



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

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

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**Responses to the list of issues and questions with regard to
the consideration of the combined initial and second
periodic reports**

Bahrain*

Question 1:

The Report indicates in paragraphs 55-56 that the Convention became part of domestic law once it was passed. Please provide information on court or other legal or administrative cases, if any, in which the provisions of the Convention were invoked, and please provide information on the outcome of such cases.

Upon Bahrain's accession to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its publication in the Official Gazette, the Convention acquired force of law, in accordance with the provisions of the Bahraini Constitution, article 37.

The provisions of the Convention have not been applied directly in cases that have been considered, because the provisions relating to women's rights that are contained in the Convention, to which the Government has registered no reservations, are included in Bahraini law. The regulations and provisions of Islamic law have been applied in personal status cases that have been or are currently being considered.

Question 2:

Please provide information on the number of women who have been appointed to the Constitutional Court, and indicate whether there are any training programmes on the Convention for the members of the Court.

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



One woman has been appointed to the Constitutional Court, which is composed of seven members in total. Members are selected from a group of individuals who possess expertise and practical experience in juridical matters. Given that the members of the Court are nationally recognized senior legal experts, training programmes are not necessary.

Question 3:

Paragraph 80 refers to the fact that the application of CEDAW, article 1, continues to face many obstacles. Please provide a detailed overview of the measures that have been taken to increase women's awareness of their constitutional and legal rights. Please provide detailed information on efforts exerted to overcome social, cultural and traditional convictions that prevent women from enjoying their rights and the impact those efforts have had on the advancement of women.

With respect to the measures that Bahrain has taken to increase women's awareness of their constitutional and legal rights and the efforts that have been exerted to overcome social and cultural convictions and traditions, SCW and other local women's organizations have arranged many training workshops, some of which aim to increase women's awareness of their various political, constitutional and legal rights, while others aim to urge women to attain leadership and decision-making positions. In addition, many programmes and workshops have been carried out as part of an integrated "legal culture for all" programme. Activities that were undertaken in the 2007-2008 period include the following:

1. Meetings with school students and teachers in order to explain the provisions of CEDAW.
2. Workshop for working women in order to explain the provisions of the civil service law and, in particular, the rights and responsibilities of female employees.
3. A workshop on management and decision-making that addressed the issue of women as leaders capable of making sound decisions.

As for overcoming social and cultural convictions that prevent women from enjoying their rights, SCW arranged the National Conference on Gender Mainstreaming that was held on 9 and 10 July 2008. The Conference raised awareness of the importance of achieving equality between men and women if the social development process is to be successful. Local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have also made efforts in that field.

Question 4:

According to paragraph 167 of the Report, the Ministry of the Interior is preparing a draft law aimed at eliminating nationality-related cases of discrimination against women. Please describe the current status of the draft law, giving a detailed account of its content, and state whether it will allow Bahraini women married to foreigners to transfer citizenship to their children.

To date, the draft law concerning the elimination of nationality-related cases of discrimination against women and the transfer of citizenship to the children of a Bahraini woman and a foreign father, has not been passed. Notwithstanding the

efforts exerted by SCW, the children of a Bahraini mother and foreign father may only be granted Bahraini nationality if they fulfil the conditions of the law in force.

However, we should add here that, albeit the law has not been amended, the Government, following directives from His Majesty the King, does grant citizenship to the children of a Bahraini mother and foreign father, using the legal powers vested in the King, and allow them access to educational services.

Question 5:

According to paragraph 92 of the Report, intensified training and educational programmes targeting attorneys, judges, and legal and judicial workers are needed. Please provide information on any programmes that have been carried out and the impact of such training.

The Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs has established the Judicial and Legal Studies Institute, part of the mandate of which is to hold workshops in order to train judges and legal researchers in judicial work. On 11 September 2007, the Institute held a workshop on personal status and court procedures, and from 2 to 11 June 2008, another workshop was held, on family reconciliation, which was attended by a number of men and women working in the legal field.

The Institute also organized a special distance-learning programme during which consideration was given to issues relating to international human rights standards and the principle of gender equality; custody; children's rights; and the role of family reconciliation offices in dealing with marital breakdown.

