

PARTICIPATION IN THE CEDAW REPORTING PROCESS:

NGO INTERVENTIONS DURING AND AFTER THE CEDAW SESSION

This document is prepared by IRAW Asia Pacific¹ to highlight the role of NGOs **during** and **after** the CEDAW session.

DURING the CEDAW session, NGOs can create a lobby presence during the CEDAW session where their State is being reviewed by the CEDAW Committee. NGOs have an opportunity to make an oral statement to the CEDAW Committee, arrange private briefings with the Committee as well as influence the recommendations in the Concluding Observations.

A summary of NGO interventions at the CEDAW session:

- A. **Preparing Oral Statements for the CEDAW Committee's informal meeting with NGOs:** NGOs can present an oral statement during the allocated "Informal Meeting with NGOs" during the session. NGOs should come to the session prepared with a draft statement. The section below provides guideline on the preparation and presentation of the oral statement.
- B. **Organising lunch meetings with the CEDAW Committee members:** NGOs can organise private lunch briefings with the Committee – arrangements must be done in advance. Read this section for more information on how to arrange the briefing and what to prepare.
- C. **Lobbying individual Committee members:** NGOs can lobby individual Committee members during the CEDAW session.
- D. **Observing the dialogue between the State party and CEDAW Committee:** This section sets out what NGOs can / cannot do during the constructive dialogue between the CEDAW Committee and the State delegation.
- E. **Making recommendations for the Concluding Observations:** NGOs can prepare their own recommendations for the Committee to include in the Concluding Observations.

NGOs also have a role to play **AFTER** the CEDAW session, in publicising the CEDAW review and the Concluding Observations, monitoring the implementation of the Concluding Observations and submitting alternative information on the status of the implementation of the Concluding Observations for the follow up procedure of the CEDAW Committee.

¹ International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IRAW Asia Pacific) is an international women's human rights organisation based in the South that plays a critical role in filling the gap between the promise of women's human rights embodied in human rights treaties, and their actual realisation at the national level. This involves mobilising women's groups at all levels to draw accountability from governments on the domestic application of human rights standards. This is done primarily through the lens of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and other international human rights treaties. Established in 1993, IRAW Asia Pacific currently works throughout South and Southeast Asia and over 100 countries globally. For further information see our website, <http://www.iraw-ap.org>.

DURING THE CEDAW SESSION

A. Preparing Oral Statements for the CEDAW Committee's informal meeting with NGOs

NGO Informal Meetings

As part of the **official agenda**² of the CEDAW session, there are two informal meetings held between NGOs and the CEDAW Committee:

- **The first informal meeting** is scheduled on the first day of the session (usually Monday) and is for NGOs whose States are reporting on the first week.
- **The second meeting** is on the Monday of the second week of the session and covers NGOs whose States are reporting in the second and third week.

During these informal meetings, NGOs will have an opportunity to voice critical concerns through **short oral statements**. They may also be asked to answer questions by the CEDAW Committee.

NGOs must register the names of their speakers with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Write to cedaw@ohchr.org (cc iwraw-ap@iwraw-ap.org) with the name of the speaker, the name of the organisation, and country. Please also contact IWRAW Asia Pacific (iwraw-ap.org@iwraw-ap.org) as we will be supporting the OHCHR in coordinating the oral statement.

There is a maximum time limit of 10 minutes **per country**. This means you will have to share the available time with any other NGOs that want to make a statement on issues in your country.

You do not need to submit the written statement in advance. Bring 35 copies of your statement to the meeting and hand them to an OHCHR staff, **before 12pm on the day of the informal meeting on Monday**.

Time Limit

- **Each country is usually given 10 minutes**, regardless of the number of speakers. The more speakers there are, the less time there is for each speaker to present. We recommend that NGO Coalitions nominate 2 speakers to represent the collaborative nature of their statement.

Nominating Speakers

² NGOs can organise their own private briefings with Committee members during lunch time or other times. These private briefings will not form part of the official agenda. Refer to our note on setting up a lunch briefing/side event for more information.

