



COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

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**SUBMISSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS TO THE
COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN IN
ADVANCE OF THE EXAMINATION OF LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC'S
TENTH PERIODIC REPORT UNDER THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL
FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN**

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I. Introduction

1. The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women's (Committee) review of the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) by the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR).
2. In this submission, the ICJ draws the Committee's attention to several areas regarding the discharge of the Lao PDR's obligations under the Convention, which have adversely affected the exercise and enjoyment of protected rights by women in the country. In particular, this submission focuses on:
 - a. Applicable legal provisions and their shortcomings in combatting gender-based violence (GBV) (articles 1, 2 and 5); and
 - b. Barriers to accessing justice for GBV victims/survivors (articles 1, 2, 5 and 15).
3. The information presented here comprises the ICJ's own legal analysis, largely informed by data gathered from interviews with academics and members of civil society organizations actively supporting victims/survivors of GBV in Lao PDR.

II. Legal framework for combatting GBV (articles 1, 2 and 5)

Rape

4. In response to the Committee's query in the List of Issues and its questions regarding the tenth periodic report of Lao PDR ('List of Issues') on the definition of rape in Lao PDR's Penal Code,¹ the ICJ considers that the current definition is inadequate and non-compliant with the Convention. The applicable provision is not explicitly based on the absence of freely given consent, which must be made an essential element of the crime, as this Committee reaffirmed in General Recommendation No. 35 and related jurisprudence.² The law fails to include elements indicate what constitutes consent and the relationship between consent and coercive circumstances. This omission amounts to a failure to implement the protective guarantees of the Convention and facilitates violations of women's rights to personal security, autonomy, and bodily integrity.
5. In particular, Article 4 of the Law on Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and Children No. 56/NA/2014 ('LPVWC')³ provides for a highly flawed

¹ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 'List of issues and questions in relation to the tenth periodic report of the Lao People's Democratic Republic,' CEDAW/C/LAO/Q/10, 14 November 2023, para 10(g) ('List of Issues').

² CEDAW, 'General recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19 (1992),' CEDAW/C/GC/35, 26 July 2017, para 29(e) ('CEDAW's GR No. 35'); CEDAW, 'Committee Communication No. 34/2011, R. P. B. v. the Philippines,' CEDAW/C/57/D/34/2011, para 8.10; CEDAW, 'Committee Communication No. 18/2008, Vertido v. the Philippines,' CEDAW/C/46/D/18/2008, para. 8.7.

³ Law on Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and Children No. 56/NA/2014, 23 December 2014, available at: <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/lao209036.pdf>

definition of "rape" against women and children.⁴ This same definition is also contained in Section 248 of the Penal Code No. 26/NA/2017,⁵ which provides for criminal liability for rape and attempted rape. Subject to the Penal Code, rape is defined as "the use of force, armed threats, chloroform or other substances, or other means to place a woman in a state of helplessness, or abusing the opportunity to have sexual intercourse with the woman against her will." Article 251 makes a criminal offence the use of "trickery" to make a woman have sex with the offender or with another person against her will. Regarding marital rape, the LPVWC,⁶ along with Article 252 of the Penal Code, defines this crime as "a person having sexual intercourse with his wife against her will by using force, threats, or when the wife is not in a state of readiness." The plain language of these provisions indicates that rape and marital rape are not defined based on consent in broad terms, but instead rely on the use or threat of force or deception.⁷ Additionally, references to a "situation in which they cannot help themselves" or "not in a state of readiness" do not fully capture the concept of lack of consent.⁸ The definition also fails to include the element that "against her will" must take into account coercive elements.

6. The definition of sexual intercourse in Article 3.8 of the Penal Code is also unduly narrow, applying only to the use of sexual organs or the use of one sexual organ with another's bodily organs, while it should explicitly include all types of penetration of a sexual nature, however slight, by any bodily part or object, as also indicated by the UN Special Rapporteur in her report.⁹
7. Further, under the Penal Code, rape is defined as occurring only with women, whereas under international human rights law, all persons must be protected from rape and other forms of violence without discrimination, including men and gender-diverse persons.

Consensual sexual conduct with persons below 18 years old

8. The LPVWC and Article 250 of the Penal Code impose criminal penalties, including prison sentences, on individuals who engage in sexual conduct with a person below eighteen years of age, with penalties varying depending on the child's age.¹⁰

⁴ Article 4 of the Law on Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and Children defines rape as "the use of force, use of a weapon to threaten, use of anesthesia drug, use of alcohol or other methods that place women and children in situation that they cannot help themselves, to have sexual relations with women and children."