With regard to the impact of that training, time is needed to assess its outcome, because it is continuing. However, there is no question but that it will play a role in increasing awareness of women's rights and issues.

Question 6:

The Report states that, despite the measures that have been taken to increase their involvement, many impediments continue to block Bahraini women's participation in politics and public life. Please provide information on new concrete measures, policies and training materials relating to the leadership role of women that are available throughout the country and are intended to increase the number of female participants in political and public life.

We should like to clarify that the Report did not say that Bahraini women were prevented from participating in political and public life: the Bahraini Charter, Constitution and law all state that men and women are equal in all fields and, in particular, in respect of political participation. With a view to activating that equality, Bahrain has taken a number of measures, including the following:

1. The institution of several prizes aimed at empowering Bahraini working women, including the King's Prize, which are designed to encourage ministries and Government and private institutions to support, empower and train Bahraini women and include them in development plans.
2. The introduction of a financial grants programme for political groups, aimed at supporting women in assuming leadership positions in such groups and standing for and voting in elections.

3. The introduction, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme, of a political empowerment programme that provides female candidates with in-kind, technical and moral support.

4. The initiative launched by SCW to provide female electoral candidates with study grants in order to gain the diploma in political development that is offered by the Bahraini Institute for Political Development.

5. The holding of several workshops designed to support and empower Bahraini women and increase their knowledge of their political rights. The most recent such workshop took place at SCW and was aimed at the professional empowerment of working women, in preparation for their assumption of leadership positions in management and their involvement in decision-making.

Question 7:

Paragraph 122 of the Report states that all groups in Bahraini society are concerned with the serious issue of domestic violence. Please state whether any draft law on such violence has been considered and describe the legal redress and social services available to victims.

The crime of domestic violence is dealt with under the current penal code. The legislative authorities have directed that the provisions of that law should be amended.

With respect to legal redress, victims of domestic violence may seek refuge with the police or with women's organizations, as is the case in most Arab countries.

With regard to the social services available to victims, the following points should be considered:

- The Batelco Care Centre provides care for victims of domestic violence through training and awareness services for women who have been mentally and physically abused, with a view to protecting them from the violence to which they are subjected. Official and voluntary bodies also undertake relevant campaigns.
- A centre has been set up within SCW in order to receive complaints from women and provide free legal assistance to complainants if they have been injured. That task is undertaken in addition to its main task of dealing with issues related to domestic violence.
- Thanks to efforts exerted by official and voluntary bodies, a battered women's shelter has been established in order to provide care and awareness services.
- The Ministry of Interior has made every effort to increase the number of women police officers and train them in dealing with domestic violence.
- The Judicial and Legal Studies Institute has been established in order to provide training for judges before they assume their positions, which has a positive impact on their approach to women's issues.
- A workshop has been held in order to raise women's awareness of the mechanisms and means that are available as protection against domestic violence.

Question 8:

Paragraph 125 of the Report states that a judicial institute has been established in order to train judges in dealing with cases of domestic violence and that women police officers have been trained to deal with such issues. Please provide information on the impact of that training; statistical data on the number of cases of domestic violence that have been considered; and information on the outcome of any relevant decisions. Please advise whether male police officers receive the same training.

Statistical data on the number of cases of domestic violence indicate the following:

- Statistics from the voluntary Batelco Anti-Domestic Violence Centre show that it dealt with 209 cases of domestic violence in 2008.
- Statistics from the Ministry of Social Development safe house that was opened in 2007 in order to provide a shelter for victims of domestic violence show that it provided refuge for 39 women and 31 children victims of such violence in 2007. A hotline has recently been opened for calls from victims of domestic violence which refers them to the appropriate authorities.
- Statistics from the Bahrain Centre for Child Protection that was opened in April 2007, which is part of the Ministry of Social Development, show that the Centre received 86 child victims of domestic violence. The aforementioned bodies provide health, counselling and legal services for such victims.

The Ministry of Interior is making every effort to train police officers of both sexes, on the basis that domestic violence is considered illegal under the law and should be prevented. The Judicial and Legal Studies Institute has therefore provided Ministry of Interior associates with several human rights courses, and that training has unquestionably contributed to an increase in police capacity to deal with cases of domestic violence.

