

NAURU ALTERNATE REPORT

Parallel to the 68th CEDAW Session - 2017

ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND THANKS

1. This report has been compiled by the Nauru Island Association of Non-Government Organisations in cooperation with representatives and individuals of organisations.
2. NIANGO acknowledges and thanks the Government of Nauru for the concerted implementation of human rights for the improvement in the quality and dignity of the people of Nauru.
3. NIANGO also acknowledges and thanks the UN for its many opportunities to enable the improvement of human rights of people in Nauru. This we acknowledge such processes of the UPR and Convention Committees.

NAURU BACKGROUND

4. Nauru has come a long way since traditional days, independence and dependence on the export of phosphate soil. Today, Nauru hosts the Regional Processing Centre that maintains maritime asylum seekers and refugees, women and men, who Australia has turned back from entering Australian borders. Although some 27 refugees have recently departed to the United States of America, there is still a significant number of asylum seekers and refugees living and working on Nauru. The RPC programme is envisaged to remain in Nauru for some time.
5. The island is distinctly broken up into two land purposes. The coastal flat makes up 20% of the island: it is highly urbanized with living and services congested together. Up on the central plateau which is 80% of the land, it is unusable as a consequence of a century of mining. In the current economy, certain lands on the plateau have been leveled to accommodate asylum seekers and RPC expatriate workers. Refugees have been moved to accommodation units on the coastal flat. Refugee women are living on the coast and women of asylum seeker status remain on the plateau.

CLIMATE CHANGE

6. 80% of Nauru is denuded land. The remaining 20% of the island is heavily urbanized. Reforestation of the land is reliant on national plans to restore the land to a usable state. Land in Nauru is owned by groups of landowners. Before any plans to reforest the land, landowners need to be consulted on free, prior and informed consent for entry their land for reforestation and for lease of the reforested land for national use.
7. Nauru is a matrilineal society. Traditionally, women were the custodians of family lands which made up the economic unit of women, land and family. Custom mandated women to speak on the rights to control and use of land. Today, the paramount status of women in relation to land has diluted to extent of diminishment.
8. There are consultations with communities in relation to climate change projects that involve the 20% fully urbanized coastal belt. These manifold climate change consultations and projects do not address the issues of 80% of the island. Nauru's most urgent climate change task is the reforestation of the denuded 80% of the land on the central plateau as mitigation.
9. There is no consultation process for this major reforestation need. Women have not been consulted regarding the proposed use of their lands– both for entry and lease.
10. Reforestation is an urgent need. Public consultation for reforestation is urgent. Nauru needs to combat climate change impacts imposed from outside as much as its own internal contributions of greenhouse gas emissions.

Recommendation:

CEDAW to urge:

- a. The Government of Nauru to embark on reforestation public consultations that include as much as possible for women to speak on their lands and as to the use of their lands;

- b. The Government of Nauru to invite the international community to assist in technical and financial in this process of consultation that will ensure the voices of women; and,
- c. The Government of Nauru to invite the international community to assist in technical and finance with the reforestation of the mined-out phosphate lands.
- d. The Government of Nauru to include and involve civil society organisations and individuals as active principal consultation facilitators in the consultation process as opposed to being recipients.

WOMEN AND HEALTH

- 11. Women with cancer – particularly cervical and breast cancer – is enlarging with certainty. Many women are often diagnosed too late as a result of failure to visit the hospital in earlier stages of cancer. Cancer is prevalent in women in their child bearing age and who are significantly married women. As busy mothers looking after children, husbands, family, homes and livelihood, it is common knowledge that these mothers put the health and well-being of their families and homes before their welfare.
- 12. Cancer is prevalent in Nauruan women. It is not known of prevalence of cancer, either cervical or breast, with asylum seeker and refugee women.
- 13. Testing that detects cancer is often delayed. Pap smear tests are sent to Australia and results returned to Nauru in about 2-3 weeks time. Assessment of treatment and decision whether to send the woman overseas for medical treatment is awaited from the Government which is reliant on the availability of funds. Otherwise, there is further investigation for biopsy testing that is sent to Australia and the results sent back to Nauru. Again an assessment process is undertaken. There is often delay in the process.
- 14. Many women have little trust in the hospital that they avoid early visits to the hospital for tests until it is too late.

Recommendations:

CEDAW to urge:

- a. The Government of Nauru to establish, with technical and financial development partner assistance, a comprehensive cancer programme for women that will maintain and sustain such programme. This programme should include a Cancer Unit that coordinates and monitors all the steps involved in the process so to expedite detection and further investigation.
- b. The Government of Nauru to establish a sustainable awareness programme on cancer detection . This programme to include education on self-examination, necessity of pap-smear test, self- examination on the breast, awareness of pre and post stages of cancer treatment, and family counseling.
- c. The Government of Nauru to include and involve civil society organisations and individuals to actively participate in the cancer programme.

WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

15. The Nauru Persons with Disabilities Organisation (NPDO) has identified three (3) main areas that need urgent addressing:
 - i. Mentally handicapped – There is an gradual increase of the number of women with mental disabilities. It is also reported that the majority of the mentally handicapped are women for unknown reasons.
 - ii. Abuse of Women with Disabilities - Cases of abuse of women with disabilities go unreported. Women with mental disabilities wander the island all day and late at night and open to abuse. Women with disabilities confined to the homes also endure abuse. Such abuses are common knowledge in communities but not in the legal capacity.
 - iii. General Rights Awareness of Women and Disabilities – Although the NPDO does carry out awareness on disability rights of which attendees are on the majority women, there is considered that greater efforts be put to awareness and consultations.

Recommendation

CEDAW to urge:

- a. The Government of Nauru to formulate and implement a programme for the addresses issues of women who are mentally handicapped - assess, diagnose, educate and care services;
- b. The Government of Nauru to step its awareness programme and reporting process to women and families regarding perpetration against women with disabilities; and,
- c. The Government of Nauru to increase assistance for public awareness on disability rights.

WOMEN AND EMPLOYMENT

16. Women on the whole carry the burden of unpaid care work. This unpaid work is evident in care-workers in relation to persons with disabilities who are often cared for at home. It is the practice that the mother and the grandmother are the principal carers who share the nursing by alternating with their full-time jobs. When patients are hospitalized, family care-workers are also on hand.

Recommendations:

CEDAW to urge:

- a. The Government of Nauru to include in the national budget remuneration for care workers in relation to persons with disabilities.