⁵ Penal Code No. 26/NA/2017, 17 May 2017, available at: https://www.bic.moe.go.th/images/stories/pdf/Law_of_Laos_1-11-2562.pdf

⁶ Article 4 of the LPVWC defines "forced sex within marriage" as "any act by a husband to have sexual intercourse with his wife by using force, coercion, threats when the wife does not want to have sex or is in situation when she is not ready to have sex."

⁷ See also Article 251 of the Penal Code regarding the offense of deceit for sexual intercourse.

⁸ See also: Dubravka Simonovic, 'A framework for legislation on rape (Model Rape Law) : report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Its Causes and Consequences,' A/HRC/47/26/Add.1, 15 June 2021.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Article 79, Law on Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and Children.

Considering that the minimum age of criminal liability is set at 15 in Lao PDR,¹¹ these provisions have led to situations where anyone over 15 years old could be subject to criminal penalties for consensual sexual conduct with individuals under 18, without considering the rights and capacity of those under eighteen to make decisions about consensual sexual activity,¹² as affirmed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in their General Comment.¹³

Discriminatory provisions in the Penal Code: prostitution, adultery, dissemination of pornography, sexual acts with monks and illegal abortion

9. The Penal Code contains provisions that discriminate against women, in contravention of Article 2(g) of CEDAW. These include the criminalization of prostitution,¹⁴ adultery,¹⁵ consensual dissemination of pornography (except in cases involving child pornography),¹⁶ and consensual sexual acts with monks, novices, nuns, or hermits,¹⁷ which could disproportionately affect women due to their situation or status.¹⁸ These provisions also create substantial barriers to access to justice, making it more difficult

¹¹ Article 12, Penal Code.

¹² ICJ, 'The 8 March Principles for Human Rights-Based Approach to Criminal Law Proscribing Conduct Associated with Sex, Reproduction, Drug Use, HIV, Homelessness and Poverty,' 8 March 2023, Principle 18, available at: https://www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/8-March-Principles-Report_final_print-version.pdf ('8 March Principles')

¹³ The Committee affirmed that "States...should take into account the need to balance protection and evolving capacities, and define an acceptable minimum age when determining the legal age for sexual consent. States should avoid criminalizing adolescents of similar ages for factually consensual and non-exploitative sexual activity." See: Committee on the Rights of the Child, 'General comment No. 20 (2016) on the implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence,' CRC/C/GC/20, 6 December 2016, para 40.

¹⁴ Article 260 criminalizes individuals engaging in prostitution.

¹⁵ Article 247 of the Penal Code criminalizes "a married person having a sexual relationship with a third person," as well as the partner in the adultery, and attempts to commit this offence. In this regard, the 8 March Principles, among other things, emphasize that consensual sexual conduct, irrespective of the marital status of the people involved, may not be criminalized in any circumstances. See, Principle 16, which, among other things states "[c]onsensual sexual conduct, irrespective of the type of sexual activity, the sex/ gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression of the people involved or their marital status, may not be criminalized in any circumstances. Consensual same-sex, as well as consensual different-sex sexual relations, or consensual sexual relations with or between trans, non-binary and other gender-diverse people, or outside marriage – whether pre-marital or extramarital – may, therefore, never be criminalized."

¹⁶ Article 267 of the Penal Code criminalizes any person "engaging in the widespread production [...] distribution, or dissemination of pornographic items, magazines, pictures, video cassettes, and other materials contrary to fine traditions." Articles 14 and 62 of the Law on Prevention and Combating Cyber Crime No. 61/NA/2015 criminalize the dissemination of pornography, including offenses related to selling, buying, distributing, transferring, introducing, and disseminating pornography. Both provisions are overly broad and contrary to the principle of legality, as well as potentially conflicting with the harm principle, given that "fine traditions" are not narrowly defined.

¹⁷ Article 266 criminalizes a female or male person who willingly commits a sexual act with a monk, novice, nun, or hermit, and vice versa.

¹⁸ CEDAW's GR No. 35, para 29 c(i); and See also 8 March Principles, Principle 16.

for women who are survivors of GBV to access justice by instilling fear of arrest and prosecution, and are thereby non-compliant with Articles 2 and 15 of CEDAW.¹⁹

10. In violation of women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, Article 201 of the Penal Code criminalizes the act of "illegal abortion".²⁰ Ministerial approvals in 2021 outlined the circumstances under which abortion is legal, including medical issues, rape, failed contraceptives, having more than four children, poverty, and young age.²¹ However, despite the need for abortion to be fully decriminalized,²² safe abortion remains largely inaccessible under existing Lao law due to social stigma and other factors.

