



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**

**Fourth periodic report submitted by Mauritania under
article 18 of the Convention, due in 2018***

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* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



I. Introduction

1. The present report is the fourth periodic report of Mauritania on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; it covers the period from 2014 to 2018. The report contains responses to the Committee's concluding observations on the combined second and third periodic reports of Mauritania (CEDAW/C/MRT/CO/2-3), which were submitted, in a single document, for the Committee's consideration at its 1221st and 1222nd meetings, held on 3 July 2014 (CEDAW/C/SR.1221 and CEDAW/C/SR.1222). The report also contains information on the progress made and results achieved in the implementation of the Convention during the 2014–2018 period.
2. The Government notes with regret the late submission of the present periodic report, which was due in July 2018.
3. The report, which is being submitted under article 18 of the Convention, has been prepared in accordance with the Committee's reporting guidelines.
4. It focuses on the measures taken by Mauritania to carry out the recommendations made by the Committee in response to its second and third periodic reports, and to implement the Convention.
5. The present report attests to the commitment of Mauritania to fulfilling its human rights treaty obligations, and, in particular, to implementing the Convention.
6. The Government of Mauritania assures the Committee that it is fully prepared to engage with it in a constructive and continuous dialogue on the implementation of the Convention.
7. The Government also reiterates its commitment to respecting, promoting and protecting human rights in general, including the rights of women.

II. Information on measures taken in follow-up to the concluding observations adopted by the Committee in 2014, in response to the combined report of Mauritania

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 9

8. As a Muslim country, Mauritania has entered specific reservations to articles 13 and 16 of the Convention because they are incompatible with Islamic sharia, the sole source of law under the Constitution. However, Mauritania remains deeply committed to the spirit and letter of all articles of the Convention that are compatible with Islamic sharia.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 11 (a)

9. To implement this recommendation, the Government carried out a number of campaigns to raise awareness of the Convention, in particular in the poorest and most remote rural communes (specifically, those located on the border with Mali and along the Senegal River, in an extremely poor area known as the Triangle de l'Espoir). It:

- Participated in public and private media events (debate shows, national fairs and exhibitions);
- Organized caravans each year on International Women's Day, 8 March;
- Participated in the annual 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign, beginning on 25 November;

- Developed and is currently implementing a strategic plan to combat domestic violence;
- Organized two large caravans in a number of wilayahs of the country to raise awareness of domestic violence;
- Produced, with the active involvement of local and community associations, a toolkit comprising a broad range of communications materials;
- Formulated and disseminated religious arguments against domestic violence.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 11 (b)

10. The Government published the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in a special edition of the Official Gazette, No. 1326 bis of 9 December 2014.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 11 (c)

11. As part of their academic and professional training, lawyers, judges, prosecutors and other law enforcement officials complete a module focusing on human rights, including the status of the Convention in the domestic legal order.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 13 (a)

12. Act No. 2018-023, which criminalizes discrimination, defines discrimination, in all its forms, as any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference which has or may have the purpose or effect of nullifying, impairing or limiting the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on the basis of equality, of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

13. This definition fully incorporates the definition set forth in the Convention.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 13 (b)

14. With regard to the establishment of a national women's rights observatory, two consultants have been recruited, with the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, to conduct a study on the model national observatory for the promotion of women's rights and the suppression of gender-based violence, to review laws and regulations relating to women's participation, to determine the responsibilities, functions and potential composition of the observatory and to develop a draft decree on its establishment.

15. The findings of the study were presented at a workshop attended by all relevant actors (public authorities, civil society, trade unions, members of parliament, resource persons), whose observations and comments were incorporated into the study. The report of the workshop was then transmitted to the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, which subsequently initiated the procedure for the adoption, by the Council of Ministers, of the draft decree on the establishment of the observatory.

16. The bill on combating violence against women and girls, which has been approved by the Council of Ministers, provides for the establishment of an appropriate monitoring entity for the early detection of violence against women and girls in family, school, university and professional contexts.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 17 (b)

17. Justice is easily accessible to anyone who claims to have been, or who feels that he or she has been, harmed by a particular act, or who considers that his or her rights have been unjustifiably violated. The provisions of the Convention, which are binding

on the country, may be invoked in judicial proceedings at all levels arising from any violation, under the conditions and in the forms provided for by law.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 17 (c)

18. Training on access to justice and on human rights, including women's rights, is now an integral part of the curricula of the National School of Administration, Journalism and the Judiciary, which provides pre-service and in-service training for members of the judiciary. Human rights are taught in law courses in faculties of law and economics at universities. A specific master's degree in human rights has been established at the University of Nouakchott. Every year since 2013, in order to promote a culture of human rights, an international moot court competition focusing on human rights has been held in Nouakchott by the Mauritanian Bar Association, in partnership with the Ministry of Justice and the Embassy of France in Mauritania. Some of these competitions have been broadcast live by independent media outlets.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 19 (a)

19. Half of the budget of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and the Family is allocated to the advancement of women and gender equality, steering, monitoring and evaluation of policies, implementation of capacity-building and economic empowerment programmes for women, combating gender-based violence, and mainstreaming of gender in the country's development policies. A number of development projects and programmes that are currently being implemented include gender dimensions. The Government is also taking gender into consideration in its efforts to mobilize funding for the implementation of the Strategy for Accelerated Growth and Shared Prosperity. In addition, the Priority Investment Programme for the next five years, which is currently being developed, includes a gender dimension.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 19 (b)

20. A national gender mainstreaming strategy was adopted by the Government on 5 March 2015. The strategy has enabled the mainstreaming of gender into national policies and programmes, in particular the Strategy for Accelerated Growth and Shared Prosperity (2016–2030); the monitoring and evaluation system for that Strategy is gender-sensitive.

21. The Government has established mechanisms for steering and monitoring the gender strategy, including the interministerial committee for gender mainstreaming, chaired by the Prime Minister, and sectoral units focusing on the promotion of gender-sensitivity within ministerial departments. Gender mainstreaming at the sectoral level is already helping the Government to prepare gender-sensitive budgets. Ministries not represented on the interministerial committee are currently mainstreaming gender at the institutional level by increasing the participation of women in relevant bodies, programmes and projects.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 23 (a)

22. The departments responsible for the advancement of women and for public television broadcasting have launched a weekly special programme entitled "Voice of the Family", which addresses issues relating to family stability, the well-being of women and children and the protection of their rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Personal Status Code.

23. Programmes on the above-mentioned topics have also been broadcast by the country's vast network of local radio stations. Local associations and grass-roots

organizations are involved in awareness-raising campaigns and are provided with appropriate support.

24. At the local level, campaigns have been implemented to educate the public and community leaders on issues relating to the promotion of women's participation in rural and community settings, and to the involvement of women in decision-making at the local level.

