

## Concluding Observations Committee on the Rights of the Child CRC/C/IRN/CO/3-4 para 78(a)

### Full recommendation:

*Ensure that girls, including married girls, have access to primary and secondary education without any barriers, including those established by husbands, parents and communities, and raise the awareness of the public about the importance of education, in particular among indigenous Arab communities;*

### Assessment using Impact Iran human rights indicators<sup>1</sup>

#### A. Girls, included married girls, should have access to primary and secondary education without any barriers, including those established by husbands, parents and communities

Article 20 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran stipulates that men and women are equally protected under the law and enjoy all human rights that are in compliance with the Islamic criteria. Additionally, Article 30 provides that the Government shall make available and free of charge educational facilities for all up to the close of the secondary stage.<sup>2</sup> Education is compulsory from age 6 to 14.<sup>3</sup>

Over the past decade in the Islamic Republic of Iran, there has been almost as many girls as boys enrolling in primary and secondary education.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, the number of girls who leave school before the end of their studies is greater than boys, particularly in border provinces.<sup>5</sup> In 2018, a representative of the Ministry of Education reportedly stated that more than 151,046 girls dropped out of school that year.<sup>6</sup> Reports identified a number of factors that might explain the reasons behind the high drop-out rate of girls. Child marriage has been reportedly one of the most common reasons for children to drop out of school,<sup>7</sup> particularly for girls and even more so in rural communities.<sup>8 9</sup> One survey showed that about 37.5% of married children were illiterate

<sup>1</sup> CRC.28.1.S.2.1; CRC.28.1.S.2.2; CRC.28.1.S.3.2; CRC.28.1.P.2.2; CRC.28.1.P.2.3; CRC.28.1.P.6.1; CRC.28.1.P.6.3; CRC.28.1.O.6.1; CRC.28.1.O.6.3; CRC.28.1.O.2.3; CRC.28.1.O.2.6

<sup>2</sup> Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, [http://www.iranchamber.com/government/laws/constitution\\_ch03.php](http://www.iranchamber.com/government/laws/constitution_ch03.php)

<sup>3</sup> UNESCO, <http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/ir>

<sup>4</sup> International Monetary Fund, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2018/03/29/Islamic-Republic-of-Iran-Selected-Issues-45768>

<sup>5</sup> Beyond the Veil: Discrimination against women in Iran <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1203136/download>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Shahrzad News: <http://www.shahrzadnewz.net/index.php?page=1&newsItemId=3938&Language=en>

<sup>8</sup> Beyond the Veil: Discrimination against women in Iran <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1203136/download>

<sup>9</sup> Radio Farda <https://en.radiofarda.com/a/iran-school-drop-out-among-girls/28726094.html>

while a far majority of them are girls.<sup>10 11</sup> Other reasons identified were the lack of schools in rural areas as well as long distances between villages, reportedly forcing girls to drop out,<sup>12</sup> notably due to economic constraints and families being more willing to send boys travelling long distances to reach their schools.<sup>13</sup> The lack of female teachers has also been identified as a factor discouraging families to send their girls to school.<sup>14 15</sup> Additionally, reports have showed that in poor areas, families rely often on children as laborers,<sup>16</sup> a phenomenon that reportedly affects more girls than boys.<sup>17</sup>

Governmental statistics from 2016 reported that the literacy rate of women living in rural areas (72.8%) is below than the literacy rate of women living in urban areas (88.0%), and much lower than the rate of literacy of men both in urban (93.5%) and rural areas (83.9%).<sup>18</sup> Iranian authorities have reported that only 40% to 50% of girls living in border provinces complete their high school education.<sup>19 20</sup> These figures may indicate that both gender and economic factors can hinder access to and/or stay in school, resulting in the high drop-out rate of girls in rural areas. Girls from ethnic minorities and living in rural areas have been reportedly further disadvantaged. For instance, the Sistan-Baluchestan province, inhabited predominantly by the Baluchi ethnic group, has a significant part of its population living in rural areas<sup>21</sup> and reportedly 60% of girls dropout by the fifth grade.<sup>22</sup>

In its General Comment no.13, the Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights stipulates that “a State must protect the accessibility of education by ensuring that third parties, including parents and employers, do not stop girls from going to school.”<sup>23</sup> Yet, reports have shown that child marriage and family decisions were amongst the main reasons behind the high school dropout rate of girls.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, although the Iranian legal framework does not explicitly prevent married girls from attending school,<sup>25</sup> a court ruling may still give the right to a husband

