



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

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

**Seventh periodic report submitted by Gabon under article 18
of the Convention, due in 2019***

[Date received: 18 March 2019]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



Recommendation contained in paragraph 7

The Committee stresses the crucial role of the legislative power in ensuring the full implementation of the Convention (see the statement by the Committee on its relationship with parliamentarians, adopted at the forty-fifth session, in 2010). It invites the National Assembly and the Senate, in line with their mandates, to take the necessary steps regarding the implementation of the present concluding observations between now and the next reporting period under the Convention.

1. The Quota Act, a parliamentary initiative, has been adopted to enable women to participate with a 30-per-cent share as candidates for decision-making posts at the policy and institutional levels. The same applies to article 24 in the revised constitution of January 2018. Parliament has also adopted draft legislation amending certain provisions of the civil and penal codes. The draft children's code is under consideration at the national level. In addition, the Assembly has promulgated Act No. 10/2016 of 16 September 2016 on combating harassment in the workplace.
2. The two chambers of Parliament have a commission responsible for monitoring the implementation of existing laws. However, there is no commission with specific responsibility for issues of gender parity and equality.

Recommendation contained in paragraph 9: Visibility of the Convention

The Committee recommends that the State party take all appropriate measures to ensure that the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations are sufficiently known and applied by all branches of the Government, the parliament and the judiciary as a framework for all laws, court decisions and policies on gender equality and the advancement of women.

3. The Government organized two workshops, in partnership with the United Nations Centre for Human Rights, with a view to establishing a national mechanism to facilitate access to the recommendations of the treaty bodies, to promote their implementation and ensure that they are monitored through public and multilateral policies. The first workshop took place from 27 to 29 November 2017 and the second from 5 to 11 December 2018. These workshops were attended by 40 participants from ministries, the interministerial committee responsible for the drafting of national reports, Parliament, civil society, and the National Commission on Human Rights.
4. In 2018, a combined celebration of the Gabonese and International Women's Days was organized jointly by the Ministries of the Economy, Agriculture and the Promotion of Private Investment and the ministry with special responsibility for the Women's Decade. During the celebration, a presentation was given on the Committee's recommendations and copies of the Convention were distributed to members of the Government, Parliament, the diplomatic corps, the judiciary and civil society, and to representatives of the constitutional institutions, senior officials from the central government and women from all social groups. This presentation was designed to inform participants and share with them the content of the Convention and the recommendations made following consideration of the sixth report.

Recommendation contained in paragraph 10: Legislative framework

The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Finalize, as a priority and within a clear time frame, the process of legislative reform, including the revision of the Civil Code and the Labour Code, and amend other legislation, including the Penal Code, with a view to bringing the legislation into conformity with the Convention and ensuring that all discriminatory provisions are repealed;

(b) Enact, without delay, a comprehensive law on violence against women;

(c) Ensure consultations with civil society during the drafting of new legal provisions to eliminate discrimination against women;

(d) Strengthen campaigns to raise awareness among local and traditional leaders and the population in general, especially in rural areas, of the negative effects of discriminatory customary laws;

(e) Consider ratifying the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.

Legislative reform

5. Since the submission of the previous report, there have been many advances in legislation for the elimination of discrimination against women.

A. With regard to the Civil Code:

6. An amendment is being made to the provision on the minimum age for marriage, and the minimum age will be 18 years for girls. There will be criminal penalties for violation of the law.

7. The nationality code is also under review in order to close certain legal loopholes in the 1999 law.

B. With regard to the Penal Code:

8. In addition to the progress made with the revision of the Penal Code (Act No. 21/63 of 31 May 1963) by means of Act No. 19/2013, which amends certain provisions of the Code, it is important to note that this amendment process has also harmonized the definition of adultery. The revision has also criminalized rape and incest and has established penalties for domestic violence.