Question 9:

Paragraph 129 of the Report states that, in order to deal with violence against women, the sharia judiciary must be reformed and law-enforcement agents trained in human rights and in methods for handling such cases. Please describe what, if any, reform of the judiciary has been effected and the impact that such reform is likely to have on combating violence against women. Please also provide information on the training programmes that are arranged for judges and law-enforcement agents and aimed, in particular, at equipping them to deal with cases of violence against women.

Many measures have been taken with respect to the reform of the judiciary, with a view to contributing to the resolution of the problems that affect women. The procedural code for religious courts has been amended by characterizing religious cases as urgent, while the clauses applicable to civil and commercial matters in the law relating to proof have been amended in order to make it easier to provide evidence of the financial contribution made by a woman in the course of married life. The number of legal and criminal provisions dealing with such cases has been increased and the administration of religious courts has been upgraded.

With respect to training courses, the Judicial and Legal Studies Institute held a workshop on that matter in June 2008, in addition to many workshops and courses on issues that affect women, including the question of equality and family reconciliation bureaux and their role in dealing with marital breakdown. The Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Justice family reconciliation offices also play an effective role in resolving family conflicts.

Question 10:

Paragraph 325 of the Report states that the Government has referred a draft family law to the legislative authorities for approval, while paragraph 130 states that such a law would reduce domestic violence and violence against women. Please provide information on the current status of that law and the schedule for its adoption.

Official bodies represented by SCW and other voluntary women's organizations have exerted many efforts in respect of that important law and with a view to raising awareness thereof.

Civil consensus is required before a family status law can be promulgated, as Bahrain has stated before the Human Rights Council.

Question 11:

Please provide information on any national plans to devise a national strategy for the collection of data on violence against women.

The national plan for the implementation of the strategy for the advancement of women includes such measures to reduce violence as the following:

- To amass data on violence against women by preparing a database in coordination with the relevant parties.
- To attempt, in cooperation with the pertinent parties, to effect the promulgation of a family status law.
- To attempt, in cooperation with the relevant parties, to develop legislation governing the courts and legal proceedings.
- To attempt, in cooperation with the relevant parties, to effect the promulgation of an anti-domestic violence law; raise women's awareness of their legal rights; increase the number of refuges for battered women; and develop related administrative and technical performance.
- To train staff working in the area of domestic violence, support workshops and seminars and increase family guidance programmes provided by official and voluntary bodies.

Question 12:

Paragraph 136 of the Report states that a division has been formed within the Ministry of Interior with responsibility for prosecuting persons involved in human trafficking crimes and that a draft law to combat human trafficking is under consideration. Please provide statistical data on the number of prosecution cases that have been brought and their outcome, and on any cooperation with foreign countries aimed at combating trafficking. Please also

provide information on the nature of the draft law on human trafficking and the schedule for its adoption.

The 2008 annual report on trafficking in persons recently issued by the United States Department of State placed Bahrain on the Tier 2 Watch List. That tier comprises countries that are exerting great efforts in that field and the classification constitutes a renewed acknowledgement of the progress that Bahrain has made towards democracy and in protecting and upholding human rights. Those efforts have been strengthened by the reform project of His Majesty King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa.

Well aware of the significance and menace of human trafficking, Bahrain promulgated law No. 1 of 2008 on human trafficking. That law is considered to be one of the best laws in the field at the international level, because it adopts all the provisions set forth in the United Nations Convention on Organized Transnational Crime and its additional protocols.

Pursuant to a decision by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking has been established. It comprises the representatives of several ministries and relevant groups and is responsible for devising programmes to prevent and combat human trafficking and protect trafficking victims from further harm, as well as for coordinating with national machinery in respect of human trafficking data.

Official and other bodies in Bahrain have held numerous workshops and seminars on the problem of human trafficking and, in particular, cases of trafficking to which foreign men and women workers may be exposed.

