



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

Distr.: General  
4 December 2014

Original: English

---

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

**Sixtieth session**

16 February-6 March 2015

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**

**List of issues and questions in relation to the fourth and fifth  
periodic reports of Eritrea**

**Addendum**

**Replies of Eritrea\*\***

[Date received: 2 December 2014]

---

\* CEDAW/C/60/1.

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



**General**

1. CEDAW as a UN convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women intends to cover critical measures that bring all government sectors on board. Therefore, the fourth and fifth reports cannot be prepared without the extensive participation of all key stakeholders i.e. all line ministries namely; education, health, agriculture, labour and human welfare, local governments, justice, local NGO's, Media, gender focal points within the ministries and private sector institutions, women members of Zoba Assemblies and local governments and most of all women members organized under the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW).

In the process of preparing the report, a steering committee was set from the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW), the line ministries, youth and workers organizations etc. The steering committee did agree by consensus to be chaired by the NUEW and has approved to conduct monthly meeting till the report was finalized. The Chair was also given the opportunity to call additional meetings as required.

The task of the steering committee was identified to:

- Look upon the provisions of CEDAW and the reporting guidelines
- Identify and commission a lead gender consultant and prepare terms of reference (TOR)
- Provide input for the preparation of the fourth and then fifth CEDAW Report
- Inform and request cooperation from the public sectors in generating required information
- Call for the gender focal persons of the public sector to inform the task and request their cooperation.
- Call a request of cooperation from the civil society organizations, such as the NCEW, NYS, National union of the disabled..., Eritrean Credit Program, National associations of Nurses and teachers and Sport commission.

Based on the TOR, the fourth and fifth CEDAW draft report was guided by the local consultant. In the process of preparation, data was collected, input of all pertinent ministries requested, discussion sessions at different levels organized, local NGO's involved, women interest groups and professionals involved and national workshops were finally organized to present the findings, cross check outputs and finalize the document.

Eritrean women are of course aware of their rights under the Convention, for it has been on board since its ratification. The process of preparation of the report by itself is a learning curve and an awareness raising opportunity since it pretty much involves women at various levels. On top of this, the convention as well as all periodic reports are used as awareness raising documents and are part of public awareness program by government institutions, the NUEW involving its high-level central committee members reaching women circles at village level, all gender focal points across the board etc. through workshops, seminars and training of trainers programs.

Besides, Eritrea has been working earnestly to consolidate the awareness of CEDAW amongst the population at large, and due to the establishment of NUEW focal persons in all the public sector institutions, a continuous effort of dissemination of the basic principles of human rights, the CEDAW, the CRC are held via workshops and discussions has been undergoing. Conferences have been conducted to take stock of what have been achieved and challenges faced on the occasion of twenty-fifth and thirtieth anniversary of NUEW in 2005 and 2009 respectively, where critical areas of concern on women and education, health, access to land and the rural girl, employment and informal economic activity, access to credit and loan, political and decision making etc...has been thoroughly evaluated and discussed. Of course, the achievement scored and challenges faced have been incorporated in the fourth and fifth reports.

The fourth and fifth Report is in the process of translation to be widely disseminated to the general public.

### **Legislative and institutional framework**

2. The provisions and the spirit of CEDAW are in tandem with the provisions of the Eritrean Constitution and other transitional laws when it comes to women's rights, the gender bond is inseparable. Proclamation 1/of 1991 (proclaimed right after independence) was the first legal instrument which has repealed all discriminatory laws and regulation. The macro policy of 1994, the national charter of PFDJ<sup>1</sup> the ruling party 1994, Eritrean Constitution of 1997, (as indicated in detail in the previous periodic reports) are also the main legal and policy instruments, that clearly prohibited any act of discrimination against Eritrean women magnifying their rights and the noble place and value of Eritrean women in our society. Therefore, we can say that the provisions of CEDAW are incorporated within Eritrean laws. There is no obstacle in gaining access to justice by women and the domestic courts are ruled by the transitional laws and work on the bases of these laws and social values, which are in favour to women's rights.

Eritrea has ratified the CEDAW in 1995. Like many other international conventions that Eritrea has signed, CEDAW is not strictly part of the national legal system as yet. This would only be attained upon completion of a current MoJ project to (i) Harmonize and consolidate Eritrean Laws"; and (ii) "to consolidate international instruments, treaties and agreements signed or acceded to by Eritrea. The Ministry of Justice is working on it.

It is also good to note that every nation has its own legal system and procedures and as previously in 2006 response clarified, Eritrea follows dualist approach whereby national laws prevail over others. Nonetheless, when it comes to women's rights our laws are in tandem with the convention and we do not observe any conflict of interest.

3. The revision and preparation of the civil and penal codes are still underway, nonetheless, all the provisions of the transitional laws with regards to women's right in all aspects of life, (marriage law, nationality act, right to own land, rights to education and health, prohibition of stereotyped traditions, labour law, prohibition

---

<sup>1</sup> Peoples' Front for Democracy & Justice.

of FGM<sup>2</sup> etc.) are currently effective and have also been incorporated in the draft civil and criminal codes.

### **National machinery for the advancement of women**

4. NUEW organizational coverage is extensive; it reaches over 90% of all villages in the six regions cutting across all ethnic groups in the country. Every woman and young girl above 16 years of age is organized under its umbrella ranging 300,000 members.