<sup>10</sup> Iran Open Data <https://iranopendata.org/en/dataset/age-distribution-of-spouses-at-the-time-of-marriage-in-1397>

<sup>11</sup> Report of the U.N. Secretary General, August 2019, <https://undocs.org/en/A/74/273>

<sup>12</sup> Radio Farda, ‘Half the girls living In border areas drop out of school,’ 9 September 2017. <https://en.radiofarda.com/a/iran-school-drop-out-among-girls/28726094.html>

<sup>13</sup> Beyond the Veil: Discrimination against women in Iran, <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1203136/download>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Radio Farda, <https://en.radiofarda.com/a/iran-school-drop-out-among-girls/28726094.html>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Farda News Agency, <https://bit.ly/334rdHt>

<sup>18</sup> Statistical Centre of Iran, *Nataayej-e-tafsili-ye-sarshomaari-e-omoumi-e-nofous va maskan 1395* [Detailed report of the results of national population and housing censuses of the year 1395], May/June 2018, <https://bit.ly/2MsGQm8>

<sup>19</sup> Radio Farda <https://en.radiofarda.com/a/iran-school-drop-out-among-girls/28726094.html>

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Iran Wire, <https://iranwire.com/en/features/5523>

<sup>22</sup> Beyond the Veil: Discrimination against women in Iran, <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1203136/download>

<sup>23</sup> General Comment No. 13, Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, Right to Education <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4538838c22.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> Radio Farda, <https://en.radiofarda.com/a/iran-school-drop-out-among-girls/28726094.html>

<sup>25</sup> Report of the U.N. Secretary General, August 2019, <https://undocs.org/en/A/74/273>

to restrict his wife's education if he finds it "incompatible with the interests of the family or with his or his wife's dignity".<sup>26</sup>

In 2014, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Women and Family Affairs reportedly signed a number of memoranda committing the government to, among other goals, address girls dropout in Iran.<sup>27</sup> The government also reportedly engaged in a number of measures considered key in the return of almost 34,000 girls to school in 2016.<sup>28</sup> Yet drop-out rates among girls in rural areas remain high as of February 2021.

During the State's 2016 CRC review, the Iranian National Body for the Convention of the Rights of the Child listed the main achievements of its established working groups, notably of its Education Workgroup which include "analysis of the educational issues of the educationally deprived children" and of its Support and Coordination Workgroup, including "analysis of different dimensions of supporting children who are deprived of education."<sup>29</sup> There is no readily available information that might indicate that such analysis have been impactful in practice. Additionally, there is no readily available information that might suggest that the Government has engaged in steps to convince parents and/or husbands to send their girls to school.

## **B. Raise the awareness of the public about the importance of education, in particular among indigenous Arab communities**

Article 19 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran contains guarantee of equality for all the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran, regardless of ethnic group or tribe, and states that "colour, race, language, and the like, do not bestow any privilege".

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has engaged in a number of initiatives promoting education among children in the country, notably a programme launched in 2014 aiming at addressing causes of illiteracy and identifying children who dropped out of school.<sup>30 31</sup>

However, high school drop-out rates have been reported among Ahwazi Arab children.<sup>32</sup> The number of Awhazi Arabs living in the Islamic Republic of Iran, while varies in different reports,

<sup>26</sup> CRC/C/IRN/CO/3-4

<sup>27</sup> Mehrnews, <https://en.mehrnews.com/news/104849/Girl-dropouts-to-return-to-school>

<sup>28</sup> Financial Tribune, <https://financialtribune.com/articles/people/51541/gov-t-struggling-to-reduce-dropout-rates-in-schools>

<sup>29</sup> The Supplementary Response of the (NBCRC) regarding the Concluding Observation on the Combined third and fourth periodic reports of the Committee on the Rights of the Child for the Islamic Republic of Iran, 2016, [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCRC%2fCOB%2fIRN%2f23480&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCRC%2fCOB%2fIRN%2f23480&Lang=en)

<sup>30</sup> Islamic Republic of Iran, National Report, UPR 2019, <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/WG.6/34/IRN/1>

<sup>31</sup> UNICEF 2019 Report [https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Iran-2019-COAR\(1\).pdf](https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Iran-2019-COAR(1).pdf)

<sup>32</sup> Dur Untash Studies Center, <https://www.dusc.org/en/drasat/2498/>

is estimated to be up to 5 million,<sup>33</sup> predominantly located in the province of Khuzestan, also one of the poorest provinces in the country.<sup>34</sup> Although the Government has engaged in a number of initiatives to reduce the rate of school drop-out in the Islamic Republic of Iran, notably through education plans<sup>35</sup> and the work of its National Body for the Convention of the Rights of the Child,<sup>36</sup> there is no readily available information that might indicate the existence of governmental measures addressing specifically the issue of dropouts among Ahwazi Arab children or initiatives aiming at raising awareness among the community.

