

Section 6 Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, gender, religion, disability, language, or social status; however, the government did not enforce these provisions effectively. Nonetheless, numerous public outreach efforts were undertaken to improve public awareness of the issues associated with violence and discrimination against women and children, discrimination against ethnic minorities, and discrimination against those with HIV/AIDS.

Women

Rape is illegal and penalties date back to the Spanish colonial era penal code in existence as of 1968, but spousal rape is not specified in the law. Penalties include a minimum punishment of 12 years in prison to a maximum of 20 years. An additional fine may be levied, but the law does not specify the amount. The government did not enforce the law effectively. Reporting rape was considered shameful to the families involved. Several cases were prosecuted in court during the year, but the exact number was not known.

Domestic violence was a widespread problem. Violence against women, including spousal abuse, is illegal, but the government did not enforce the law effectively. Depending on severity and circumstances, the penalty for assault can range from one to 20 years' imprisonment. Police and the judiciary were reluctant to prosecute domestic violence cases. In conjunction with international organizations, the government conducted public awareness campaigns on women's rights and domestic violence. In accordance with a law passed in May 2009, family courts were created to deal with cases of violence against women. On occasion, the police organized workshops on family violence.

Sexual harassment is illegal; its extent was unknown. There were no known cases brought before the courts.

The government did not interfere with the basic right of couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so free from discrimination, coercion, and violence. According to the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), less than 10 percent of the population used any contraceptives. Statistics on maternal health, prenatal care, essential obstetric care, and postpartum care were dated and unreliable. However, the UNFPA estimated the maternal mortality ratio to be 280 deaths per 100,000 live births. The Population Reference Bureau estimated that in 2008 approximately

65 percent of births were attended by skilled health personnel. However, many local observers believed that such data was unreliable. Some prenatal and obstetric care was free in government clinics but availability and quality was highly variable, and access was limited mostly to the two main cities. Women were equally diagnosed and treated for sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. There were no legal, social, cultural, or other barriers limiting access to these services.

The law provides for equal rights for women and men, including rights under family law, property law, and in the judicial system; however, the rights of women were limited in practice. According to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the prevalence of negative stereotypes and the "deep-rooted adverse cultural norms, customs, and traditions, including forced and early marriage, and levirate marriage (the practice by which a man may be required to marry his brother's widow)" discriminated against women. Lack of legislation regulating customary marriages and other aspects of family law also discriminated against women, particularly with respect to polygyny, inheritance, and child custody.

Women in rural areas largely were confined by custom to traditional roles. In urban settings women with equal qualifications rarely suffered overt discrimination. However, the country maintained a conservative culture in which societal bias against women persisted. Women sometimes experienced discrimination in access to employment, credit, and equal pay for substantially similar work.

The government continued to provide courses, seminars, conferences, and media programs to sensitize the population and government agencies to the needs and rights of women. The Ministry of Social Affairs and the Promotion of Women held several events during the year to publicize these rights and held public rallies for women's rights and against domestic violence.

Children

Citizenship is derived from one's parents. Registration of births is the responsibility of the parents, and failure to register a child so can result in the denial of public services.

Education was free and compulsory until 13 years of age. The overwhelming majority of children attended school at least through primary grades. Boys were