



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Information received from Costa Rica on follow-up to the concluding observations on its eighth periodic report***

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* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

** The annexes to the present document are available on the Committee's website.



I. Introduction

1. When it ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1984, Costa Rica made a commitment to submit periodic reports on its implementation of the Convention. In 2021, Costa Rica submitted its eighth report, covering the period from July 2017 to July 2020. In 2022, it received the list of issues and questions from the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and updated the information on the relevant areas, using data from January 2021 to June 2022. The delegation of Costa Rica participated in the constructive dialogue held at the eighty-fourth session of the Committee, which ran from 6 to 24 February 2023 in Geneva, and, on the basis of that dialogue, the Committee issued its concluding observations on the report in March 2023. In paragraph 54 of that document, the Committee requested Costa Rica to provide, within two years, additional information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 16 (b), 18, 34 (b) and 40 (b). The present report is submitted in response to that recommendation, in keeping with the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international treaties (para. 56).

II. Methodology

2. The National Institute for Women, as the lead institution for the promotion and defence of women's human rights, coordinates the inter-institutional platform established in 2011 for reporting on the implementation of the Convention. Representatives from 55 institutions including ministries, autonomous institutions and State universities, which have direct obligations under the Convention, currently participate in the work of the Institute. The present report was drafted using inputs from public and open-access sources of information, including institutions such as the Legislative Assembly. Seven public institutions – the National Institute for Women, the Office of the Ombudsperson of Costa Rica, the Municipal Development and Assistance Institute, the Ministry of Health, the Costa Rican Social Insurance Fund, the Directorate General for Migration and Alien Affairs, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – as well as the National Union of Local Governments also provided information in line with their nature and responsibilities.

III. Steps taken by the country to fulfil specific recommendations

Additional information relating to the concluding observations ([CEDAW/C/CRI/CO/8](#))

National machinery for the advancement of women and gender mainstreaming (paragraph 16 (b))

3. Municipalities are responsible for establishing municipal offices for women's affairs and providing them with appropriate budgets.

4. Efforts made to strengthen the municipal offices for women's affairs include the adoption of Act No. 8679 (2008) amending a number of articles of the Municipal Code. As part of the amendment to Act No. 8679 adopted in 2010, however, responsibilities in the areas of equality, gender and human rights were taken away from municipal councils and left to the sole discretion of mayors' offices.

5. For that reason, in 2024, the National Institute for Women filed a complaint (File No. 24-016520-0007-CO), challenging the constitutionality of the amendment on the

grounds that it had been adopted without consultation or discussion and in violation of the principle of non-regression in human rights. The complaint was dismissed for reasons of form. Efforts to reinstate the 2008 provisions will continue.

6. In 2022, Act No. 10235 on the prevention, response, punishment and eradication of violence against women in politics was adopted. The Act is the basis for the defence of women in public office who experience gender-based discrimination. It presents an opportunity to better position the municipal offices for women's affairs as local mechanisms that facilitate the provision of specialized, gender-sensitive advice and support to women leaders and elected representatives in public bodies and social organizations. As at May 2025, 57 municipal regulations had been developed and issued under the Act (see annex 1).

7. The National Union of Local Governments has developed a model regulation for municipalities in accordance with the Act, to strengthen its operation within these entities. The Union has updated its document governing gender mandates in the Municipal Code of Costa Rica and associated regulations, which is a reference tool for local governments.

8. The National Union of Local Governments and the network of municipal offices for women's affairs have developed a plan of action for the 2023–2025 period to promote the legal and financial stability of the municipal offices for women's affairs. It sets out strategies under six lines of action: sustainable financing mechanisms, incorporation of the performance of municipal offices for women's affairs into the local government management index, training programmes for municipal civil servants, self-care plans, better working conditions for women managers of municipal offices for women's affairs, and gender-sensitive local policies.

9. Municipal offices for women's affairs may also be strengthened through a regional development strategy implemented by the National Institute for Women, through its six regional offices, in the performance of its lead role. This line of action is necessary in the light of the reform of the Municipal Code, which has resulted in some municipalities altering how municipal offices for women's affairs are established.

10. The National Institute for Women seeks to strengthen both municipal mechanisms and the mechanisms of strategic local partners, taking into account the unique needs of women shaped by the canton in which they reside (see annex 2). The municipal mechanisms are mainly the municipal offices for women's affairs, but the National Institute for Women also works with municipal commissions on the status of women, gender units, and similar bodies, and social development units and similar bodies. It provides support through the implementation of the workplan of the regional network of municipal offices for women's affairs; technical and advisory assistance for women managers; institutional advocacy for the establishment and/or reopening of offices; integration of municipal offices for women's affairs into regional and inter-institutional mechanisms; training on the content of gender policies and how to mainstream them in local government, inter-institutional coordination and job networks; assistance and development of strategies for addressing gender-based violence, including the development of safe spaces and "Purple Points"; advisory services for the development and implementation of municipal policies on gender equality; and implementation of joint measures to promote the economic empowerment of women, such as the Fomujeres fund (see annex 3).