With regard to the efforts that have been exerted to cooperate with foreign countries in combating trafficking, Bahrain has taken part in many conferences and seminars, with a view to exchanging ideas and proposals for joint coordination in combating the phenomenon. Such meetings have included the Vienna Forum to Fight Human Trafficking, which was held from 13 to 15 February 2008, and the course to build capacity and raise awareness in the field of human trafficking that was hosted by Bahrain in January 2007 and arranged by IOM in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior of Bahrain. Such cooperation could be reinforced by the opening of an IOM office in Manama with a view to undertaking a project designed to build capacities and raise awareness of human trafficking.

Bahrain has become a party to many anti-human trafficking regional and international agreements and conventions, including the United Nations Convention on Organized Transnational Crime and its additional protocol, the United Nations Convention on Slavery and the United Nations 1956 Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery.

It should be noted that in November 2008, Bahrain, in cooperation with the Suzanne Mubarak International Women's Movement for Peace, will host an international conference on combating human trafficking.

Question 13:

According to paragraph 137 of the Report, women's and human rights associations have started to examine cases involving the trafficking of women

and their exploitation for immoral purposes, and ways of suppressing such occurrences. Please provide information on the outcome of those studies and indicate whether awareness-raising campaigns have been introduced, including campaigns aimed at foreign workers. Please also provide statistics on women who are being trafficked in and out of the country.

The Report states that cases of the trafficking and exploitation of women are being examined, and that the issue continues to be studied. Groups involved with foreign workers' rights and women's and human rights associations organize awareness-raising campaigns, in order to inform targeted groups of women and female workers of their rights and human trafficking-related issues.

The National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking distributes publications and pamphlets in various languages and, in particular, Asian languages, at ports and the airport. Those publications contain basic information on the rights of foreign workers and the relevant procedures. They provide the hotline number to call in order to report problems or seek advice on any issue affecting foreign workers during their time in Bahrain.

The Ministry of Social Development has organized courses intended for civil servants involved in combating human trafficking, the most recent of which took place in March 2008.

Public awareness-raising campaigns addressing the question of human trafficking and exploitation have also been organized. Coordination has taken place with foreign embassies in Bahrain in order to discuss concerns about the issue.

The safe house has at its disposal an entire floor that can accommodate up to 126 female foreign workers who have been the victims of violence or human trafficking. Its statistics show that its services have been used by 62 female household servants who had suffered psychological or physical violence or were the victims of human trafficking. The necessary legal measures have been taken to resolve their cases and repatriate them voluntarily. Only two victims of human trafficking who had suffered sexual exploitation were admitted to the safe house. Their repatriation was organized in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

The Ministry of Labour confirms that a hotline exists for foreign workers to make complaints concerning human rights violations. However, under the provisions of the Labour Law for the Private Sector which was promulgated under decree law No. 23 of 1976, and its amendments, the Ministry's role is limited by law to such labour rights as, inter alia, wages, holidays and working hours. If the Ministry receives complaints via the hotline regarding violations of such other areas of law, as criminal law, the Ministry can only direct the caller to the authorities competent to investigate such violations, including the police or the public prosecution service.

Question 14:

The Report states in paragraphs 113-119 that a national strategy for the advancement of Bahraini women and elimination of stereotypical attitudes towards the role of women has been prepared. The Ministry of Information has also signed a cooperation protocol with the Supreme Council for Women (SCW) concerning the action to be taken against all types of media that show or

encourage gender-based violence. Please provide information on the nature and current status of the implementation of the strategy and protocol.

Our response to question 11 gives an outline of the national strategy in respect of domestic violence. It remains to highlight the measures taken in accordance with the cooperation protocol between the Ministry of Information and SCW in respect of media portrayal of gender-based violence. Some of those measures are set forth below:

SCW has organized workshops and awareness-raising courses for Bahraini and Arab men and women who work in the media sector, exploring the concept of gender and other issues affecting women. Those included an awareness-raising course for Arab media workers, held in cooperation with the Arab Women Organization, and a workshop on the Political Empowerment Programme.

The national plan for the implementation of the women's empowerment strategy stressed the role of the media in helping to raise awareness in society of women's issues.