It was through the Presidential Notification of 1995, the NUEW has been mandated to act as the national machinery for the advancement of women and represent the government of the State of Eritrea with regards to women's issues both locally and internationally. These have given the Union an effective organizational capacity to fulfil its mandate as women's machinery. The GSE<sup>3</sup> have allocated more than 30% of the NUEW budget and is also been the beneficiary of the United Nations Development agencies fund to undertake various programs and projects and building its human resource capacity.

A key objective of the National Policy on Gender is to ensure that gender issues are integrated in the national development process. This means, first and foremost, that national, sectoral, regional and local development programs and initiatives are gender responsive. The UN agencies have supported, NUEW as well as a cross-sectoral range of institutions to undertake gender analysis, planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation.

The NUEW has been actively engaged in guiding and supporting mainstreaming gender in the public sectors. With the support of UN agencies an evaluation and impact assessment was conducted to assess women's advancement and gender equity from 2007-2011 by independent consultants. Implementation of the convention is monitored by the focal persons within the ministries and NUEW.

With the support of local and international gender consultants, the NUEW reviewed the policies, frameworks and program documents aiming at strengthening key government ministries in gender mainstreaming activities and addressing the gaps that exist at the national level in gender related issues and whether development programs and initiatives are gender responsive. It also encourages ministries to prepare sex disaggregated data and to use systematic analysis of gender issues. Detailed case studies of gender mainstreaming experiences of various key ministries i.e. the Ministry of Education, Health, Agriculture, Land Water and Environment, and Ministry of Information has been conducted. Gender concept and mainstreaming orientation has been convened amongst Ministries of Transport and Communication, Trade and Industry, Energy and Mining, Tourism, and Finance.

---

<sup>2</sup> Female Genital Mutilation.

<sup>3</sup> Government of the State of Eritrea.

**Table 1:** Gender mainstreaming activities carried out in key Ministries.

<i>Ministry</i>	<i>Conduct Gender Sensitization Training</i>	<i>Appointed Gender Focal Point</i>	<i>Developed Gender Mainstreaming Strategy</i>	<i>Developed Action Plan</i>
Transport and Communication	✓	✓		
Trade and Industry	✓	✓		
Mine and Energy	✓			
Information	✓		✓	
Education	✓	✓	✓	✓
Health	✓	✓	✓	✓
Agriculture	✓	✓	✓	✓
Land, Water and Environment	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tourism	✓			
Justice	✓			
Finance	✓			

*Source: NUEW 2012*

Six ministries, namely Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Transport and Communication, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Trade and Industry and Ministry of Land, Water and Environment have posted a gender focal point.

Significant progress has been achieved in mainstreaming gender in key ministries and pursuing advocacy. Appointing gender focal persons at ministries, designing strategy and action plans and putting systems and structures for mainstreaming gender at ministries will assist in sustaining the progress made so far and institutionalizing approaches to policy implementation.

Six priority areas of concern have been identified in the NGAP<sup>4</sup> of 2003-2008 i.e. (1) education and training; (2) improving women's health; (3) improving economic status; (4) advancement of women in power and decision making; (5) participation of women in environment; (6) strengthening the human rights of women (eliminate violence against women, support women in situations of conflict). The program have been under implementation since, impact analysis has also been conducted resulting in commendable outcome, which is enshrined in sector reports compiled under the fourth and fifth periodic reports. NUEW was following and monitoring its implementation in collaboration with the pertinent sectors. In the occasion of twenty-fifth and thirtieth anniversary of NUEW, a thorough assessment on the achievements, progress made in each aspect and the challenges encountered have been conducted.

<sup>4</sup> National Gender Action Plan of 2003-2008.

### Temporary Special Measures

5. It is a policy of the government of the state of Eritrea. Taking temporary special measures to enhance women's participation indifferent aspects of education, local governments, community courts etc. has been an ongoing activity. At least 30% of seats in the public sector are reserved for women.

### Stereotypes and harmful practices

6. Stereotyping and harmful practices basically or historically emanate from the feudal system and economic backwardness of a society. With socio-economic development and prosperity, with the booming of education and health opportunities, the well-entrenched mindset against women and the girl child eventually disintegrates. Hitherto, women were discriminated on the basis of sex in Eritrea, portrayed in the myth and proverbs that belittle the role of women and discriminate her from participating in all walks of life. Today, it is a MUST to send a girl child to school; constitutionally and legally any idea and practice that thwart women's right is prohibited; textbooks have become gender sensitive, FGM<sup>5</sup> has been legally prohibited, all myth and proverbs have been discarded. Hence, we can say that a well-grounded base for equal right for women is laid.

Access to sport and recreation is familiar in the cities, however, it was not practical in rural and semi urban. During the reporting period fourth and fifth, certain developments were achieved across the board. The Sport Commission of Eritrea (SCoE) launched its first constitution in November 2003 that empowered its institutional capacity and mandate. The constitution focuses on women by stating *“whereas national sport provides equal opportunity for all citizens, it shall particularly encourage the participation of women and enable them to identify their potential talents. Women, who constitute half of the population, need special focus on ensured rights in order to make them eligible actresses in any national activities and endeavours. National sport is one of the windows of opportunity whereby women can participate and prove their mental and physical development. In view of the national principle, the role of women can play in making sport community-based is also clear and vivid.*

Women are today elected members of the leadership of Football Federation, Athletics Federation and Cycling Federation. At least one woman is elected member in the executive board in all federations to head the women's affairs bureau which has currently injected a major input towards the development of women participation in sport and other recreation activities. The role and mandate of the women's affairs office in all federations is clearly stated as:

- Follow and campaign for the participation of women;
- Prepare action plans to promote and enhance the role of women in sport and follow their implementation;
- Look for ways to develop the education and training of women;
- Follow international games Olympic, cycling and football for women clubs.

