



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

Distr.: General  
5 March 2024

Original: English  
English, French and Spanish only

---

## Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

### List of issues and questions in relation to the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Belize\*

#### Women's rights and gender equality in relation to the coronavirus disease pandemic, recovery efforts and global crises

1. Please describe efforts made and mechanisms put in place to respond to the coronavirus disease (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, the energy crisis and other relevant areas. 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 elaborating adequate responses, such as policies, assistance programmes, recovery efforts and the consolidation of the rule of law. Please also 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.

#### Women's access to justice

2. Recalling the Committee's previous recommendations ([CEDAW/C/BLZ/CO/4](#), para. 12) and in the light of the indication in the State party's report (para. 46)<sup>1</sup> that it remains difficult and costly for women to access legal services and aid, please indicate what measures the State party is putting in place to address this issue and to enhance women's legal literacy, awareness of their rights and capacity to effectively claim their rights.

3. Please provide information on awareness-raising and training programmes that have been put in place to ensure that a gender-sensitive approach is applied in family law cases and in the treatment by the court system of survivors of gender-based violence, sexual minorities and other vulnerable individuals.

---

\* Adopted by the pre-sessional working group on 21 February 2024.

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, paragraph numbers refer to the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of the State party ([CEDAW/C/BLZ/5-6](#)).



**National machinery for the advancement of women**

4. Please provide updated information on the conversion of the National Women's Commission into a statutory body and the measures that have been taken to provide it with the authority, decision-making power and human and financial resources necessary to carry out its work effectively. Please indicate what steps have been or are being taken to strengthen the national machinery for the advancement of women at the district level. Please provide details on the focus areas of the National Gender Policy for the period 2021–2030.

**National human rights institution**

5. In the light of the feasibility study conducted in 2022 by the State party in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and with the Commonwealth on the establishment in Belize of a national human rights institution that is compliant with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles), which indicated a need for a properly resourced human rights institution ([A/HRC/WG.6/45/BLZ/1](#), para. 23), please explain what steps are being taken to establish an independent national human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles.

**Temporary special measures**

6. Recalling the Committee's previous recommendations ([CEDAW/C/BLZ/CO/4](#), para. 18) and in the light of the indication by the State party (paras. 103–112) that no temporary special measures have been put in place and that women continue to struggle to be elected in national and municipal elections, please explain how the State party intends to address, in a timely and effective manner, the low representation of women in public life and elected bodies. In particular, please provide details on specific measures put in place to address cultural attitudes that have a negative impact on the participation of women in public life.

**Gender-based violence against women**

7. Recalling the Committee's previous recommendations ([CEDAW/C/BLZ/CO/4](#), para. 20), please describe measures taken to provide training on gender-based violence against women for the judiciary, legal professionals and health providers. Please explain what steps have been taken to increase the number of female judges and law enforcement officials with a view to encouraging women to report cases of violence. Noting that there are only three shelters in the State party (para. 128), please indicate what concrete measures have been put in place to increase the number of shelters and strengthen the legal, medical and psychological support available across regions, including in rural areas. Please provide information regarding the results of the efforts undertaken by the State party to address gender-based violence against women and girls, in particular within the framework of the revised National Gender-Based Violence Action Plan and the social and behaviour change communication strategy to end violence against women and girls. Please also provide details on programmes and activities that were planned and carried out within the framework of the project on engaging men and boys to advance gender equality and help prevent gender-based violence.

8. Please indicate what steps have been taken to establish a centralized data collection system on the prevalence and incidence of violence against women. Please provide statistical data and information gathered on gender-based violence against women, including marital rape, especially the number of complaints, investigations, prosecutions, convictions and penalties imposed.

### **Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution**

9. Please indicate whether there have been investigations, prosecutions or convictions under the 2013 Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Act; if not, please explain why. Please detail efforts that have been made:

(a) To address the root causes of trafficking and exploitation of prostitution in the State party and adopt targeted measures to combat trafficking in persons and exploitation in prostitution, especially for groups considered most at risk of trafficking in Belize, including girls, migrants, those experiencing economic difficulties, and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women;

(b) To strengthen bilateral, subregional and multilateral cooperation to combat trafficking;

(c) To monitor the potential negative impact of increased tourism on the incidence of prostitution and trafficking of women in the State party.

### **Participation in political and public life**

10. Given the low level of participation by women in politics (para. 20), please indicate what measures, including temporary special measures, are being put in place to increase the representation of women in politics and decision-making positions in the public sphere.