On the contrary, the apparent reluctance of the Islamic Republic of Iran to enable children of ethnic communities, including Arabs, to learn in their mother tongue could well dissuade them from enrolling in school. The Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran raised concerns about reports of Kurdish, Ahwazi Arab and Azerbaijani-Turk (or Azeri-Turk) lacking access to education in their mother tongues.<sup>37 38</sup> These concerns were echoed by the U.N Secretary General,<sup>39 40 41</sup> noting reports indicating that members of ethno-linguistic minorities, including the Arab community, were being denied the opportunity to teach their language in schools.<sup>42</sup> In 2016, reportedly up to 40,000 Ahwazi Arab children were denied access to education for failing the Farsi language proficiency test, although Farsi being their second language.<sup>43</sup> A lack of teaching in a children's mother tongue has reportedly been causing high school dropout and illiteracy rates, notably among Ahwazi Arab children.<sup>44</sup>

Although the Government has engaged in initiatives to address the right to education of girls and raise awareness on the importance of education among children, in practice, girls, especially married girls, still face significant barriers to access primary and secondary school and complete their education. Additionally, there is no readily available information that might indicate that

<sup>33</sup> Human Rights Watch, [https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/04/29/iran-sweeping-arrests-ahwazi-arab-activists#:~:text=\(New%20York\)%20%E2%80%93%20Iran',Human%20Rights%20Watch%20said%20today.](https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/04/29/iran-sweeping-arrests-ahwazi-arab-activists#:~:text=(New%20York)%20%E2%80%93%20Iran',Human%20Rights%20Watch%20said%20today.)

<sup>34</sup> Iran Focus, <https://www.iranfocus.com/en/life-in-iran/34478-iranian-cities-are-not-only-below-poverty-line-they-are-below-misery-line>

<sup>35</sup> Tehran Times, <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/450506/Plan-for-returning-drop-outs-to-school-started>

<sup>36</sup> The Supplementary Response of the (NBCRC) regarding the Concluding Observation on the Combined third and fourth periodic reports of the Committee on the Rights of the Child for the Islamic Republic of Iran, 2016, [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCRC%2fCOB%2fIRN%2f23480&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCRC%2fCOB%2fIRN%2f23480&Lang=en)

<sup>37</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, January 2020, [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IR/Report\\_of\\_the\\_Special\\_Rapporteur\\_on\\_the\\_situation\\_of\\_human\\_rights\\_in\\_the\\_Islamic\\_Republic\\_of\\_IranA4361.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IR/Report_of_the_Special_Rapporteur_on_the_situation_of_human_rights_in_the_Islamic_Republic_of_IranA4361.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> See more : Association for the human rights of the Azerbaijani people in Iran, [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CRC/Shared%20Documents/IRN/INT\\_CRC\\_NGO\\_IRN\\_19735\\_E.pdf](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CRC/Shared%20Documents/IRN/INT_CRC_NGO_IRN_19735_E.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> IRNA, [www.irna.ir/news/83404283/](http://www.irna.ir/news/83404283/) (in Farsi).

<sup>40</sup> Report of the U.N. Secretary General, January 2020, [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IR/Report\\_of\\_the\\_Secretary-General\\_on\\_the\\_situation\\_of\\_human\\_rights\\_in\\_the\\_Islamic\\_Republic\\_of\\_IranA4320.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IR/Report_of_the_Secretary-General_on_the_situation_of_human_rights_in_the_Islamic_Republic_of_IranA4320.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Report of the U.N. Secretary General, August 2019, <https://undocs.org/en/A/74/273>

<sup>43</sup> UNPO, <https://unpo.org/article/19590>

<sup>44</sup> Center for Human Rights in Iran, <https://www.iranhumanrights.org/2013/10/khuzestan-teachers/>

the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has engaged in awareness-raising initiatives about the importance of education particularly among Arab communities.

Recommendation Status:

This recommendation has been **PARTIALLY** implemented.