---

<sup>5</sup> Female Genital Mutilation.

The ongoing encouragement has resulted to new athlete runners both cross country, half marathon, 1000-5000 m runners and within a short period of time and have managed to participate in international 5000 m contest in Europe.

Cycling is another area where female cycling teams in all regions are already established, games organized and out of the best players a national team has already been formed. The team participated in South Africa female cycling contest in 2012 and stood eighth. In 2013, the same team participated in Cairo stood first and became Champion Africa. This was amazingly path-breaking achievement for Eritrean women cyclists.

In the area of football, the approach is quite different. A new program named “grass roots” involving community (parents), regional administration and the schools that made football a community based was introduced. About 11,000 children from 6-12 age group across the country are now organized under this program. Girls comprise 12%. They are organized in 38 football teams.

A total of 37 female referees and lines women (previously restricted to men) are trained to take care and run the football games across the country for first and second divisions and the federal level female football contest as well. Eritrea has also three International qualified female referees. The impact of the sport policy is therefore massive. It abolishes discrimination and exclusion of girls in sports and enables to trespass patriarchal social norms thereby allowing girls to come in front and show their talents.

### **Violence against Women**

7. The GSE has worked hard to complement the different sectors, such as the Ministry of Education, Health, Local Government, Justice and NUEW to fight violence against women. A participatory, community based and multi-disciplinary approach has been used in the effort eradicate VAW from the country.

The coordinated effort includes:

- Development/adoption of legal literacy training materials/manuals.
- Providing legal literacy training at different levels.
- Training for developing knowhow about FGM and advocacy campaign
- National advocacy campaign against VAW during the 16 days of activism.
- Developing IEC materials, including drama shows, TV and radio shows regarding GBV/VAW
- Training judges, community judges and law enforcement personnel on jurisprudence of equality.

Workshops were conducted for community and court judges, lawyers and members of the police force, sub-regional leaders, high school students, public service employees, assembly members, community members, NUEW and NUEYS leaders and members of PFDJ on jurisprudence of gender equality.

The training dealt with the rights on reproductive health, enforcement of Proclamation No. 158/2007 that bans FGM, international conventions such as CEDAW and conventions on the rights of the child (CRC), and the rights enshrined in the family law part of the Transitional Civil Code of Eritrea. IEC materials

regarding GBV/VAW have been developed such as NUEW AGEZO women's magazines and calendar, post cards, agendas, posters, and banners for gender promotion purposes. Print and on air mass-media, including radio and state TV broadcast were also used to bring VAW issues into the public debate. Moreover, popular art, literature and music has been used as one of the powerful mediums of change.

Due to lack of a well-developed mechanism for collecting data, detailed information on the form and extent of violence are not available.

Corporal punishment of women and girls were abolished by law in Eritrea.

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

10. "*Trafficking in persons*" pursuant to Article 605 of the Transitional Penal Code of Eritrea (TPCE), is defined as "*any person who procures gain or gratifies the passions of another by trafficking in women or infants and young person by seducing, enticing, inducing to engage in prostitution even with their consent, keeps the victim in disorderly house or to let out for prostitution*". Moreover, by virtue of Article 607 it also includes making of "arrangement or provisions of any kind for trafficking in women or infants and young persons". The term "persons" means, natural human being or legally established entities. Article 605 and 607 intend to render special protection against trafficking of women regardless of age and extend special legal frameworks of safeguard to infants and young persons of sexes. According to Article 52(1) of the TPCE "infant" are children who have not attained the age of 12 (twelve) years. By virtue of Article 53(1) "young persons" are those who are between the age of 12 (twelve) years and 15 (fifteen) years old.

Pursuant to Article 604 of the TPCE, "Prostitution" is defined as "any person who gains or makes a profession of or lives by procuring or on the prostitution or immorality of another, or maintains, as a landlord or keeper, a disorderly house ...". Furthermore, by virtue of Article 605 the term "prostitution" includes any person who traffics women or infants and young person to procure gain or gratifies the passions of another by seducing, enticing, inducing to engage in prostitution even with their consent; keeps the victim in disorderly house or to let out for prostitution. The TPCE does not provide provision that per se criminalizes prostitution but, criminalizes the person who gains or makes profession or procures income from prostitution.