Gender-based discrimination and the discrimination against lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (LBT) women

11. In relation to the Committee's query, as outlined in the List of Issues²³ concerning the absence of a specific provision in the Constitution of Lao PDR No. 63/NA/2015 ('Constitution') prohibiting gender-based discrimination, we regret that, there is still no equivalent provision to Article 8²⁴ of the Constitution explicitly addressing gender-based discrimination, despite its recognition of the principle of equality between men and women.²⁵
12. Moreover, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression (SOGIE) are not explicitly mentioned in the Constitution. To our knowledge, no other laws in force in Lao PDR offer protection against discrimination based on SOGIE. The country also lacks a comprehensive legislative framework to protect LBT women. Notably, there is no legal gender recognition for transgender women and gender-diverse persons in Lao PDR, leaving a significant gap in protection for persons from these groups.
13. While Article 224 of the Penal Code provides for criminal liability for "discrimination against women," academics interviewed by the ICJ have reported that the justice system normally considers discrimination based on biological sex at birth. This narrow

¹⁹ CEDAW, 'General recommendation No. 33 on women's access to justice', CEDAW/C/GC/33, 3 August 2015, paras 9 and 10 ('CEDAW's GR No. 33').

²⁰ including performing an abortion on another person, a woman performing an abortion on herself, unlawfully recruiting someone to perform such an operation, and attempts to commit these offenses.

²¹ Ministry of Health Lao PDR (MoH), "ຂໍ້ຕົກລົງວ່າດ້ວຍການຄຸ້ມຄອງ ການໃຫ້ຖືພາແທນ ແລະການໃຫ້ຫຼຸດລູກ (Health Minister Approvals on the Governance of Surrogacy and Abortion)," 8 July 2021; and Laotian Times, 'Authorities Draft New Legislation on Surrogacy and Abortion in Laos,' 21 July 2021, available at: <https://laotiantimes.com/2021/07/21/authorities-draft-new-legislation-on-surrogacy-and-abortion-in-laos/>

²² 8 March Principles, Principle 15.

²³ List of Issues, para 2.

²⁴ Constitution of the Lao PDR No. 63/NA/2015, 8 December 2015, available at: https://www.parliament.go.th/ewtadmin/ewt/ac/ewt_dl_link.php?nid=119&filename=parsystem2 Article 8 of the Constitution provides that "The State pursues the policy of promoting unity and equality among all ethnic groups. ... All acts creating division and discrimination among ethnic groups are prohibited."

²⁵ Article 35 of the Constitution provides that "Lao citizens are all equal before the law irrespective of their gender, social status, education, beliefs and ethnic group." Article 37 states that "Citizens of both genders enjoy equal rights in the political, economic, cultural and social fields and in family affairs".

interpretation excludes LBT women, who may face discrimination based on SOGIE, further underscoring the need for more inclusive legal provisions.²⁶

III. Barriers to accessing justice for GBV victims/survivors (articles 1, 2, 5 and 15)

14. Significant barriers continue to prevent victims/survivors of GBV from effectively accessing justice, in contravention of Articles 2 and 15, particularly as construed by the CEDAW Committee's General Recommendations No. 33 and 35.²⁷ These barriers, highlighted in the 2018 Concluding Observations,²⁸ persist despite the Committee's recommendations, as also noted in the List of Issues by the Committee for clarification from Lao PDR.²⁹
15. Several factors serve to facilitate such barriers, including the inappropriate use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms for GBV cases, harmful gender stereotypes maintained by many justice sector actors, the failure of responsible authorities to take effective measures to protect GBV survivors from secondary victimization, and the lack of specific funds and inadequate assistance.

The use of alternative dispute resolution

16. One of the key concerns that may impede GBV victims/survivors from accessing justice is the use of alternative dispute resolution processes, such as seeking help from family or village elders for "re-education³⁰ and compromise" (Articles 48–50 of the LPVWC) and mediation by the Village Mediation Committee under the Village Mediation Units (Articles 51–56 of the LPVWC), which usually consists of village elders or other community members. These practices are common in cases involving GBV, including domestic violence. However, they are typically inappropriate and wholly inadequate means of achieving justice and contravene the Committee's prescriptions outlined in General Recommendation No. 33, which advises against using such mechanisms to address crimes of this nature.³¹

²⁶ On the other hand, the Penal Code also criminalizes discrimination against persons with disabilities, children, and ethnic minorities under Articles 225, 226, and 227, respectively.

