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The Universal Periodic Review (4th Cycle)

Written Submission to the UPR Compilation

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Iran**

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Table of Contents

Context.....	3
I. Background and framework.....	4
II. Implementation of the international human rights obligations.....	4
A. Groups in Focus.....	4
1. Women.....	4
2. Persons with disabilities.....	6
3. Children and Adolescents.....	9
4. Migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.....	9
B. The Right to Development.....	11
C. Human rights and climate change.....	11
D. Conditions of detention.....	12
E. Right to health.....	12
F. Right to an adequate standard of living.....	14
G. Right to education.....	14
H. Human rights education, trainings and awareness raising.....	15

Context

As per established practice, the United Nations agencies, funds, and programs in the Member State (referred to as the UN Country Team (UNCT)) have contributed to the UPR either jointly or at the entity-level in 2009 (1st Cycle), 2014 (2nd Cycle), and 2019 (3rd Cycle). The present document, aiming to review the status of human rights in the Country in the 4th Cycle, is meant to complement other stakeholder submissions to the UPR from the perspective of the UNCT in Iran. The observations and recommendations should be considered in the context of UNCT's mandate and data available to UN-Iran. As such, this document is focused on rights that are related to the development and humanitarian fields, e.g., child rights, women rights, right to health, refugee and migrant rights, and rights of persons with disabilities.

I. Background and framework

1. The Islamic Republic of Iran is participating in the fourth cycle of the Universal Periodic Review. The UN Country Team focuses on development and humanitarian assistance guided by the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2023-27) and the Refugee Response Plan (2024-25).
2. In Iran, various entities (including the High Council for Human Rights, Ministry of Justice National Body of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, State Welfare Organization, and Martyrs Foundation) report to committees overseeing core human rights instruments (ICCPR, ICESCR, CRC, CRPD).
3. Despite ratifying these instruments, Iran has prioritized its domestic law over international human rights law. A recent Directive by the Judiciary in November 2023, on “Reference to International Human Rights Conventions in Judicial Decisions”, it is implied that priority is given to human rights obligations over the national regulations in the case of the abovementioned five Human Rights Instruments.
4. Iran has actively engaged on human rights instruments, including with the Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review (UPR), Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures. Between 2021 and 2023, several mandate holders requested to visit Iran. In 2022, Iran hosted a visit by the Special Rapporteur on Unilateral Coercive Measures and is yet to respond to the requests for visits from the other Special Procedures. In February 2024, the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights visited Iran at the invitation of Iran’s High Council for Human Rights.
5. **Recommendations:**
 - a. The State is recommended to positively respond to requests for visits by Special Procedure mandate-holders to enhance multilateral support for realization of rights in the country.

II. Implementation of the international human rights obligations

A. Groups in Focus

1. Women

6. Iran has made remarkable strides in closing the gender gap in primary and lower secondary education, significantly improving education outcomes. Mean years of schooling for girls and women have increased from 8 in 2005 to 12 in 2019.
7. Women’s increased participation in education, including at tertiary level, is yet to translate into increased economic participation, including in formal employment. Women’s rate of economic participation is among the lowest in the region (13.7 percent in 2021).
8. In 2019, Iran’s Parliament passed a law allowing Iranian mothers to apply for nationality for their children at birth, regardless of where they were born. Individuals aged 18 and above can independently apply for Iranian nationality. Despite progress, the gap between men and women in nationality rights persists. The Civil Code automatically grants nationality to children of Iranian fathers, but Iranian mothers must still apply. Children of Iranian women

married to undocumented migrants or refugees remain at risk of statelessness.

