



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

Distr.: General
5 January 2010

Original: English

**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**

Pre-session working group

Forty-fifth session

18 January-5 February 2010

**Responses to the list of issues and questions with regard to
the consideration of the sixth periodic report**

Malawi*

* The present report is being issued without formal editing.

Responses to issues raised with regard to the sixth periodic report of Malawi

General

Issue/question 1

1. Ministry of Gender, Children and Community Development undertook a very consultative approach to the production of the report. Most of the relevant stakeholders, including various Government departments, district assemblies, women's rights organizations (particularly the NGO Gender Coordination Network (NGO GCN) and the Women's Legal Resource Centre) and academia were given a questionnaire to respond to and one-on-one interviews held with them, which informed the draft report. Further, a stakeholders' workshop was conducted where the draft report was discussed among all stakeholders including the aforementioned women's rights organizations and a further task force was put in place to vet the report, in which the Women's Legal Resource Centre was a member. All these initiatives informed the final report.

Issue/question 2

2. The Government of Malawi, through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Community Development, is very committed to the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In this respect, it has taken significant steps to ensure that data disaggregated by sex is available. The Ministry, with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), trained staff from the national statistical office on gender statistics in order to build the capacity of this department for the production of surveys and census reports that have data disaggregated by sex. The just released (November 2009) population and housing census has produced data in respect of which most of the issues are disaggregated by sex. The Ministry has also engaged the national statistical office, with support from the United Kingdom Department for International Development, to produce the Malawi gender and development index report, which will be out very soon. The index will produce data and information on the status of gender equality and the effects of gender policies in reducing women's marginalization. Further, the index will help in monitoring the progress made in the implementation of the international and regional conventions, protocols and declarations in quantitative and qualitative terms. It will also provide planners and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with a monitoring tool.

3. The Ministry has developed standard monitoring and evaluation tools to assist in the collection of information that is disaggregated by sex. For instance, in the National Programme for Women, Girls and HIV and AIDS, a number of indicators have been developed to collect data disaggregated by sex, for example, the number of officers trained in gender and HIV/AIDS at national and district level by sex, the percentage of peer educators trained in gender HIV/AIDS issues by sex, and the percentage of teachers trained in giving career guidance and sexual reproductive health counselling in school by sex. Some of the indicators will capture information that is comparable between men and women on issues of access to credit, economic empowerment and adult literacy. These tools will be distributed to all district assemblies and partners all over the country that are implementing interventions related to issues under the mandate of the Ministry. District officers have already

been trained on these monitoring and evaluation tools. During this training, it was emphasized that there was a need to collect data disaggregated by sex. It is expected that when these tools are formally in use, information disaggregated by sex will be readily available.

Constitutional, legislative and institutional framework and status of the Convention

Issue/question 3

4. The process to enact bills is cumbersome. As much as the Law Commission has been very robust in the review and development of new legislation such as the Gender Equality Bill, Parliament sets its own priorities so it is difficult to push on the passing of the bills. The guiding document is the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy, which guides Government priorities. It is anticipated, however, that the Deceased Estates Bill and the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Bill will be presented for enactment at the next sitting of Parliament after Cabinet approval in 2010. (N.B. Question 26 is also answered by this response to question 3).

Issue/question 4

5. The Malawi Law Commission has developed one Gender Equality Bill. This was the third bill developed as part of a three-phase gender-related law reform programme initiated in 2001 to conduct a review of the laws of Malawi in accordance with Government policy to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women in all spheres of life in Malawi.

6. The Gender Equality Bill covers five thematic areas, namely:

- (a) Prohibition of harmful (social or cultural) practices;
- (b) Participation of women in all spheres of life;
- (c) Health;
- (d) Education and training; and
- (e) Dignity, including sexual harassment.

7. As discrimination is the main theme running through all five thematic areas addressed in the Bill, discrimination has been defined with reference to the definition in the Convention, as follows: "Discrimination" means 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 either men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

8. The Gender Equality Bill is pending publication in the Government *Gazette Extraordinary*. The Bill should, however, be presented to Parliament for enactment after publication and Cabinet approval, hopefully by the end of 2010.