25. Media coverage of activities carried out by women with disabilities on the achievements of government departments during the celebration of national independence, as well as exhibitions and films focusing on the products of women with disabilities have helped to strengthen the role of such women in society and to reduce the discrimination they often face.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 25 (a)

26. Act No. 2017-025 of 15 November 2017 on reproductive health, which criminalizes female genital mutilation, has been promulgated and is being broadly disseminated among health-care personnel.

27. Under article 79 of Act No. 2018-024 of 21 June 2018 on the General Child Protection Code, female genital mutilation is punished and classified as cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, as follows: "Cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment includes harmful excision and all other similar practices performed on girls, and negative customary, cultural and social practices affecting the physical integrity, health or dignity of the child." This removes any ambiguity with respect to the understanding of genital mutilation and of negative customary, cultural and social practices affecting the physical integrity, health or dignity of the child.

28. Article 12 of the Child Criminal Protection Code criminalizes and punishes any causing of injury to the genital organs of a girl through infibulation, anaesthetization or any other means that results in harm to the child. Heavier penalties apply when the perpetrator of the act is a medical or paramedical professional.

29. The bill on combating violence against women and girls, which has been approved by the Council of Ministers, punishes female genital mutilation and all other practices harmful to the health of women and girls.

30. A priority component relating to fistula repair and to the integration of women with fistula into society through the development of income-generating activities and the provision of material assistance has been included in the national reproductive health programme.

31. The national health information system collects routine data on fistula cases.

32. Female genital mutilation was included in the 2007, 2011 and 2015 multiple indicator cluster surveys and in the demographic and health survey, which is currently being finalized.

33. Health professionals have been pioneers in combating female genital mutilation in Mauritania, and, as a result of their advocacy, religious leaders have issued two fatwas (opinions of Muslim jurists), one national and one subregional, calling for the prohibition of female genital mutilation. A number of awareness-raising workshops have been held for health-care personnel.

34. In recent years, Mauritania has strengthened its commitment to the promotion and protection of women's rights. As part of its efforts to combat violence against women, in particular female genital mutilation, the Government has taken significant measures, including:

- Establishment of the National Committee against Gender-based Violence, including Female Genital Mutilation;
 - Establishment of regional committees against gender-based violence, including female genital mutilation;
 - Establishment of a network of non-governmental organizations which specialize in combating female genital mutilation;
 - Implementation of standard operating procedures for combating and responding to violence against women, and for ensuring comprehensive support for survivors of gender-based violence;
 - Development and approval of the framework bill on violence against women and girls (including female genital mutilation, sexual, domestic and psychological violence), which is being considered by parliament for adoption;
 - Provision of training on the prevention of female genital mutilation to 180 imams in wilayahs where the practice is very widespread;
 - Implementation of an action plan to encourage the voluntary discontinuation of female genital mutilation in regions where the practice is very widespread;
 - Issuance, through public and private media, of a fatwa calling for the prohibition of female genital mutilation;
 - Development of a national action plan on gender-based violence in Mauritania for 2014–2018, which has resulted in a comprehensive understanding and more effective management of gender-based violence;
 - Scaling up of regional units and committees for handling and resolving family disputes;
 - Observance of the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation;
 - Development of materials (booklets, brochures, films, modules, etc.) on female genital mutilation;
 - Development of a strategy for the discontinuation of female genital mutilation, accompanied by a five-year plan;
 - Implementation of awareness-raising campaigns against harmful practices, including female genital mutilation and child marriage;
 - Preparation of harmonized training modules on combating female genital mutilation including cultural arguments;
 - The prevalence of female genital mutilation has declined by four points, according to the 2015 multiple indicator cluster survey.
35. More than 1,600 women’s cooperatives bringing together women practitioners of female genital mutilation throughout the country, in particular in areas where the practice is very widespread, have received funding for income-generating activities.
36. The strategic needs of rural women are given priority in development projects in rural areas, and special attention is given to poor households headed by women.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 27 (a)

37. The bill on combating violence against women and girls has been approved by the Council of Ministers and has been tabled in parliament for adoption. The bill covers various forms of violence against women and girls, including physical, psychological and sexual violence.

38. A national strategy to combat violence against women was adopted in December 2019 and is currently being implemented.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 27 (b)

39. Rape is criminalized and severely punished under article 309 of the Criminal Code and under article 24 of the Child Protection Code. There is a particular focus on rape in criminal policy, including the guidelines, instructions and circulars of the Public Prosecutor's Office. Perpetrators of rape are arrested, prosecuted and tried in accordance with the law, and are ineligible for sentence adjustment (conditional release and presidential pardon).

40. The bill on combating violence against women and girls defines rape, sexual harassment, incest and all other forms of physical and psychological violence, including domestic violence, and classifies them as serious offences punishable by appropriate penalties in accordance with international norms.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 27 (c)

41. Women who are victims of rape are not prosecuted for adultery. All persons of legal age, whether men or women, who engage in consensual sexual relations outside marriage are guilty of a criminal offence and, therefore, are subject to prosecution and punishment.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 27 (d)

42. All criminal cases, including cases of violence against women, are received by and registered with the Public Prosecutor's Office. Special attention is paid, in law and in practice, to the handling of such cases, in accordance with due process.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 27 (e)

43. Listening centres and shelters run by civil society organizations such as Association "Paix" pour la lutte contre la contrainte et l'injustice, Association des Femmes Chefs de Famille and Association mauritanienne pour la santé de la mère et de l'enfant provide assistance to women who are victims of violence in all settings, without distinction. This assistance generally consists of listening, building trust and providing support and care.

44. The bill on combating violence against women and girls covers all matters related to protection and assistance. Accordingly, women and girls who are victims of violence receive assistance tailored to their individual situations, including comprehensive information, psychological and psychiatric care, social support, health care, judicial police services, follow-up to legal and administrative claims and easy access to shelters.

45. Administrative remedies (the National Commission of Human Rights, the Ministry of Social Affairs, Children and the Family and the High Council for Fatwa and Informal Appeals) and judicial remedies (lawsuits) are available and accessible to all victims without distinction.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 29

46. In article 1 of Act No. 2003-025 of 17 July 2003 on the suppression of trafficking in persons, trafficking in persons is defined as "the recruitment, transport and transfer of persons by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of deception, of the abuse of authority or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payment or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of

exploitation”. Article 1 also indicates that “exploitation shall include, at a minimum, unpaid labour, forced labour or services and similar practices, the removal of organs for profit, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation”.

47. Under Act No. 2003-025, trafficking in persons is classified as a serious crime and perpetrators and accomplices are appropriately punished.