9. Furthermore, certain provisions of the Penal Code, section XVI, entitled "Crimes and Offences against Children", are in the process of being revised. The same applies to the draft Children's Code that is currently under consideration by the parliament (Senate). The draft Code brings national legislation into line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Accordingly, the minimum age of marriage will be harmonized at 18 years old for both girls and boys.

10. The criminalization of fetishistic crimes has been strengthened by Act No. 11/2016 of 9 August 2016, by means of which the provisions of article 229 of the Penal Code were revised and supplemented. Article 2 of the Act provides that "murder committed with removal of organs or other parts of the human body for fetishistic, witchcraft-related and/or commercial purposes shall be punished by life imprisonment.

11. Anyone convicted of the crimes covered by the above article shall not benefit from any pardon, amnesty, conditional release or parole, or any other kind of sentence adjustment”.

C. With regard to the workplace and political and administrative bodies:

12. Act No. 10/2016 of 16 September 2016 on countering harassment in the workplace has been promulgated. It defines harassment as any repeated behaviour that violates personal dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, offensive or humiliating work environment. The Act distinguishes two forms of harassment, psychological harassment and sexual harassment. It also provides for penalties in cases of harassment. The Act also contains provisions against dismissal and other direct or indirect discriminatory measures in the context of harassment in the workplace;

13. In addition, the quotas for women and young people as candidates for political elections and for women as candidates for senior government positions are now regulated by Act No. 09/2016 of 5 September 2016. The quotas are intended to increase the direct and active participation of women and young people in political life and public administration.

(a) Quotas ensure that women and young people are represented in Parliament, local councils and the offices of elective assemblies, and, in the case of women, in senior government positions. This requirement is consistent with the consolidation of the democratic system and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

(b) With regard to the law on violence against women, the Government has begun work on a specific bill on gender-based violence, in order to address violence against women in all areas, including violence related to cultural practices;

(c) With respect to the participation of civil society in the drafting the new legislative provisions on the elimination of discrimination against women, the Government has consulted with civil society at all stages of the process, including during the revision of discriminatory provisions in the Civil Code, the Penal Code and the Labour Code. Moreover, the Observatory for Women’s Rights and Parity (ODEFPA), among other entities, participated in the Government’s study of the second part of the Civil Code.

(d) The celebration of the Gabonese Women’s day in 2017 was an opportunity to raise awareness among the local and administrative authorities that are members of the Economic and Social Council of Gabon as well as among the general public on the topic of discriminatory social practices and violence as a hindrance to the professional ambitions of women and girls.

14. For Women’s Day in 2018, parliamentarians and rural communities were provided with information on violence and on legal counselling provided to the victims. Such awareness-raising efforts are to be extended throughout the country.

15. Similarly, in 2018 civil society organizations (Cris de femme, Agir pour le genre and ADDEFÉ) were extensively involved in the events held for International Widows’ Day.

(e) Gabon ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on 10 January 2011.

Recommendation contained in paragraph 15: Access to justice

The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Strengthen the measures taken to provide free legal aid to women without sufficient means;

16. Gabon has a legal framework for legal aid. This aid, which has an annual budget allocation, is the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice through the Directorate General for Civil Affairs and not through the courts, as indicated in the law.

17. The budget referred to is not intended specifically for vulnerable women.

(b) Combat sociocultural barriers that women may face in gaining access to justice, including by enhancing women's awareness of their rights and the means to enforce those rights;

18. In order to enhance women's awareness of their rights, the Government held a validation workshop from 19 to 21 December 2018 to revise the leaflet "I am a woman, I know my rights" to include the social and legal developments that have taken place since 2015. This leaflet has been drafted in language that is accessible to all.

19. For several years the Observatory has worked consistently to disseminate information on women's rights by issuing a number of leaflets to help women to learn about their rights and be aware of mechanisms available to assist them.

(c) Take all appropriate measures to ensure that the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations are made an integral part of training for judges, lawyers, prosecutors, police officers and other law enforcement officers;

20. Initial training for judges, prosecutors and lawyers does not include human rights courses. However, the training for judicial police officers includes modules on human rights, but without a focus on gender-based violence and violence against children.