Issue/question 5

9. The table below responds to issue/question 5.

**Case statistics related to discrimination against women, 2007 to June 2009
(Malawi Human Rights Commission)**

<i>Category of rights</i>	<i>Received cases</i>	<i>Cases under investigation</i>	<i>Advised cases</i>	<i>Alternative dispute resolution</i>	<i>Referred cases</i>	<i>Cases under legal action</i>	<i>Resolved cases</i>
Labour issues	18	1	6		6	1	4
Family and marriage issues	22	5	8	1	2	1	5
Access to justice	18	5	5		3		5
Education issues	6	1	2		1		2
Land issues	4	2	2				
Political issues	2		1				1
Total	70	14	24	1	12	2	17

Issue/question 6

10. The Ministry of Gender, in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice, NGO GCN and Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA), with support from UNFPA, has been training judicial officers, legislators and prosecutors on the Convention and gender-related legislation in Malawi.

National machinery for the advancement of women

Issue/question 7

11. The revised national gender policy is pending approval by the Cabinet. Necessary lobbying has been done. The mandate to put it on the agenda, however, rests with the Cabinet.

Stereotypes, cultural practices

Issue/question 8

12. Refer to response under question 17 below.

Violence against women

Issue/question 9

13. The Prevention of Domestic Violence Act is fully operational. Statistics are available on women that have benefited from the legislation, especially those being granted protection orders. The review that is being carried out is to clear the small hitches that exist to ensure that the legislation provides maximum legal support to the survivors of domestic violence, on the basis of which the Ministry of Gender, Children and Community Development has been able to obtain funds for the review of the Act. The Law Commission has started the review process to address the gaps. The process will cost \$80,000 and will take about six months.

14. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Community Development with support from development partners and NGOs, printed over 5,000 copies of the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act in English and two other main local languages and distributed them to the district assemblies and NGOs. The total cost was \$14,300. The Ministry and its partners (NGO GCN, WLSA, Malawi Human Rights Resource Centre, etc.) have trained enforcement officers, judges, magistrates and prosecutors on the new legislation.

15. NGO GCN has produced a training manual on the Act to ensure effective training of law enforcement personnel. The Reproductive Health Unit has developed rape management guidelines and has also raised awareness and provided capacity-building to some health personnel and police officers on how health personnel and the police can provide support to the survivors of gender-based violence.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

Issue/question 10

16. The Trafficking Bill is pending publication in the *Government Gazette Extraordinary*. The Bill should, however, be presented to Parliament for enactment after Cabinet approval in 2010.

Issue/question 11

17. There are no readily available statistics on this issue.

Political participation and participation in public life

Issue/question 12

18. After the launch of the national programme on increasing women's participation in politics (the "50:50 campaign"), the Ministry of Gender in collaboration with NGO GCN implemented the following activities under the programme: a unit was established in the Ministry to coordinate the campaign; the Ministry and NGO GCN trained all 234 women aspirants in campaign skills, public speaking, etc., before the May 2009 elections; and election monitors for the women candidates were trained and supported on voting day to represent the interests of women during the voting and counting. The 50:50 campaign programme also supported the actual campaign for all the 234 women aspirants regardless of party affiliation. The women aspirants were assisted with start-up campaign funds: each woman aspirant received the equivalent of \$687 to assist them in their campaign and 500 T-shirts and 76 caps as campaign materials under the programme. A comprehensive media campaign on the need to vote for women candidates was implemented by NGO GCN and its network members. The programme helped to raise representation of women in Parliament from 14 per cent in 2004 to 22 per cent in 2009, including having the first ever female Vice-President. The national programme assisted Malawi to improve on the number of women in Parliament regardless of not having legislation on affirmative action.

19. With respect to participation of women in the public sector, the Department of Human Resources and Development has developed mainstreaming guidelines for the public sector and a Gender Officer for the Department has been appointed to mainstream the strategy and training of human resources officers in the public sector

in order for them to appreciate and recruit professional women in senior public positions.

