NGO REPORTING GUIDELINES

PARTICIPATION IN THE CEDAW REPORTING PROCESS: Guidelines for writing an NGO report

A practical guide for NGOs developing and submitting a report to the CEDAW Committee

International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific

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INTRODUCTION

About this guide

International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAW Asia Pacific) has prepared these CEDAW Shadow Report Guidelines[1] to support non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in their participation in the reporting process for the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), including the preparation of CEDAW shadow and/or alternative reports. This document contains practical information about the CEDAW review process and provides a step-by-step guide for NGOs to prepare their reports for submission to the CEDAW Committee.

About IWRAW Asia Pacific

IWRAW Asia Pacific is a Global South feminist organisation committed to advancement of substantive equality and non-discrimination through the mobilisation of grassroots women. Since 1993, we have worked on the implementation of universal standards on women's human rights, particularly as conceptualised and articulated in the Convention.

In undertaking this role, IWRAW Asia Pacific has worked with women's rights organisations and feminist collectives across the Global South to build and share thematic and functional expertise on the implementation of CEDAW. Our approach involves capacity and movement building, as well as strategic guidance for CEDAW advocacy. We also contribute to the evolution of CEDAW's normative standards through engagement with CEDAW's general recommendations and the application and interpretation of CEDAW's framework in all dimensions–both historical and contemporary–of discrimination against women.

IWRAW Asia Pacific also acts as the coordinating NGO for civil society engagement with the CEDAW Committee, facilitating NGO participation in the CEDAW process. Our role as a coordinator and facilitator has been officially recognised by the CEDAW Committee and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

About CEDAW

CEDAW is a human rights treaty that requires countries that have ratified it to take necessary steps to promote and protect women's rights. Often regarded as a comprehensive bill of human rights, CEDAW addresses discrimination against women in all fields and encompasses women's human rights across civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights. The CEDAW Committee is an independent body composed of 23 elected experts on women's rights. The mandate of the Committee is to monitor the implementation of the Convention in individual countries.

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[1] The CEDAW NGO Reporting Guidelines was developed in 2010, and updated in 2026 by Kavitha Devadas and Pravind Premnath.

The NGO Reporting Cycle

Governments of countries that have ratified the CEDAW Convention are obliged under international human rights law to submit periodic progress reports to the CEDAW Committee. NGOs are also highly encouraged to submit their own reports to the CEDAW Committee to facilitate its preparations and strengthen its capacity to draw accountability from governments.

In the process of considering State reports, the Committee has emphasised the importance of NGO engagement in the review cycle. It invites representatives of national and international NGOs to provide country-specific information on the implementation of the Convention.

NGO reporting to the CEDAW Committee during the consideration of your State is a **crucial process for holding your State accountable** for its obligations to the Convention's framework of equality and non-discrimination in the pursuit of the full realisation of women's human rights. Reports can either be submitted by individual NGOs or via coalitions.

A. What is an NGO Report

NGOs can ensure that they are representing the voices and lived realities of women who were either misrepresented or excluded from the State report. In particular, they can critically engage with the reporting and monitoring process by providing **data** (especially those collected through alternative, civil-society led sources) that provides information about:

- The real situation of women
- Structurally marginalised communities of women
- The impact and progress made by the State in implementing the CEDAW Convention
- Violations of the human rights of women
- Inadequacies and gaps in laws and policies and their implementation
- Obstacles to the realisation of the human rights of women

This data and the report as a whole help to reveal why women's rights commitments often remain de jure (in law) commitments rather than representing de facto (in reality) change. It enables NGOs to highlight areas where discrimination continues to persist either in the case of government inaction or ineffective government intervention.

You may decide to take any of the following approaches when organising your information and compiling recommendations on measures to be taken:

- Preparing a **shadow report:** This is possible if you have access to the government/State

party report. Your report would critique the information in the government's report. State party reports and further details on CEDAW sessions can be found on the webpage of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

- Preparing an **alternative report:** This is a report written independent of the government report, where no government report is available or the government report excludes issues of priority to you. This report could comprehensively touch on all the articles of the Convention or it could focus on one or two priority concerns.

It is important to note that your NGO or coalition's participation in the relevant CEDAW session where your State is reviewed is contingent on the submission of a shadow or alternative report. Only NGOs or coalitions that submit a report are eligible to participate in avenues for NGO engagement during the review.

There is no limit to the number of NGO reports that can be provided for a State party's review. It is not mandatory for NGOs to prepare a single joint report with other NGOs from their country. All NGOs and coalitions wishing to contribute to the CEDAW review are encouraged to send a report to the CEDAW Committee. For example, a total of 41 NGO reports were submitted to the CEDAW Committee for Brazil's review at the 88th CEDAW session in June 2024. The Committee reads all reports received by the deadline.