The penalty against any person convicted of trafficking women, infants and young persons, varies with or without aggravating circumstances and may be punished with rigorous imprisonment not exceeding five years and a fine not exceeding ten thousand Nacfa.<sup>6</sup> In case there is concurrent illegal restraint of the victim and aggravating circumstances, such as the victim is under 15 years of age, wife of a descendant of the offender, adopted child, child of the offender's spouse, offender's brother or sister, offender's ward, entrusted to the offender's custody or care, offender taken unfair advantage of the physical or mental distress of the victim, offender's position as protector, employer, teacher, landlord, creditor or of any other like situation, offender made use of trickery, fraud, violence, intimidation or coercion, misused authority, professional procurement, residence of the victim is unknown, victim driven to suicide by shame, distress or despair; the punishment

---

<sup>6</sup> Nacfa is Eritrean official currency.

shall be rigorous imprisonment from 3-10 years and fine not exceeding twenty thousand Nacfa. Nevertheless, a person convicted for merely arranging or providing information or mechanisms for trafficking in person may be penalized with simple imprisonment that might reach up to three years.

A person who is criminally liable for the commission of prostitution is (a) professional procurers of prostitution for gain (b) seducer (c) enticer (d) inducer and (e) landlords or keepers of house for the purpose of prostitution.

According to Article 605(a) of the TPCE, the victims of trafficking and prostitution are not subject to liability even if an offender adduces their full consent to be trafficked and prostituted. Trafficking in persons and professional procurers of prostitution is regarded as a public offence, hence, the victim is represented by the public prosecution.

The customary law of Eritrea also plays a great role and gives special protection to victims of trafficking and prostitution. A victim of seduction or any sexual outrage must immediately report, save exceptional circumstances, to the chief or administrator of a village, traditional judiciary, elders or tribal leadership with the aim of punishing the offender.

There are criminal and civil redress available to victims of trafficking and prostitution. The civil redress is sought by the victim or guardian. The civil damage or extra contractual (tort) against an offender, depends on quantifying the damage materially or pecuniary and includes moral and future damages. In case of customary laws compensation varies depending on age and marital status, the flat rate compensation varies from twenty thousand up to hundred thousand Nacfa.

Reparation and restitution programs are provided in various ways. Provision of social, medical and economic support is one measure taken, those who are voluntarily ready to leave prostitution are provided with alternative means of livelihood such as income generating supports and appropriate trainings which enable them to jump start self-employment from the skills they acquire during the vocational training. They are also provided with material support such as weaving machine and threads free of charge. UNICEF and the Global Fund have been generous to support the social, medical and economic support program.

Other method worth mentioning is the provision of individual counselling to the victims of trafficking and prostitution, through social workers, to return to their families. The victims are organized in BCC<sup>7</sup> through peer coordinators and peer facilitators to discuss how risky it is to live while practicing prostitution and provide them options to leave and graduate from prostitution voluntarily. Currently, there are around 2590 women sex workers who are organized in 124 BCC groups. They are provided with free medical services to cure the damage that has been created by the perpetrators including free medical check-ups, voluntary counselling and testing services and to utilize condoms to prevent themselves and their clients from transmitting disease.

It is the principal belief that prevention is better than cure, and in this case one of the programs available is the sensitization program organized at community and peer group levels. The community based sensitization program which brings together community elders, opinion leaders, administrators, appropriate government

---

<sup>7</sup> Behavioural Change and Communication Groups.

institutions including the Police and legal persons, and civil society organizations among other NUEW, NUEYS<sup>8</sup>, NCEW<sup>9</sup>, Teachers Association, Doctors and Nurses Association etc., to strengthen awareness on the negative effect of prostitution and that families, communities and teachers are advised to prevent any person not to drift into prostitution. Thus, they play a promotional role to prevent and discourage prostitution and trafficking.

### **Participation in political and public life and decision-making**

11. It is women's constitutional right to vote, to elect and be elected in national and regional elections. They have the right to participate in policy formulation through the proper institutional channels i.e. regional and national assemblies. To make the election of women to public life more effective and meaningful, gender resource centre was established.

The NUEW has benefitted from the gender resource centre library, conference hall and training rooms equipped with audiovisual and sound systems, computers, software packages, Internet facilities, books, and furniture, to identify areas of research to enhance the National Gender Database.

A gender training curriculum has been developed, a training of trainers conducted and as a result a series of training at different levels for various female and male population in the public sector have been conducted.

Using this opportunity the capacity of NUEW, as the national women's machinery, and other public sectors is strengthened to advocate for gender equity and has been targeting women, to equip them with skills for higher ladder of occupation. Leadership capacity workshop to enhance women's designation has been one of the major programs NUEW to upgrade the skills of women and prepare them for leadership position. The topics covered in the training include: presentation skills, report writing, project management, participatory monitoring and evaluation, basic principles of finance, CEDAW, CRC, NUEW organizational tools, the essential skills for running a campaign, public speaking and message development are some the tools.

The basic principles of establishing a chapter and facilitating meetings, conferences, etc. is to ease the burden of women in their caring role where the GSE has enacted laws related to maternity leave, public childcare facilities. Mobilizing women to give their votes to women, to ensure the continuity of women representation and maturity of women to overcome the structural discrimination is to come to a reality.

Besides, the NUEW always urge that women should constitute at least one third of any public formation.

12. Eritrean women have the right to organize in women's civil association, based on the Eritrean laws of establishing non-profit civil association who can have access of funding and resources. Any women's organization as long as it does not conflict with the public interest is applauded.

---

<sup>8</sup> National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students.

<sup>9</sup> National Con-Federation of Eritrean Workers.

## Education

13. The National Education Policy of 2010 stipulates:

“Our education system aspires to produce all around citizens along with a firm commitment to country, people and social justice. This aspiration includes the development of creative and productive individuals who are capable of contributing towards the attainment of a modern, competitive, harmonious and self-reliant Eritrea”.