²⁷ These include the Lao PDR's due diligence obligation to prevent, investigate, prosecute, punish, and provide reparations for acts or omissions by non-State actors that result in GBV against women.

²⁸ CEDAW, 'Concluding observations on the combined eighth and ninth periodic reports of the Lao People's Democratic Republic,' CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/8-9, 14 November 2018, paras. 25-26 ('2018 Concluding Observations').

²⁹ List of Issues, para 10. These include inadequate safeguards ensuring that GBV victims/survivors have a real choice between mediation and formal complaint mechanisms, and insufficient sensitization efforts targeting village authorities who have an attitude that women should endure violence to keep the family together.

³⁰ Article 76 of the LPVWC provides that "An individual, legal entity or organization that has committed violence against women or children within the family, their staff member, employee or other people, that does not cause much harm and it is the first time, shall be warned and re-educated with the record."

³¹ CEDAW's GR No. 33, para. 57(c). In addition, CEDAW's General Recommendation No. 35 discourages mandatory referrals of GBV cases to alternative dispute resolution. See: CEDAW's CR No. 35, para 32(b).

17. There is also confusion about which cases should be directed to alternative dispute resolution and which proceed through the formal justice system.³² Under the LPVWC, “re-education and compromise” are to be applied in cases where the violence is deemed to “not cause much harm,”³³ though it remains unclear who makes this distinction. “Much harm” is also a vague formulation, as violence by its very nature is per se harmful, and in any event, something for the survivor to determine. In addition, mediation by Village Mediation Units is permitted for offenses categorized as minor or punishable by less than one year of imprisonment.³⁴ However, in practice, Lao CSOs have observed numerous instances where cases ineligible for mediation, including serious crimes like rape, have been mediated instead of being pursued through formal judicial channels.³⁵
18. The use of such alternative dispute resolution mechanisms often fails to comply with the preconditions prescribed by the Committee in its General Recommendation 35.³⁶ The law does not require prior evaluation by a specialized team to ensure the free and informed consent of survivors, nor does it empower survivors. This flaw is evident in the LPVWC, where the consent of survivors does not appear to be mandatory in cases of “re-education and compromise.” Additionally, the LPVWC allows those responsible for “re-education and compromise” to prioritize family solidarity over the safety of survivors.³⁷
19. Regarding mediation, while Article 53 of the LPVWC mandates that mediation must be consensual, prioritize victim safety, and ensure voluntary acceptance of outcomes by survivors, it is concerning that these alternative dispute resolution mechanisms may still expose women to further harm, including human rights violations or abuses, and perpetuate impunity for perpetrators. This is largely because these mechanisms are often implemented by persons who have internalized gender stereotypes. According to the experiences of CSOs and academics we interviewed, members of the Village Mediation Units are not professionals specifically trained to understand and adequately intervene in GBV cases. As a result, these interventions frequently fail to protect the rights of women and children, reinforcing stereotypes and revictimizing women.

³² See also, the List of Issues, para 10(c).

³³ Articles 47- 50, LPVWC.

³⁴ Article 51-52, LPVWC.

³⁵ See also: World Bank Group, ‘GBV Institutional Mapping Report,’ April 2020, at 13-14, 16-17, available at: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/300891594091530233/pdf/Lao-PDR-Gender-Based-Violence-Institutional-Mapping-Report.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3yLCpqlfslrevmDoGeVJHLkAbwtsrLU0ufbAyOgBE8-3sDE8TIJCMv7bw>

³⁶ CEDAW’s GR No. 35, para 32(b).

³⁷ Under Articles 48 and 49 of the LPVWC, re-education and compromise can be conducted by family members aiming to resolve violence within the family to “maintain family status, security, and solidarity.” If unsuccessful, close relatives or village elders may intervene “to foster understanding, love, reconciliation, and to stop the use of violence.” Article 50 further assigns this responsibility to the organization to which the victim or perpetrator belongs, aiming to “maintain solidarity, reconciliation, cooperation, and to stop the use of violence.”