The workshops and seminars organized by SCW for men and women in the media tackled women's issues in a general sense; the national strategy also includes workshops and courses on gender-based violence and ways of addressing it.

Question 15:

The Report states in paragraph 115 that SCW and the Ministry of Education signed a cooperation protocol in 2006 regarding a review of curriculums and educational materials in order to eliminate stereotypes of women. Please provide information on that review and on whether it has been undertaken in respect of the educational curriculum. If not, please indicate what the obstacles are to its implementation. Please provide information on any awareness-raising measures carried out through the media and public education programmes which have been undertaken or are planned with a view to making it clear that violence against women is socially and morally unacceptable.

The Ministry of Education has introduced a new curriculum entitled "Citizenship" for inclusion among Ministry curriculums. It includes human rights issues, in order to strengthen and improve the position of women in society.

In 2007-2008, SCW organized an awareness-raising course for secondary-school pupils and a number of male and female teachers at Government and private schools in all five governorates, with the aim of introducing the provisions of CEDAW.

As regards making it clear that violence against women is socially and morally unacceptable, courses on criminal protection have been organized. Those courses explain the forms of protection available for women under the Penal Code and refer to real-life cases of rape and sexual harassment.

In order to raise awareness of the issue in the workplace, a course has been organized on the legal protection available for working women, with the aim of informing women of their rights and of ways to guarding against violence from employees.

Numerous family activities have been organized with a view to combating domestic violence, the most recent of which are set forth below:

- A conference on domestic violence, entitled “Causes and solutions”, was held on 16 and 17 February 2008. It raised awareness of the dangers posed to families and society by domestic violence, particularly when directed against women, and explored ways to curtail and address the issue.
- A meeting in June 2008 of civil society organizations active in the domain of domestic violence, at which a presentation was made on the outcome of a visit by a Bahraini delegation to the United States, which was aimed at learning about that country’s experience of combating domestic violence.

Question 16:

The Report states in paragraph 191 that as part of the plan for developing curriculums that was adopted for 2004/05, textbooks will include discussion of the social, political and economic roles of women in an effort to eliminate gender stereotypes. Please specify whether the new plan has been incorporated into curriculums and whether its implementation has been monitored in order to verify whether goals on the elimination of stereotypes are being achieved.

As was indicated in the answer to question 15, the Ministry of Education has completed preparation of a new curriculum entitled “Citizenship” for inclusion among Ministry curriculums. The curriculum includes human rights issues and is intended to strengthen and improve the position and value of women in society. It will certainly take time to assess the impact of the curriculum, which was only recently introduced, and will require more than one or two years to evaluate.

Question 17:

According to paragraph 136 of the Report, a hotline has been established in order to receive complaints and offer advice, and inspectors have been appointed to monitor the conditions of foreign workers. Please provide gender-disaggregated statistical data on the number of complaints received, and indicate whether any cases of prosecution have been brought and, if so, the outcome of those cases. Please provide information on the work of inspectors in monitoring the working conditions of foreign women workers.

The Ministry of Labour of Bahrain has opened a hotline to receive complaints and give advice and counselling to male and female workers. The Ministry made an announcement in the daily press when the hotline became active. However, the number of complaints and prosecutions has been relatively small because, on the one hand, of lack of awareness among foreign workers and, on the other hand, to the fear of unfair dismissal.

Statistics show that the hotline responded to a number of requests for legal advice from employers and employees. In 2007, employees made 779 requests for advice, and employers 478.

The main duty of inspectors appointed by the Ministry of Labour in order to monitor working conditions is to assess the extent to which employers comply with the Labour Law. However, they also make a point of directing employers not to

discriminate between employees, especially on the basis of gender, in allowing them to enjoy the rights granted to all workers by the Labour Law.

Question 18:

According to paragraph 241 of the Report, efforts are being made to amend the Labour Law in the interests of women migrant domestic workers. Please provide an update on the progress of the implementation of that reform and indicate whether the law allows foreign women domestic workers to enjoy the same rights as those enjoyed by Bahraini women. Please also indicate whether the amendments to the Labour Law will lead to the abolition of the Kafala (sponsorship) system.