The Policy underlines the MoE’s commitment on reaching the unreached and the goal for creating a literate society that can promote and facilitate good quality education to all children and at all levels. In line with this policy, the government built schools at different levels of kinder garden, elementary, middle, secondary and tertiary level. The increase in the number of schools and the enrolment of girls can be seen in the following table:

**Table 2:** Number of schools and female enrolment

<i>Sr</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Elementary</i>	<i>No.Fem.Stu</i>	<i>Middle</i>	<i>No.Fem.Stu</i>	<i>Secondary</i>	<i>No.Fem.Stu</i>
1	1991/1992	214	44 690	59	66 566	19	13 346
2	2000/2001	667	94 809	142	84 603	43	23 596
3	2011/2012	875	137 049	315	74 812	92	40 216

*Source: MoE*

Although the number of schools have been increasing tremendously (from 214 to 875), they could not satisfy the needs of the potential student population. Therefore, there is the need of increasing the number of schools to reach the different parts of the country, especially the remote areas. However, the trend of development is positive and has proved progressive growth. For instance, in 1991/92 school year the female population was 109,900 out of these 13,346 girls (12.2%) were enrolled in secondary school. In 2000/01 and 2011/12 the female population at the age 14-18 was 139,679 and 149,152 respectively. The enrolment was 23,596 (16.9%) in 2000/2001 and 40,216 (27%) in 2011/2012. These figures can show us clearly the increase in female participation in secondary school as the number of schools increases. The government of Eritrea is working very hard to build more schools in villages so that all children will have access to education.

**Table 3:** Elementary level: Flow Rates by sex (2009/2010-2011/2012)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Promotion%</i>			<i>Repetition%</i>			<i>Drop out%</i>		
	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Total</i>
2009/10	84	80.7	82.2	11	13	12	5	6.3	5.7
2010/11	85.5	82.5	83.8	10.3	12.1	11.3	4.3	5.4	4.9
2011/12	84.2	81.1	82.5	11.5	13.4	12.6	4.3	5.5	5

*Source: MoE*

The general promotion rate in the elementary level rose from 79.7 in 2007/08 to 82.5 in 2011/12. The promotion rate of females has been constantly above that of the males with females scoring 3.1% higher than males. Both the drop out and repetition rates are greater in males than in females.

**Table 4:** Middle Level: Flow Rates by Sex: 2009/2010-2011/2012

Year	Promotion %			Repetition %			Drop Out %		
	F	M	T	F	M	T	F	M	T
2009/10	86.9	80.2	83.2	9	12.7	11.1	4.1	7.1	5.7
2010/11	86.9	81.1	83.7	8.8	12.6	10.9	4.4	6.3	5.5
2011/12	84.3	76.9	80.2	10.8	15.9	13.6	4.9	7.2	6.2

*Source: MoE*

Promotion rate of females in the middle level has remained higher than males. Aside from the dropout rates, the repetition rate among males is comparatively higher than females and the trend of increment is continuing.

**Table 5:** Secondary Level: Flow Rates by Sex: 2009/2010-2011/2012

Year	Promotion %			Repetition %			Drop Out %		
	F	M	Total	F	M	Total	F	M	Total
2009/10	83.6	76.7	79.6	8.6	14	11.8	7.8	9.3	8.6
2010/11	84.3	79.5	81.5	8.2	12.4	10.6	7.5	8.1	7.8
2011/12	84.2	77.8	80.5	7.5	12.3	10.3	8.3	9.9	9.2

*Source: MoE*

Promotion rate among females in the secondary level is far better than males. The previous occurrence of high female dropouts due to marriages and other social, economic, cultural and geographic barriers has greatly reduced.

Following are the major plan of action taken by Ministry of Education and various stakeholders, including National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW), National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students (NUEYS), Local administrations, community based organizations and other local and international actors.

- Gender awareness training materials developed in order to sensitize the communities about gender issue and girls and women's education in general and the socio-cultural practices that hamper the participation in particular.
- Guidance and counselling provided to help girls overcome problems that would affect their education.
- Boarding schools and hostels built and used for girls with emphasis on remote area, as well as for nomadic and semi-nomadic communities.

- Gender committees established in almost all middle and secondary schools in order to identify girls problems and aware gender issues within their respective schools and communities.

Take affirmative action to girls with particular socio-economic difficulties and from disadvantaged minorities to remedy their difficulties through preferential criteria of enrolment, especially in higher learning and vocational trades, as well as providing financial support. This includes conducting tutorial classes to identified girls in need of support in core subjects. The NUEW provide sanitary pads to solve the challenges that girls and women face during menstrual period which affects absents from classes. Moreover, bicycles were provided for those who travel long distances from home to school. In addition, life skills and sex education is provided with in their respective schools.

Domestic work specifically fetching water was identified as one of the main burdens for girls that hinder them from going to school specifically in rural areas. To solve this problem the NUEW initiated a project called donkey and canvas providing poor women with a donkey and water canvas, so that the family members would share the burden of fetching water and enabling girls to go to school. From this successful project over 11,000 poor families became beneficiaries.