- **NGOs need to nominate speakers** for the oral statement. The names of these speakers will be submitted to the OHCHR prior to the commencement of the particular session during which the informal meetings will take place. IRAW Asia Pacific will be coordinating with the OHCHR to submit your names so you should inform us a week before the session commences. Send the names of your speakers to iwraw-ap@iwraw-ap.org. Ensure that you receive a confirmation of receipt from us.
- **Please be aware of other NGOs from your country speaking at the informal meeting.** If you wish to maximise your time, it is a good idea to coordinate with other NGOs from your country to make a joint statement. We request that you inform iwraw-ap@iwraw-ap.org as we can link all NGOs coming for the CEDAW review for a planning meeting on the Sunday before the review for your country. International NGOs may also wish to give statements on issues concerning your country. Usually, the time is allotted per speaker only on that day after the Committee has the full list of the number of speakers. Accordingly, time available to each speaker may be very short – please make allowances for this in preparing your statement.

Disseminating Your Statement

- **Make 35 copies of your written statement** and hand them to the OHCHR before the informal meeting commences. There are photocopy machines in the UN but you will need to bring your own paper.

Language

- **Simultaneous translation is provided in English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian and Chinese.** Most of the Committee members speak English, Spanish and/or French, so it is best to write and deliver your statement in one of these languages so you can also distribute it to the Committee members. When answering questions from the CEDAW Committee, however, you can do so in the language that you are most comfortable in (as per the provided translations).

States Parties Attendance

- Government representatives are informed of the informal meeting with NGOs and **may attend hearings as observers**. They will have an opportunity to comment on the statements made by NGOs during the Committee's consideration of their report, but **not** during the informal meeting.
- Should you have concerns about personal security arising from State attendance at the informal meeting, please inform IRAW Asia Pacific immediately.

If you are not able to attend the NGO Informal Meeting

- If you cannot attend the NGO Informal Meeting, IRAW Asia Pacific can make arrangements for one of the members of the "From Global to Local" team to distribute the statement to the Committee members and/or present your statement.
- Please make sure that you can be contacted (via mobile phone or other means) by the IRAW Asia Pacific team **during** the presentation of your statement, in case the CEDAW Committee wishes to clarify points or issues raised in your statement.

Preparing Your Oral Statement

Contents of the Statement

In their statements, NGOs are invited to³

- Discuss the main critical points of their Shadow/Alternative Report;
- Identify specific questions the Committee could raise during the review of the Government/States Party report;
- Present any new information that has become available since the NGO written report was submitted;
- Propose solutions to problems encountered in the implementation of the Convention.

Length of Statement

- The oral statement to be presented during the informal meeting must be **short and within the time limit**. If you wish to disseminate a more comprehensive written statement to the CEDAW Committee, we recommend that it be no longer than four pages.

Tips for an Effective Statement

- For an effective presentation, it is important to be mindful of the time limitations and think carefully about the nature and content of the presentation.
- Be rigorous in identifying and articulating priority issues relating to women's rights in your individual country. The statement should underscore critical concerns already identified in your shadow report and put forward your perspective on the situation of women's human rights in your country.
- You can prepare two versions of the same statement: one to be presented verbally at the informal meeting, and a written version to be disseminated.
- In your written statement, specific references can also be made to the relevant articles in the CEDAW Convention, General Recommendations or even to the Concluding Observations issued to the State party previously.
- Due to time limitations, we highly recommend that NGOs from each country prepare a joint statement to be read out by two speakers.
- In the event that NGOs from one country disagree on particular issues and wish to present separate statements, it is recommended that they work together to ensure that there be no repetitions in their respective statement thus maximising the use of available time. IRAW AP invites all NGOs to come for a planning/discussion on Sunday morning before the Informal Briefing of NGOs (Oral statement day) to discuss the sharing of the time and space at the Oral Statement and during the Lunch Briefing.

³ These questions have been adapted from the guidelines provided by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on NGO participation during the reporting process.