Gender stereotypes within the justice system

20. Harmful gender stereotypes and the stigmatization of survivors persist, not only among village authorities, as the Committee sought clarification on in the List of Issues,³⁸ but also within the justice sector. Survivors of GBV frequently face victim-blaming and revictimization, in direct violation of Articles 2(d), 2(f), and 5(a) of CEDAW.
21. Gender stereotypes, as well as unresponsive and insensitive attitudes among justice sector actors, are evident in how they question GBV victims/survivors. CSOs reported that police, public prosecutors, and judges failed to adopt a confidential and gender-sensitive approach to avoid stigmatization during legal proceedings.³⁹ Instead, authorities relied on gender stereotypes and discriminatory assumptions, using blaming, shaming, and retraumatizing language. For example, in rape cases, members of CSOs witnessed several justice sector officers ask questions such as: "Did the offender pick you up or vice versa?"; "Why did you follow the offender?"; "Why didn't you fight back?"; and "Why are you only reporting this now?"⁴⁰

Failure to protect GBV victims/survivors from secondary victimization

22. GBV survivors were frequently subject to secondary victimization in their interactions with judicial authorities, in contradiction to the Committee's General Recommendation 33.⁴¹ For example, GBV survivors were often interviewed multiple times without the assistance of psychological experts. One lawyer recalled a case where a survivor was asked to recount the violence up to five times because the police purportedly required more information or clarification.
23. Interactions were frequently undertaken without the supportive environment necessary for women to exercise their rights, report crimes, and actively participate in criminal justice processes.⁴² At the police stage, there were no separate waiting areas or private rooms for survivors to register their concerns confidentially, and interviews with GBV survivors were sometimes conducted in the presence of offenders. Similarly, in court, survivors had no option to request a separate entrance, for legal proceedings to be held privately unless requested by their lawyer, or to give testimony remotely or via communication equipment. Instead, GBV survivors often had to testify in confrontation with the offender, alongside unrelated parties testifying in separate cases on the same day.
24. Information received by the ICJ indicates a significant shortage of female police officers. Members of CSOs interviewed reported that female police officers are rarely found, even in the capital, Vientiane. This challenge mirrors the situation in Village Mediation Units, where committee members were predominantly men.

³⁸ List of Issues, para 10(d)

³⁹ CEDAW's GR No. 33, para 51(g)

⁴⁰ CEDAW's GR No. 35, para 26(c)

⁴¹ CEDAW's GR No. 33, para 14-15 and 51 (c)

⁴² CEDAW's GR No. 33, para 51 (d)

25. In line with the Committee's General Recommendation 33, responsible authorities should take measures to prevent retaliation against women seeking recourse in the justice system⁴³ - a duty which is also enshrined in the LPVWC.⁴⁴ However, according to several members of CSOs we interviewed, when concerns about the security of GBV survivors were raised with the police, they were often ignored. Police did not always intervene or impose emergency measures, even when warranted, and in some cases, violence, including retaliation against survivors for reporting, occurred without police taking further action.

Other practical obstacles

26. Several practical barriers further impede access to justice for GBV victims/survivors, including a shortage of female lawyers. According to the Lao Bar Association (LBA), as of 1 September 2024, in a country of 7.5 million people, there are only 529 lawyers registered with the LBA, which is a requirement to practice law, and only 133 of them are women.

27. Lawyers, including those officially appointed by the State, frequently encounter difficulties accessing case files and evidence collected by the police and public prosecutors when acting and providing support to their clients who are GBV survivors. Article 71 of the Criminal Procedure Code guarantees the right of lawyers to access and make a copy of documents from the case file, yet lawyers report that in practice access is often denied. Police and prosecutors commonly justify this by claiming that sharing the files might impede the investigation or that the information is confidential—troubling practices that hinder women's access to high-quality, gender-sensitive legal advice and their ability to seek justice.⁴⁵

28. Another barrier identified by members of CSOs was the lack of capacity, understanding, and resources among justice sector officers for the collection and preservation of forensic evidence in GBV cases. In most cases, this results in GBV survivors having to request medical evidence at their own expense.

Provision of specific funds and other assistance

29. There are no specific funds allocated for reparations to GBV survivors, nor are there women-specific funds to ensure that women receive adequate reparations when those responsible for abusing their rights are unable or unwilling to provide such reparations. This dereliction is odd with repeated prescriptions by the Committee.⁴⁶

30. To our knowledge, there are three government-run protection shelters for survivors of GBV provided by the Lao Women's Union.⁴⁷ While these shelters are critical to

⁴³ CEDAW's GR No. 33, para 51 (d)

⁴⁴ For instance, Articles 29 and 30 of the LPVWC empower the police to intervene immediately to stop violence and assist the victim by interviewing, collecting data, and assessing the situation. Additionally, police are tasked with referring cases to the court for protection measures under Article 43, and imposing emergency protection measures when necessary under Article 44.