11. Activities carried out for municipal civil servants included the following: in 2022, a course on new egalitarian and non-violent masculinities in local government for 15 local governments that received assistance from the Municipal Development and Assistance Fund; in 2024, workshops on migration, human rights and health,

conducted by the National Union of Local Governments and the Pan-American Development Foundation. In 2024, the National Union of Local Governments also held a forum on the theme “Voices of equality: challenges and progress in gender policy” for women serving as councillors or representatives on municipal councils and other municipal stakeholders, aimed at enhancing their knowledge of the implementation of gender-sensitive public policies and identifying strategies for promoting equality of opportunities and strengthening measures for the prevention and eradication of gender-based violence.

12. In 2024, in a bid to develop and strengthen partnerships and leadership among women in politics, the National Union of Local Governments also organized a meeting of women in municipal government, in support of the Costa Rica Network of Women in Municipal Government. In addition, to promote more efficient and inclusive government, in 2025 the Municipal Development and Assistance Institute, in collaboration with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), organized a sharing-of-experiences event for women deputy mayors of various cantons, to discuss challenges and projections relating to the digital transformation of local government.

13. Through the Network of Cantons Promoting the Sustainable Development Goals, led by the Municipal Development and Assistance Institute in conjunction with the United Nations and the Ministry of Planning and Economic Policy, a joint programme with UN-Women entitled “Conexión ODS”, which was initiated in 2024, is still being implemented in 2025. Under the programme, organized women’s groups and civil servants receive training on women’s rights, empowerment and gender equality. The programme is being implemented in three cantons (Sarchí, Atenas and Palmares), with the help of partners such as the Ministry of Science, Innovation, Technology and Telecommunications, the Ministry of Planning and Economic Policy and the National University of Costa Rica.

14. Efforts have been made to strengthen the work of existing municipal offices for women’s affairs by providing training and support for the development of measures to mainstream gender in not only their operations but also in local government management. In addition, political advocacy efforts are under way to encourage mayors’ offices and municipal councils to establish new mechanisms. Nevertheless, the legal progress that has been achieved through Act No. 8679 (2008) needs to be acknowledged.

National human rights institution (paragraph 18)

15. In follow-up to the recommendation made by the Committee in paragraph 18 of its concluding observations with respect to its strengthening, the Office of the Ombudsperson of Costa Rica has taken a number of measures to strengthen itself, including gradually restoring the configuration of its personnel (from a small group of three women to the current group of five women), and repositioning one professional post and its management and secretariat services. The strengthening of the Office has been advanced through the efforts of the current administration to internally reorganize and prioritize issues.

16. The Office of the Ombudsperson has requested the Legislative Assembly and the Ministry of Finance to increase its budget so that it can better address its financial needs, including the needs of the Ombudsperson Office for Women. Nevertheless, the type of budget increase it has requested has yet to be finalized.

17. Bill No. 23217, which sought to amend the Office of the Ombudsperson of Costa Rica Act, was rejected by the Legislative Assembly (Rejection Notice No. 17693).

18. On 27 February 2023, Angie Cruickshank Lambert, an attorney with a master's degree in international law and human rights from the University for Peace, was appointed Ombudsperson of Costa Rica, as documented in the minutes of the 143rd regular plenary session of the Legislative Assembly, which is the body responsible for making the appointment. Her appointment marks a milestone, since she is the first woman of African descent to hold the position in the country. The Office recognizes, however, that the appointment process should be more streamlined and expeditious.

Health (paragraph 34 (b))

19. With respect to the recommendation set forth in paragraph 34 (b) of the concluding observations concerning the technical guidelines for the therapeutic termination of pregnancy, the existing national guidelines are being implemented.

20. Accordingly, the Costa Rican Social Insurance Fund, through its webmaster, has informed its entire staff that the protocol is available and that they are required to be familiar with and apply it. A training plan has been developed for the staff of all health facilities in the network that provides care to pregnant women, including medical and nursing professionals. The training is being carried out through a women's healthcare standardization programme, in collaboration with the chief of obstetrics at México Hospital and the Bioethics Office of the Costa Rican Social Insurance Fund, and with technical and financial support from the United Nations Population Fund office in Costa Rica.

21. In 2023 and 2024, training sessions were conducted at seven networks of health facilities, including health centres (primary and secondary care), local and regional hospitals, and national hospitals that provide gynaecological and obstetric care (22 hospitals with maternity units). In 2025, residents in the final year of gynaecology and obstetrics specialization were included in the training. The plan for the second half of 2025 is to continue to provide training to residents and centres that were not able to participate in 2024.