Presenting Your Oral Statement

Tips for an Effective Statement

- Plan your presentations carefully and be precise.
- Be judicious in how many speakers you nominate.
- State your name and the name of your organisation and country but do not waste time talking about the work of your NGO. Go straight to the point and immediately raise your key issues.
- In the oral presentation of your statement, you do not need to make references to relevant articles in the CEDAW Convention, General Recommendations and previous Concluding Observations issued to the State party – these can be set out in the written statement but need not be read.
- The speed of your delivery should be moderate. If you speak too quickly, the interpreters may not be able to capture and translate everything you say to the Committee members. Similarly, in answering questions posed by the Committee, be aware of the clarity and speed of your presentation/answers.
- In situations where NGOs of your country were unable to arrive at a common position on particular issues, it is critical that you do not work at cross-purposes during the presentation of your statements.
- In the event that you cannot be personally present at the informal meeting due to security concerns, please make yourself available for immediate, "real time" contact by the Global to Local team during the meeting.

Follow-up Questions

- **Be prepared to answer follow-up questions** from the Committee after making your statement. The Committee will ask questions by country. Take detailed notes of their questions for your country so you do not miss any questions in your response. Sit together and make a quick decision as to who is going to answer the questions.
- If you are unable to answer the Committee's questions during the meeting itself and intend to give a reply later, please take note of which Committee member asked the questions. In responding to the Committee, inform them that you will submit a written answer later. You will be able to address their questions through a one-on-one informal lobbying after the meeting, or give a written reply to the Committee via the OHCHR.
- It is highly recommended that you prepare a list of answers to all the questions raised during the informal meeting and submit a written response to the Committee.

B. Organising lunch briefings/meetings with the CEDAW Committee members

NGOs can organise confidential side events / lunch briefings with the CEDAW Committee, as a way to lobby the Committee to raise critical issues and concerns during the dialogue with the government delegation the next day, and to clarify any issues / questions the Committee may have about the State part report or the NGO shadow / alternative report. This will be an event that NGOs from each country take the lead in organising jointly, and is not part of the official agenda of the CEDAW session.

IWRAW Asia Pacific can provide tips, help with room bookings and alerting the OHCHR and CEDAW Committee to the event in advance, but you need to organise your own lunch and lobbying of Committee members to attend.

Important:

This briefing space is agreed with the CEDAW Committee as a way for NGOs to provide alternative information on each country coming for review. This is a space where the Committee will have a question and answer session with all NGOs who wish to attend. Because the time is limited to 1 hour or less please note that prior discussion and negotiation of the use of this space is important. IWRAW Asia Pacific arranges for a specific time to hold a planning meeting by all NGOs to conduct the lunch briefing on the Sunday morning before the CEDAW review. If there are security or other concerns this needs to be raised with IWRAW Asia Pacific before the planning meeting.

Procedure:

If you want to organise a lunch briefing for the CEDAW Committee, please inform IWRAW Asia Pacific at least 4 weeks in advance so we can assist you in booking a room at the UN and requesting the secretariat to inform the CEDAW Committee of your lunch briefing.

Venue:

IWRAW Asia Pacific will make a request to the OHCHR to allocate a room for your lunch briefing. The OHCHR will inform us of the location nearer to the date of the CEDAW session.

Day and Time:

The lunch briefing is usually slotted between 1.45 – 2.45pm on the day before the Constructive Dialogue (Day of review) . Some refreshment should be provided and all NGOs attending the lunch briefing should share the cost of the refreshments.

Flyers / Invitations:

You may wish to prepare flyers which you can distribute to the CEDAW Committee members and anyone else you may want to attend your lunch briefing. We suggest that the flyer reads as an invitation to CEDAW Committee members, and contain brief information about the purpose of the meeting (i.e. *NGO Lunch time briefing on [country]*), the venue / time / date, and brief info about the organisers (your coalition and/or list of NGOs). This can go on half an A4 size paper. Sample flyer:

<p style="text-align: center;">Invitation</p> <p style="text-align: center;">to CEDAW Committee members</p> <p style="text-align: center;">for a lunch briefing on</p> <p style="text-align: center;">[COUNTRY]</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Date:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Time: 1.45 – 2.45pm</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Venue:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Lunch will be provided.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Organised by</p> <p style="text-align: center;">[YOUR NAME AND NAME OF YOUR NGO]</p>
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Documents for the meeting:

We would suggest that you provide a copy of the executive summary of your report and also a list of issues / questions that you want the CEDAW Committee to raise in the dialogue with your government the next day or fact sheets about specific priorities to aid the Committee in understanding particularly complex situations. You may also want to highlight what recommendations you want and what you intend to do if you get those recommendations.