20. Further, the report of the Law Commission on the Gender Equality Bill concerning the issue of participation of women in all spheres of life has recommended the introduction of quotas to secure the representation of women in politics and public life through bills to amend the Gender Equality Bill. In terms of politics, the Law Commission has developed draft amendment bills in relation to the Political Parties (Registration and Regulation) Act and the Local Government Elections Act. These amendment bills:

(a) Prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sex or marital status in the conduct of elections;

(b) Place an obligation on the Malawi Electoral Commission and political parties to ensure the presentation of a minimum of 40 per cent and maximum of 60 per cent for either sex;

(c) Make it a criminal offence to discriminate or to breach the quota provisions, punishable by a fine or disqualification from taking part in an election.

Nationality

Issue/question 13

21. In its 1996 report on the review of certain laws of Malawi under chapter XII of the Constitution (review of certain laws on defilement of young girls, wills and inheritance, citizenship, marriage and affiliation), published in the Malawi Government *Gazette Extraordinary*, the Malawi Law Commission recommended the removal of those aspects of section 9 and section 16 of the Malawi Citizenship Act, respectively, that discriminate against women. Although this was a 1996 recommendation, it was not enacted by Parliament despite the fact that certain other recommendations made in that report were. The recommendation was re-echoed 10 years later in the Law Commission report on the review of the laws concerning marriage and divorce in 2006. It is anticipated that during the consideration of the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Bill, Cabinet will also consider these recommendations.

Issue/question 14

22. The Department is working with the Policy Unit in the Office of the President and Cabinet and the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Public Security on the immigration and citizenship policy. At present a draft policy is in place, and the Department is consulting the International Organization for Migration, through the proposed project related to the Capacity-Building for Migration Management Programme for Malawi. Specifically, the Programme will provide assistance in reviewing and developing Malawi's migration policies and legislation and in developing policy and procedural guidelines. It is envisaged that through this programme the policy will be finalized and the concerns that were raised, particularly in respect of disparities in treatment between women and men in terms of the citizenship and immigration laws, will be addressed. The discussions are at an advanced stage and it is hoped that the policy will be finalized soon.

Education

Issue/question 15

23. The Malawi Government is implementing through the education sector several policies and programmes that are aimed at increasing enrolment in schools and reducing drop-out cases and absenteeism as described below.

24. At the primary level:

(a) The school-feeding programme is increasing retention in schools of girls from poor families and families where the head of household is a child;

(b) The child-friendly schools programme is looking at sanitary issues, such as building of extra toilets and water facilities, which has increased retention of girls in school. It also includes training of head teachers;

(c) Malawi is currently implementing a deployment policy for primary schoolteachers, who are required to sign a bond to teach in rural schools in the district of their origin after two years training at teachers' training college. This has improved internal efficiency and provides role models in rural schools;

(d) The introduction of life-skills education is equipping girls with information to make informed decisions and it helps them to remain in school;

(e) Free primary education, which was introduced in 1994, has assisted in enrolment and retention of girls in school;

(f) Intensification of teacher training at certificate and graduate levels.

25. At the secondary school level:

(a) The Government is implementing a 50-50 selection policy when selecting students for secondary school. The limitation is that there is an insufficient pool of girls who have attained a passing mark to attain the 50 per cent. Nevertheless, the policy exists and it is helping in enrolment of girls;

(b) The Government is providing accommodation for girls in secondary schools, which previously did not exist. This is increasing the number of girls in school since the challenges the girls were facing as day pupils have been addressed;

(c) Bursary funds have been increased at the ratio of 3:2 in favour of girls;

(d) Since 2007, the readmission policy readmits teen mothers back into school one year after delivery;

(e) Role modelling programme by some NGOs;

(f) In some districts, groups of mothers have been established, who assist in taking care of issues of girls' retention in school. These groups are also trained in policy lobbying to influence policy decisions;

(g) Night classes have been increased in all Government schools, which help those who have not been selected to go to secondary school.

26. At the tertiary level:

(a) Quota system for girls to go to university (affirmative action);

(b) Increased bed space in university for girls;

- (c) More female hostels are being built in teacher training colleges;
- (d) Introduction of parallel programmes in the University of Malawi and Mzuzu University.

Issue/question 16

27. At the teacher training college level, the Ministry of Education is implementing affirmative action. For instance, a lower pass mark for girls was introduced, which has increased the number of female teachers. Female boarding facilities have also been increased to cater for more women trainees.