22. It is important to continue to step up training activities for staff involved in providing care and support to women at all stages of the process, as well as activities related to the recording, processing, analysis and dissemination of the relevant indicators.

Migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women (paragraph 40 (b))

23. With respect to the recommendation set out in paragraph 40 aimed at streamlining refugee and asylum claims, it should be noted that Costa Rica has a long-standing tradition of, and commitment to, granting asylum. It is important to clarify that the reference to asylum covers two related concepts in international protection: refugee (a technical, apolitical and humanitarian status under the jurisdiction of the Directorate General for Migration and Alien Affairs) and political asylum (a status granted at the discretion of the executive branch) (see annex 4).

24. Costa Rica is a transit and destination country for a variety of mixed migration flows, and it hosts individuals who have been granted "asylum based on refugee status". The Directorate General for Migration and Alien Affairs has found from its experience that some individuals who submit refugee claims are not necessarily interested in settling in the country. Nevertheless, when a refugee claim is submitted, the Directorate General begins a process that concludes with a personalized decision based on the case and the criteria of the bodies involved in the process (the Commission on Restricted Visas and Refugees and the Administrative Migration Tribunal).

25. In recent years, the number of refugee claims in Costa Rica has increased. In January 2023, migrants and persons in need of protection accounted for 11.66 per cent of the country's population, which makes Costa Rica the country with the most foreign-born residents in Central America.¹ All told, 34,584 refugee claims (14,064 from women and 20,520 from men) were submitted in 2023, and 28,306 claims (10,740 from women and 17,566 from men) were submitted in 2024 (see annex 5).

26. The significant and steady increase in the number of refugee claims has outstripped institutional response capacity, which has led to longer processing times, especially for those individuals who intend to settle in the country as refugees. Against that backdrop, the Refugee Unit of the Directorate General for Migration and Alien Affairs has implemented various strategies, including revamping its services platform and redesigning the claims processing method and procedure, and has achieved better results, especially in terms of resolution timelines.

27. The Directorate General for Migration and Alien Affairs and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have developed an institutional strategy for streamlining efforts to address delays in case resolution, opening up, on an exceptional basis, additional appointment slots. The number of appointments for those submitting refugee claims for the first time was increased from 420 appointments per week prior to 24 September 2024 to 960 from 30 October 2024 onward. The number of appointments for requesting a work permit was also increased, from 30 appointments per week to 200. Despite those measures, the service became yet again overloaded almost immediately. Since 2015, a total of 22,983 individuals have been granted refugee status. In 2024, 1,890 individuals (826 women and 1,063 men) were granted refugee status (see annex 6).

28. With support from UNHCR, between 25 October and December 2024, 9,058 persons visited the Refugee Unit to submit requests to renew their applicant identification card or work permit and update their information, which will help to identify cases of foreigners who are interested in continuing with the process.

29. Executive Decree No. 43810 MGP (2022) could have resulted in the imposition of certain restrictions on effective access to refugee claims for the first time in the country, but it was amended in 2024 by Executive Decree No. 44501 MGP, which reinstated the original method for requesting refugee status by eliminating the time limit and restrictions relating to passage through a safe third country. Another notable change is that adults now only need to submit a refugee claim to receive work authorization for the time required for processing the claim through its final resolution.

30. With respect to the recommendation to increase the human, technical and financial resources of the Refugee Unit and the Commission on Restricted Visas and Refugees, since the adoption of Act No. 10159, the Public Employment Framework Act, there are regulations limiting the hiring of new staff, with restrictions around the frequency of such hirings, the number of people hired and the required budget. Accordingly, even though the Directorate General for Migration and Alien Affairs has requested an increase in the Unit's staff, the lead institution has rejected those requests. As a result, the Unit currently runs with five staff members, supported by 35 individuals thanks to support from UNHCR through the United Nations Office for Project Services.

31. It is important to clarify that the Commission is a collegial body consisting of a number of heads or their representatives, not an office as such. As a result, it is the

¹ Report prepared as input from Costa Rica for the fourth universal periodic review of the Human Rights Council, April 2024. Available at <https://cejilmovilidadmesoamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/2024-04-05-Informe-Alternativo-EPU-CR-MH.pdf>.

Unit that provides facilities for the Commission's meetings and technical and administrative support as required, although the Commission's responsibilities cannot be delegated to third parties.

32. Progress has been made towards closing regulatory gaps, as shown. Nevertheless, despite the efforts and resources allocated to streamlining the processing of refugee claims, the volume of claims continues to rise owing to increasing demand and the restrictions on the hiring of additional staff for key bodies involved in case resolution.