9. The Hijab and Chastity Bill drafted in 2022 that reportedly criminalizes the non-wearing of hijab by women has been passed by Parliament and is under scrutiny by the authorized entities. The passing of the Bill could compromise women's empowerment and wellbeing.
10. The quota system introduced in 2017, allocating 30 percent of public sector management positions to women and young people and providing capacity building for women managers, was annulled in 2020 on the grounds that it discriminates against other candidates. There is no formal restriction on women's participation in politics. Currently 14 out of 285 seats in Parliament are held by women (compared to 16 previously). However, there are no female ministers.
11. The Parliament approved the "Bill of Preventing Harms to Women and Enhancing their Security/Safety against Misbehavior/Misconduct" on 9 April 2023. Subsequently, the Guardian Council requested further revisions which are currently being undertaken. The Bill defines misbehavior as committing any criminal act or ignoring a necessary act. Although the Bill puts more emphasis on preserving the dignity and health of families, it includes some entry points for prevention, mitigation, and response to gender-based violence (GBV).
12. While cases of femicide are increasingly reported in media and social media, Iran has currently no comprehensive law on domestic violence to prevent abuse and protect survivors.
13. Women do not have the same right to divorce as men. Under the Civil Code a man can divorce his wife whenever he chooses (Article 1133 of Civil Code), while a woman can only do so when it is proven that the marriage causes intolerable difficulty and hardship (Article 1130). If the parents are divorced or separated, the mother has custody rights until children turn seven, after which custody devolves to the father. When the child is mature, she/he can decide to live with either parent (Articles 1169 or 1170 of Civil Code).
14. According to the "1990 Labor Law", employed women are entitled to nine months of paid leave following childbirth. This leave can be partially taken before the birth, but at least three months must be taken after childbirth. During this period, the Social Security Organization covers two-thirds of the regular salary. Additionally, employers are required to continue paying bonuses, severance payments, and family-cost bonuses during this leave. Additionally, male employees are entitled to three days of paid paternity leave following the birth of their child.
15. Recommendations of the UPR in previous cycles and other human rights mechanisms have highlighted significant challenges and gaps in legislation and policies with regards to gender inequality and gender-based discrimination in employment and decision-making, lack of protection from all forms of violence and harmful practices, and impunity for perpetrators.
16. **Recommendations:**
 - a. The State is recommended to conduct assessments of existing services to prevent, mitigate and respond to GBV vis-a-vis international standards.
 - b. The State is encouraged to remove all forms of discrimination against women in the legal system, especially in family law.

- c. The State is recommended to consider CRC Committee's recommendation to further increase the minimum age of marriage for both girls and boys to 18 years, and to take all necessary measures to eliminate child marriages in line with its CRC obligations.
- d. The State is recommended to align the Bill of Prevention Harms to Women and Enhancing their Safety Against Misconduct with CEDAW provisions and enact it to the Law.
- e. The State is encouraged to ratify CEDAW.

2. Persons with disabilities

17. The "2018 Law on the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" provides an opportunity for inter-State cooperation in implementation of Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and CRC. The Law currently does not refer to children. The State is encouraged to ensure consideration of the rights of children with disabilities, specifically girls, in legal frameworks. The definition of disability adopted in National laws does not fully comply with the bio-social and rights-based definition of the UN CRPD. In this regard, the State Welfare Organization (SWO) with UN's support conducted a study on children with disabilities in 2019.
18. The 2011 national census found that 1,017,659 people, or 1.35 percent of the population, are living with disabilities in Iran. Of these, 669,135 (65.8 percent) live in urban areas and 347,870 (34.2 percent) live in rural areas, of which 200,726 are children.ⁱ There is no recent official data since all disability-related questions were removed from the 2016 census questionnaireⁱⁱ The actual number, therefore might be much higher, with some officials estimating it between 11-14 percent of the population, which would equal 9-11 million people.ⁱⁱⁱ
19. Stigma, discrimination, a cumbersome and often lengthy registration process, and a lack of awareness about their rights likely contribute to the reluctance among some to register disabilities, particularly among women and girls, as only about 24^{iv} to 37^v percent of people registered as having a disability are female.^{vi}
20. On May 5, 2004, the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran created the "Comprehensive Law for the Protection of PWD" and in 2017, amended this law and approved a bill to protect PWD to further ensure the status and realization of the rights of PWD in Iran. Iran has also ratified the CRC and the CRPD with a public reservation right.
21. Article 29 of the Constitution, the provisions of the CRPD and the 16-Article Law on the Protection of the Rights of PWD require the provision of accurate data to target support for PWD. Moreover, Article 29 of the Comprehensive Law on the Protection of the Rights of PWD obliges the Statistical Center of Iran to plan the general population censuses of the country in such a way that the population of PWD is disaggregated by the type of disability. Despite this requirement, the most recent census did not include disability-related questions.
22. The 2018 Law includes provisions for improving access to healthcare and health insurance

for PWD. The national health insurance scheme provides PWD with access to basic healthcare services. Despite the legislative framework, there are gaps in the effective implementation of these policies. Many PWD still face difficulties in accessing affordable and comprehensive healthcare services. One of the significant challenges is the high out-of-pocket expenses that PWD have to bear for specialized healthcare services, rehabilitation, and assistive devices. These costs are often not fully covered by the existing insurance schemes. There is also a disparity in healthcare service availability between urban and rural areas.