Availing micro credit for poor families and for female-headed households was also a means of promoting girls to attend school. Moreover, there are animal fattening income generating projects for poor women so that they can support their family and enabling their children to school. The ministry of education also provides scholarships for poor girls. The NUEW provides uniforms, soaps, pants and sanitary pads for free to the poorest girls.

Affirmative action has been taken for girls in enrolling teacher training institute and education department in colleges in order to recruit more female teachers that will provide role models.

The national media and adult education media are used to train and mobilize campaigns for the community at all levels to foster positive attitudes regarding the social and economic values of educating both boys and girls.

14. The Ministry of education has prepared a Communication Strategy to improve access to girls education. Some of the contents of the document are:

- The reality in Eritrea: Challenges and Opportunities
- The Gender Gap
- Why Are Girls And Other Disadvantaged Groups Not In School?
- The Role of Communication

Moreover, the document shows the following strategy to be used:-

1. Create partnerships for a **Coalition for Change** (for advocacy and action at all levels)
2. Enable **social and community mobilization** and **capacity enhancement** (for community involvement and grassroots action)
3. Develop **communication campaigns** and interventions in all **relevant media** (for influencing change of attitudes and behaviour)

A coalition consisting of key stakeholders and partners created to build on existing initiatives and create synergy of purpose on the theme of girls' education. This Coalition include senior representatives from key Ministries, Development Agencies, the Private Sector, The National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students, the National Union of Eritrean Women, Teachers' Association, PTAs, National Confederation of Eritrean Workers, International NGOs, Adult Literacy Programmers, Newspaper editors and publishers, TV and radio programmers from all channels etc.

The purpose of this Coalition for Change was to build ownership about the movement and plant the seeds for a truly broad-based Social Mobilization programme. The Coalition pledged commitment for increasing girls' education and advocate for relevant policies and programmes, advocate for girls' education both within their own organizations and in public forums; shared and built upon each other's experiences; shared important and relevant studies/reports/research papers among all members. The Coalition use the appropriate communication materials developed for the movement in all major activities/programmes/events and built consensus and advocated to reach the objectives.

The members of the Coalition MOE, MOH, the National Union of Eritrean Women and Youth Association are involved in developing materials as well as disseminating important information through seminars, workshops and conferences. Advocacy tools were developed to make the Movement a dynamic social change initiative.

In addition to this, the national mass media played a critical role in creating an alternative reality which people can aspire to. Positive, empowering stories of girls who have completed their studies and are economically independent; role models and icons in society who can inspire and motivate others have been the creative themes of the campaign. The mass media campaign covers Radio spots, TV spots, Billboards and Posters. Programmes on the national media and adult education media broadcasted frequently on prime time on all channels at least once a week. The communication materials focus on creating an enabling environment with specific messages targeted to girls and their communities.

Social mobilization for girls' enrolling in schools and completing their education requires a participatory process conducted at the village levels. Based on this principle, the National Union of Eritrean Women created gender committees in secondary schools in order to reach the communities at the grassroots level and spread the required information across the country. The process was conducted through these gender committees in the form of facilitated dialogues with the community at regular intervals.

The community dialogue facilitators were from girls and boys students, parents (from mothers and fathers), teachers and directors. Facilitators conducted regular community meetings and sensitization sessions with local community elders, religion leaders, PTA members and parents whose children do not attend school, and boys and girls students. The purpose of these meetings focused on the importance of girls' education to break the cycle of poverty and other problems which hinder girls from attending and continuing their education and empower each girl. Positive role models were used as examples to motivate and inspire parents to commit themselves to send their girls to school. Parents who sent their girls to school in spite of difficulties were encouraged to address their experience in group meetings and get rewarded for the practice pursued.

Such meetings are conducted in the form of dialogues and conversations rather than one-way speeches and presentations. Communities were able to articulate their problems and discover solutions through interaction with each other and the facilitators.

With regards to the curriculum, measures have been taken to address violence against women and gender-stereotypes in school text-books. All text books had been revised and engendered. In implementing the text books a gender fair teacher text book developed, published and teachers were trained. In addition, one subject on gender fair teacher is added in the teacher training institute

With regards the inclusive education policy, in Eritrea, it is conceptualized as a means to achieve the goal of social justice in education. In order to fulfil the equal right to education for ALL, there is a need to ensure that the National Education Policy (MOE, 2003, draft) is implemented as an enabling policy which ensures that there are appropriate measures to address all those barriers that restrict opportunities to access education, participate on an equal basis, and learn according to one's potential. This requires the recognition that policy and practice will need to be diversified enough to reach out to those whose living conditions, learning potential or life style do not fall neatly into the category of "mainstream". Only when these issues are addressed, equity can be achieved.

In order to sharpen the focus of the "all-inclusive" basic education, as stated the National Education Policy, the Policy and Strategy on Inclusive Education in Eritrea proposes that inclusive education should be understood as a process of addressing and responding to the diverse needs of ALL learners. This process involves the identification of barriers to presence, participation and learning created by policies, practices and cultures, and developing appropriate responses to remove or minimise the barriers.

The Policy and Strategy on Inclusive Education highlights the need for collaboration and effective co-operation across education sector, and between the different sectors, to ensure the needs of currently disadvantaged groups. The Policy and Strategy also proposes strategic actions in the areas of curriculum and assessment, teacher education, educational support and school-based development so as to focus on quality improvement within education.