48. The bill on the prevention and punishment of trafficking in persons and on the protection of victims, which repeals and replaces Act No. 2003-025 of 17 July 2003, contains provisions related to criminal liability, prevention, support for and protection of victims of trafficking, and cooperation and partnership mechanisms.

49. Legal aid for victims of migrant smuggling, who are particularly vulnerable, including child victims, is provided for under Act No. 2010-021 of 10 February 2010 on combating the smuggling of migrants, which stipulates that a public defender must be appointed to represent victims of that crime.

50. In 2019, the Commission for Human Rights, Humanitarian Affairs and Relations with Civil Society conducted a study on the phenomenon of trafficking in Mauritania, which revealed that Mauritania is increasingly becoming a country of transit and destination.

51. The national action plan on combating trafficking in persons (2020–2022) has been adopted, following broad consultations and discussions with the ministerial departments concerned, technical and financial partners, and international organizations. The action plan is designed to provide public authorities with an integrated planning tool to effectively and sustainably combat trafficking, punish perpetrators and identify, protect and assist victims and witnesses.

52. The action plan, which is aligned with national strategies, including the Strategy for Accelerated Growth and Shared Prosperity, the National Strategy for Access to Justice, the National Strategy for Migration Management and the National Strategy for the Protection of Children, has the following objectives:

1. Preventing trafficking in persons through awareness-raising;
2. Documenting the phenomenon of trafficking;
3. Building the capacities of relevant actors;
4. Improving the legal framework on trafficking;
5. Strengthening the judicial repression of trafficking;
6. Protecting victims and witnesses of trafficking;
7. Assisting victims of trafficking by ensuring their social reintegration and/or voluntary return;
8. Coordinating national efforts to combat trafficking;
9. Promoting regional and international cooperation on combating trafficking.

53. International cooperation in criminal matters is essential to combating trafficking in persons, owing to the transnational nature of the crime. Such cooperation includes:

- Exchange of information regarding trafficking networks and other organized crime groups;
- Mutual assistance in criminal matters;

- Collaboration between relevant bodies;
- Sharing of experiences with regard to the methods of operation of organized crime groups;
- Ensuring the voluntary return of victims of trafficking to their countries of origin.

54. As a country of transit and destination, Mauritania has engaged in effective judicial cooperation at the subregional level (with the Economic Community of West African States) and at the international level (with Spain).

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 31

55. Since the 2007 elections, the Government has been implementing a programme to promote women's political participation. The programme is funded under the national budget and is also supported by technical and financial partners, in particular the United Nations Development Programme.

56. Prior to the 2013 and 2018 National Assembly and municipal council elections, training sessions were held throughout the country in order to build the capacities of female candidates at the national and local levels.

57. The results of the 2018 legislative and municipal elections are set out in the table below:

Table 1
Results of the 2018 municipal and legislative elections

<i>Elective position</i>	<i>Number of officials elected</i>	<i>Men as a percentage of total</i>	<i>Women as a percentage of total</i>
Municipal councillor	3 831	63.87	36.13
Regional councillor	285	64.56	35.44
National Assembly member elected at the departmental level	113	93.81	6.19
National Assembly member elected from the national list of candidates	20	85	15
National Assembly member elected from the national list of female candidates	20	0	100
Total	4 269	64.51	35.49

Source: National Independent Electoral Commission, Legislative, regional and municipal elections, 2018.

58. According to the National Independent Electoral Commission, the overall rate of representation of women in political positions in 2018 was 35.5 per cent.

59. The quota system for the appointment of women to the Cabinet, foreign service positions and the judiciary is not systematized. Nevertheless, as a result of political will, women have, over the past five years, held an average of 6 of the 27 Cabinet positions. In addition, a number of women have been appointed ambassadors, and positions of responsibility within the judiciary are open to women without discrimination.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 33

60. Under article 6 of Act No. 61-112 on the Nationality Code, provisions relating to nationality contained in duly ratified and published international treaties and agreements are applicable, even if they run counter to Mauritanian law.

61. However, the Code's provisions relating to the transmission of Mauritanian nationality to children and spouses are not discriminatory.

62. There is no discrimination concerning the transmission of Mauritanian nationality to husbands by marriage. Part III, chapter 2, of amended Act No. 61-112, entitled "Acquisition of nationality by marriage", has been repealed and replaced by chapter 3, which is entitled "Naturalization" (article 2 of Act No. 2010-023 of 11 February 2010). This chapter now applies to the acquisition of Mauritanian nationality by marriage, without making any distinction between men and women.

63. With regard to children born abroad, article 9 of Act No. 61-112 has been repealed (article 1 of Act No. 2010-023 of 11 February 2010). There are three possibilities for the acquisition of Mauritanian nationality at birth: (1) being born to a Mauritanian father; (2) being born to a Mauritanian mother and a father without a nationality or of unknown nationality; (3) being born in Mauritania to a Mauritanian mother and a father of foreign nationality. This provision is in no way discriminatory. As Mauritanian law does not recognize dual nationality and makes no distinction on the basis of the child-parent relationship (paternal or maternal), the transmission of nationality to the child depends on the child's place of birth and the parent's nationality of origin. A child born abroad to a Mauritanian mother and a father of foreign nationality may opt for Mauritanian nationality (new article 13 of Act No. 2010-023). Similarly, a child born in Mauritania to a Mauritanian mother and a father of foreign nationality may renounce his or her Mauritanian nationality (article 8 of Act No. 61-112). In both cases, a choice is required because dual nationality is not recognized under Mauritanian law. In any case, if one of the parents is stateless or of unknown nationality, the child is automatically Mauritanian (article 8 of Act No. 61-112). It follows that, in the case of mixed couples, the ability of a child born abroad to opt for Mauritanian citizenship is merely a reflection of the ability of a child born in Mauritania to renounce it.

64. Any minor whose mother or father acquires Mauritanian nationality automatically becomes Mauritanian, like his or her parent (article 15 of Act No. 2010-023).

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 35

65. The Government has implemented a national education strategy whose main objective is to ensure that all Mauritanian children, without distinction of any kind, receive a complete and high-quality education. The priorities identified under the strategy are as follows:

- Improvement of educational opportunities through the reorganization of schools;
- Elimination, in all wilayahs, of disparities between male and female students and between students of different socioeconomic backgrounds;
- Improvement of the quality of teaching;
- Strengthening of the management of the system through the introduction of a results-based management approach.