- 23.** Outsourcing rehabilitation services in Iran started in the 1990s. By 2020, the State Welfare Organization had outsourced approximately 93 percent of its activities to the non-governmental sector, including counselling, rehabilitation, and treatment services for PWD.^{vii} While private rehabilitation centers are partially subsidized by government, outsourcing these services has increased the overall expenditure of the affected families^{viii} The engagement of The Ministry of Health and Medical Education (MOHME) is limited in provision of these services.
- 24.** PWD across Iran face serious obstacles in participating in daily activities, such as going to work or school, gathering with friends or relatives, attending cultural events, shopping for groceries, or visiting a doctor. Inaccessible buildings and public transportation reduce the ability of PWDs to live independently and participate in society on an equal basis with others. In Tehran and other major cities, the government began initiatives to investigate and promote accessibility of public buildings, transportation, and other facilities including through the establishment of the National Headquarters on accessibility in 2015.^{ix} However, much remains to be done. According to SWO, 30 percent of public buildings in Iran are accessible for PWD.^x
- 25.** Disability is one of the main causes for children being out of school in Iran (20 percent of Primary level Out of School Children (OOSC), are CWD)^{xi}. Although the overall rate of OOSC at Primary level is 2 percent, this rate for CWD is 15 percent. This shows significant barriers in accessing education for CWD in the country.
- 26.** A total of 142,000 students with disabilities are accessing formal schooling in Iran, among which 65,000 CWD are attending mainstream Inclusive Schools thanks to the Ministry of Education's (MOE) implementation of the National Inclusive Education Initiative, since 2017. Despite the significant increase in the number of inclusive schools in recent years (20 percent of total number of schools), there is still more support required for CWD. Main barriers are limited physical accessibility of education services and learning material, limitations of the SEO screening programme, limited capacity of teachers and school staff in providing inclusive learning opportunities for CWD, and unsupportive cultural and social norms and attitudes towards disability and inclusion.
- 27.** Stigma and discrimination are prevalent, affecting all interactions of PWD's. Various initiatives aim to change public perceptions, including inclusive centers and events to promote acceptance. However, negative attitudes and inadequate facilities continue to

prevail. CWD are among the most vulnerable groups to different types of abuse, violence, and neglect.^{xixiii} According to 2017 media reports, 16 percent of child abuse cases registered by SWO were against children with mental disorders.^{xiv}

- 28.** Despite the progressive move Iran has adopted in using the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) for identifying the type and intensity of disability, only 3 out of the 4 ICF categories are considered (body structure, body function, activity, and participation). The important category which is missing is "Environmental Factors". Furthermore, only 4 out of 8 categories of impairment (under the body function ICF category) are used in the current identification, which leaves out groups of CWD. Furthermore, the children and adolescent version (ICF-CY) is not being adopted for diagnosis in children.
- 29.** Data is not available on incidence or prevalence of violence against women with disabilities in Iran. However, women with disabilities are less likely to access health care due to financial and mobility restrictions and stigma. The "2020 National Document for Older Persons" considers the rights of older persons with disabilities and the coverage of services they are entitled to. SWO offers complementary insurance to older persons with disabilities.