Cost and Arrangement for Lunch:

There are cafes and cafeterias in the UN building that sells sandwiches, muffins, pastries, bottled water, coffee and tea etc. You can easily buy these at the UN before your lunch meeting with the Committee.

In Geneva, you can also order sandwiches / juice / coffee/ tea for you from the UN caterers:

Restaurant DSR-ONU

N°TVA 257700

Tél.022/917.56.19

Fax. 022/917.01.02

8-14 Avenue de la Paix, 1202 Genève

E-mail: onu@dsr.ch

You should estimate a budget of about CHF/USD15 per person, and for approximately 10 Committee members. The number of Committee members who are available to attend your lunch meeting depends on who can make it – you will have to lobby them. Once you are at the session, we suggest that you approach the Committee members with your flyers and ask for their confirmation. They will have been informed by the OHCHR in advance that you are planning to organise this briefing.

C. Lobbying individual Committee members

In addition to the NGO meeting and lunchtime briefing, NGOs attending the CEDAW Session will have access to individual Committee members throughout the Session. This gives NGOs opportunities to approach Committee members to highlight key issues, request that they ask specific questions of the Government, respond to what the Government said during the dialogue, and make recommendations for what issues should be included in the Concluding Observations.

Tips for lobbying Committee members:

- Make sure you have the list of Committee members with you so you know their names.
- You don't need any one to facilitate a conversation with the Committee. Just go to the conference room where the CEDAW session is held, walk up to the Committee member and introduce yourself. Inform them that you are part of the IRAW Asia Pacific programme called "From Global to Local". Their names will be on their places where they sit.
- Before raising your issues with them, ask if they have time to speak with you. If they are busy, ask them for lunch appointments or just to have tea with you at any convenient time. Some times they will agree to have tea or coffee before the CEDAW session starts. The **lunch hour of the day before and day of your country review** is especially important. On the day before, you can arrange to have a lunch briefing with the Committee member(s) (see above as to how to do so) and on the day of the review, you can inform the committee if the government is giving frank answers during the dialogue on that morning. Do not go for lunch with anyone else, and especially do not go for lunch with your government on those days. If possible, book your lunch appointment with committee members well in advance.
- After the review of your country report prepare statements on what you would like to see in the Concluding Observations and give it in writing to the Committee member who will be rapporteur for your country. You should also give this paper to the secretariat to the Committee, i.e. the OHCHR and the IRAW Asia Pacific resource persons as well.

D. Observing the dialogue between the State party and CEDAW Committee

The constructive dialogue:

As part of the consideration of a government/state party report, the CEDAW Committee engages in a constructive dialogue with the government delegation. Committee members pose questions on the implementation of the CEDAW Convention at the national level. The questions and issues raised are based on the state party report, further information requested by the Committee to the government, and alternative information provided by NGOs.

States have a tendency to send local UN representatives to the CEDAW sessions, who are often not in a position to respond with authority to the issues raised by the CEDAW Committee. NGO observers are permitted to be present at CEDAW and feed information back to their networks at home about commitments made by their representative and, at the same time, domestic pressure may help to ensure that appropriate officials are sent to attend the meeting.

During the dialogue between the state party delegation and the CEDAW Committee, NGOs cannot intervene. However, it is useful for NGOs to remain in the conference room to observe the dialogue. There will be informal opportunities to approach committee members.

It is useful to attend the dialogue between the Committee and your government because it provides you with a good opportunity to know further what are some of the positions taken by the government on certain issues and useful information during the dialogue that can be an input into your advocacy strategies back at the local level. More importantly, it is an opportunity to listen to the CEDAW Committee and how they interpret the CEDAW Convention on issues raised or areas that are developing.