(d) Increase the number of judicial structures in rural areas.

21. There are judicial structures in rural areas, but the professional staff have not received training.

22. Mobile courts are also organized regularly in rural areas (when funding is available).

Recommendation contained in paragraph 17: National machinery for the advancement of women

The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Review the distribution of State resources to significantly increase the proportion allocated to the advancement of women, sustainable development and poverty eradication;

23. In this regard, it should be noted that, as a result of the restrictions on and complexity of budget implementation, the numbers given below do not reflect the actual implementation of the budgeted funds.

24. The share of the State budget officially allocated to the Directorate General for the Advancement of Women from 2014 to 2017 is as follows:

- 2014: 53,293,784 CFA francs
- 2015: 572,067,500 CFA francs
- 2016: 148,842,767 CFA francs
- 2017: 129,464,776 CFA francs

25. In sum, the budget allocated to the Directorate General for the Advancement of Women increased from 2014 to 2015 but decreased from 2016 to 2017, which does not allow for the completion of all planned activities.

(b) Strengthen anti-corruption measures;

26. Since 2009, the Gabonese Government has made the fight against corruption and illicit enrichment its main priority. There is also a court to deal with financial crimes.

27. To that end, in 2012 Gabon produced a strategy paper for combating corruption and money-laundering, which focuses on improved governance. The strategy has several pillars, including

- The fair and equitable redistribution of national wealth
- The strengthening of the image and international credibility of Gabon
- An improved business environment

28. To implement this strategy, the non-governmental organization ONG Malachie, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme, the National Commission to Combat Fraud and the National Financial Investigation Agency, organized a workshop in December 2015 on combating corruption and money-laundering in the workplace.

29. The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Educate and inform women leaders
- Contribute to citizen development and probity in the management of public affairs
- Familiarize women with the legal and institutional mechanisms for combating corruption

30. At the institutional level, Gabon has a body responsible for combating corruption and fraud.

31. In short, measures are being taken by the Government to implement the Convention, and these measures are increasing the social protection of all women. Nonetheless, our country is still continuing its efforts to attain the objectives set out in the Convention.

(c) Establish a permanent national machinery for the advancement of women, with a clear mandate and adequate human and financial resources, which would be responsible for the promotion and protection of women's rights and for combating any form of discrimination against women, and, in the interim, significantly strengthen the financial, human and technical resources of the existing national machinery to ensure its effective functioning;

32. Gabon has established a Directorate General for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality responsible for implementing government policy on women's advancement and gender equality. In this connection, it initiates and proposes

measures to promote women's rights and mainstream the gender approach in policies and programmes.

33. In addition, there is the Gabonese Women's Decade (2015–2025), decreed by the President of the Republic in 2015 to analyse and solve Gabonese women's problems. Since January 2019, the project has taken shape with the establishment of a ministerial department responsible for the Women's Decade.

(d) Strengthen the capacity of machinery staff to address the advancement of women and enhance their cooperation with civil society;

34. Machinery staff receive regular capacity-building through seminars, lectures and workshops, including on human rights, especially women's rights.

35. The Directorate General for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality engages constantly with civil society actors involved in the advancement of women's rights in all their planning and activities.

(e) Promote gender mainstreaming throughout all government bodies;

(f) Incorporate a results-oriented approach, including specific indicators and targets, into the National Gender Equality and Equity Strategy and into future strategies for the advancement of women, and establish a monitoring mechanism to regularly assess their impact and effectiveness;

36. In Gabon, there is a women and children's rights observatory.

(g) Increase the representation of women at the decision-making and policymaking levels, including in national and local development institutions and structures;

37. In order to increase the proportion of women at the decision-making and policymaking levels, Parliament adopted Act No. 9/2006 of 5 September 2016 establishing quotas for women and young people as candidates for political elections and for women as candidates for senior government positions. Nonetheless, despite the enactment of this legislation, women remain poorly represented in decision-making positions.

