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**Committee on the Elimination of  
Discrimination against Women**  
Pre-session working group for the thirty-second session  
10-28 January 2005

**List of issues and questions with regard to the consideration  
of initial reports**

**Lao People's Democratic Republic**

**Introduction**

The pre-session working group examined the combined initial, second, third, fourth and fifth periodic report of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (CEDAW/C/LAO/1-5).

**Articles 1 and 2**

1. In the report, it is noted that as a signatory to the Convention, the Lao People's Democratic Republic "accepts its legal commitment to end any form of discrimination against women owing to gender" (p. 8). The report also notes that there are "no acts that specifior030.98 123.O deffior0n(reporimin)-6(a)2(tio)-6(n again)-6(s)-6(men owin(p.)-6(

**Article 3**

4. Please describe the progress achieved in realizing equality for women as a result of the implementation of the Development Plan for Lao Women 1998-2003. This assessment should include any impediments to achieving the development strategies and target goals for gender mainstreaming and capacity-building outlined in the Plan, remedial measures undertaken and intentions for future development plans.

5. Please provide information regarding the current status, role and resources of the subsequently established National Commission for the Advancement of Women in the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

6. Please describe the way statistical data are collected, including any efforts to collect sex-disaggregated data.

**Article 5**

7. Under several articles, the report notes the pervasive impact of culturally entrenched stereotypes on the enjoyment by women of their rights protected under the Convention, including in the areas of education and employment and in their participation in decision-making. The report also notes that a number of measures have been proposed to combat such gender stereotyping and the perceived inferiority of women (pp. 13 and 18). Please describe the progress achieved as a result of these measures, including the current status and reach of the widespread media campaign of the Lao Women's Union and the extent to which the goals established by the Union's Gender Resource Information and Development Centres (p. 18) have been achieved. (p. 0 334b92273 0 0 10.02 138.77853 19.260356 Tm(ster)Tj10728030.02 341.01825 .

8. In the light of the above-noted gender stereotyping, please indicate what practical steps have been taken to use the educational system to combat gender stereotyping in a systematic

**Article 6**

12. In addition to the trafficking in women and children in the Mekong subregion project, which was designed to collect data on the reasons for women and girls being trafficked, what practical and urgent measures are in plac

**Article 10**

19. Despite recognition that “the starkest education problems appear at the primary level”, the report states that the Government has “decided to postpone the implementation of the compulsory primary education at all levels beyond the year 2000” (pp. 27 and 28). Please clearly identify the reasons for this postponement and indicate when the Government intends to resume a programme of compulsory primary education.

20. The report states that between 1976 and 1985 “massive literacy campaigns were introduced in the rural areas of the country with immediate but unfortunately not with long-term results” (p. 27). Currently, literacy rates are reported to be generally low among Lao women (66.12 per cent), however the report notes that literacy rates are extremely low among ethnic minority women (i.e., Khmu 22.71 per cent; Hmong 8.10 per cent; Akha 0.74 per cent) (p. 30). What is the status of the non-formal education and literacy programmes that are described on page 30 of the report, and to what extent have they been successful in increasing literacy rates, particularly among ethnic minority women in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic?

21. In accordance with the education for all by the year 2000 programme, the report notes that a women’s education project was initiated, inter alia, to increase the gender and ethnic sensitivity of the formal school system, integrate the three main systems of education at the village level, enhance education (h) Tj 10.3273

women in entrepreneurial skills and to provide them with practical and programmatic support through the extension of small-scale loans and revolving funds. Please indicate the status of the 1998-2003 programme launched by the Union, which was developed to provide practical and programmatic support to women as entrepreneurs and to ensure that women were fully able to take advantage of new economic opportunities, including in areas of modern information and communications technologies.

27. Are maternity benefits universally available to all women throughout the Lao People's Democratic Republic, in the public and private sectors as well as the informal sector?

### **Article 12**

28. Considering the "stark" gap in medical services and personnel between rural and urban areas (see, in particular, pp. 50 and 51), what steps have been taken to develop incentive programmes designed to encourage medical personnel to travel to or establish medical practices in rural communities or to train local women in general health-care provision?

29. According to the report, a target to reduce maternal mortality rates by 2000 was established under the safer motherhood programme (p. 42). What have been the results of this and other related programmes, such as those focused on improving women's access to health care and women's nutrition?

30. The report notes that "population education classes" were to be held at all educational levels yet the report also observes that enrolment rates of adolescent girls and boys in schools remained extremely low (p. 44). Have community outreach birth spacing services (such as the National Birth Spacing Programme) been made available to both adolescent girls and boys who are not enrolled in school or those who live in rural areas without access to health-care services?

31. Abortions performed for reasons other than those established by strict medical criteria are criminalized under article 85 of the Criminal Law. Please provide detailed information on prosecutions and imprisonment of women who have had abortions and on measures that are in place to ensure information about and easy access for both women and men to contraceptives and family planning.

32. Please include information regarding the number of women with disabilities in the Lao People's Democratic Republic as well as the availa

the Government taken to eradicate these discriminatory requirements or to improve women's access to formal credit?

**Article 14**

35. The report notes that more than 83 per cent of the population lives in rural areas (p. 35) and many women must walk long distances to retrieve household and drinking water (p. 54). Please describe the impact of efforts undertaken to achieve the active participation of rural women in the decision-making processes, in particular with regard to implementation of the water and environment sanitation programme, and the Water User Organizations and to improve their access to water supplies and irrigation schemes.

36. The State party report notes that rural women "face extraordinary barriers to good health" which is often exacerbated by cultural traditions and low levels of education (p. 40). As stated in the report, cultural traditions may include the role of men in determining (thereby restricting) which health-care services may be used by family members (p. 40). Please indicate what specific measures have been undertaken to eradicate cultural, linguistic and physical restrictions to rural women's access to health care as well as efforts aimed at increasing women's knowledge of the importance of health care for themselves and their families.