



The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is the primary international legal instrument that focuses on women's rights. State parties – which include all Southeast Asian countries – must submit periodic reports on their progress to the CEDAW Committee, which is a panel of independent experts. The Committee evaluates states' progress in implementing the treaty on the basis of those reports, as well as 'shadow reports' provided by NGOs.

### Women as workers in CEDAW

CEDAW covers a broad range of concerns from the elimination of discrimination in political life, to equal access to education and healthcare. Gender equality in the workplace is primarily addressed through Article 11, which prohibits discrimination in employment, deals most directly with women and employment.

However, several other parts of the Convention also establish rights that are related to women and work generally. Most important among these are:

- Article 3, which is concerned with the advancement of women in political, social, economic and cultural fields;
- Article 13, which requires states to ensure non-discrimination in family benefits and loans; and

- Article 14, which requires states to take into account the particular problems faced by rural women, including their participation in the non-monetised sectors of the economy.

### Women and work in the Philippine reports

The Philippines ratified CEDAW in 1981, and has submitted six periodic reports to the CEDAW Committee setting out its progress in implementing the treaty.

There has been a gradual development of CEDAW jurisprudence and shifts in the way women's issues are framed internationally since the Philippines ratified CEDAW. Over the same period the primary focus of the Philippines government's responses have remained consistent, although there has been more emphasis on women entrepreneurs in recent years.

The themes raised by the Philippines government in response to Article 11 have been reasonably consistent over time. All of its responses have addressed women's participation in the labour market generally, and the specific issue of workplace rights and conditions. Some of its responses have also referred to the standards established by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions it is a party to, and in recent years it has also emphasised the need to protect migrant workers.

## Themes in the Philippines' reports to CEDAW

	Article 11			Article 3			Article 13			Article 14		
	1993	1996	2004	1993	1996	2004	1993	1996	2004	1993	1996	2004
Women and work	x	x	x	x		x	x					x
Labour migration		x	x		x							
Workplace rights	x	x	x	x	x							
Entrepreneurship	x		x		x		x		x	x	x	x
Economic empowerment												

The Philippines government has raised a variety of concerns related to women and work when addressing Article 3, with no particular trend discernible over time. It mentioned domestic workers in its 1996 report but not in its 2004 report, but more recently emphasised sexual harassment in the workplace and the employment of women in government.

The government's responses to Article 13 have been the most consistent, as they closely mirror the article itself, with each addressing social security, access to credit, and access to culture and sport. Some reports responding to this article also emphasised the provision of loans to women entrepreneurs.

The responses to Article 14 were also fairly consistent, with all reports raising the issue of female entrepreneurship, particularly in relation to the provision of credit to women in small-scale agricultural enterprises.

A striking pattern is evident in the Philippines government's responses to each of these articles,

namely their focus on the importance of female entrepreneurship, which it has raised in responding to all of the articles. The Philippines government has noted the importance of providing credit to women involved in the agricultural sector in its response to Article 14 in each of the reports analysed. It also mentioned providing credit to women running small business in its response to Article 3 in 1996, and to the support it provides to women entrepreneurs in its response to Article 13 in 2004.

However, it is also interesting to note that the Philippines government has not raised the issue of 'economic empowerment' in any of its reports, whereas other countries have often emphasised this issue in conjunction with female entrepreneurship.

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