Important to remember

As a pilot project it is exercised in 25 schools. In each school two classrooms are arranged for disabled children. In the meantime intensive training is provided for teachers training institute graduates including training on sign language. Through these exercises the Ministry of Education is working to implement the inclusive education policy.

### **Employment**

15. Eritrea is signatory to seven ILO's core conventions, the basic rights of workers and employers in Eritrea are thus compatible with international labour standards. Moreover, the fundamental labour rights enshrined in the labour proclamation No. 118/2001 are in line with the basic requirements provided within the international obligations of Eritrea including the universal human rights declaration. The Ministry of Labour and Human Welfare strives to promote the basic

rights at work such as freedom of association and the effective recognition of the rights to collective bargaining; the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour; the effective abolition of child labour and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

Under Article 3(6) of labour proclamation all establishments i.e. manufacturing, mining and quarrying, agriculture, social and personal services including domestic works, construction etc... are subject to labour inspection. Inspectors are empowered in ordering employers to take corrective measures.

Discrimination based on sex is totally prohibited under Article 65(1) of the labour proclamation, and Article 41(2) promotes equality of remuneration for different types of work of equal value and these has been effective since 2001. In most cases wages are set by collective agreement regardless sex for private sector and through the civil service administration for public enterprises based on the principles of equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value.

Employment of girls among 14-17 is totally discouraged by the policy and principles of compulsory basic education for all. All children are supposed to be at school and those who are somehow employed are allowed for specific light jobs (family farms, livestock herding, apprentice, petty trade, etc.) and are therefore not exposed to hazardous high risk activities. The list of hazardous activities prohibited to girls and boys under the age of 18 are specified under Article 69 of the labour proclamation, suffice to tackle due exposure if any. The rural girl also it is a must to attend primary school; she cannot have leisure time because whatever free time she gets, is preoccupied with the domestic chores. And this is something that could be solved with the overall economic development of the rural area.

With technical assistance of the ILO, the Ministry of Labour and Human Welfare has introduced a pilot project, known as local economic development (LED), aiming to promote self-employment for women, is underway.

16. "Force labour" according to the labour proclamation Article 3(17) is defined as any work performed involuntarily merely because of someone's influence as the result of his holding a public office or traditional status of chieftaincy; however, compulsory national services, normal civic obligations, labour provided for in the penal code, communal services and services rendered during emergency may not regard as a forced labour. According to the ILO convention No. 29, "Normal civil obligation" is specifically mentioned as exception from its scope, namely; compulsory military service, work or service in case of emergency and minor communal service. Our Constitution asserts, citizens must complete their duty in national service, which is categorically similar to the normal civic obligation of ILO. Therefore, neither forced nor compulsory labour has been exacted, contrary to the provisions of international standards and violation of force labour ILO Convention Nos. 29 and 105.

In tackling the socio-economic problems emanating from the long years war and drought, the national assembly of Eritrea had promulgated a declaration, known as Warsai Yikaalo Campaign. Through this campaign, Eritrea achieved incredible outcome in its self-reliance policy, i.e. in reforestation, soil and water conservation, construction, poverty reduction programs, literacy campaigns, public health promotion, etc. ... besides, post-war development programs is practiced by several countries, including post WWII Europe, via the marshal Plan declared by the US.

Hence, contributing for the communal development and public safety, reconstruction own country, denounce beggary and “aid” working for self-reliance is a divine thing to do in one’s young life and is not considered as a forced labour.

Obviously, by virtue of Article 6-8 of the national service proclamation of Eritrea No. 82/1995, all citizens who attained the age of 18 and above shall have the obligation to render national service for eighteen month. Nonetheless, due to the no-war-no peace situation in Eritrea; which the United Nation is equally responsible for not settling the border conflict and for not implementing the Hague resolution of the dispute and for abstention on the illegal occupation of our territory; the service obligation of all citizens, to the interest of national security, might go beyond the stated time zone. The number of the female conscripts and even male conscripts cannot be disclosed for obvious reasons; nonetheless, female conscripts hold 50% of the total. SAWA-Warsai Yikiaalo training Centre is primarily a precollege one year academic training combined with national service military training. Girls attending this college do not face harassment, intimidation or violence, simply because it is against our laws and traditional values, no record has been filed.

### **Health**

17. Good maternal and nutrition during pregnancy and location is important for the health and reproductive performance of women as well as the survival and development of the babies. Malnutrition during pregnancy could result in low birth weight babies or prematurely among other things that contribute to infant morbidity and mortality. In this regard, the following actions were taken on:

1. Adequate diversified food intake during pregnancy and lactation
2. Antenatal follow-up for pregnant mothers at antenatal clinic at least four visits for.
  - Check-up of their haemoglobin level
  - TT vaccination
  - Monitoring their weight
  - Check-up for malaria-endemic area
  - Distribution of impregnated bed nets for all pregnant mothers in malaria-endemic areas
  - Promoted core message on birth-spacing
  - Counselling for optimal breastfeeding their infants after delivery
3. Iron/folic acid supplementation during pregnancy and 2 months after delivery that could prevent risk of low birth weight abortion and foetal damage
4. Promotion of consumption of iodized salt in the family
5. Fortified food supplementation or pregnant and lactation women at risk areas of malnutrition through all health facilities.