66. The following measures have been taken to promote the enrolment of girls in school:

- Urbanization of rural populations through the establishment of village clusters (Nbeiket el Ahouach, Oum Sfeya, Termesse, Bourat, Saboualla and Boulahrath);
 - Establishment of a proactive policy that has made the education of girls a priority and reduced the disparities between girls and boys and between students from rural and urban areas;
 - Significant increase in the budget for education;
 - Expansion of the network of primary schools, including in rural areas;
 - Bringing schools closer to families;
 - Increase in the number of teachers and improvement in their level of qualifications.
67. Pilot projects focusing on the education of girls in remote areas include a number of measures to attract and retain girls in school, including:
- Introduction of nutrition programmes (school cafeterias);
 - Installation of latrines, running water and bathroom facilities specifically for girls;
 - Provision of school buses for female students in rural areas;
 - Establishment of priority education zones in rural areas;
 - Implementation of campaigns against child marriage;
 - Granting of cash transfers to poor families, provided they send their children to school.
68. Under the Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend project, support has been provided for the education of girls from rural areas, including:
- Granting of monthly scholarships to nearly 2,400 vulnerable girls;
 - Provision of 12 buses for the transportation of girls to school during the school year for nominal fees;
 - Tutoring in core academic subjects for female national-exam candidates;
 - Establishment of cybercafés in schools, with free access for female students;
 - Creation of welcoming spaces to enable girls between 16 and 25 years of age to develop the skills to make informed choices and improve their immediate circumstances (health, hygiene, environment);
 - Distribution of brochures in the core subjects for the final year of junior high school and for the final year of high school for the natural sciences track are distributed to girls attending schools located in wilayahs targeted by the project.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 37

69. The global issue of unemployment is given top priority by the Government. Particular emphasis is placed on young people and women under the Government's proactive, gender-based policy.
70. The Government has adopted an ambitious national employment strategy that has a strong focus on women's employment with the goal of ensuring decent work for women.
71. In Mauritania, all employers are contractually bound to provide their employees with social security coverage within eight days of their hiring (Act No. 67-039 of 3 February 1967).

72. An actuarial study to improve and extend the coverage of the social security scheme to a greater number of beneficiaries is being carried out with the assistance of the International Labour Office.

73. Combating sexual harassment in the workplace is a global concern. Although the phenomenon is not widespread in our country, for cultural and religious reasons, consideration will be given to setting up a mechanism to combat it as a preventive measure.

74. Women domestic workers have free access to law enforcement structures and full freedom to file complaints. Labour inspectorate complaint mechanisms are simple, accessible and free of charge.

75. Mauritania has ratified all the International Labour Organization core conventions and incorporated them into its domestic laws. Upon adoption by the Organization of the important Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), the Government introduced regulations (order No. 797 of 18 August 2011) on domestic work and will support ratification of the Convention.

76. Labour inspectorates have been established throughout the country, with the main task of ensuring the rigorous application of labour laws.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 39

77. The Government is pursuing a reproductive health strategy that includes elements such as the availability of essential and emergency basic obstetric care, the presence of skilled birth attendants, access to prenatal care for pregnant women, preparedness for complications at childbirth, availability of contraceptives, infertility treatment, combating female genital mutilation, screening for and treatment of cervical cancer, prevention of mother-child transmission of AIDS, treatment of obstetric fistulas and neonatal care.

78. The reproductive health strategy includes building capacity and upgrading health facilities. This has taken the form of outfitting several health facilities with medical and surgical equipment (e.g., a second operating theatre for the Sebkhah health centre, the inpatient facility for women with obstetric fistulas in Nouakchott, the Guérou health centre in Assaba and other health facilities in the wilayah of Gorgol); hospitals (Cheikh Zayed, regional hospitals in Kiffa and Kaédi), enabling them to provide full emergency obstetric care; funding the construction of an independent operating theatre for the maternity unit and a ward block at Cheikh Zayed Hospital; the purchase of theatre equipment; making ambulances available to health facilities (access to emergency obstetric care); training in operational research (health staff in Assaba); the availability of contraceptives in health facilities and the availability of new methods, and availability of condoms in the context of preventing sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS by involving civil society (national and international non-governmental organizations).

79. Regarding staff training, the national reproductive health programme has trained doctors, gynaecologists, paediatricians, midwives and anaesthetists in reproductive health service techniques, including emergency obstetric and neonatal care and training head nurses and auxiliary midwives in essential obstetric care. This has facilitated family planning and use of new techniques, the treatment of obstetric fistulas and training in reproductive health management programmes that apply the set fee for obstetric care.

80. Regarding advocacy, the National Reproductive Health Project has done the following: advocacy addressed to decision makers, opinion shapers (local elected representatives, community and religious leaders) and development partners; and

awareness-raising and information, education and communication to change behaviour geared towards communities and users of reproductive health services.

81. Through programmes and projects, in particular the National Reproductive Health Programme, the Ministry of Health has established a national reproductive health strategy that has family planning at its core.

82. It includes the following aspects:

- The Strategic Plan to Secure Reproductive Health Products;
- The availability of family planning products in health facilities;
- Free, community-based distribution of contraceptives (condoms, pills, etc.) with the support of civil society organizations.

83. A line was included in the State budget in 2019 to secure reproductive health products, especially contraceptives. The United Nations Population Fund also continues to ensure the availability of free contraceptives.

84. Act No. 2017-025 of 15 November 2017, the Reproductive Health Act, and its implementing instruments, have been adopted.

85. The National Health Information System, which has been collecting the bulk of reproductive health data since 1998, compiles and ensures such data are reliable and complete.

Replies to the issues raised in paragraphs 41 and 43

86. The Government is implementing several economic programmes to finance women's economic development in both urban and rural areas, including the following:

- Women's savings and loan groups: three groups, two in Hodh El Gharbi (Ayoun and Tintane) and one in Nouakchott;
- Women's banks of Gorgol: five banks (Kaédi, Mbout, Monguel, Maghama and the regional union of women's banks);
- Seventeen microfinance institutions in disadvantaged rural and peri-urban areas, serving nearly 90,000 women (individuals or members of cooperatives). Their funding capacity has remained limited, with only 223 million ouguiyas (UM) in loans distributed. The funds of these 17 savings and loan institutions come from endogenous resources raised from women and resources granted by the State and its development partners, in particular the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and the Oxford Famine Relief Organization (Oxfam).

87. Agencies in the financial sector that contribute to the promotion of women's economic activities also include the Agency for the Promotion of Savings and Loan Associations. According to the annual report of the Central Bank, this sector has 99 institutions, including 51 savings and loans and 20 savings and livestock-raising loan institutions. The savings and loan associations and the National Union of Agricultural Savings and Loan Associations of Mauritania are the main networks in terms of volume of activity and national coverage. Approved microfinance institutions have a total of 207,000 clients, including 164,000 for the Agency for the Promotion of Savings and Loan Associations network and 25,000 for the National Union of Agricultural Savings and Loan Associations of Mauritania network. Women's participation in the sector is estimated at 70 per cent. There are also dozens of informal actors in the sector, including rotating savings and loan associations at the neighbourhood and village levels.