30. Recommendations:

- a.** The State is recommended to update its definitions in domestic laws to fully comply with CRPD standards, as the definition of disability and people with special needs does not have reference to children with disabilities and special needs.
- b.** for the State is recommended to consider the inclusion of questions on PWD/CWD in all nationally representative surveys and in the design of a cohesive administrative statistic system to monitor the situation of PWD/CWD.
- c.** The State is recommended to assign more responsibilities to MOHME regarding provision of rehabilitation services to PWD, and not limit responsibilities to SWO.
- d.** The State is recommended to develop an Action Plan for the implementation of the National Comprehensive Law on the Protection of PWD.
- e.** The State is recommended to adopt all categories of ICF, and specific version on children and youth with disabilities.
- f.** The State is encouraged to enhance the coverage and access and increase the inclusiveness and quality of medical and rehabilitation services. While Iran's primary healthcare services are generally inclusive, including for PWD but would benefit from an evaluation on the degree of inclusiveness and insurance coverage.
- g.** The State is recommended to ensure the accessibility and education in mainstream schools, both in terms of building, transportation, learning material and equipment. The education system may benefit from enhanced coverage and quality of the pre-school disability screening programme and capacity building on inclusive teaching and learning in pre-service teacher education.

- h.** The State is recommended to enhance social participation and prevent stigma and discrimination. A National Action Plan, with roles and responsibilities for various entities, is needed for combatting stigma against PWDs and promoting inclusion in society.
- i.** The State is encouraged to establish the required coordination mechanisms and M&E tools for implementation of the 2018 Law with a child, equity, and gender lens.
- j.** The State is encouraged to include questions on disability in the upcoming census exercise and disseminate the results disaggregated by sex and age, and functionality status.

3. Children and Adolescents

31. On juvenile justice, there are positive steps being taken in line with key standards outlined in the CRC (Articles 37 and 40) and the ICCPR (Article 6). While there are areas for improvement, such as the absolute prohibition of capital punishment for children, the Government is commendably respecting other important standards. These include keeping children deprived of liberty separate from adults, ensuring their right to maintain contact with their families, providing access to legal and other assistance, and utilizing diversion and alternative measures.

32. The legal minimum age for marriage is 13 for girls and 15 for boys, subject to judicial consent for younger individuals. Child marriage, defined as marriage below these ages, requires court approval, ensuring the minor's best interest, but often applied inconsistently. A review of the fertility patterns shows an increase in fertility during the ages of 15 to 19 years. Early pregnancy, and marriage below 20 are considerable in rural areas with the highest ratio of childbirth among girls below 19 years in just 5 provinces (2016 Birth Registration Report, 2017). There is a lack of specific data on the potential negative impact on health and wellbeing of adolescents.

33. Recommendations:

- a.** The State is recommended to amend its laws to prohibit all forms of corporal punishment; to adopt measures that promote non-violent forms of discipline against children and prevent all forms of violence against women and children.

4. Migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers

34. Iran has become the largest refugee hosting country globally in 2024 with over 3.8 million refugees and refugee-like persons as per UNHCR estimates. Iran acceded to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. Iran has since made reservations to the 1951 Refugee Convention including to Article 17 (wage-earning employment), Article 23 (public relief), Article 24 (labour legislation and social security) and Article 26 (freedom of movement). The definition of a “refugee” contained in the domestic legal framework (1963 Refugee Regulation) is not fully in line with the 1951 Convention in that nationality is not listed as one of the five grounds for persecution. There remains a gap with functionality, transparency, and coherency in implementation of the domestic legal framework, viz. 1963 Regulation which enshrines the principle of *non-refoulement*.

