What is CEDAW?

CEDAW defines "discrimination against women" as any "distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field."

CEDAW requires state parties to:

- Adopt appropriate legislative and other measures prohibiting discrimination against women;
- Ensure effective protection of women against any act of discrimination;
- Refrain from any act or practice of discrimination against women;
- Take all appropriate measures, including temporary measures to accelerate equality in practice between men and women, to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise;
- Take all appropriate measures to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women.

State parties must take all appropriate measures to ensure equality with men and non-discrimination against women in a number of areas:

- Rights to access to health care services, including those related to family planning.
- Rights to participate fully in political and public life – this includes the right to vote, to hold public office and represent their country at the international level.
- Rights of women in rural areas – states should take into account and address the particular problems faced by such women.
- Rights to freely choose a spouse and marry only with free and full consent, and property rights within a marriage.
- The right to equality before the law and to hold and exercise full legal capacity in civil matters.
- Rights to acquire, change or retain their nationality – in particular, a woman's marital status should not affect her nationality.
- Rights to access to education, career guidance, and employment opportunities.

The Review Process

State parties are obliged to submit regular reports to the Committee every 4 years.

Illegal discriminatory laws and practices are identified by the Committee.

The state party is requested to follow-up on particular issues identified by the Committee.

The Committee submits an addendum to the report of the state party.

NGOs can submit country shadow reports to the Committee, which supplement and/or present alternative information to the report of the state party.

List of issues and questions arising from state and NGO reports is formulated by a pre-sessional working group and submitted to the state party.

The state party replies to the list of issues and questions. NGOs submit updated shadow reports.

Dialogue between Committee and representatives of the state party on review implementation of CEDAW.

The state party submits the state report, and the Committee examines it.

The Committee adopts concluding observations on the progress and setbacks in the implementation of CEDAW and offers recommendations.

The state party submits regular and updated reports.

The Committee examines the reports and identifies follow-up activity.

The Concluding observations

Follow-up activity

Concluding observations

List of issues

State report

Shadow reports

NGOs can submit country shadow reports to the Committee, which supplement and/or present alternative information to the report of the state party.