Issue/question 17

28. A gender audit of the curriculum has been carried out. The Ministry of Education has reviewed the issue of gender in textbooks by giving equal roles to both girls and boys (balanced stories of boys and girls in the textbooks). The social studies curriculum has incorporated gender as a topic.

29. At teacher training college level, both male and female trainees are given equal opportunity to handle all subjects in order to increase female teachers who can teach mathematics and science, with the result that there are now more female teachers at the primary level handling science subjects.

30. At the district level, the Ministry of Education is establishing mother groups (piloted in a few districts in the Eastern Division), where there is a major problem of girls dropping out. The mother groups track the girls that have dropped out of school within their areas, and try to understand their problems and bring them back to school.

31. The Gender Equality Bill has made provision for equality in education as follows:

- (a) The same curricula;
- (b) The same examinations;
- (c) Teaching staff with qualifications of the same standard and institutional premises and equipment of the same quality;
- (d) Provision of sanitary facilities that take into account the specific needs of the sex of the pupils and students.

32. The Bill has also provided for equality in access to grants, bursaries and scholarships. A quota system has been created for tertiary educational institutions, which are to enrol no less than 40 per cent and no more than 60 per cent of either sex. The bill also creates specific duties in relation to curricula so as to eliminate stereotypes by requiring that the curriculum for primary and secondary schools shall:

- (a) Promote the spiritual, moral, cultural and mental development of pupils and students at the educational institution and prepare them for society and experience of life after completion of school;
- (b) Integrate gender issues and human rights at all levels;

(c) Address the special needs of female pupils and students by incorporating teaching of life skills, including sex education;

(d) Address issues of environmental care and protection;

(e) Introduce subjects that enhance the integration of female pupils and students in disciplines that are traditionally male dominated.

33. Further, the Bill provides that the Minister responsible for education shall ensure that:

(a) The curriculum for all schools complies with these requirements;

(b) The curriculum for all schools is free from all forms of gender stereotyping.

34. The head teacher of any public school must ensure that the curriculum for the school complies with these requirements. Lastly, the Minister responsible for education shall, by Order published in the *Gazette*, revise the national curriculum to ensure there is equal participation of male and female students at all levels in the education system.

Employment

Issue/question 18

35. There are no readily available statistics on unemployment, the wage gap and occupational segregation.

Issue/question 19

36. In addition to prohibiting sexual harassment, the Gender Equality Bill also puts in place a requirement for public or private workplaces that employ not less than 15 people to develop and implement appropriate policies and procedures aimed at eliminating sexual harassment in the workplace. The Bill also places a statutory duty on the Minister of Gender, Children and Community Development to undertake civic education initiatives and public awareness campaigns on every aspect of the Bill, which includes sexual harassment.

Health

Issue/question 20

37. Malawi's maternal mortality rate is currently at 807/100,000 live births (Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), 2006). The deaths are due to infections (sepsis), postpartum haemorrhage, complications of abortion (mainly unsafe abortions), obstructed labour, HIV/AIDS and anaemia. Malawi, through the Reproductive Health Unit in the Ministry of Health, developed a road map in 2007 to accelerate the reduction of maternal and neonatal mortality and morbidity in Malawi. Some key strategies to address this are the reproductive health strategy, 2006-2010, the Reproductive Health Service Delivery Guidelines; and the national sexual and reproductive health and rights policy of 2009. These issues are in the national development guiding framework (Vision 2020 and the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy). The Government of Malawi recently also launched a campaign to accelerate the reduction of maternal mortality in Africa. During the launch of the campaign, first female Vice-President was crowned Good Will

Ambassador for Safe Motherhood. With this title, the Vice-President is popularizing the campaign and, to date, it has been adopted at 10 health centres.

38. The Ministry of Health is also trying to address the issue of unsafe abortion in collaboration with human rights organizations, the legal community and civil society. It started with the strategic assessment of unsafe abortions in Malawi and a preliminary report has been issued. The remaining work relates to finding out the magnitude of unsafe abortion in Malawi. Data analysis for that study is under way and the results will be out before March 2010. To strengthen maternal and neonatal services, the Reproductive Health Unit at the Ministry of Health has integrated focused antenatal care, basic emergency obstetric and newborn care, community-based maternal newborn and childcare, kangaroo mother care, HIV prevention and prevention of mother-to-child transmission, family planning and post-abortion care services into the sexual and reproductive health rights programme.

