

All-China Women's Federation &
Chinese Women's Research Society

A Brief Report
on the Combined Seventh and Eighth Periodic Report
Submitted by China under Article 18 of the *Convention on
the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against
Women*

(For public information)

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1. The report draws from inspirations and cites concerns of Chinese women's NGOs to examine the progress of the implementation of CEDAW in China, analyze challenges in the concerned areas and put forward constructive recommendations. It refers chiefly with the *Concluding comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: China* (CEDAW/C/CHN/CO/6) developed after the CEDAW Committee's deliberation on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of China (CEDAW/C/CHN/5-6 and Add.1 and 2) at its 743rd and 744th meetings on August 2006.

2. China has taken a series of actions regarding defining discrimination and introducing laws and policy measures to eliminate discrimination against women, which has contributed to the applicable CEDAW in China. The efforts mainly includes further improving the legal system to protect women's rights, mainstreaming a gender perspective in law enforcement and justice administration, keeping abreast of the progress of women in national policies and programs, enhancing the national mechanism to guarantee women's social status, fostering the gender-disaggregated statistics, and so on. However, obstacles remain in this area, such as unavailability of an operational definition of discrimination in existing laws and policies and lack of gender-related knowledge across policy makers and judiciary officials. Our recommendation is to strengthen analysis and evaluation of the laws and policies as well as their application from the perspective of gender equality, redouble training efforts for the legislative, judicial and law enforcement personnel, enhance gender-disaggregated statistics, and consolidate the national mechanism to guarantee women's social status.

3. To avoid stereotyped roles for men and women, China has developed a number of regulations and policies in favor of the elimination of gender discrimination across media. Above all, a special action was initiated to control the unbalanced sex ratio at birth arising from the son-preference convention. The government has entered a multilateral cooperation with the women's federations, international agencies and schools, etc., to carry out diverse campaigns for gender awareness and education, such as introducing combating gender discrimination in school curriculum and teaching. Nevertheless, there is still a serious gender bias across the mass media, calling for an urgent wipeout of gender stereotypes from textbooks. We suggest well-established mechanisms and enhanced publicity for gender equality across the media should be stressed, with financial and technical support provided to ensure more women's access to public information and resources. Public opinion with a gender perspective should be encouraged, coupled with corrections to the gender stereotypes in

textbooks.

4. Great progress has been made in laws and policies related to combating trafficking in women and children and forced prostitution in China, with increased efforts in trafficking crackdown and victim relief as well as in gender-based statistics and information dissemination, where attention has been paid to the rights and rehabilitation of women forced into prostitution. However, given the ever-changing situation of trafficking in women and forced prostitution, we need to make the related legal provisions more relevant, do a better job in preventing and combating crimes in this regard while rescuing and restoring victim women, continue to train the police officers responsible for anti-trafficking and prostitution regarding human rights and gender awareness, strengthen gender-related research and statistical work, and further cooperate with non-governmental organizations.

5. In the development of temporary special measures to propel gender equality in political and public life, regulations and policies have been promulgated to spell out the proportion of women engaged in politics. Cooperation among women's organizations in training contributes to strengthen women's leadership and improve their capabilities. However, deficiencies and challenges remain in women's participation in political and public life, mainly reflected in the under-representation of women engaged in political decision making, female leaders serving in principal and other backbone positions outnumbered by male leaders, and inadequate public awareness of the importance of women's political and public engagement. We recommend further improving legislation towards more systematic and operational regulations and policies, prescribing a certain proportion of women representatives in politics and all levels of leadership and diplomatic posts and establishing a long-term mechanism for women's political engagement, raising public awareness of the importance of women's participation in political and public life to create a favorable social environment for women to engage in politics, and reinforcing the capacity building of women leaders.

6. To safeguard women's right to education, the Chinese government has developed relevant educational policies and regulations to increase financial investment in education and promote all levels of education and training sessions for women. These efforts have further narrowed the education gap between males and females, increased women's access to education and training significantly, which have resulted in improved quality and level of education for women. But there are still some challenges such as failure to fully practice the principle of gender equality in practical work, the regional imbalance regarding the development of girls' education, the unsecured right to education among migrants girls in cities and left-behind girls in rural areas, and the insufficient opportunities for women to receive lifelong education and vocational training. Therefore, we recommend launching specific policies and programs targeted at practical problems confronting women's education at this stage to fully protect their right to education, helping women out from the disadvantaged situation in lifelong and vocational education, promoting women's studies and establishing academic discipline.

7. China has made progress in increasing women's employment opportunities and safeguarding their employment rights, with a series of laws, regulations and policies enacted and mechanisms initiated to promote employment equity. In addition, various types of job training and assistance have been provided for different groups of women. Nonetheless, problems remain: many relevant laws and policies are neither adequately

gender-sensitive nor practical to execute; gender segregation in occupation still exists in employment; income gap between men and women is too large to be ignored; labor protection regulations for female workers were misused at some point which tends to deprive women of some employment opportunities; the social security net barely covers the female-dominated informal employment sectors; and differences in the retirement age for men and women remain. We recommend a modification of the laws, regulations and policies concerning labor protection and clarification of the definition of gender-based discrimination in employment. We call for introducing legal frameworks to combat such discrimination, strengthening publicity for the *International Labour Convention*, and altering the flawed perception of gender across decision makers at all levels.