B. The CEDAW review process

The CEDAW review process begins before the CEDAW Committee meets with a State Party. A pre-sessional working group of the Committee first reviews information about the State and identifies areas where the State may not be sufficiently implementing the Convention. This is known as the pre-session.

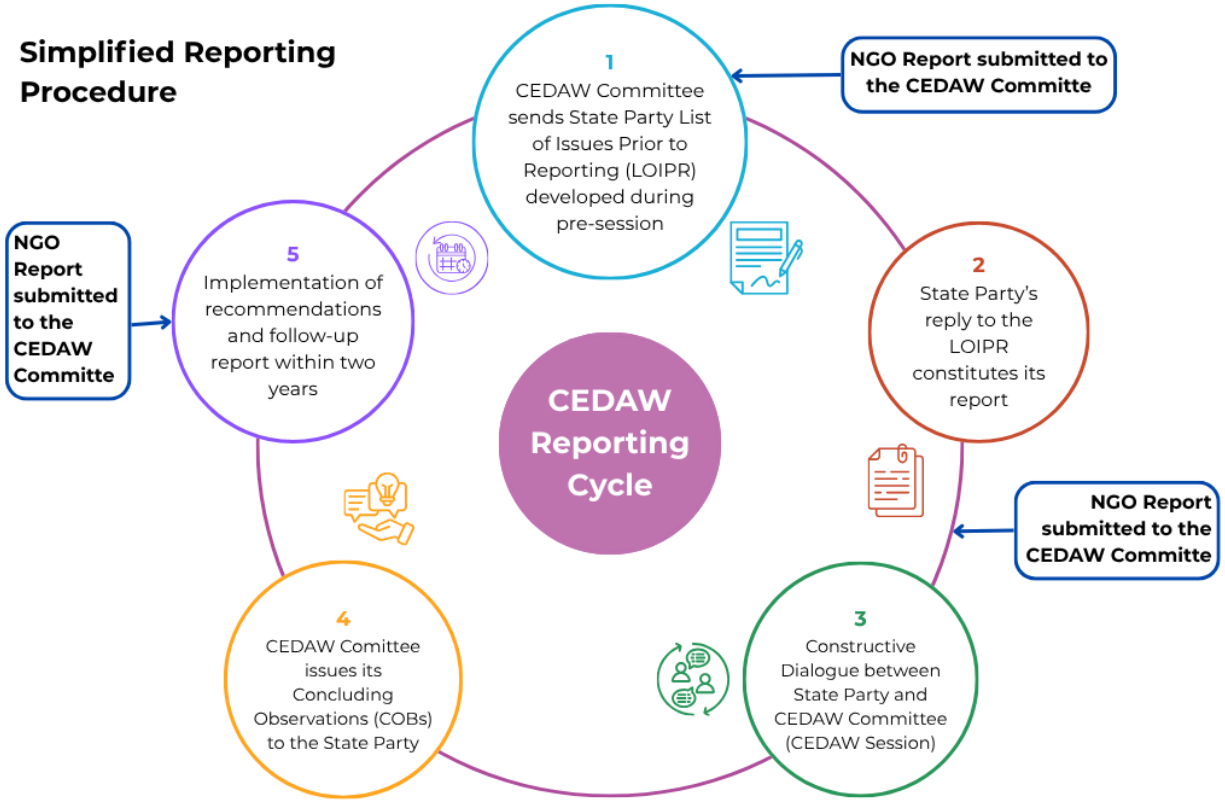
There are two ways in which a State Party can report to the Committee:

1. **Simplified Reporting Procedure**[2]
   From the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights: Under the simplified reporting procedure, the Committee's pre-sessional working group prepares a List of Issues Prior to Reporting (LOIPR). The Committee approves this list at its next regular session and sends it to the State Party before the State submits its report.

   Under the simplified reporting procedure, the State Party does not need to prepare a separate periodic report. Instead, its written responses to the LOIPR constitute its periodic report for the Committee's review.

   The simplified reporting procedure is currently the default procedure for State reporting to CEDAW. Alternatively, State parties can choose to follow the standard reporting procedure instead.