88. Information from the Ministry of Employment shows that the microfinance sector is characterized by short- and medium-term loans (3 to 36 months); the financing of income-generating activities (more than 15 per cent of loans), agriculture (more than 80 per cent), fishing and housing; relatively small loans (MU 10,000 to MU 2,000,000); a high concentration of institutions in urban areas (more than 70 per cent of microfinance institutions are urban and although some serve rural borrowers, urban savings and loan associations account for 52 per cent of approved microfinance institutions); weak links to traditional banks and fewer loans compared to banks (6 per cent).

89. In 10 years, the number of customers has increased 15-fold, which shows the vitality of the sector despite its relative youth. This increase is also in line with the need for financial services among the poor, who represent more than 40 per cent of the population.

90. The Deposit and Development Fund also contributes to the economic empowerment of women. This public financial institution makes short-, medium- and long-term investments. It is also responsible for managing projects or funds and can transfer some of its activities to subsidiaries. It was created to address the continuing structural challenges facing the country's economy, which required the establishment of an independent institution with good governance and broad management autonomy; significant financial, operational and human resources; and assistance from external partners. It completes the national financial landscape through its position as a player in the financing of medium- and long-term projects and as a bank managing funds for public institutions.

91. Its activities cover a fairly broad spectrum, ranging from the financing of very small enterprises to support for government sectoral policies in several areas, including agriculture, housing, industry, services and the development of the financial sector.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 45

92. The eradication of contemporary forms of slavery and their consequences is a priority for the Government. As a result, a road map was adopted on 6 March 2014 for the eradication of the consequences of slavery and contemporary forms of slavery. The road map, developed with the participation of the government departments involved in combating the consequences of slavery and with civil society, has been approved by the country's technical and financial partners and endorsed by the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery.

93. The road map comprises 29 recommendations related to legislation, economic and social matters, and the awareness-raising needed to eradicate the consequences of slavery.

94. An interministerial committee was established, chaired by the Prime Minister, with a brief to implement the recommendations of the road map. In addition, a technical follow-up commission was formed, comprising representatives of ministries and civil society organizations, and the National Human Rights Commission, as an observer.

95. An action plan for implementation of the road map was adopted on 30 September 2014 and the following main steps have been taken:

- The adoption of Act No. 2015-031 of 10 September 2015, superseding Act No. 048/2007 criminalizing slavery and punishing slavery-like practices, which grants non-governmental organizations the right to intervene as a third party in court proceedings;

- The observance on 6 March each year of the national day to address the consequences of slavery;
- The introduction of a cash-transfer programme to boost school enrolment for school-age children from families living in poverty and/or affected by the consequences of slavery;
- The implementation of a plan of action to combat child labour;
- The development of educational infrastructure such as schools and school canteens in education priority zones;
- The organization of campaigns to raise awareness of the unacceptability of slavery;
- The organization of workshops for civil society organizations and the media on anti-slavery legislation;
- The promulgation by the Association of Ulama (religious leaders) of a fatwa on the illegitimacy of the practice of slavery;
- The implementation of income-generating projects for persons affected by the consequences of slavery and poverty;
- The establishment of the national Tadamoun agency to combat the consequences of slavery and poverty and promote integration.

96. Three evaluations of the road map were conducted in partnership with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Mauritania: a mid-term evaluation in 2015; one in the context of the Special Rapporteur's visit in April 2017; and a final one conducted in December 2017.

97. During the final evaluation seminar, objective and clear indicators for each activity included in the road map implementation action plan were established and validated and a matrix of indicators was completed.

98. The seminar enabled:

- Identification of relevant monitoring-evaluation indicators to help improve the visibility, effects and impact of the implementation of the road map for beneficiaries;
- Better knowledge for participants to be able to define appropriate indicators, including in data collection and the measurement of indicators;
- Qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the actions carried out, showing that all the recommendations of the road map have been generally implemented.

99. The Government undertakes to continue awareness-raising activities and to strictly implement all laws relating to the promotion and protection of human rights, as well as socioeconomic programmes.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 47

100. The process of revising the Personal Status Code is under way. Amendments are being put forward for a number of articles.

101. The amendments generally introduce the following reforms:

- Pregnancy time frame for the establishment of filiation; principle of shared responsibilities for husbands and wives;
- An incapable girl can only be given away in marriage by her guardians with prior authorization of a judge;

- Any person of legal age related by blood to an incapable person and civil society organizations approved under the Code can bring legal proceedings against a negligent guardian;
- Classification of marriage and heading of the family;
- Validity of marriage;
- Form of consent for women;
- Women's management of their property;
- Divorce at the initiative of the woman.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraphs 49 and 50

102. The Government has taken the gender dimension and equity into account in the monitoring and evaluation system of the Strategy for Accelerated Growth and Shared Prosperity, in order to combat gender-based inequalities.

103. In 2017, the Department for the Advancement of Women prepared the first national report on the composite index of gender and development inequalities, which highlights women's social powers (capacities), economic powers (access to opportunities) and political powers (power of action or participation). This index addresses inequalities and the status of women in the country.

104. As a result, the report on the implementation of the Beijing +25 Platform for Action was prepared and forwarded to UN-Women in 2019.

Reply to the issues raised in paragraph 51

105. The various concluding observations and recommendations are shared and discussed at workshops, and the conclusions reached are then transmitted to the competent authorities. This process has been followed for the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

III. Implementation of the Convention

Articles 1–3

Elimination of discrimination

106. The 20 July 1992 Constitution, amended in 2012, 2016 and 2018, is based on the principle of the equality of all citizens, regardless of gender.

107. The recognition of gender equality is therefore guaranteed under Act No. 2018-023 on the criminalization of discrimination, in accordance with the Constitution and the commitments of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania; this equality is effective, both de jure and de facto.

108. This principle allows women to be parties to judicial proceedings and, where appropriate, to benefit from legal and judicial assistance. Therefore, if they lack the means to demand their rights, they are eligible to receive free legal advice or the assistance of a lawyer or other judicial officer paid for by the Government.

Article 4

Temporary special measures to combat discrimination

109. The Constitution guarantees women civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

110. Order No. 2006-029 of 22 August 2006 on women's access to elected office and elective positions ensures women's political participation and representation by setting aside a minimum quota of 20 per cent for them.

111. The 2012 Act gives women a national list of their own, of 20 deputies.

112. Mauritanian women are becoming key players in national political life; they vote and are elected.

Article 5

Modifying social and cultural patterns of conduct

113. The public and private media constantly deal with the advancement of women and development and with their role in society; problems related to family, motherhood and childhood, as well as the creation of conditions that enable women to lead a fulfilling life, raise children, take care of their health and have leisure activities. Educational programmes presenting Mauritanian legislation and the norms of international law on the family, women, young people and children are broadcast on national and private television channel channels.