Distribution of local elected officials by sex and position

Province	Position-men	Position-women	% men	% women	% total
	Mayor	Mayor	Mayor	Mayor	
Estuaire	15	08	21.43	11.43	100
Haut-Ogooué	16	03	30.18	05.67	100
Moyen-Ogooué	03	01	21.42	07.14	100
Ngounié	08	03	21.05	7.90	100
Nyanga	02	03	11.11	16.77	100
Ogooué-Invido	5	01	25	5	100
Ogooué-Lolo	03	03	14.9	14.29	100
Ogooué-Maritime	04	04	16.66	16.66	100
Woleu-Ntem	07	00	29.16	00	100
Total	63	26	23.24	20.64	

Source: Decade for Women report, 2015.

Constitutional Court – distribution by sex

<i>Positions</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>% men</i>	<i>% women</i>
President	0	1	0	100
Constitutional judges	5	4	55	45
Assistants to constitutional judges	8	2	80	20
Total	13	7	65	35

National Council of Communication – distribution by sex

<i>Positions</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>% men</i>	<i>% women</i>
President	1	0	100	0
Vice-President	0	1	0	100
Councillors	8	1	88.89	11.11
Total	9	2	82	18

Economic and Social Council - distribution by sex

<i>Positions</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>% men</i>	<i>% women</i>
President	0	0	0	0
Vice-President	1	1	50	50
Quaestors	2	0	100	0
Bureau secretaries	2	1	66	34
Total	5	2	71	29

(h) *Develop a comprehensive system of gender indicators to improve the collection of sex-disaggregated data necessary to assess the impact and effectiveness of policies and programmes aimed at promoting women's enjoyment of their human rights on an equal basis with men. In this regard, the Committee draws the State party's attention to the Committee's general recommendation No. 9 on statistical data concerning the situation of women and encourages the State party to seek technical assistance from United Nations agencies and to enhance its collaboration with women's organizations that could assist in gathering accurate data;*

38. A project to establish a database is being prepared by the Directorate General for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality in order to gather data on the situation of women. This requires indicators to be defined for all sectors and, above all, the support of technical and financial partners.

(i) *Encourage the National Commission on Human Rights to apply, without delay, for accreditation by the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and ensure that it complies with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles).*

39. Because the National Commission on Human Rights does not meet the standards of the Paris Principles, it has not yet been accredited by the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights.

Temporary special measures Recommendation contained in paragraph 19

The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Implement temporary special measures in various forms, such as outreach and support programmes, quotas and other proactive and result-oriented measures aimed at achieving substantive equality between women and men in all areas covered by the Convention in which women are underrepresented or disadvantaged, and encourage their use in both the public and private sectors;

40. With Government support, civil society (the Sylvia Bongo Ondimba Foundation) has established the Ozavino scholarships resource for boys and girls. The resource is designed to encourage the most deserving girls to avail themselves of merit scholarships at internationally renowned universities.

41. In addition, in partnership with the World Bank, in 2017 the Government funded a skills and employability project for young people from 18 to 34 years of age to be trained in construction and public works.

(b) Raise awareness among parliamentarians, government officials, employers and the general public of the need for temporary special measures.

42. The special measures include:

- The law on harassment in the workplace (Act No. 11/2016 of 9 August 2016, amending and supplementing the provisions of article 229 of the Penal Code.
- The youth apprenticeship contract is a contract for all young people aged between 16 and 35 years, tailored to the needs of enterprises. Under the contract employers pay the National Employment Office a management fee to establish a fund to help young people to start their own businesses. The Office charges all businesses receiving interns 80,000 F, depending on the category of the internship. If the intern needs to improve his or her skillset, the Office provides training. The Office also covers the interns' cost of tuition. (oil company and National Employment Office).