8. The Chinese government has provided more effective legal and policy support for women's health by incorporating the issue into its national plan for economic and social development as one of the priorities, with a series of related measures and actions adopted. Close cooperation on women's health research and intervention has been forged between the government, women's federations, NGOs and international agencies for effective improvement of women's health. However, women's health condition and access to healthcare services differ greatly across regions and populations as well as between urban and rural areas, in particular, migrant women lack access to the health services. Besides, women's mental health care provisions are in short supply, female AIDS/STD infections keep on increasing, and the unbalanced sex ratio at birth has not been satisfactorily addressed. We recommend ameliorating laws and policies to promote women's health on a constant basis, further integrating a gender perspective into the government's public health decision-making, strengthening gender-disaggregated statistics, enhancing measures and actions in each department to provide people-oriented, care-centered health services, mobilizing community efforts and conducting publicity campaigns to create a favorable environment for women's healthcare.

9. To advance the development of rural women, the Chinese government has safeguarded rural women's land rights and interests through the development of laws and policy measures. Funds and projects as well as training and education have been delivered to support rural women's access to science and technology, enabling their entrepreneurship to shake off poverty. Rural women's participation in politics has been propelled via temporary quota requirements for women entering village committees, training sessions, support networks and other means. Health services have been offered to rural women, and communication and advocacy efforts have been redoubled. However, the development of rural women is still challenged in many ways. Currently in rural areas, above all, women's land rights and interests are infringed; women's income and engagement in non-farm employment are still outnumbered by men; and the proportion of women engaged in political decision making cannot be fully ensured. Besides, rural women's education is still lower than that of rural men and urban women, while prenatal care and hospital delivery rate among women in rural areas is also less than that of women in urban areas. We recommend taking effective measures to ensure rural women of their land rights and interests, generating more job and training opportunities for them, strictly following the quota provisions for women's political representation, enhancing capacity building for rural women and launching targeted public advocacy to create a favorable social and cultural environment for rural women's political presence. In fields of economic production, public life and public services in rural areas, further attention should be

paid to the needs of women left behind in village whose husbands have migrated out into cities for livelihoods. We call for increased efforts to support their well-being regarding education, health and social security.

10. The Chinese government has been successful in combating violence against women, reflected in the progress in legislation on anti-domestic violence, sexual harassment and rape, etc., where specific legislation against domestic violence has been incorporated into the state-level legislation agenda. Furthermore, relief measures have been intensified for battered women and the relevant authorities have strengthened cooperation with NGOs, proving fruitful in terms of research, advocacy, training, assistance and so on. But there are still some problems, including the prevalence of domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment and other types of gender-based violence, the public awareness of gender violence negatively affected by the traditional gender culture and double moral standards, inadequate intervention and rescue mechanisms, etc. Therefore, we call for the launch of specific measures as soon as possible to prevent and curb violence against women, with compensation introduced for victims who have been mentally abused. We call for great importance attached to sexual harassment, especially in the workplace.

11. The Chinese government has made great efforts in protecting the rights of migrant women, mainly reflected in the emphasis on the development of domestic service, an informal sector whereby the majority of migrant women concentrate. Meantime, the government has improved labor and social security policies for migrant women in general. In respect of health and safety, women's health care services have been consolidated through legislation, education and publicity, with occupational health as a priority. Although a preliminary social security net to safeguard women's rights has taken shape in China, migrant women are still facing some problems and challenges under the urban-rural dual structure where mechanisms for social security and rights protection are far from well-established. Main challenges include: Women are outperformed by men in employment rate and occupation level, and are subject to a more unstable income; migrant women lack access to healthcare resources, whose occupational disease prevention and control is therefore not satisfactory, added by inadequate compensation and rescue for occupational injuries; migrant women are not well-engaged socially or politically at either their domicile or their workplace in the recipient city; and their needs for public services, such as their children's education, living conditions and so on, have not been fulfilled. For this reason, we recommend that the government promoting the employment of migrant women and improving the social security systems, paying attention to their health and safety while safeguarding their right to social and political engagement.

To conclude, China has been devoted to addressing the biggest concerns on women's rights and interests throughout the CEDAW implementation process. NGOs have been actively advocating and urging policy changes and facilitating women's rights protection and their development, with good results achieved. However, gaps still exist and challenges remain daunting, requiring the government and NGOs to work together more closely for further progress in CEDAW enforcement in China.

Appendix

Catalog of the Organizations

All-China Women's Federation (ACWF)

The All-China Women's Federation (ACWF), founded in 1949, is the biggest non-governmental Women's organization in China, whose basic function is to represent and safeguard the rights and interests of women as well as to promote gender equality. The ACWF promotes legislation, supervises law enforcement, assists vulnerable groups and mobilizes all relevant parties to address Women's top concerns regarding their direct and practical interests. In 1995, the ACWF became one of the NGOs with a consultative status recognized by the ECOSOC.

Women's federations follow an organizational system combining local organizations with corporate members.

Website: <http://www.women.org.cn>

Chinese Women's Research Society (CWRS)

The Chinese Women's Research Society (CWRS), established in December 1999, is a national academic coalition of volunteers from all walks of life who are enthusiastic in theoretical research and supportive to women's studies. The Society consists of corporate members and individual members, currently including 119 corporate members, 183 directors and 36 executive directors, with a specialized committee on women's education established. Since 2006, the Society has successively cooperated with 32 units in building women's / gender research and training bases. Its partners include the Party School of the CPC Central Committee, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and Peking University, etc.

Website: <http://www.wsic.ac.cn>