Article 6

Combating the exploitation of women

114. Mauritania's domestic legislation prohibits the exploitation of women. The country observes norms of Islamic law that strictly punish the prostitution of women, sex tourism, procuring, paedophilia and pornography. The Criminal Code, the Act on trafficking in persons, the Act on smuggling of migrants and the Children's Code all serve to strengthen legislation that already severely punishes exploitation of persons. Women and girls who are victims of female genital mutilation are cared for in public health facilities, including the Mother and Child Hospital Centre and in shelters opened by certain non-governmental organizations.

Article 10

Equal rights in education

115. The Mauritanian Government has put in place a national plan for the development of the education sector. The plan's main objectives include consolidation of the achievements of the education system, correction of dysfunction and effective support for the implementation of reform by translating its policy directions into actions on the ground. The plan covers all components of education, from early childhood to higher education.

116. Since 2014, the Government has been implementing a national strategy for the development of education which has been of benefit to both boys and girls, and which includes the following:

At the pre-school level:

- Expanding access to preschool education, particularly in rural areas and for children from poor backgrounds;
- Developing parental education to meet the care needs of children under 3 years of age;
- Improving the quality of the preschool education system;
- Improving the quality of learning.

At the primary education level:

- Strengthening and reorganizing educational offerings to better meet demand;
- Strengthening, restructuring and adapting initial teacher training to the requirements of the reform, by: (i) creating five new primary school teacher training colleges, (ii) renovating curricula, (iii) improving the qualifications of teachers, (iv) improving supervision at the level of demonstration schools and (v) setting up a teacher certification and monitoring system;
- Developing and implementing a new, in-service teacher training strategy;
- Executing an intense programme of language retraining;
- Establishing a system of local supervision, in the form of inspection and training units, in all communes;
- Strengthening teacher motivation, through increased performance-related incentive allowances (classroom, hardship and bilingualism allowances);
- Improving the quality and availability of educational tools and teaching materials (manuals, guides, etc.);
- Upgrading schools and improving their living environment, through the implementation of a vast rehabilitation programme, the systematization of access to drinking water and decent latrines and the promotion of school health;
- Implementing a system of educational, cultural and sports activities through the expansion of school libraries, the creation of clubs and the organization of remedial classes;
- Implementing an effective strategy to ensure that school time is respected, and a system to monitor student and teacher absenteeism;
- Updating the inventory of schools and implementing an ambitious programme to merge non-standard schools;
- Reducing disparities linked to the environment and socioeconomic conditions, through the implementation of targeted programmes to benefit wilayahs and areas with poor educational indicators;
- Stimulating demand by increasing the number of users of school canteens (45 per cent of boarders in 2020) and improving the quality of their services;
- Providing non-formal, inclusive and adapted primary education, giving a new chance to children who have never attended or who have dropped out of school (9 to 14 years of age) to enter or return to formal education;
- Maintaining the involvement of the private sector in school offerings (11 per cent).

General secondary education

117. General secondary education is being reformed with the aim of gradually ensuring that all young people who have completed primary education have the opportunity to complete lower secondary education; of facilitating access to upper secondary education; and of creating the necessary conditions to better prepare the young people who can do so to continue their studies in higher education, according to their abilities, or to enter technical and vocational training schools.

Technical and vocational training

118. The strategy for technical and vocational training aims to strengthen links with the other levels of the education system and to make it more relevant to the needs of the economy in terms of skills and qualifications. It consists of combining traditional technical and vocational training with a system of targeted training, geared towards integration, and will be based on two priorities: (i) improving the quality of training, its relevance and its key role in the economy; and (ii) extending the system's training offerings.

Higher education

119. The promotion of quality higher education lies at the heart of the country's sustainable development strategy. In addition to its scientific role in the creation of knowledge and its economic role in the training of high-level executives, higher education is increasingly called upon to play a social and cultural role. The strategy applied to this level of education will focus on:

- Reinforcing the relevance of training and research by adapting offerings to the real needs of the country;
- Managing the workforce in such a way as to reconcile the pressures of social demand, economic demand and funding constraints;
- Optimizing the use of available resources, prioritizing educational and research spending;
- Diversifying funding sources by mobilizing contributions from students and the private sector.

120. Several actions have been carried out in this regard related to both the structural configuration of the higher education system and its institutional roots, governance, organization and functioning. The merger of the University of Nouakchott and the University of Science, Technology and Medicine into a single institution (University of Nouakchott Al Asriya) brings it closer to international standards.

121. Training in engineering has been improved with the creation of the Higher Schools of Engineering Preparatory Institute and the restructuring of the Higher Polytechnical School, through a merger of existing technical institutions, consolidating the modernized system. The establishment of the Higher Institute of Building, Public Works and Urban Development Trades in Aleg responds to the need to train qualified technicians in this sector.

122. The Higher Institute of English has enriched the higher education system with excellent training in English provided by British and Mauritanian instructors. This institution provides a bachelor's degree course accredited by the University of Cambridge and continuing education open to all senior members of the armed and security forces and the administration in general.

123. In terms of infrastructure, the university campus has been equipped with a capacity of 2,540 beds. Construction work is continuing on the rest of the university complex, the headquarters of the Higher Professional School of Languages, Translation and Interpreting, in Nouadhibou, and the Higher Institute of Building, Public Works and Urban Development Trades in Aleg.

Article 11
Equal rights to employment and work

124. The working-age population consists of individuals of both sexes aged 14 to 65 who can participate in the production of goods and services as understood in national accounting. Women of working age account for 57.5 per cent of this group.

125. The female unemployment rate is higher than that of men: 12.6 per cent compared to 8.6 per cent. This is due mainly to the low level of access to education by women and their lack of qualifications for certain jobs that require advanced technical skills. A combination of several factors has shown that women often have less access than men to productive resources, education, skills development and the labour market (the vast majority of women are still confined to domestic work, work in the informal sector, handicrafts and petty trading) and often work in lower paid jobs than men. This situation confirms their under-representation in several sectors of public and private life, especially in the scientific and technical fields.

126. In the civil service, a breakdown by gender of human resources indicates that in category A (senior management) only 11.5 per cent are women. In the middle management category, women are also less numerous, with 27.8 per cent of the total workforce compared to 72.2 per cent for men. It is only in category C, which represents fewer than 19 per cent of civil service employees, that the presence of women is more pronounced (almost 60 per cent of employees in this category are women, compared to 40.1 per cent for men).