39. Again, the Gender Equality Bill has provisions specifically on sexual and reproductive health rights. These provisions include specific rights to:

- (a) Access to sexual and reproductive health-care service;
- (b) Access to family planning services;
- (c) Be protected from sexually transmitted infection;
- (d) Self-protection from sexually transmitted infection;
- (e) Choose the number of children and when to bear those children;
- (f) Control fertility;
- (g) Choose an appropriate method of contraception.

40. In order to ensure the realization of these rights, the Bill imposes an obligation on health-service providers to respect the rights and dignity of all persons seeking their services and to provide their services irrespective of marital status and without requiring that both spouses attend as a precondition to performing the service. Lastly, health-service providers must impart all information necessary for a person to make a decision regarding whether or not to undergo any procedure or to accept any service.

Inadequate family planning services, especially in rural areas, low rate of contraceptive use and lack of sex education

41. Malawi currently has a contraceptive prevalence rate of 41 per cent (38 per cent modern methods and 3 per cent traditional methods (MICS, 2006). The unmet need for family planning is at 28 per cent and the total demand for family planning is at 62 per cent (Malawi Demographic and Health Survey, 2004). Currently, efforts are being made to strengthen the availability, access to and utilization of family planning services at both facility and community level. An injectable contraceptive is now available at the community level. More community-based distribution agents are being trained to increase access to family planning services at the community level. Sex education in schools is now part of the basic curriculum. Other line ministries are also implementing the policies, including the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Development, with components of life-skills, sex and peer education.

42. Redefining the role of traditional birth attendants to exclude conducting any deliveries is one of the measures to reduce the maternal mortality rate in Malawi. Currently, traditional birth attendants are being encouraged to refer any pregnant woman to a health facility for the child to be delivered by a skilled attendant. The new roles for traditional birth attendants have been disseminated to all stakeholders and interested parties. There are still challenges in areas that are difficult to reach and where even an ambulance cannot go to assist the women.

Issue/question 21

43. There has not yet been an impact assessment of the Women, Girls, HIV and AIDS national plan of action and programme. A multiple indicator cluster survey in 2006 revealed that the comprehensive knowledge on prevention of HIV infection by female youth (15-24) was at 56.3 per cent in urban and 38.7 per cent in rural areas, compared with 45.8 per cent for male youth.

44. The right to sexual and reproductive health has been introduced in the proposed Gender Equality Bill; if enacted the Bill will ensure that both women and men will enjoy sexual and reproductive health rights.

45. The Ministry of Health, through the Reproductive Health Unit and HIV Unit, in collaboration with UNFPA and other partners, developed a condom strategy in 2008 in line with condom programming. More focus was put on the female condom, so that women are able access the product on their own without fearing that they might lose their partner in the process. Condom programming is now well established in the Ministry of Health and more health facilities are stocking female condoms as part of empowering women to access and utilize the product. The female condom is also fully registered and is now part of the list of products in the Central Medical Stores. This approach is in line with the national HIV policy and the comprehensive HIV/AIDS programme for women and girls, aimed at decreasing the feminization of the epidemic in Malawi. There is also a socially marketed female condom, with the brand name “Care”, championed by Population Services International. This socially marketed female condom is available in beauty salons, barbershops and pharmacies at a subsidized price. Men are involved in the work related to female condoms through training barbers as master trainers and to be advocates in the use of female condoms.

Awareness of girls on sexual and reproductive health issues, including their knowledge of how to protect themselves from HIV

46. The Ministry of Health, through the Reproductive Health Unit and in collaboration with partners and other organizations, has developed national standards of youth friendly health services. This is a focus on young people in sexual and reproductive health, including prevention of HIV among young people. The National Youth Council of Malawi, in collaboration with the Ministries of Health and Youth, Sports and Development, are trying to strengthen awareness of sexual and reproductive health among young people including at the community level through youth organizations and clubs. The launch of the “Stop early marriage” campaign in 2009 is part of creating awareness among girls to prevent teenage pregnancies as well as sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS.