Paragraph 241 states that an amendment to the Labour Law is being envisaged in order to benefit domestic workers in general. It has been decided that Bahrain will reform the Kafala system by the end of 2008. Ideas and recommendations for alternatives to that system are being developed in cooperation with experts from the International Labour Organization.

Question 19:

The Report states in paragraph 248 that because of the small number of women in decision-making positions, women continue to face discrimination in employment. Please provide information on the steps taken to increase the number of women in decision-making positions and indicate whether any new measures have been taken to address the issue of women's unemployment in both the public and private sectors.

As regards steps taken to increase the number of women in decision-making positions and measures aimed at addressing female unemployment in the public and private sectors, women in the public sector have taken on several leadership roles and become closer to decision-making positions. There is no legal provision preventing women from occupying leadership roles. There are women ministers, ambassadors, judges, heads of universities and managers. The Constitution and other legislation enshrines the principle of equality, and the Constitutional Court ensures that those laws are respected.

The Ministry of Labour, whose remit is primarily the private sector, refers to the fact that no steps may legally be taken to increase the number of women in decision-making positions, because the issue depends on the skills and capacities of women in that sector.

One of the priorities of SCW is to ensure that women occupy leadership roles, by means of policies, public awareness-raising, training and services aimed at empowering women to assume decision-making positions. The most prominent steps taken by SCW include the following.

1. The Sheikha Sabeeka Award for the Empowerment of Women, which is intended to encourage ministries and public and private bodies to support and empower working Bahraini women.

2. A project to give financial grants to political associations that support women, which is aimed at giving such associations an incentive to allow women more opportunities to take part in decision-making and gain expertise.

3. Awareness-raising programme project on decision-making, which includes a series of training programmes and workshops to train women in leadership and decision-making. In May, SCW organized a workshop on that issue entitled “The working Bahraini woman: A manager making sound decisions”.

4. The initiative of Her Majesty Sabeeka Bint Ibrahim Al-Khalifah to honour Bahraini women who have achieved distinction in the professional world, volunteer work, science, culture, literature or other areas.

Measures have been taken to address female unemployment. We shall limit ourselves here to mentioning a project currently being implemented by the Ministry of Labour and consisting of a mechanism for insurance against unemployment. The project was enacted by Decree No. 78 of 2006. The mechanism provides aid and training programmes for unemployed persons.

Question 20:

According to paragraph 230 of the Report, the private sector does not provide any nursery schools or kindergarten services. Please indicate whether any measures have been taken to establish such services and please provide statistical information on the number of such facilities that have been established.

Paragraph 230 of the Report stated that private-sector companies do not provide nursery schools; that service is provided by civil society and for-profit institutions. The for-profit sector contributes in that context alongside the public sector. The Ministry of Social Development has taken a number of measures with regard to nursery services, including the following:

- Voluntary groups have been granted licences to open nurseries, in order to provide a suitable environment for the care of infants. Licences have been given to 44 nurseries accepting children between the ages of one month and three years. The Ministry of Social Development oversees and monitors those nurseries.
- Several buildings serving as social centres run by the Ministry have been designated for use as nurseries and kindergartens. Women’s associations have undertaken to manage those facilities.
- A decision has been adopted regarding home nurseries, with a view to providing a suitable environment for comprehensive childcare in a family atmosphere.
- In conferring the Sheikha Sabeeka Award for the Empowerment of Women, which is granted to Government and private institutions that support women, SCW takes into account the provision of supportive means, mechanisms and procedures that help women to reconcile their roles in the family and the workplace, including the establishment of nurseries in Government ministries and Government and private institutions.

Question 21:

Paragraph 228 of the Report indicates that complaints have been filed by women in respect of promotion. Please provide information on the outcomes or any decisions that have been taken with regard to those complaints. Please also

provide information, including statistical data, on the number of complaints that have been filed involving sexual harassment or violence against women in the workplace.

Paragraph 228 made it clear that no complaints had been made with regard to allowances, leave or salary. There are no statistics on complaints respecting promotion in the private or public sector, and no claims have been brought in that regard.

SCW has held courses and workshops for certain employees in the civil service and private sector in order to raise awareness of employment rights.