127. Labour inspectorates oversee compliance with the ban on discrimination at work through monitoring visits. In addition, meetings and seminars at the national level help raise the awareness of companies of respect for the principle of non-discrimination in employment. Thus, companies are encouraged to:

- Evaluate the presence of discrimination within their ranks;
- Establish and disseminate an employment policy setting out clear procedures for non-discrimination and equal opportunities;
- Provide training at all levels to raise awareness of the issue and encourage action against discrimination;
- Support awareness campaigns to combat stereotypes;
- Where necessary, modify the organization of work and the distribution of tasks to prevent certain groups of workers from prejudice in terms of treatment and promotions;
- Ensure equal opportunities in vocational training;
- Examine complaints and appeals from women workers;
- Encourage community efforts to create a climate of equal opportunity (such as adult education programmes and funding for health and childcare services).

128. Workers are also called upon to contribute to the fight against discrimination at work, through their representatives.

129. In addition, employers and labour unions are urged to develop a corporate policy to eliminate discrimination and promote equality, and to refer to relevant national and international standards.

130. Civil society conducts awareness-raising campaigns to prevent sexual harassment in general and in the workplace in particular that stress the fact that gender discrimination also includes sexual harassment.

131. Mauritanian laws in general and labour laws in particular are gender-neutral and treat workers of the same status equally. The principle of non-discrimination in employment and occupation provided for in the Labour Code encompasses the principle of equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value.

132. The principle of equal pay for work of equal value means that rates and types of remuneration should not depend on the sex of the worker but on an objective assessment of the work performed. Equal pay is a fundamental right of male and female workers, overseen by the labour inspectorate and enforced collaboratively by the National Social Security Fund and the General Tax Directorate, which report any violations to the inspectorate.

133. The principle of equality applies to all elements of pay, i.e. basic or ordinary pay and other basic remuneration and benefits, whether paid directly or indirectly, in cash or in kind. Wages are determined according to job classification and pay scale systems, based on objective criteria that do not take the gender of the workers in question into account.

134. Any reference to gender is eliminated from all pay criteria and collective agreements, pay and bonus systems, pay scales, benefit plans, health insurance and other benefits.

Article 12

Equal access to health services

135. The Government pays particular attention to the right to health, which is enshrined in the Constitution, in the preamble and article 10.

136. The health of mothers and girls has benefited from government efforts to accelerate implementation of the strategic framework for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and its application to Goal 5, the targets of which concern maternal health.

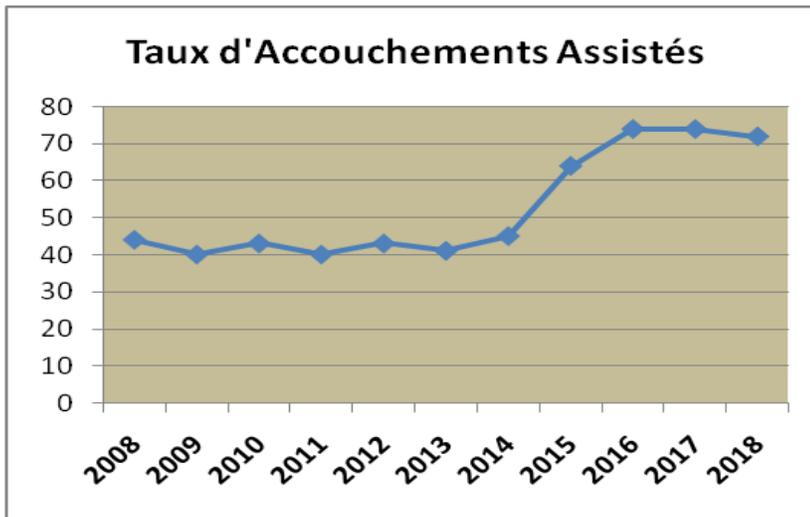
137. During the period from 2014 to 2019, the Government boosted its capacity and efforts in the area of health and social welfare in general and reproductive health in particular.

138. These efforts are the result of a political will expressed through various sectoral and national health and social development strategies. In terms of reproductive health and family well-being, Mauritania has made significant progress thanks to political will reflected first in the adoption of the various iterations of the strategic framework for poverty reduction and later in the strategy for accelerated growth and shared prosperity, a strategy that has made health in general and reproductive health in particular a priority.

139. Overall, these efforts have yielded results that are still insufficient to achieve the health Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goal 3 targets.

140. The maternal mortality rate fell from 747 cases in 2001 to 626 in 2011 and to 510 in 2015, according to the 2015 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey).

Figure I
Rate of assisted childbirths



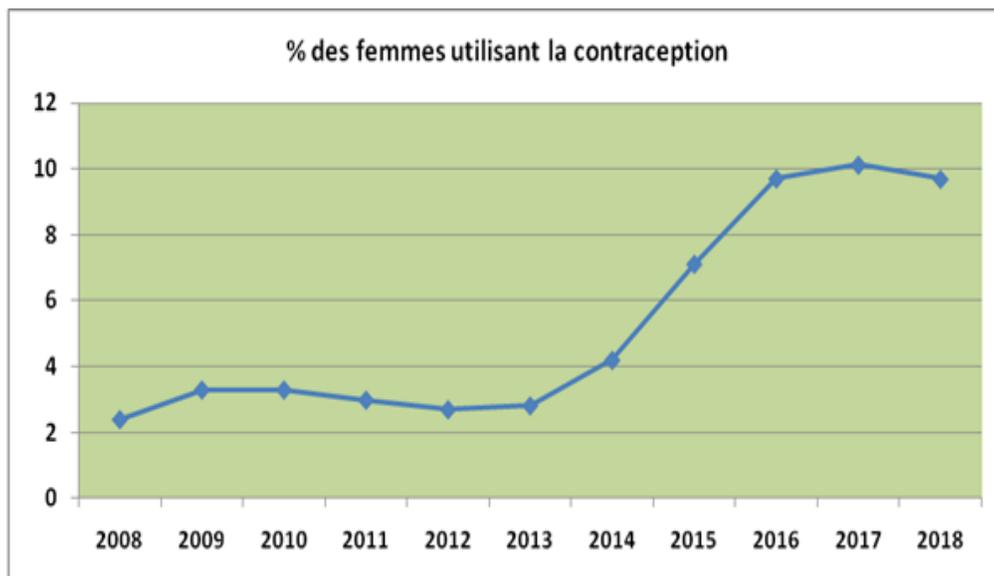
Source: Health Statistics Yearbook 2018.

141. There has been a marked increase in assisted childbirths, from 49 per cent in 2000 to 64.5 per cent in 2011, with a 9.6 per cent rate for caesarean sections, thanks to health services in closer proximity to users and the gradual greater availability of equipment and trained staff.

142. The same trend also applies to consultations, where the State deploys efforts and means to guarantee the constitutional right to health for all in general and for women in particular.

143. The rate of contraceptive use among married women aged from 15 to 49 increased significantly in 2018, demonstrating women’s receptiveness to messages on family planning, which they now recognize as a useful tool for their development.