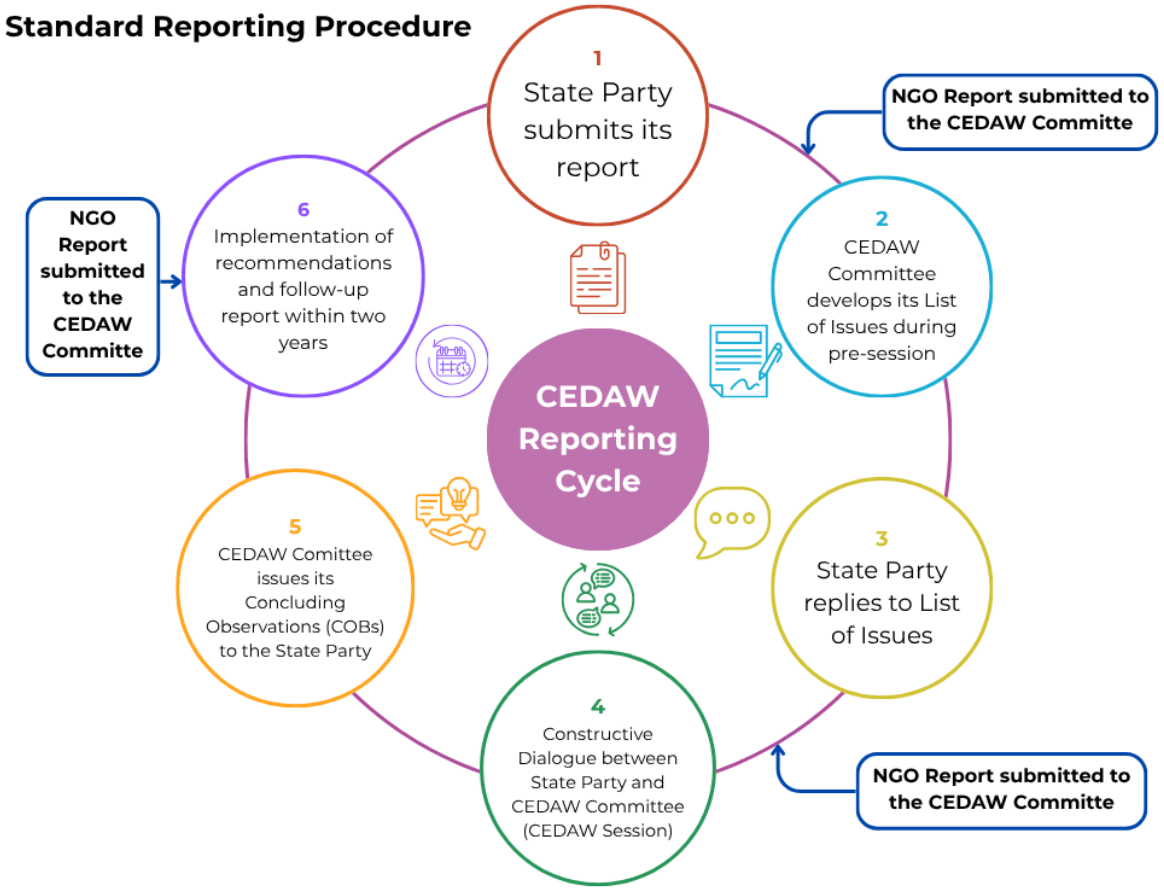
[2] The CEDAW Committee reinstated the simplified reporting procedure to facilitate State parties to prepare and submit more focused reports, and meet their reporting obligations. Read more about it at https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/cedaw/simplified-reporting-procedure



2. **Standard Reporting Procedure**
   State Parties are required under Article 18 of the Convention to submit their report at least every four years, or whenever the Committee requests a report.

   Several factors are considered in deciding which States to review, including:
   - whether it is the State's initial (first) report
   - whether a State's report is overdue
   - the need for geographical balance among the States reviewed

The pre-sessional working group prepares a **List of Issues** and questions relating to the State Party's report. This list is sent to the State, which must provide written responses before the session in which it will be reviewed.



Why the pre-session is important for NGOS

The pre-session is a crucial stage of the CEDAW review process. It determines the direction, tone, and issues for dialogue between the CEDAW Committee and your government during the CEDAW Session. It is also the last chance to get the government to submit written information on issues that it may have overlooked or may be trying to avoid addressing in its report. Therefore, it is an **important time for NGOs to intervene in the process** by submitting information on the most urgent issues affecting women in your country. This information can help the CEDAW pre-session working group identify gaps in the government's report and decide which questions it will raise with the government.

If you are working on a shadow or alternative report for your State's review, you can identify the key issues from your report and share them with the Committee in bullet-point form. Your list should highlight:

- the most important issues facing women in your country
- what is missing in the government's report

BOX A: Reporting Tip

NGOs also have the opportunity to update their report submitted for the pre-session, and submit the updated version for the main session where your State will be reviewed.

- what you want the CEDAW Committee to prioritise during the CEDAW review

If you have a shadow report ready by the pre-session, you are highly encouraged to share it with the Committee. The report does not need to be finalised at this stage—you can send a draft and provide the final version later, in time for the CEDAW session.