Stereotypes and harmful practices Recommendation contained in paragraph 21

The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Ensure the effective implementation of Act No. 38/2008 of 29 January 2009 aimed at combating and preventing female genital mutilation;

43. Pursuant to Act No. 38/2008 of 29 January 2009 combating and preventing female genital mutilation, awareness-raising campaigns are regularly conducted on the harmful effects of such practices and the penalties applicable to all offenders.

(b) Adopt legal provisions prohibiting child marriage, widowhood practices, levirate and ritual crimes and include adequate sanctions for violations of those provisions;

- The draft Children's Code is pending adoption by Parliament.
- Widowhood practices: levirate, sororate
- Ritual killings: the criminalization of fetishistic crimes has been strengthened by Act No. 11/2016 of 9 August 2016, by means of which the provisions of article 229 of the Penal Code were revised and supplemented. Article 2 of the

Act provides that “murder committed with removal of organs or other parts of the human body for fetishistic, witchcraft-related and/or commercial purposes shall be punished by life imprisonment.”

(c) Put in place a comprehensive strategy, in conformity with articles 2 (f) and 5 (a) of the Convention, to eliminate stereotypes and harmful practices that discriminate against women, such as female genital mutilation, child marriage, widowhood practices, levirate and ritual killings. Such measures should include concerted efforts, within a clear time frame, in collaboration with civil society, the education system, the media and traditional leaders, to educate and raise awareness among women and girls as well as men and boys at all levels of society about negative gender stereotypes;

44. The national strategy to combat gender-based violence was approved in December 2018 in collaboration with civil society, the educational system and the media. It seeks to strengthen and harmonize priority actions in the fight against violence, and also supports victims.

(d) Regularly monitor the measures taken in order to identify shortcomings and improve them accordingly within a clear time frame.

45. An observatory on the rights of the child and the family was set up in order to better monitor and evaluate measures taken to protect women’s rights.

Violence against women Recommendation contained in paragraph 23

The Committee urges the State party:

(a) To adopt a comprehensive law on violence against women that prohibits and introduces adequate sanctions for rape, including marital rape, sexual harassment and domestic violence;

46. Specific legislation on violence against women is currently being drafted. However, in the absence of specific legislation, the Penal Code establishes penalties for rape, sexual harassment and domestic violence.

(b) To adopt a comprehensive strategy against gender-based violence;

47. The Government, in partnership with UNFPA and civil society, adopted the national strategy to combat gender-based violence at a workshop in December 2018.

(c) To ensure effective access for women who are victims of violence to courts and tribunals, prosecute all acts of violence against women upon complaint by the victim or ex officio, and adequately punish perpetrators;

48. Although limited legal aid exists, it is not specific to women.

49. Nevertheless, awareness campaigns are regularly conducted by the Government to encourage women to take ownership of their rights and to assert them when they are victims.

(d) To strengthen victim assistance and rehabilitation through the establishment of a comprehensive care system for women who are victims of violence, including measures to provide them with legal aid, medical and psychological support, shelters, counselling and rehabilitation services;

50. In collaboration with UNFPA, in 2017 the Government conducted training on the essential services package for women and girls subject to violence. The training focused on the analysis of the situation of victims of gender-based violence, the

multisectoral response to gender-based violence and addressing multifaceted violence. The training was geared towards sectoral stakeholders who work addressing gender-based violence.

51. With regard to assistance and rehabilitation for victims, several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in Gabon to protect women's rights undertake activities related to psychological care.

52. A capacity-building programme on gender-based violence in prison settings was carried out in 2016–2017. This programme trained nine prison directors and nine registrars.

53. This programme led to the establishment of a network of provincial child protection systems in April 2017. It involved 27 magistrates, 9 prison directors, 9 social coordinators and 2 social services directors, for a total of 47 personnel members.

(e) To undertake awareness-raising and educational activities, targeted at both men and women, including mandatory training for judges, prosecutors, police officers and other law enforcement officers and health-care and social workers, with support from civil society organizations, with a view to eliminating violence against women;

54. Training on the essential care package for victims of gender-based violence was conducted from 17 to 19 October 2017 by the Government in partnership with UNFPA. The training was organized for the judiciary, social workers, civil society organizations, Parliament, and health personnel.

