2017, in Debub region 65,721 (constituting 51.2% of total), in Gash-barka Region 18,549 (constituting 39.6% of total) and in Maekel region 15,314 (constituting 54.9% of total) was allotted to women farmers.

#### **P. Reply to paragraph 20 of the list of issues**

54. Women with disabilities enjoy equal rights in education, health service, sexual and reproductive right, access to justice, access to land ownership, employment and the right to a dignified life accorded for persons with disability.

55. Rural women, are decisively involved in decision making. Consultations at village level with investment companies and in particular mining projects to address the environmental impacts in their livelihood, provision of community assistance and training programmes on employment opportunities. Community assistance in the areas of operation by mining companies includes water supply, energy, rangeland development and diversion canals for irrigation.

#### **Q. Reply to paragraph 21 of the list of issues**

56. Rural women are decisively involved in consultations and decision making at all levels on issues relating to environment security and climate change issues. Villages adjacent to investment companies and in particular where mining projects operate are engaged to address the environmental impacts on their livelihood, provisions of community assistance programs and training on employment opportunities. Community assistance plans in the areas of operation by mining companies in particular include water supply, energy, and range land development and diversion canals for irrigation.

57. Climate change affects different segments of a society differently. Women and vulnerable groups in general are more susceptible to climate impacts and their adaptive capacity differs based on their access to assets, resources and the ability to participate in the decision-making process. Therefore the integration of gender considerations throughout climate change related actions is crucial for long-term sustainability and effectiveness of climate change actions. Eritrea is not significant contributor to the greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions but remains affected by the trends of climate change. In this vein, the MOLSW is in the process of mainstreaming climate and environment issues in its National Action Plan.

58. The effort to mitigate the damage to the environment inflicted by cutting forest trees for wood energy consumption remains a major issue. While there is already a

legal regulation enacted on this matter, a locally improvised fire wood energy saving stove (called *Megogo Adhanet*) has been introduced throughout the country, in particular in rural areas. In the last decade 95,913 fire wood energy saving stoves, have been introduced in rural areas and assessments shows that fuel wood consumption is reduced by 30-40%.

59. NUEW is partner organization of the Small Grant Project (SGP) introduced in 2009 to facilitate innovative approaches in community-based Environmental programs. The program has become a mechanism to scale-up tested and known approaches to community based environmental improvements, particularly those achieved through Sustainable Land Management (SLM) and to some extent through mitigation and adaptation to climate change. The program has supported 33 community-based activities during 2009-16. The SGP activities executed in Eritrea focused mainly on land degradation, climate change mitigation and biodiversity. About 80% of the project activities are accomplished by women.

60. NUEW is a member of the National climate change Steering committee set to review Eritrea's National Adaptation Plan (NAP). All relevant gender aspects have been mainstreamed in all the phases of NAP preparation, implementation and monitoring. NAP proposal will be finalized soon and will be submitted to Green Climate Fund (GCF).

61. A national gender, environment and Socio-economic and Livelihood assessment was carried out in the *Rora Habab locality* (in the Northern Red Sea Region) to establish the baseline and come up with concrete action plans to overcome the identified challenges. This project aims to 'restore degraded forest landscapes through community-based, sustainable and integrated natural resource management' and is already endorsed by Global Environment Facility (GEF) and ready for implementation.

## **R. Reply to paragraph 22 of the list of issues**

62. There are three types of marriage recognized under the TCCE, namely civil, religious and customary marriages. These types of marriages have equal status, share minimum common conditions and produce the same legal effect. The rules of the TCCE, however, do not apply to marriages celebrated in accordance with the Islamic Law. Such marriages are subject to the Islamic Law and handled by the *Sharia* Courts. However, where followers of the Islamic faith celebrated marriage in a form other than the Islamic Law, the Rules of the TCCE shall apply to govern the respective rights and obligations of the spouses.

63. Article 837 of the TCCE states that the sex, age and nationality of an heir shall not affect in the ascertainment of his/her rights to succession (inheritance). No discrimination is also made in transferring inheritable rights and obligations to legatees through testamentary provisions (wills).

## **S. Reply to paragraph 23 of the list of issues**

64. As indicated in the 6th report, notable action is being taken by certain ministries to collect and collate disaggregated data by gender.

65. The Ministry of agriculture (MoA) has introduced data collection template for subsistence and small and medium commercially engaged households, which will be applied by 2020, to analyze by gender disaggregated data by geographic location and measurable indicators also aligned to SDG indicators.

66. The quantitative indicators used in this template are:
- Number of women in the working force;
  - Number of women engaged in different farming practices;
  - Number of women who receive- different agricultural inputs; and
  - Number of women benefitting from several income generating activities.
67. The qualitative indicators focus on:
- The impact of opportunities provided to empower women (in line to the provisions set in the legal frameworks and policies);
  - Access created to improve the livelihood of women (access to means of production);
  - Changes achieved as a result of change in policy and strategy.
68. Ministry of Health has replaced the paper based data collection system by the electronic District Health Information System-2 (DHIS2) in most of the hospitals all over the country as of 2018. Thus the MOH maintains gender disaggregated information in its data collection system.
69. Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare has taken initiative in 2019 and revised all forms of data collection to be gender disaggregated. Training for all staff in the ministry is already underway towards the application of the new system by 2020.

### **III. Conclusion**

70. In this report efforts have been made to address the issues and questions posed by the CEDAW Committee and will be further discussed and enriched in the constructive engagement and dialogue with the CEDAW Committee slotted for 14 February 2020. The Government of the State of Eritrea once again renews its commitment to further consolidate the achievements made in the advancement of women's agenda and address the challenges still faced in several areas.

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