Writing an NGO report

This section is applicable for both NGOs and coalitions that are planning to submit a report for either the pre-session or the main session.

PREPARATORY STEPS

STEP 1: Identifying priorities

In preparation for your involvement in the CEDAW reporting process, connect with as many women's rights organisations and groups as possible in your country. You are encouraged to work together to identify and agree on the main issues affecting women at the national level. Coordinating your efforts is likely to make your advocacy more effective by bringing together the experiences and voices of women from different communities and backgrounds. It can also help build a stronger base and network for advocacy in your country after the review.

STEP 2: Gathering and analysing alternative information

Once you have agreed on your priority issues, gather relevant data and information and analyse the actual situation for women on the ground. This information will help you identify discrimination, gaps, and barriers to women's equality, as well as develop recommendations for addressing them at the national and community levels.

At this juncture, you should use the CEDAW Convention as your main tool to critically assess the conditions for women in your country and evaluate government measures to respect, protect, and fulfill women's rights. Alternative information for consideration by the CEDAW Committee can be provided in various ways, depending on the capacity, time, and priorities of your organisation.

Some women's groups may choose to work together to submit a comprehensive report on the status of women's human rights at the national level. In this case, women's groups interested in monitoring the implementation of CEDAW may divide the work according to their areas of expertise, with different organisations preparing information on health, education, employment, violence against women, political participation, or any other area of concern covered by CEDAW.

A comprehensive report is not always possible. If your organisation has limited time, staff, funding, or access to information, you can instead focus on a smaller number of priority issues. A focused report is effective when it clearly identifies the most serious or urgent violations of women's rights and provides reliable evidence and practical recommendations to the Committee.

In order to maximise your efforts, please consider the following:

- **Read the CEDAW Convention** in its entirety to understand its three main principles,

which will give meaning to the articles of the convention and provide a strong foundation for your report as well as follow-up advocacy.

- **Review the previous Concluding Observations.** If your country has reported to the CEDAW Committee before, the previous review is an important starting point for preparing your submission. It can help you identify issues that are still unresolved and assess whether the government has taken sufficient action to implement the Committee's **Concluding Observations**. This assessment can act as the basis for information to be included in your report.

- **Reference the Committee's General Recommendations.** The General Recommendations act as interpretive documents that expand the scope of CEDAW's framework to dimensions of discrimination that are not explicitly encompassed in the text of the Convention. Your State's ratification of the Convention also makes it accountable to the normative standards of rights established in the General Recommendations.

- **Collect evidence about the situation of women and girls.** Gather reliable information through **research papers, laws, policies or other relevant documents** that will provide useful **data on the practical status of women** in your country. Try to gather information on the success or failure of the State in fulfilling its international commitments towards women's rights. This may includes obligations under CEDAW and other human rights treaties, as well as commitments under frameworks such as the Beijing Platform for Action, the Sustainable Development Goals and the outcomes of the Commission on the Status of Women.

- **Collect information on the efficiency or effectiveness of State machinery** meant to promote human rights in general and women's rights in particular. This may include specific ministries or state departments overseeing women's rights, national gender equality mechanisms, and national human rights institutions. If there are **discriminatory laws** in your country, it is particularly useful to include excerpts from these laws, as well as key court decisions on women's rights. This will help the Committee understand not only what the law says, but also how laws and institutions affect women in practice.

STEP 3: Keep guidelines and formats in mind

There are several formatting requirements to keep in mind when preparing your NGO report. Following these requirements will ensure that the Committee can easily read and consider your report:

- **Language**
  Reports can be submitted in any of the Committee's working languages: English, French, or Spanish[3]. However, we highly recommend submitting your report in English where possible, so that all Committee members assigned to your country's taskforce are able to read it.

- **Structural Elements**

  Your report should include an executive summary, table of content, citations or footnotes

[3] The working languages of the Committee changes periodically according to changes to the Committee's membership

where applicable, and page numbers.

- **Word Limit**
  The word limit for reports are as follows:
  - **3,300 words** for individual NGO reports
  - **6,600 words** for coalition reports submitted by two or more organisations. These organisations do not need to be formally affiliated to submit a coalition report.

  Please note that **footnotes, report titles, and organisation names are included in the word count**. It is important to keep your report within the word limit to avoid having to re-write and re-submit it.

- **Confidential Submissions**
  NGOs and coalitions have the option to submit a confidential report to the Committee. This may be necessary for various reasons including when making the information public could create security risks for the organisation or the women and communities referred to in the report. Confidential submissions are shared with the Committee but will not be made available on the session webpage under 'Information from civil society'.