Supporting protocols

- Micronutrient (vitamin A, iron) supplement guidelines developed
- Maternal and infant feeding guideline and promotional materials developed

- Promotional materials developed
- Advocacy on mass media, sensitization and training at community level on maternal and child nutrition is ongoing.

#### Result of implementation

- Coverage of iron/folic supplementation 80%
- Universal salt iodized coverage 95%
- Women(15-149) of age with body mass index (BMI) less than 18.5 Kg/m<sup>2</sup> is 21(EPHS 2010)
- Low birth weight 7.4

#### Under-age pregnancy

Childbearing age has declined over the time from 23% in EGHS 1995 to 14% and finally to 11% in EPHS 2010. This is a decline of 39% and 29% during the period of 1995-2002 and 2010 respectively.

#### Rural Women

18. National development policy of Eritrea gives priority to the disadvantage population in the rural area, following bottom top approach, closing the gap between the rural and urban. Hence, new health facilities, Primary and KG schools, roads and bridges, transport services, potable water pumps or taps, “*Adhanet*” baking ovens (energy saving improved traditional oven), toilet facility in most of the villages etc. have been put in place, which benefited girls and women in the rural remote areas. Because of the immense program of infrastructural reconstruction, interconnectivity by roads and mobile telephones has reached the hard to reach areas. Resettling scattered villages thereby establishing large towns enjoying education, health, communication and other facilities is one of the successful development programs undergoing in the rural areas. The other effective measure is the provision of agricultural tools, high breed seeds, plots of land, technical assistance, goats chickens, donkey and water canvas etc. to women in rural areas, which has empowered them to become self-sufficient.

It is true that in many developing countries large part of the population lives in agrarian settings and is highly dependent on agriculture as the main source of living. This is true for Eritrea where agricultural production and mainly crop production is predominantly rain-fed and is characterized by subsistence farming. The farm production cycle is dependent on the rainy season and as the result agricultural output is susceptible to variations in rainfall.

**Table 6:** Land distributed to male and female heads of households 2010-2013

<i>Sn</i>	<i>Land category</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Female %</i>
1.	Housing land (tiesa)	5 320	10 540	15 860	33.5
2.	Commercial agriculture	75	376	451	16.6
3.	Commercial enterprises	305	1 068	1 373	28.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>5 700</b>	<b>11 984</b>	<b>17 684</b>	<b>32.2</b>

*Source: MoELW*

Women heads of households have 32.2% access to land distributed for various purposes during the four years period. Comparatively speaking the lowest rate in terms of accessing land by women was for commercial agriculture purposes. This is dependent on the entrepreneur capacity of women to invest in commercial agriculture.

In practice, land is allotted to the husband and wife in the name of the head of the household. In the event of divorce, each of them is allotted her/his separate farmland. Land for housing is traditionally known as “Tessa-land”. Every citizen over the age of 18, irrespective of gender and other diversities, has the right to residential Tessa land holding in her/his village of origin, and in the case of married couples in the village of origin of one of the spouses, depending on their choice. The common practice is to get land for residential housing in the village of the husband, but there are those who choose land in the village of the wife instead. This is based on existing or potential comparative advantages of the wife’s village of origin to the husband’s village of origin. The later seems to be on the increase in recent times in particular when the wife’s village of origin is closer to urbanized areas with higher prospects for economic development.

### **Women in Detention**

19. In Eritrean context, detention or prison is practiced for the aim of correcting and rehabilitation a citizen. Any person woman or man who trespasses the law shall be detained to be corrected and integrated back to the society at later stage. All women prisoners have access to education, training, health services, safe drinking water, sanitation facility, adequate food and hygiene items, provision of KG, child care, proper service in case of child delivery, etc. etc.

The data of female prisoners requested could not be availed for obvious security reasons.

### **Internally displaced women, asylum seekers and refugees**

20. It has become global phenomena for asylum seekers and refugees especially from Africa instigated by the brain drain policy of the west, recurrent poverty, civil war and boarder aggression and conflict etc. To minimize these phenomena, national and regional workshops have been organized to develop a common strategy to tackle human trafficking and refugee cases. Internal displacement in our country has been caused after the Eritrean sovereign land was trespassed by the Ethiopian aggression affecting the people in the border area. Women and children were victimized, nonetheless, due care was under taken by the GSoE, to handle the internally displaced citizens and meet their daily demands.

### **Marriage and family relations**

21. By principle under-age marriage is a practice that is not widely accepted. Concerted and strenuous campaign is underway by the MoH, MoE, MoLHW, by local governments and regional assemblies and the national union of Eritrean women to eliminate it entirely, not only the practice but also the notion of under-age marriage in certain remote villages and ethnic groups since it affects the health of the girl child, alienate her from education and from enjoying her child life. It is a matter of ensuring socio economic development and raising public awareness and with time it will be totally uprooted.

Marriage age has already improved legally to be 18 for both girls and boys at least in the reviewed civil code. It is a matter of time to be effective. Nonetheless, it is fair enough to acknowledge that laws and regulations alone will not work what matters a lot is the change in attitude of society and that definitely takes time. The National Union as women's machinery has a well-established legal counselling office giving service in counselling and legal literacy programs on various issues, such as customary and harmful practices, child betrothal and marriage, FGM, property rights etc. One of the critical issues raised by this office is the campaign against underage marriage among community elders, parents and the women themselves, and has become really effective.

---