Lobbying country rapporteurs:

You should work closely with the committee member assigned as "rapporteur", who will be the primary Committee member in charge of writing up the first draft of the Concluding Observations for your country. IWRAP Asia Pacific will advise you as to who your country rapporteur is at the CEDAW session.

Lobbying during lunch time:

The lunch hour of the day your government is reporting is a great opportunity for you to speak with the CEDAW Committee members and provide feedback about the dialogue between the Committee and your government. This also gives the Committee an opportunity to raise any issues that need to be raised in the remaining afternoon session. Be careful not to go for lunch with anyone else during this lunch hour, especially not members of your government delegation since this is prime time that can and should be spent lobbying the CEDAW Committee and clarifying issues that were raised during the dialogue. There may be lunch time events organised by NGOs from other countries for the CEDAW Committee members during this time as well.

E. Making recommendations for the Concluding Observations

At the end of its consideration of the government/state party report, the CEDAW Committee adopts Concluding Observations that reflect the Committee's position with respect to the status of implementation of the CEDAW Convention in the said country. The Concluding Observations contain specific recommendations regarding the further implementation by the state party on the CEDAW Convention.

It is important for NGOs to ensure that priority concerns are addressed in the Concluding Observations. **During the review of your government, you should ensure that you take notes to help you prepare a list of recommendations you want the Committee to include in the Concluding Observations.** You should note in particular that the Committee will **not** include recommendations on issues/concerns **not raised during the review**. Your recommendations for the Concluding Observations can be handed over to the country rapporteur on the morning of the day after they have reviewed the government/state party report.

The Concluding Observations are finalised and edited by the last day of the CEDAW Committee session. Soon thereafter, they are translated into and issued in all the official languages of the United Nations as a separate document. They are also placed on the website of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/index.htm>

Follow up procedure:

The CEDAW Committee has adopted a new follow up procedure, in which the Committee identifies one or two extremely critical issues, and asks States parties to report back on how they are handling these issues within one or two years.

NGOs can submit alternative information to the CEDAW Committee on the progress of the State on these critical issues for the follow up procedure. The deadline for submission of NGO information is the same as that for the State (which is set out in the Concluding Observations). For more information on the follow up procedure, see the OHCHR website at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/followup.htm>.

AFTER THE CEDAW SESSION

A. The role of NGOs in the follow-up processes

The role of NGOs is crucial after the CEDAW Committee issues its Concluding Observations. They can assist by providing the CEDAW Committee with **reports on follow-up measures** taken by their government in response to the recommendations contained in the Concluding Observations⁴.

NGOs can give publicity to the Concluding Observations locally and nationally, and monitor the Government's performance in implementing the CEDAW Committee's recommendations. NGOs reporting back to the Committee on the basis of their local monitoring and awareness-raising activities would contribute to more effective follow-up on the part of the Committee by keeping it informed of developments in the country after the consideration of the state party report.

In this regard, NGOs may consider the following:

- If you are consulting other women's groups in preparing your Shadow/Alternative Report, inform them that they should remain organised in order to advocate for the implementation of the recommendations of the CEDAW Committee. If you are attending the CEDAW Session in New York / Geneva, tell them that you will debrief them on your return as this will help to build a constituency that demands follow-up and implementation of the Committee's views and recommendations.
- You may also keep in mind that **press releases** are available after each day of discussion. In this regard, we recommend you bring contact information of journalists that may be interested in publicising the reporting process. Alternatively, ensure that you brief the press about the CEDAW review when you are back home. Press releases will be available on the following websites:
 - 1) UN News Centre - <http://www.un.org/apps/press/latest.asp>
(this URL avails the 30 latest press releases, including the CEDAW Session and other events taking place in relation to the UN).
 - 2) The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/pressreleases.htm>
(select "Press Releases & Meeting Summaries (UNOG)" and then the "Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women").
- A **summary record** of the dialogue between the CEDAW Committee and the government delegation is also made available on the website of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/sessions.htm> (select the relevant session). Aside from providing summary proceedings of the meetings, summary records are also authoritative documents that can be used for advocacy at the national level.

⁴ See the OHCHR website for more information: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/followup.htm>.