

illegal workers, transporting illegal aliens and confiscation and forfeiture of property used in connection with alien smuggling.

Mechanisms and Reports of the Sub-Commission

Traditional practices affecting the health of women and children, Special Rapporteur on: (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1997/10, paras. 30–42, 125)

The report refers to information provided by the government related to steps taken to implement the Plan of Action for the Elimination of Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children. The steps included adoption of legislative and other measures to put an end to traditional practices, with a specific law declaring female genital mutilation (FGM) illegal. The report notes that four federal departments are responsible for addressing the issue of harmful practices affecting women and children. Health Canada assumes the lead on issues relating to FGM and chairs the Inter-Departmental Group on FGM which has been active for three-and-a-half years. The report states that this working group, made up of representatives of the Departments of Justice, Status of Women, Canadian Heritage, Citizenship and Immigration and Human Resources, ensures a coordinated approach to federal action addressing FGM. In 1995, the group held consultations with the members of communities concerned in order to determine the most appropriate ways in which to educate the public about Canadian criminal law, health risks and cultural and religious issues relating to FGM and to provide recommendations regarding measures that the Group could take to ensure that the practice of FGM does not occur in Canada. The report notes that in the light of those recommendations, the Inter-Ministerial Working Group developed a workshop module addressing FGM to be used for training in community workshops across Canada. This module addresses all aspects of the problem of FGM and is based on an approach that is very sensitive to the age, experience and faith factors of the members of the communities concerned. It also deals with the negative consequences of FGM. The information provided also indicated that the federal government had launched a project to determine the information needs of health-care providers serving women and children who have had FGM performed on them.

The report cites information on activities by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) which has taken an active in its approach to the elimination of harmful practices by: its support of UN resolutions calling for the elimination of harmful practices affecting the health of women and children; taking into account that the definition of harmful traditional practices is broad and that there are differing approaches to addressing the problem in the various countries and regions where CIDA works; and, respecting local culture and proceeding on the basis that it is essential to work with local partners in countries where traditional harmful practices are common as well as with international and Canadian NGOs that support groups working locally. CIDA addresses traditional practices in two ways: indirectly, through policies and programmes which generally advance the status of women and girls to contribute to creating conditions conducive to the eradication of harmful traditional practices; and directly, through specific programmes which support the initiatives and efforts of those active in developing countries in eliminating traditional harmful practices

where they are common. The report notes that CIDA considers these practices to be intrinsically related to the role and status of women and, thus, that efforts to promote gender equality can provide a solid foundation for the elimination of such harmful traditional practices. The report further notes that CIDA addresses the problem of violence against women as a violation of human rights and considers that special attention should be paid to promoting the rights and meeting the health, educational and nutrition needs of girls. CIDA activities also seek to improve access to and improve the quality of health services. The report notes that several countries of South America, the Caribbean, Africa (Kenya, Mali, Egypt, Morocco, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Senegal and Burkina Faso) and Asia (India, China and Indonesia) receive assistance from CIDA, as well as a number of national non-governmental organizations, specialized agencies, UN agencies and international non-governmental organizations.

The Special Rapporteur notes with interest CIDA's Action Programme against Female Infanticide in the Salem District in India, the Adolescent and Gender Programme in Egypt which focuses on minimum marriage age and financial programmes targeting abandoned women in Nigeria. The report states that the example set by Canada through the activities of its cooperation agency is deserving of emulation by other countries that have financial bodies of the proportions of CIDA but which, to date, have neglected the vast field of action constituted by the struggle against traditional practices.

The addendum to the main report (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1997/10/Add.1, para. 25) refers to information provided by the Division for the Advancement of Women, noting that Canada's Criminal Code prohibits female genital mutilation and precludes the removal of a child from Canada for the purposes of female genital mutilation.

Other Reports

HIV/AIDS, Report of the S-G to the CHR:
(E/CN.4/1997/37, Appendix)

The report of the Secretary-General on the Second International Consultation on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights (Geneva, September 1996) notes that law reform programmes focussing on human rights in Canada led, in part, to the adoption of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms which provides constitutional guarantees of human rights with practical enforcement mechanisms, extending non-discrimination to include persons with HIV/AIDS.

International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, Report of the HCHR and the Coordinator of the Decade:
(E/CN.4/1997/101, para. 9)

Canada has contributed to the Voluntary Fund for the International Decade.

National institutions, Report of the S-G to the CHR:
(E/CN.4/1997/41, paras. 9 and 38)

Canada supports the establishment of a separate category of participation for national institutions so that they can deal directly and in their own right with the UN Commission on Human Rights. Canada is a member of the Coordinating Committee of National Institutions which meets under the auspices of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

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