⁴⁵ CEDAW's CR No. 33, paras 13 and 16(c)

⁴⁶ CEDAW's CR No. 35, para 33(b); and CEDAW's CR No. 33, para 19(d).

⁴⁷ Lao News Agency, 'Bokeo opens women and children's protection shelter,' 26 April 2023, available at: <https://kpl.gov.la/EN/detail.aspx?id=72694>

ensuring access to justice,⁴⁸ they are far too few in number to provide adequate support and are not always accessible for the duration needed by GBV survivors due to limited space. CSO members report that accessing these shelters requires numerous documents, which take time to gather and place a significant burden on survivors.

31. In terms of language assistance, while the Lao government recognizes 50 ethnic groups in Lao PDR, there is a clear lack of professional interpreters in ethnic minority languages, particularly female interpreters, according to several experts interviewed by the ICJ.

IV. Recommendations

In light of the above concerns, the ICJ requests this Committee to make the following recommendations to the authorities of Lao PDR:

In relation to the legal provisions and their non-compliance with Convention obligations in respect of combatting GBV

- Adopt a legal definition of rape and marital rape in the Penal Code and the LPVWC that centers on the lack of consent, including an express provision regarding the need to take into account coercive circumstances in determining consent. The legislation should also cover and protect all persons without discrimination and include all types of penetration of a sexual nature;
- Amend the legislation addressing the criminalization of sexual conduct with persons below eighteen years of age to reflect the rights and capacity of those under eighteen to make decisions about consensual sexual conduct and to ensure that there is no criminal liability for factually consensual and non-exploitative sexual relations between adolescents of similar ages;
- Repeal provisions that criminalize prostitution, adultery, and sexual acts with a monk, novice, nun, or hermit. Adultery should be treated as a matter of civil family law and should never entail criminal liability;
- Amend the provisions related to the dissemination of pornography to limit them to non-consensual dissemination only, except in cases involving child pornography;
- Repeal provisions that criminalize abortion, and enhance women's access to sexual and reproductive healthcare with women's sexual and reproductive health and rights at the center;
- Include a specific provision in the Constitution prohibiting gender-based discrimination; and
- Enact comprehensive anti-discrimination laws that recognize SOGIE as protected characteristics and prohibit discrimination on these grounds.

In relation to barriers to accessing justice for GBV victims/survivors

- Amend the LPVWC to ensure that any use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms complies with CEDAW and General Recommendations No. 33 and 35. The law should be amended to:

⁴⁸ CEDAW's CR No. 33, para 16(b)

- Ensure that GBV victims/survivors are not automatically referred to alternative dispute resolution measures for “re-education”, “compromise”, and mediation; and
 - If alternative dispute resolutions are allowed, ensure that they are conducted only with the free and informed consent of the survivor, assessed by a specialized team, and carried out by independent mediators and conciliators—professionals who are specially trained to understand and adequately intervene in cases of GBV. Additionally, ensure that these processes do not prioritize so-called “family solidarity” over the safety of survivors and prevent gender stereotyping.
- Increase public awareness about the law and the protection mechanisms available to GBV survivors, ensuring that women are fully informed about their legal options and judicial forums available for their claims;
 - Enhance training efforts for justice sector actors and other responsible authorities on CEDAW, its general recommendations, and the application of international human rights law and standards to the investigation, prosecution, adjudication, and sentencing of GBV-related criminal offenses;
 - Prevent and address gender stereotypes, promote gender sensitivity among justice system professionals by increasing training within the justice sector, and consider establishing specialized gender units within the police and prosecution systems;
 - Provide training and allocate adequate financial resources for police and healthcare providers on the collection and preservation of forensic evidence in GBV cases;
 - Eliminate practices that subject GBV survivors to secondary victimization throughout legal proceedings, and ensure the creation of supportive environments that encourage women to claim their rights;
 - Prevent retaliation against women seeking recourse in the justice system by providing adequate protection measures;
 - Increase the number of female police officers and enhance women's participation in the justice sector as a matter of urgency;
 - Increase the number of female lawyers and ensure that they can effectively carry out their work to provide high-quality, gender-sensitive legal advice and support justice-seeking efforts;
 - Increase the number of interpreters in ethnic languages, particularly female interpreters;
 - Establish specific funds allocated for reparations to GBV victims/survivors, or women-specific funds to ensure that women receive adequate reparations when those responsible for violating their rights are unable or unwilling to provide such reparations; and
 - Address practical concerns related to accessing shelters and ensure they are available to all those in need.