- **Anonymise names**
  You should ensure that the names of victims, survivors, witnesses, and alleged perpetrators are anonymised. If names are contained in your report, the CEDAW Secretariat will request that you anonymise them and resubmit your report. Please ensure that this guideline is strictly followed to avoid exacerbating security risks and the disqualification of your report.

- **Online submission**
  Since 2024, OHCHR requires all NGO reports to CEDAW to be made via an online submission portal. Make sure that you allow sufficient time to complete the online submission process before the deadline.

Report Guidelines

Set of guidelines to assist NGOs in the writing of an NGO report

The CEDAW committee reviews several sources of information for all the countries scheduled for the reporting period. These include the State party report, NGOs reports, reports from other UN agencies and bodies. NGO reports are further constrained by strict word limits.

It is therefore important that you prepare a cohesive, reader-friendly, and well-structured report. This ensures that the Committee members receive the crucial and credible information they need to understand the context, most important concerns, and civil society recommendations in preparation for the Constructive Dialogue with the State parties.

A. Structure

You are advised to structure your NGO report either according to the Articles of the Convention or by thematic areas.

The shadow report should focus only on the substantive articles of the CEDAW convention, i.e., Articles 1-16 *[See Box B].*

Articles 1-5 and **Article 15** specify state obligations and set out the underlying principles of the CEDAW Convention. **Articles 6-16** enumerate and cover substantive issues.

These provisions should therefore be discussed differently in your report. This approach is detailed further in the 'Guidance on Analysis and Writing' section of these guidelines.

Box B: The broad structure of the CEDAW Convention is as follows:

- Articles 1 - 5 provide the general obligations of the State to provide a legal and policy framework for the implementation of the Convention as well as the social context that may impede the achievement of women's right to equality;
- Articles 6 - 16 provide specific substantive areas of equal rights for women under the Convention;
- Articles 17 - 23 outline the role of the CEDAW Committee and the procedures pertaining to the Convention and finally;
- Articles 23 - 30 outline the administration and interpretation of the Convention.

Your report must contain an **Executive Summary** which highlights:

I. The challenges encountered in implementation of the Convention and non-compliance, organised according to the Articles of the Convention

II. A summary of your key recommendations for addressing the gaps and challenges in implementation

Where relevant, you are encouraged to identify and mention recommendations for the CEDAW Committee to raise during the Constructive Dialogue and include in its Concluding Observations.

B. Framing and Analysis

The following sources of information should be considered in deciding the framing of your report.

- The text of the CEDAW Convention.
- The State Party report that is available on the OHCHR website.
- The CEDAW Committee's Concluding Observations to see whether the government has addressed the concerns and recommendations raised during the last review. If a country has been reviewed by the CEDAW Committee previously, its Concluding Observations will be available on the OHCHR website.
- General Recommendations which contain the latest interpretation of the normative standards in the CEDAW Convention (link). They should be read in consonance with the relevant Articles of the Convention.
- Concluding Observations of other UN Treaty Bodies (e.g. the Convention on the Rights of the Child or the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) with relevance to women's rights.
- Reports of other UN Human Rights Mechanisms, such as special rapporteurs on health, housing, violence against women, and others. These reports can expand on normative standards and provide data on violations of human rights.
- Summary Records of the previous CEDAW review capture the accurate and official record of the dialogue between the State Party and CEDAW Committee. They will contain information which is not reflected in the Concluding Observations but can help in analysis, e.g. by helping you identify areas where the State's responses were incomplete, unclear, or inconsistent with the information available from other sources.

C. Types of reports

There are several ways you can organise the content of your NGO report. The approach you choose will depend on your objectives and available resources.

- **Comprehensive**

Comprehensive shadow reports provide a broad overview of a country's compliance with the CEDAW Convention, addressing all relevant articles usually in chronological order. This helps NGOs align their report with the way the CEDAW Committee conducts its Constructive Dialogue with the State party, where Committee members raise questions by proceeding Article by Article through the Convention.

- **Thematic**

A thematic shadow report focuses on one or more specific issues in greater depth. For example,

a report may target women's rights to education, employment and economic rights, health, or violence against women.

- **Constituency-focused**

A constituency-focused shadow report examines the experience of a specific group of persons and their rights. This may include, for example, Indigenous women, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women, women refugees, women with disabilities, migrant women, and others. Constituency-focused reports can also be centred on a specific group of women's experiences with claiming rights, for example, women who are incarcerated or women who use drugs.

- **Update report**

An update report is primarily a form of follow-up to information submitted earlier. It can be used to highlight new developments, emerging concerns, or changes in the situation of women since the previous report was submitted.

