

Concern was also expressed over: the great number of homeless people and the acute housing problem; the fact that clean drinking water is available to only 39 per cent of the population; the fact that gross under-funding and inadequate management of health services led to rapid deterioration of health infrastructures in hospitals over the last decade; the extent of devastation that oil exploration has done to the environment and quality of life in such areas as Ogoniland; and the fact that the government's social and health allocations consistently diminished up until 1998 and that new hospital charges have been imposed in certain states.

In the area of education, the Committee referred to: the reintroduction of primary school fees in certain states; the marked reduction in school age children going to school because parents cannot afford to pay the new drastically increased school fees; poor educational quality arising from the lack of attention being devoted by teachers to school work; the dramatic increase in university fees in 1997 and the closure of satellite campuses for no particular reason; the view of military authorities that intellectuals, journalists, university professors and university students constitute the most vociferous and dangerous political opposition; the fact that one of the major university campuses was put under military guardianship and universities have suffered repetitive and long periods of closure; and a "brain drain" in academia, as a result of political and academic instability as well as the extremely low salaries of university professors.

The Committee noted that the restoration of democracy and the rule of law are prerequisites for the implementation of the Covenant and that the elimination of the practice of governing by military decree and the strengthening of the authority of the Nigerian judiciary and the Human Rights Commission are necessary first steps to reinstitute democratic civilian rule. The Committee then recommended that the government, *inter alia*:

- ♦ restore a democratic political system and respect for the rule of law, as well as respect for trade union freedoms and academic freedom;
- ♦ free immediately union leaders and their rank and file members who have been imprisoned without charge or trial; alleviate harsh prison conditions; free and pardon political prisoners;
- ♦ respect the rights of minority and ethnic communities — including the Ogoni people — and provide full redress for the violations of the rights set out in the Covenant that they have suffered;
- ♦ cease and prevent, in law and in practice, all forms of social, economic and physical violence and discrimination against women and children, especially the continuous, degrading and dangerous practice of female genital mutilation;
- ♦ enact legislation and ensure by all appropriate means protection against the many negative consequences

which ensue from child school drop-outs, child labour, child malnutrition and from discrimination against children born out of wedlock;

- ♦ take steps to meet the targets it has accepted in relation to the Education for All by the year 2000, and enforce the right to compulsory free primary education; and
- ♦ cease immediately the massive and arbitrary evictions of people from their homes, take the necessary measures to alleviate the plight of those who are subject to arbitrary evictions or are too poor to afford a decent accommodation, and allocate adequate resources and make sustained efforts to combat this serious situation.

### Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Nigeria's 2nd and 3rd periodic reports were submitted as one document (CEDAW/C/NGA/2-3, February 1997) which was considered by the Committee at its July 1998 session. The report prepared by the government covers the period from 1987 to 1994 and contains information on, *inter alia*: general constitutional provisions related to freedom from discrimination; the traditional role of women in Nigeria; establishment of the National Committee to monitor implementation of the Convention; the upgrading of the National Commission for Women to the Ministry for Women's Affairs and Social Development; a proposed law on female genital mutilation; the Women Education Programme; measures to change stereotyped attitudes towards women; legal provisions related to rape and violence against women; the National Policy on Communication and the electronic media; trafficking in, and prostitution of, women; participation in political and public life; nationality and citizenship; equal rights in education, the policy objectives of women's education, non-formal education and rural women, nomadic education; employment and labour, the Labour Act, social security, pensions, obstacles to women's employment; health care and family planning, HIV/AIDS and STDs; access to loans and credit, the Family Economic Advancement Programme, family benefits; the situation of rural women, the Women in Agriculture programme; equality before the law; and marriage and family law rights.

The Committee's concluding observations and comments (CEDAW/C/1998/II/L.1/Add.6) welcomed the establishment of a Ministry of Women's Affairs, an increase in school attendance rates for girls and literacy rates for women, the increase in the number of women in decision-making posts, and improvements in access to drinking water and electricity for rural women.

Factors hindering implementation of the Convention were noted as including: the predominance of cultural stereotypes that are prejudicial to women; the continued existence of such practices as polygamy, inhumane rites undergone by widows, and female circumcision; and the coexistence of three legal systems — civil, religious and