- 35.** Since July 2020, both the Cabinet of Ministers and the Parliament proposed separate draft bills on establishment of an organization dealing with affairs of foreign nationals, which were subsequently merged into the general framework of “Draft Bill on the Establishment of the National Organization for Migration (NOM)”. The proposed Bill includes definitions of “refugees” and “asylum seekers” more in line with the 1951 Convention. However, access to territory and asylum needs more alignment with the provisions of the Refugee Convention, and it is acknowledged that the Bill may potentially provide a more protection sensitive framework in line with the 1951 Convention. The Bill also introduces a vulnerability criterion under its article 13 towards realizing the rights of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. Iran is yet to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.
- 36.** Access to basic rights for foreign nationals is solely governed by their documentation status. Refugees registered by the Government (Amayesh and Hoviat status holders) are generally protected from enforced expulsion. However, in the event an expulsion is pursued, it typically follows a court order. On the other hand, foreign nationals without valid documentation, including those who may need international protection, may be subject to arrest and deportation based on administrative order without being granted access to formal complaint mechanism. Persons arrested for immigration infringements are often detained with criminals.
- 37.** On the rights of foreign nationals, including migrant workers and those in need of international protection, there has been progress as well as challenges. Iran partially safeguards access to employment for foreign nationals with valid documentation allowing them access to health, social security insurance and public services. Foreign nationals with valid documentation are issued work permits in select job categories and can avail technical and vocational training in partnership with international organizations. They can also benefit from schemes such as “Employment Status Determination Scheme” for Headcount slip holders” in 2022 to assess their capacity in the job market.
- 38.** NOM, in collaboration with the National Bank of Iran, has initiated a new financial scheme aimed specifically at foreign nationals, with a focus on Afghan refugees. This scheme is part of Iran's effort to integrate Afghan nationals into the Iranian economy, providing them with investment opportunities and access to various benefits and services. Priority is given to those with headcount or recount slips, and legally recognized individuals can voluntarily participate to enjoy the plan's benefits and extend their residency in Iran. The second group are those who have identification and residence documents (such as Amayesh card, special residence booklet, household passport) and their presence in the country has been legally recognized, can participate in this plan on a voluntary basis to benefit from the privileges of the plan such as insurance.^{xv}
- 39.** The “2019 Law on the Naturalization of Children Born to Iranian Mothers and Non-Iranian Fathers” allows Iranian women married to foreign men to pass their nationality to their children. By January 2024, 26,000 children had acquired Iranian citizenship under the provisions of this law. However, the Bill of the Establishment of the National Organization for

Migration (NOM), seeks to annul this law.

B. The Right to Development

- 40.**Iran is the second largest economy in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, with the second largest population estimated at almost 89 million people^{xvi} of which 49.5 percent is female. As of 2023, an estimated 24.6 percent of the population are under 15 years, and 22 percent, are aged 15 – 29 years. This represents a youth bulge and a favorable demographic profile for accelerating development.
- 41.**Unilateral sanctions have impacted Iran's economy, resulting in decreased government revenues, a decline in currency value, and high inflation. This has affected the general population, especially the most vulnerable, through increased cost of living and reduced access to essential services like health and education. The impact of unilateral sanctions on financial transactions and overcompliance by foreign businesses have forced many businesses to downsize, increasing unemployment. It has also affected the health system by limiting the ability to import certain medicines, medical equipment, and raw materials for the production of drugs and pharmaceuticals.
- 42.**In 2024, less than 5 percent of the population lacked health insurance. Out-of-pocket spending accounts for 34.5 percent of current health expenses. Health insurance for refugees and migrants are supported by UNHCR and the government. Rural areas have good coverage, and some sub-populations with special diseases receive additional insurance. However, health insurance for people with disabilities are limited.

C. Human rights and climate change

- 43.**The Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS), serving as the principal entity for delivery of emergency response in Iran, has enhanced the child-centric aspects of its emergency response capabilities and norms. This initiative incorporates the "UNICEF's Child Protection in Emergencies Standards" within its disaster response protocol Thus ensuring the protection and welfare of children during emergencies and aligning with international standards.
- 44.**In the context of disaster response, the country's legal framework and administrative structure include areas for further development. These include unclear definitions of "vulnerable groups," insufficient attention to their specific needs, and the absence of explicit strategies for achieving objectives such as the identification and training of these vulnerable groups.^{xvii}
- 45.**In practice, entities such as the IRCS, Imam Khomeini Relief Committee, Housing Foundation, and the SWO leverage their existing capacities to provide relief during crises, thereby extending their legal responsibilities. Additionally, mental health and the development of psychological resilience are potential components for further investment and capacity building in disaster management strategies, both before and after disasters.
- 46.**Women are often at greater risk of injury and death during climate change related disasters. However, sex disaggregated data on the impact on women and men, boys and girls, and information on incidence of violence, is not available. The Government is mainstreaming

women's health in provincial disaster plans. In line with the Hyogo Framework for Action, Iran has initiated disaster preparedness and response policies.

47.Iran has been working on integrating climate change considerations into national legislation. However, the extent to which this includes active community participation is not well-documented.