Guidance on Analysis and Writing an NGO Report

This section presents a series of questions for each article of CEDAW that can help you frame and analyse the information in your report. The questions are intended to guide you in identifying relevant issues and information related to specific articles. You do not need to answer every question. Instead, you can select the questions that are most relevant to the situation of women and girls in your country and to the priorities of your organisation.

It is important to note that CEDAW is a living document. The interpretation of the Convention continues to evolve to accommodate different emerging perspectives and issues, especially around more contemporary and contentious issues. The Committee's General Recommendations provide further guidance on how the Articles should be understood and applied. As such, you should refer to the relevant General Recommendations when reviewing the Articles and preparing your report.

For a more detailed discussion and guidance on preparing thematic or constituency specific shadow reports (e.g. shadow report guidelines for sex workers and reporting on gender equality and macroeconomics), please refer to IWRAW Asia Pacific's guidelines.

Guidelines for writing an NGO report, Articles 1 - 5

Articles 1 - 5 are general in nature and set out the underlying principles of the CEDAW Convention:

- Substantive Equality
- Non-Discrimination
- State Obligation

ARTICLE 1: DEFINITION OF DISCRIMINATION

A. Has the definition of discrimination as given in Article 1 of the CEDAW Convention been incorporated into the Constitution or laws of your country?

B. Do the laws also address both direct and indirect (or unintended) discrimination?

ARTICLE 2: POLICY MEASURES TO BE UNDERTAKEN TO ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION
(refer also to General Recommendation 28)

A. Has the government taken legal action for the CEDAW Convention to be incorporated into domestic laws?

B. Is the CEDAW Convention applicable in the courts?

C. Have any of the provisions of the CEDAW Convention been directly invoked in domestic courts to gain equal rights for women? Is there any case law?

D. Are lawyers and advocates able to directly cite the CEDAW Convention in court?

E. Do judges refer to the CEDAW Convention or international human rights principles in their decisions?

F. Are there national laws that are in conflict with the CEDAW Convention?

G. Where there is a conflict between national laws and the CEDAW Convention, which one takes precedence?

H. Has a comprehensive review of discriminatory legislation been done? Has a plan developed for legal reform?

I. Has any legislation been enacted as a means of incorporating the CEDAW Convention into domestic law and to make discriminatory acts in the public and private actors actionable? Such legislation could take the form of an Equal Opportunities Act, Gender Equality Act, or Anti-Sex Discrimination Act.

J. Are there any adequate sanctions in place for discrimination against women by public and private actors?

K. What steps have been taken by the government to ensure that women are informed about their rights?

L. What legal remedies are available to women who have been discriminated against or have had their rights violated?

M. Are there remedies available to women whose perpetrators are from the public or private sector?

N. Are legal mechanisms in place to draw compliance from all sectors of government at all levels—vertically and horizontally—especially within a federal system and where there is devolution of powers?

O. What measures, if any, have the government undertaken to ensure the practical realisation of the principles of equality and non-discrimination?

P. Does the government monitor the effect of the laws protecting women's rights on women? Does it examine whether laws are enforced and/or implemented and take appropriate action on its findings?

Q. Is there a process for monitoring discriminatory practices?

R. Are there competent and sensitised tribunals to hear cases on discrimination and inequality? Are there procedures for women to claim their right to equality and non-discrimination?

S. Do specific institutions exist and are procedures laid out for women to be able to make complaints (such as an Office of the Ombudsman or special tribunals)? If these institutions and procedures are in place, how effective are they in addressing the violations and providing the remedies? Is there data on cases brought by women to these institutions?

T. Have all relevant government officers, relevant legal personnel, the judiciary, and parliamentarians been trained to carry out their obligations under the CEDAW Convention?

ARTICLE 3: GUARANTEE OF BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

A. What legislation has the State enacted to ensure women's equality in all fields (including political, social, economic and cultural)?

B. Has the government created national machineries which address the development of women, create equal opportunities for women, and ensure women's equal access to those opportunities and equal results? For example, a Ministry of Women or an Office of Gender Equality.

C. What are the competences and mandates of these machineries? Do they have the authority to coordinate, as well as the resources and competence, to play a catalytic role with other sectors? Can these machineries be more effective? How?

D. Has an inter-sectoral monitoring mechanism been established to monitor compliance with the obligations under the CEDAW Convention?

E. What is the level of coordination with other institutional machineries?

F. Have the national development plans in your country addressed women's development and advancement on a scale that is representative of the population of women? In the national development plans—including poverty eradication strategies—has the government incorporated macro-economic and social policies that will ensure women's access and enjoyment to overall economic and social development based on the principles and framework of the Convention? How are women's rights mainstreamed in all sectors? Are Action Plans for Women integrated into the national development plans or do they run parallel to the national development plans?