Figure II
Rate of contraceptive use

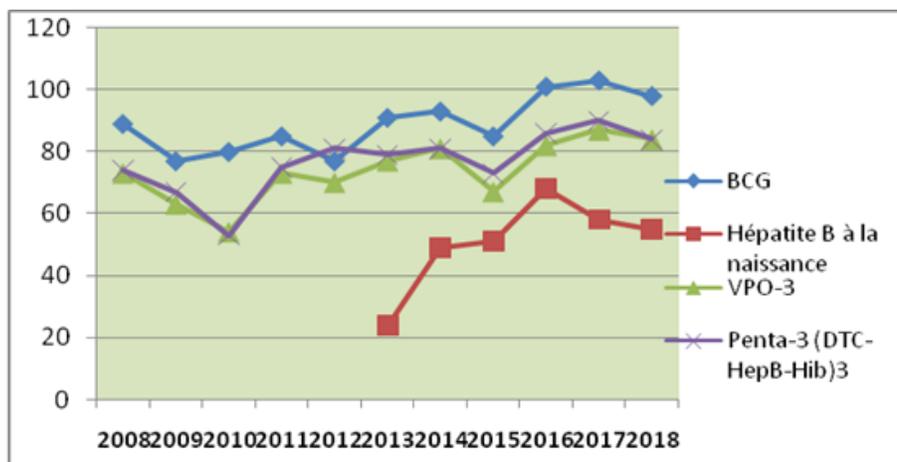


Source: Health Statistics Yearbook 2018.

144. There has been a gradual increase in vaccination coverage and the introduction of new vaccines.

145. Coverage rates for the five main vaccines can be seen in the figure below.

Figure III
Coverage of the five main vaccines



146. The field of health overall has benefited from the following activities:

- Improving access to health-care structures through health-centre and health-post building and renovation programmes, training of health-care personnel and provision of capital equipment, including ambulances for evacuating at-risk cases, such as women experiencing childbirth difficulties;
- Establishing health-care training structures by opening a medical school and a school for health-care personnel, thereby facilitating the development of specialized hospitals such as a mother and baby hospital;
- Implementing a flat-rate obstetric payment programme enabling poor women to receive obstetric care.

Article 14 Rural women

147. The rural parts of the country account for 45 per cent of the total population, which is made up, for the most part, of poor people. They contribute about 20 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). The contribution of agriculture to GDP is low (12 per cent), despite the large investments made and the fact that it employs around 60 per cent of the population. In rural areas, more than 6 out of 10 women are employed, compared with fewer than 4 out of 10 in urban areas. The activity of rural women is particularly concentrated in the agricultural subsector, whose productivity is markedly low. They are particularly involved in post-soil preparation tasks (sowing, weeding, harvesting, transport, storage, processing and preserving of crops) and in other work for which they are exclusively responsible, alongside children (weeding, bird hunting, etc.).

148. Market gardening, which has intensified in recent decades as a result of severe droughts, is a traditional activity carried on by women in cooperatives. This has made it possible to significantly improve people's diet and living conditions. Despite their strong presence in agriculture, it is difficult for women to become landowners. According to the only study on women's access to land ownership conducted by the State Secretariat for the Status of Women, there are obstacles to access to land for

women: 56 per cent need a third party as guarantor to conduct a land transaction, only 31 per cent are aware of the procedures for transferring land, and only 18.7 per cent own land.

149. Mauritania is a country with a strong pastoral tradition and women are also present in the livestock subsector (14 per cent of GDP) where, in line with sociocultural traditions, they are responsible for milking cows, watering and milking goats and sheep, and providing veterinary care, and processing and selling dairy products. They still keep small livestock and poultry which, although providing only a modest source of income, are a resource they control.

150. In the rural sector, the fundamental role that women play as a labour force is generally recognized, although it is virtually absent from official accounts. Moreover, women with limited access to land are highly concentrated in low productivity activities and are not notably present in mixed socio-professional organizations.

151. However, women who receive technical support are able to demonstrate their ability to take charge of the socioeconomic development of their regions.

152. The activities conducted under various rural development programmes are part of a dynamic of development and support to strengthen the capacities of rural women and improve their income and living conditions. These programmes have had positive impacts on women at different levels: participation in decision-making; capacity-building; improved access to basic services, land, employment and credit; and the promotion of grassroots women's organizations.

Article 15

Equality in legal and civil matters

153. The Constitution provides for legal equality between men and women. Article 6 states that all citizens are equal before the law, which means that women, as citizens, are entitled to exercise their political, economic and social rights fully. The Personal Status Code was an important milestone in giving women a more equitable place in society, offering prospects for the harmony of the family unit and for social cohesion.

154. Article 12 of the Constitution states that all Mauritians are equal before the law. Under article 10 of the Constitution, everyone, regardless of gender, enjoys equal rights.

155. Mauritanian legislation does not authorize any restriction on the movements of Mauritanian men or women or on their freedom to choose their place of residence and domicile.

Article 16

Equal rights in the family

156. Family relations are governed by the Personal Status Code. The right to marry is inalienable, natural and fundamental for all men and women. Intending spouses marry of their own free will. The complementary roles of men and women in contracting marriage and choosing a spouse freely are recognized in article 1 of the Family Code, which defines marriage as a legal contract by which a man and a woman come together to create a lasting conjugal life, the aim of marriage being fidelity and procreation through the founding, on a sound basis and under the husband's direction, of a home that allows the spouses to fulfil their reciprocal obligations with affection and mutual respect. Article 25 of the Personal Status Code, which draws heavily on the provisions of the Mauritanian Constitution, establishes equality between the husband and the wife with respect to individual rights and property rights. It provides that in order to marry, both the intending spouses must have given their consent and have reached the age required by law.

157. The Civil Status Act allows women to take their husband's surname or retain their maiden name. Article 28 of the Personal Status Code guarantees women the right to freely choose their employment or occupation. Article 102 of the Personal Status Code recognizes the right of women to seek divorce on grounds of prejudice. The Code enshrines each spouse's right to his or her own property and affirms women's capacity to manage their property themselves. It defines systematically and in detail the rights and obligations of the spouses both during marriage and upon its dissolution.

IV. Conclusion

158. In fulfilment of its obligations arising from the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Mauritania has embarked on a process of promoting and protecting women's rights. The action taken in this area reflects the Government's political will to create an environment favourable to women in all their diversity and social, economic and intellectual specificities.

159. In addition to its political commitment, Mauritania now has some important tools for completing the process of strengthening women's participation in the management of the community. Among other things, there is now a body responsible for gender issues, development partners have been brought into the process, civil society, the media and religious leaders are involved in raising awareness and mobilizing public opinion on women's rights, local courts have been set up to encourage women to assert their rights and women have access to microcredit.