47. The Ministries of Education and Youth, Sports and Development are implementing both in and out of schools, life skills and peer education programmes respectively.

Issue/question 22

High infection rates of women and the direct linkage between harmful traditional practices and the spread of HIV and AIDS

48. The newly revised national sexual and reproductive health rights policy in 2009 recognizes that many Malawian women and children experience harmful practices and domestic and sexual violence, but the magnitude is not known. In an effort to address some of these harmful practices, the Ministry of Health, through the Reproductive Health Unit, developed guidelines for management of sexual assault and rape in Malawi in 2005. Currently the document is in use in most of the health facilities and victim support units in police stations.

49. In another development, the Ministry of Health is working hand-in-hand with the umbrella body for the traditional healers union of Malawi. The national policy on traditional healers has been developed to regulate this area, although the Ministry of Health decided that the national health policy should be launched first and any other health-related policies should come later. The national policy on traditional healers has been finalized, but has to be presented to the Cabinet before it is launched.

Economic empowerment

Issue/question 23

50. Although the Gender Equality Bill has no specific provisions on economic empowerment, the report of the Law Commission on the Development of the Gender Equality Statute made a number of specific recommendations for Government to implement as policy in relation to poverty eradication and economic empowerment, as follows:

- (a) Strengthening entrepreneurial skills among women;
- (b) Improving access to credit for women entrepreneurs;
- (c) Improving access to appropriate technology by women entrepreneurs;
- (d) Improving access to local and international markets;
- (e) Policy environment to support and sustain growth of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises.

51. These recommendations are to be considered by the Cabinet during its consideration of the Gender Equality Bill.

Rural women, vulnerable groups

Issue/question 24

52. Several initiatives are under way to support rural women in Malawi in their access to justice. For instance, community action groups and community victim support units have been established in communities to address issues of gender-based violence. These are first points of contact for the community members

themselves to respond to issues of gender-based violence. Community action group members provide referral services to women to various justice delivery structures. Several civil society organizations have community-based educators in most of the communities, who provide awareness on women's rights issues and provide information as to where women could go to seek redress. Some of these community support units have paralegal services at the district and community levels. However, the services are not available in all the communities.

53. To ensure access to health for rural women, the Government of Malawi in its national health strategy has proposed that in rural areas a radius of 10 km between one health facility and another should be employed to ensure coverage in the rural community. However, this is still not the case in most of the hard to reach areas. Outreach or mobile clinics have been established by the Government and other players, which are able to reach most of the hard to reach areas. Bicycle and motorcycle ambulances have also been provided to ensure women are catered for in these hard to reach areas.

Issue/question 25

54. Ideally, the Ministry of Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly has responsibility for mainstreaming issues related to disability and the elderly in relevant sector policies and plans. In this context, it is assumed that since the Ministry of Gender, Children and Community Development exists to advance issues related to women, among others, the interests of older women and those with disabilities are included.

55. In response to the various problems and challenges that girls and women with disabilities and older women are facing, the Ministry of Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly has put in place the following interventions aimed at improving their situation and quality of life:

Girls with disabilities

- (a) Advocating for inclusion of disabled girls in schools and vocational training institutions;
- (b) Advocating for accessibility of schools, colleges and vocational training centres;
- (c) Awareness of parents, teachers and the public on disability and mainstreaming;
- (d) Paying school fees for needy and deserving girls with disabilities;
- (e) Assisting girls with disabilities to access vocational training;
- (f) Providing appropriate assistive devices.

Women with disabilities and older women

- (a) Provision of start-up capital for small-scale enterprises;
- (b) Linking these women to lending institutions, especially the Malawi Rural Development Fund for loan facilities;
- (c) Encouraging them to actively participate in local initiatives;

- (d) Providing food and non-food items to needy older women;
- (e) Provision of assistive devices;
- (f) Encouraging them to join clubs and community-based organizations;
- (g) Policy on the elderly is under way;
- (h) Bill on equalization of opportunity for people with disability.

Issue/question 26

56. See answer to question 3.

Issue/question 27

57. No immediate efforts are envisaged to ratify the optional protocol.