G. What percentage of the budget in the national development plans is geared towards goals for the development and advancement of women?

H. Do the national development plans include specific provisions for specific groups of women including rural women, Indigenous women, women with disabilities, migrant women, minority women, refugee women, and marginalised women in your country?

I. Are there any monitoring systems in place to evaluate the implementation of the national

development plans in relation to women's development?

J. Are there mechanisms in place to address the shortfall of the national development plans implementation in relation to women's development?

K. How are the women in your country affected by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) or other bi-lateral or multi-lateral trade agreements? Have there been any assessments made on the impact of these agreements on the rights of women in your country?

L. Are there human rights action plans in your country and do they address the human rights of women?

M. Is there adequate data to assess the progress made in the implementation of the CEDAW Convention, such as data disaggregated by sex, ethnicity, and other relevant variables?

N. Is information or data collected to identify obstacles to the achievement of de facto rights for women and to assess the effects of laws and policies on women? ·Does the government make data available and use the data to formulate policies?

O. Is there a plan for implementation of the CEDAW Convention that sets out benchmarks for progress?

P. Has the government involved NGOs in planning any of the above?

Q. Does the government/State party report mention specific commitments and institutional arrangements for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action that includes accountability to NGOs?

R. What are your recommendations for government action under each of the issues or problems you have identified?

ARTICLE 4: TEMPORARY SPECIAL MEASURES TO ACHIEVE EQUALITY
(refer also to General Recommendation 25 and General Recommendation 40)

A. Has the government instituted any temporary special measures to improve specific situations of women in your country that would bring them closer to experiencing equality with men? For example, the implementation of affirmative action policies in education, employment, or political decision-making.

B. Are the temporary special measures limited to the public sector or do they also extend to the private sector as well?

C. Are there temporary special measures that address specific groups of women such as rural women, Indigenous women, women with disabilities, migrant women, minority women, girl children or other marginalised women in your country?

D. Are there mechanisms in place to monitor the implementation of temporary special measures and to measure their progress in accelerating de facto equality for women?

ARTICLE 5: SEX ROLES AND STEREOTYPING
(refer also to General Recommendation 31 and General Recommendation 35)

A. What has the government done to overcome negative perceptions of women and stereotyping of women's roles within the family and the society?

B. What policies or programmes are the government implementing to change prevailing mindsets among the population?

C. How have gender equality campaigns addressed the issue of stereotyping of women and men and the roles that they play within the family and society?

D. What actions has the government taken to eliminate harmful traditional practices? Initiatives to raise awareness on harmful traditional practices are critical but not sufficient to change harmful cultural and religious practices. Has the government taken steps to put in place relevant laws to eliminate these harmful practices?

Guidelines for Writing an NGO Report, Articles 6 - 16

Article 6-16 are substantive and specific in nature. The following is a series of questions that can be asked for these articles, focusing on the specific issues covered in each article. The same set of questions can be used for each article.

A. What is the status of women in your country according to the issues and rights raised in the CEDAW article concerned? Are there violations of women's rights as well under this article and what are they? Which communities of women are most affected? Provide data disaggregated by sex and other variables if possible. If there is no data, indicate this as a gap in state action.

B. What are the obstacles or contributing factors preventing women from enjoying the rights provided for in the article concerned? (Immediate, historical, systemic, etc.)

C. What is the effect on women when they are denied rights under the article concerned? This should surface the interrelatedness of rights.

D. Has the government acknowledged these issues or the low status of women in their report to CEDAW? If so, how has it presented these issues/problems and is there agreement in relation to:
   i. Prevalence and magnitude of the situation?
   ii. Contributing factors?

E. What does the government say should be done to address the problems related to this article and what does it say it is already doing? What is the analysis of this with regard to:
   i. Appropriateness of what the government says should be done?
   ii. Effectiveness of government action. Are there statistics or evidence of the scale or effectiveness of government action? Does the government monitor its own actions?

F. If in your opinion the government's actions are not effective, what are the contributing factors?
   i. Have the relevant actors been identified?

ii. Is there an allocation of adequate resources?
iii. Are there laws or policies that are adequate and are these enforced/implemented?
iv. Are there institutional arrangements to facilitate the action?
v. Are relevant personnel being trained?
vi. Is there a public awareness programme?
vii. Is there a plan for support services if needed?

G. For countries presenting periodic reports, what action has the government taken to follow-up on the Concluding Observations made by the CEDAW Committee in relation to this right at the previous State party report review?

H. What are your recommendations for government action under each of the issue(s) or problems(s) that have been identified?