48.Recommendations:

- a.** The State is encouraged to undertake comprehensive assessments and scholarly investigations pertaining to the gender and age-specific implications of climate change.
- b.** The State is encouraged to enhance the engagement of the community and civil society in planning for climate change adaptation as well as the preparedness and response to natural disasters.

D. Conditions of detention

49.Children deprived of their liberty are kept separate from adults in the Juvenile Correction and Rehabilitation Centers (JCRCs). The 2021 Executive Regulations of the State Prisons Organization and Corrective Measures (Section 5, Articles 261-324) has regulated conditions of care and services to inmates in the JCRCs. The provisions related to JCRCs are generally in line with international standards. However, it is not clear how these provisions are being applied in different provinces.

E. Right to health

50.The “2021 Family Protection and Youthful Population Law”, aimed at reversing the decline in fertility rate, provides financial and housing incentives for couples with children. This Law provides for extended maternity leave, prohibits discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy, provides insurance benefits for unemployed mothers and provides support for breastfeeding mothers. However, the Law restricts and penalizes abortion, and limits availability of contraception with potential negative consequences on the health of women of childbearing age.

51.Health is recognized as a right for Iranian citizens based on the principle 29 of the Constitution (Welfare Rights). In 2023, health has been prioritized as the fourth developmental area for budget allocation in the Government, following social welfare, education and defense and security. The allocated budget for health has seen a 51 percent increase compared to 2022, with 21 percent allocated to primary health care and 79 percent to treatment services.^{xviii} Iran's Primary Health Care (PHC) system, aims to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in line with WHO framework. The Rural Family Physician Program (FPP) was introduced in 2005 to address coverage gaps in rural areas. According to the national report in September 2023, access to clean drinking water is 99.6 percent (99.9 percent urban and 98.7 percent rural), and sanitation and hygiene in general is 90.3 percent (92.8 percent urban and 82.3 percent rural). The urban wastewater treatment remains a challenge.^{xix} Acute climate stress has rendered Iran the fourth-most water deficient country on the planet^{xx}.

52.Coverage of essential health services as expressed as the average score of 14 tracer

indicators of health service coverage is 74 percent.^{xxi} In terms of WHO triple billion targets, the number of additional people expected to be covered by essential services and not experiencing financial hardship is projected to be 7.5m (4.2m – 9.8m) by 2025 compared to 2018 and the number of additional people expected to be protected from health emergencies is projected to be 3.5m (1.7m–7.8m) by 2025 compared to 2018.^{xxii} IRI has succeeded in significantly reducing maternal mortality over the previous decades but this was reversed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

53. Nonetheless, there are certain challenges in the health system that need to be addressed to bridge gaps in equal access to essential healthcare services. These include shortages in human resources and budget constraints and direct and indirect effects of unilateral sanctions on health through limitations in access to health technologies, goods, and supplies. The suboptimal PHC coverage in urban settings due to rapid urbanization, the rapid growth of migrants and refugees and insufficient funds to cover service costs pose significant challenges.^{xxiii} Scaling up of the health system developmental plan is a strategic directive in the 7th 5-year national developmental plan. Accordingly, out-of-pocket expenditure and the expenditure for the first five deciles of the population should reach respectively 30 percent and 2 percent by the end of the national plan.^{xxiv}

54. As per Family Protection and Youthful Population Law, coverage of insurance has expanded for unemployed mothers with 3 or more children, living in rural and nomadic areas, where 100 percent of the insurance premium should be paid by the State. All couples who have not had a child for a year or more, benefit from infertility examination, diagnosis, and treatment under full coverage of basic health insurance plans, without any frequency limitations. The Ministry of Cooperatives, Labour, and Social Welfare (MCLSW) is tasked to have all mothers not having an insurance policy insured under the basic medical insurances during pregnancy and breastfeeding periods. The MoHME is tasked to provide support for childbirth in public and maternity hospitals completely free of charge even without insurance coverage (within 2 years of promulgation of the law).