There are no statistics to indicate the number of cases of sexual harassment or violence against women in the workplace.

Question 22:

According to paragraph 246, women working in unskilled occupations suffer from poor working conditions and low wages. Please report any measures that have been taken to deal with those problems and whether any plans have been implemented to protect women from discrimination in the workplace or prevent such discrimination.

The aforementioned paragraph referred to a distinct group of female workers, namely, those employed in the clothing industry, and does not apply to any other female workers.

The civil service and labour laws do not differentiate between men and women in respect of conditions and wages. There is no minimum wage. However, by means of the National Employment Project, the Minister of Labour has taken action to raise wages that are lower than BD 200 per month.

As for measures that have been taken in the Labour Law to protect women from discrimination, they comprise judicial control by inspectors, as was referred to in question 17. Women also have the right to inform the relevant authorities of any discrimination.

Here it is worth mentioning the efforts that have been exerted to encourage ministries and Government and private institutions to support women. Such efforts include the Sheikha Sabeeka Award for the Empowerment of Women, which aims to encourage Government and private institutions to support and empower Bahraini working women, increase their levels of qualification and training, integrate them into national development plans, achieve higher numbers of female appointees to leadership, executive and decision-making positions, and encourage those institutions to commit to a policy of non-discrimination against women.

A draft awareness programme for economic empowerment has been drawn up. It is essentially a series of training programmes to be used in order to empower women economically and assist in providing women with information, rights and the mechanisms for their use. SCW has organized many other awareness programmes for working women.

Question 23:

Paragraph 249 states that action must be taken to apply the unemployment insurance system to unemployed women. Please state whether action has begun in that respect and describe any other programmes that have been devised in order to assist unemployed women to obtain work.

It should be stressed that the unemployment insurance system that is the subject of decree law No. 78 of 2006, referred to above, currently covers all unemployed persons of both sexes. As has already been stated, most job-seekers who apply for unemployment benefit are women. Such benefits are indeed disbursed, pursuant to the principle of social solidarity towards which the Government of Bahrain is striving. Bahrain is one of the developing countries that use an unemployment insurance system in order to achieve some kind of social and economic security for Bahraini families.

With respect to programmes that have been put in place in order to assist unemployed women to obtain work, the Ministry of Social Development has carried out numerous development projects with a view to encouraging women to enter the labour market, including the following:

- The introduction of the Award established by Her Royal Highness Sheikha Sabeeka Bint Ibrahim Al-Khalifa, President of SCW, which is granted to the most productive family as a form of encouragement. A second award is given to the most productive individual and a third is bestowed on the person who best cares for or supports a productive family.
- The launching of the National Project for the Development of Productive Families.
- The development of a productive families project: in 2007, 276 families benefited from that project.
- The opening in 2007 of the Sitra Centre for Productive Families.
- The inauguration in March 2007 of the capital complex for Bahraini workers.
- The opening of a design and innovation centre and the Centre for Productive Family Products.
- The initiation of a family bank project.
- The provision of support and funding for productive families through the development of the Microstat Financing Project.

Furthermore, SCW has been working towards the establishment of a women's capacity-building centre project as an initiative to create appropriate employment opportunities for women who want to set up particular projects or who want to change their employment and work in small or medium-sized projects. The centre is intended to be a comprehensive economic incubator that will provide all kinds of administrative, training and counselling services to pioneering women workers. The Council has also arranged many training courses, some of which aim to enable women to acquire skills, particularly in the professions in which women engage.

Question 24:

According to paragraph 291, a civil association, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, is preparing a programme document for the incorporation of reproductive health concepts into educational curriculums. Please provide information on the implementation of such programmes and whether they will be carried out in all Government and private schools. Please also state whether any measures have been taken with particular respect to women and young girls with the aim of raising awareness throughout the country of the risks and effects of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

The issue of the incorporation of reproductive health concepts into educational curriculums in Government and private schools remains under consideration. In cooperation with the Bahrain Family Planning Association, the Ministry of Education is working on an appropriate and acceptable formulation of such concepts for targeted age groups.

It should be noted that reproductive health concepts are not included among the preventative and palliative school health services that are offered by educational institutions.