### **Education**

11. Please provide information on:

(a) The dropout rate among girls as a result of child marriage and early pregnancy, and measures, including monitoring mechanisms and sanctions, to ensure that pregnant students stay in school during pregnancy and can return after childbirth;

(b) How, given the long-standing disparity in favour of men in technical and vocational education training centres (para. 151), the State party promotes the diversification of educational and professional choices for women and men and what incentives it offers to young women entering traditionally male-dominated fields of study;

(c) Measures to combat gender stereotypes in the education sector, including the training of teachers in combating gender stereotypes and the review of school curricula and educational materials and textbooks to eliminate discriminatory gender stereotypes;

(d) Efforts to provide comprehensive and age-appropriate sexuality education in all schools and at all levels of education.

12. Please provide detailed information on efforts to reduce illiteracy rates among women and girls, including through the conduct of literacy campaigns and the development of adult literacy programmes. Please also provide data on literacy, disaggregated by sex, age, disability, geographical location and other relevant factors.

### **Employment**

13. Recalling the Committee's previous recommendations ([CEDAW/C/BLZ/CO/4](#), para. 26), please explain what steps the State party has taken to eliminate horizontal and vertical occupational segregation and to encourage wage increases in female-dominated employment sectors. Please also describe efforts to facilitate the transition of women from the informal economy to the formal economy, including through the

provision of opportunities for professional training for women in all formal labour sectors.

14. In the light of the alleged underused and outdated nature of the Protection against Sexual Harassment Act (para. 161), please provide an update on the plans to review and revise that Act and to raise awareness among the general public, in particular women, about protective provisions found in legislation and policies.

### **Health**

15. In view of the information provided in paras. 170 and 171, please describe any efforts made since 2009 to review legislation relating to abortion. Please explain what steps the State party has taken, or envisages taking, to ensure that victims of rape or incest who wish to terminate unwanted pregnancies are not criminalized. Please also provide data on the number of maternal mortality cases resulting from abortion complications.

16. Recalling the Committee's previous recommendations ([CEDAW/C/BLZ/CO/4](#), para. 28), please provide an update on the development of a statutory instrument on adolescent sexual and reproductive health (para. 164). Please also describe efforts:

(a) To strengthen women's access to health care throughout the State party, in particular in rural and remote areas;

(b) To improve the availability of modern contraceptives with a view to preventing early pregnancies and unsafe abortions;

(c) To prevent and combat HIV/AIDS, as well as non-communicable diseases, and to improve the prevention, early detection and treatment of cervical and breast cancers.

### **Economic empowerment of women**

17. Please describe measures in place to address the barriers that women face in accessing land ownership, loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit, and to provide them with financial services, including financial technology (fintech), microcredit at low interest rates, start-up and scale-up funds, venture capital, equipment financing and leasing and social protection for women in the informal economy.

### **Rural women**

18. Please describe the work of the Gender Advocates Programme launched by the National Women's Commission and the Women and Family Support Department (para. 186) and explain in more detail how that programme is intended to strengthen services in rural areas and empowers and improves the situation of rural women.

### **Indigenous women**

19. Indigenous women and adolescent girls are reportedly significantly less likely to benefit from services and more likely to have worse maternal health outcomes. Recalling general recommendation No. 39 (2022) on the rights of Indigenous women and girls, please indicate what steps are being taken or envisaged to provide targeted protection to Indigenous women in order to address the systematic inequalities that they face. Please indicate whether new projects similar to the "Expanding the reach of our Indigenous women" project, which ended in 2023, are being put into place to empower indigenous women.

**Women with disabilities**

20. Please explain what measures are being taken, including within the framework of the long-term development plan entitled “Horizon 2030: National Development Framework for Belize 2010–2030”, to address the situation of women with disabilities.

**Climate change and disaster risk reduction**

21. Recalling general recommendation No. 37 (2018) on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change, please provide details on the implementation of the National Climate Change Gender Action Plan for the period 2022–2027. Please also describe measures in place to provide small-scale women farmers with access to financial support to foster climate resilience.

**Marriage and family relations**

22. Please indicate what steps are being taken to ensure the equal inheritance rights of women and men.

23. Please indicate what legislative and other measures are in place to ensure that domestic violence is taken into consideration in judicial decisions on custody and visitation rights. Please also describe steps taken to conduct training and awareness-raising activities for judges, mediators, lawyers, youth welfare officers, law enforcement agencies and local executive bodies with a view to ensuring that they are aware of the rights of women and children and of their own role in protecting victims of domestic violence and that they comply with provisions protecting the rights of women.

---