55. Recommendations:

- a.** The State is recommended to invest more to cover vulnerable populations, including refugees and host communities, who are suffering from health and social risk factors.
- b.** The State is recommended to enhance implementation of existing guidelines on early detection and referral for maternal, newborn, and mental morbidities among women and children, building on current “Family Health Initiative”.
- c.** The State is encouraged to identify challenges and implement interventions to further reduce maternal and newborn mortality and morbidity, considering geographical disparities.
- d.** The State is recommended to redesign and pilot existing premarital education counselling to cover family life and relationship skills, child-bearing timing, and other health aspects.

F. Right to an adequate standard of living

- 56.** The National Document of Older Persons (2020) (Goal 4.3, Articles 7 and 10) emphasizes the development of infrastructure and physical spaces that are friendly to older persons, promotes healthy lifestyle for older persons, and encourages community-based services for the elderly. Considering the country's major demographic transitions, a general population decree (2014) and general family decree pay special attention to older persons. The proportion of older people (65 years old and above) is projected to increase, including a large proportion of women.
- 57.** The State has planned for the 2026 register-based census. Census data plays a crucial role in understanding the need for affordable services and housing, for the general population and those with low incomes.
- 58.** Female headed households (12.5 percent of households), are among the most vulnerable, due to low level of women's economic participation and financial independence. Benefits such as family allowance and child benefit are provided to men as heads of the household. Women who are primarily engaged in household work are not independently covered.
- 59. Recommendations:**
- a.** The State is recommended to develop comprehensive, affordable, formal, and informal care services for older persons (including those with disabilities) and reduce costs of ageing by boosting productivity and active ageing.
 - b.** The State is recommended to develop support programmes for female headed households, especially in rural areas and among older women.

G. Right to education

- 60.** The Iranian Government has expanded online education platforms, making educational content more accessible to students across the Country. Online courses and virtual classrooms have allowed students to continue learning during challenging times, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the quality of the education declined during the online classes.
- 61.** The MOE is in the process of recruiting new teachers to address the teacher shortage, especially in rural areas. The quality of teacher training programs and the recruitment criteria and therefore learning outcomes in schools are still challenging. Skills development needs more attention to make education more relevant to the needs of children and adolescents. If implemented appropriately, it can incentivize adolescents staying in school and prevent their dropping out to join the workforce. In rural areas, boarding schools are a solution to decrease dropouts from primary to secondary school. However, limited financial and human resources are affecting boarding schools' ability to serve the needs of adolescents and to prevent dropouts.
- 62.** All pregnant or married children, specifically girls, are legally entitled to access and attend state schools. However, certain societal norms and gender stereotypes may inadvertently impede the realization of this right.
- 63.** Until 2023-24, Iran maintained an overarching policy that permitted all children, regardless

of their nationality and legal status, to enroll in schools. Before the new influx in 2021, the number of Afghan refugee children enrolled in public schools was 490,000 and increased to 800,000 by 2024. This increase has put a severe financial burden on the MOE and resulted in overcrowded classrooms in host communities. Many Afghan children are left out of school, as local schools do not have the capacity to accommodate all children. There are also financial and administrative barriers that makes access to education challenging for the most vulnerable families.

64. Recommendations:

- a.** The State is recommended to continue towards ensuring access to education for young married girls.
- b.** The State is recommended to continue to make further progress for enrollment of women to the higher education, especially STEM fields and for the most vulnerable population.
- c.** More efforts should be made to improve the quality of education, especially in rural and disadvantaged areas, including for those with disabilities. This includes decreasing class sizes, improving teacher training programs, more focus on skills building relevant to the needs of the society, and better assessment of learning to inform policy making and resource allocation.
- d.** Efforts to improve access to education for undocumented refugee children should continue and expand so that the number of out of school children can be reduced.
- e.** More efforts should be made to decrease disparities in access to, and quality of, education between rural and urban areas, and children from high- and low-income families.

H. Human rights education, trainings, and awareness raising

65. During the reporting period, the Judiciary and Ministry of Justice proved their willingness to train judicial professionals on child rights through supporting training of judges, prosecutors, law enforcement/police and lawyers on child rights and access to justice for children. Iran's "Charter of Citizenship Rights" is considered a positive development in the area of women's citizenship rights. However, some provisions of the Charter require further alignment with existing laws. Additionally, for the Charter to achieve its goals, it needs to be supported by mechanisms to educate citizens about their rights and ensure adequate enforcement guarantees.

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