Efforts exerted by the Ministry of Health have had an impact on reducing the number of cases of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. The following awareness-raising measures have been taken:

1. Brochures and books detailing the symptoms of HIV/AIDS and ways of confronting the disease have been published and distributed in workshops, schools and mosques and at the paying of condolences.
2. Information campaigns on the risks of and means of protection against HIV/AIDS have been undertaken in the media.
3. Many anti-HIV/AIDS workshops have been organized for female supervisors in social centres, counsellors and the Ministry of Social Development, and in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme, a workshop for schoolchildren was held on 12 and 13 May 2008 and for members of the Women's Union on 3 May 2008.

It should be mentioned that the Ministry of Health provides treatment to women and men equally, in accordance with World Health Organization standards for the use of the triple-dose combination drug.

Question 25:

In paragraph 292 it is stated that the Government and private sector are preparing intensive educational programmes in order to remove obstacles, including certain traditions and cultural legacies, to family planning. Please provide information on the status of those programmes.

The Ministry of Health is endeavouring to upgrade family planning by means of the following:

1. The provision of family planning methods in health centres throughout the country.

2. The development of training programmes for the staff of family planning centres.
3. The provision of health awareness services, in cooperation with the Bahrain Family Planning Association and the Family Planning Consultancy Centre.
4. The provision of family planning guidance and advice through the various forms of the media.
5. The implementation of the comprehensive cooperation programme between Bahrain and the United Nations Children's Fund, 2007-2009.

Question 26:

According to paragraph 330, some married women who own property are exposed to tangible losses upon separating from their husbands. Please provide information on the measures that have been taken to assist such women in recovering their property and whether the draft family law covers that issue.

The paragraph referred to the fact that some women may suffer material loss if they contributed to the expense of establishing the matrimonial home. With respect to the measures that have been taken to restore to divorced women property assumed by the husband after separation, we note the following:

- Bahraini law adopts the provisions of the sharia with respect to the division between the financial obligations of spouses. Upon marriage, the assets of a married woman are not incorporated into those of the husband. A woman may cede some of her property to her husband or grant him the right to use that property or include her as a trading partner. All such matters are regulated by the Bahraini Civil Code, including the nature of the transaction, whether or not it is to be repaid and methods of verifying the transaction. The Bahraini civil judiciary is responsible for resolving such conflicts.
- Both parties may have recourse to family reconciliation offices in order to resolve such disputes amicably, rather than having to go to court. If that proves unsuccessful, court is a woman's only option in seeking the return of her property.
- With a view to making it easier for a woman to substantiate her contribution, the law on evidence concerning civil and commercial articles has been amended in order to consider the marital relationship a moral objection to proof.
- Efforts are continuing to be made to regulate the marriage certificate by including conditions that will safeguard the rights of both parties.

Question 27:

Paragraph 325 of the Report states that a marriage contract is only recognized in Bahrain if the marriage has been concluded under Islamic law. The Report also states that, while there is no minimum age for marriage for men or women, the age of puberty is considered the minimum age for marriage. Please state whether the draft family law will specify a minimum legal age for marriage for both men and women, and whether that age will be consistent

with the legal age of majority specified in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Paragraph 325 made it clear that marriages that are concluded between such non-Muslims as Jews and Christians are subject to their own laws and religions, not to the sharia. No marriage between Muslims is recognized unless it has been concluded under Islamic law.

With respect to a specific age for marriage, Minister of Justice decision No. 45 of 2007 raised the age of marriage for girls to 15 and for boys to 18.

Question 28:

Please advise whether any progress has been made in respect of ratification of the optional protocol to CEDAW or towards accepting the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1 of the Convention.

In common with most Arab States, Bahrain has not ratified the optional protocol to CEDAW because that would imply that it withdrew its reservations to certain articles of the Convention. Furthermore, some aspects of the protocol infringe the sovereignty of States. Those two issues require consensus, as was the case with Bahrain's withdrawal of its reservations to the *Human Rights Report*.

The Government of Bahrain supports the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1 of the Convention and the relevant authorities are taking the necessary legal measures to approve that amendment.