I. For each article, include information on how girl children experience these issues and rights, particularly in relation to education, health (including infanticide, nutrition, adolescent health, HIV/AIDs, and access to health care), violence and sexual abuse, child labour, street children, girls held in detention centres, teenage pregnancy, and other concerns.

Specific questions for Article 15: Equality before the law

The emphasis in Article 15 specifically relates to the legal capacity of a woman (e.g., her ability to enter into a contract, to move about freely, etc.) and her equal access to the law. When it comes to discriminatory provisions, practices related to the law, and biases in the implementation of the law, Articles 2 & 3 should be used for analysis and reporting.

Some questions that are useful to think about when reporting on this article are:

A. Do women have full equality with men in all civil and business matters, i.e., is the legal persona of women equal to that of men?

B. Are women able to enter into contracts, receive loans, own/buy/sell and administer their and their children's property, travel freely, apply for a passport. etc., on their own, without the consent of their husbands, fathers, or other male guardians?

C. Are women recognised as legal adults in the law? Are they deemed to have equal capacity to that of men? With respect to their interactions before the law, are they treated as independent adults before the law, or as dependents?

D. Are women treated as equals at all stages of procedure in courts and tribunals? Can they bring cases on their own and serve equally with men as lawyers, judges, and witnesses? Are women able to use the laws and remedies available on an equal basis with men?

E. What steps has the State taken to ensure that women and men are equal before the law and are equally able to exercise their legal capacity?

F. Are women able to choose where they live and their domicile? Do women have full equality in their ability to move around the country and outside of the country?

Frequently Asked Questions

What language should our NGO report be in?

Your NGO report submitted to the OHCHR should be in the working language of the CEDAW Committee. This is currently English, French, or Spanish, and is subject to change for future sessions depending on the membership of the Committee and resources for documentation.

What if an NGO report has already been submitted for the pre-session?

An NGO report can be updated with information to include any recent developments made by the government, progression or even stagnation of the implementation of the rights of women in the country. An integrated report that captures this information is strongly advised over separate or multiple reports.

How many NGO reports can be submitted per country?

There is no limit to the number of NGO reports that can be submitted per country. The CEDAW Committee reads all reports that are submitted by the deadline. Certain country groups collaborate on one shadow report, which is submitted as a coalition report. In other instances, separate reports are submitted from several NGOs because of the need to highlight various issues and violations in their complexity and depth.

There are circumstances where it is imperative to prepare a separate report, to bring out:

- the status of a particular minority group which is facing marginalisation;
- the status of geographical areas under conflict which is experiencing specific kinds of violence or oppression;
- issues on which consensus cannot be reached within the country groups.

Does the CEDAW Committee have a follow-up procedure?

Yes, the CEDAW Committee has a follow-up procedure to its Concluding Observations. In the Concluding Observations, a State party is requested to submit information on action taken to implement a selected few recommendations—usually two—identified by the Committee under the follow-up procedure, within one or two years. You can therefore highlight in your report the most critical issues for the attention of the Committee for the follow-up procedure.

Can committees for other human rights treaties use this report?

Yes. A state party can enter multiple treaties, including regional human rights treaties which, while freestanding, also complement one another and must be read together to understand the State's obligations and how it upholds principles of equality and nondiscrimination.

Hence, the information in the shadow/alternative reports may be useful to other treaty bodies reporting, as long as the State party has signed on to the treaty. Similarly, you can consider If

the NGO shadow report addresses issues that relate to the other treaties. The entire report or relevant chapters can be submitted to other Committees when a State party is scheduled to report to another ratified treaty body.

Can we use information in our NGO report for different treaties?

Yes. For example, in CEDAW, in the chapters on education, employment, health, and violence against women, NGOs may include subsections on how girl children are affected within these areas (consider the issues of education, child labour, teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, access to health care, sexual abuse of girl children, etc.), which makes the report very relevant for the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Including data disaggregated by race and ethnicity and information about the rights of women within minority groups in your report will make it relevant for the CERD Committee.

Various articles in the CEDAW Convention also overlap with articles in the International Convention on Civil and Political Right (ICCPR), International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESR), and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

What else can be done with our shadow report or the information in it?

Considerable time and resources go into collecting data, prioritising issues, analysis, and sharing recommendations in a shadow report. For many NGOs, this is an opportunity to build common ground with organisations working on the same issues.

Outside of sharing this information across different treaties, many national groups translate their reports into local languages and share relevant parts with stakeholders. Some groups share parts of the information with the media. It is useful to use the same information in domestic advocacy and activities, and to develop a work plan to monitor the implementation of the Committee's concluding observations before the follow-up and the next review.