(f) To develop a system for the regular collection of statistical data on violence against women, disaggregated by age, type of offence and the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator; the number of complaints, prosecutions and convictions in relation to violence against women; and the sentences imposed on perpetrators of violence against women.

55. Currently, there is still no system for the regular collection of data on violence against women, disaggregated in accordance with the recommendations. The statistics available are those of the 2012 Gabon Demographic and Health Survey and sectoral surveys. The government mechanism for the protection of women's rights is establishing a database.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution Recommendation contained in paragraph 25

The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Carry out a study on the prevalence of trafficking in women and girls and prostitution in the State party to inform the development of a strategy to combat trafficking in women and girls and their forced prostitution and to address the root causes, including poverty, and a law aimed at preventing and combating trafficking and establishing mechanisms for the investigation, prosecution and punishment of traffickers;

56. Decree No. 000024/24/PR/MTE establishing the conditions for checks, investigations and searches to combat trafficking in children in Gabon. There is also a committee that monitors action to combat child trafficking, regulated by Order No. 001058/PM/MSNASBE on the establishment, responsibilities and structure of a committee to monitor the implementation of the platform for action on trafficking in children for labour exploitation.

57. As part of the fight against trafficking in women and girls and prostitution, meetings for the development of a national action plan against trafficking in persons and migrants in Gabon were conducted in January 2019.

(b) Tackle, as a priority, the issue of trafficking in women and girls for purposes of domestic servitude, forced and servile marriage, forced begging, sexual exploitation and prostitution;

58. Gabon ratified the Palermo Protocol on 8 October 2010 and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime on 10 December 2004.

59. Recognizing the shortcomings of Act No. 09/2004 on child trafficking, the Gabonese Government has sent Parliament two bills on the Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure. These two texts will complement the aforementioned Act and effectively combat trafficking in women and girls.

(c) Consider ratifying the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), of the International Labour Organization;

60. Gabon has yet to ratify the Convention.

(d) Strengthen international, regional and bilateral cooperation with countries of origin, transit and destination to prevent trafficking through information exchange and harmonize legal procedures aimed at the prosecution and punishment of traffickers;

61. To combat cross-border trafficking in children, the Government signed cooperation agreements on 25 September 2018 with the Togolese Republic and on 8 November 2018 with the Republic of Benin.

(e) Collect data on women in prostitution, develop programmes aimed at addressing prostitution, including exit programmes for women who wish to leave prostitution, and reduce the demand for prostitution.

62. As part of its annual action plan and with the support of UNFPA, the Gabonese Government has reintegrated 35 former sex workers in employment in hairdressing, nail and beauty salons.

Participation in political and public life Recommendation contained in paragraph 27

The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Promote the equal representation of women in political and public life at the national, provincial and local levels, including in decision-making positions in the Government, the parliament and the judiciary, the civil and foreign services and in diplomacy;

63. Act No. 9/2016 of 5 September 2016 sets the quotas for women and young people as candidates for political posts at 30 per cent and for women for senior government positions at 30 per cent.

64. The quota rule is aimed at increasing the direct and active participation of women and young people in political life. Quotas ensure the representation of women and young people in Parliament, local councils and the offices of elective assemblies, and, in the case of women, in senior government positions.

65. Nonetheless, in the introductory section on fundamental principles and rights, the constitutional revision of 12 January 2018 establishes, in paragraph 24, that the

State shall promote equal access for women and men to electoral mandates and political and professional responsibilities.

National Assembly, twelfth and thirteenth parliamentary sessions, distribution by sex

<i>Position</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
President	0	1
1st Vice-President	1	0
2nd Vice-President	1	0
3rd Vice-President	1	0
4th Vice-President	1	0
5th Vice-President	1	0
6th Vice-President	1	0
1st Secretary	1	0
2nd Secretary	1	0
3rd Secretary	1	0
4th Secretary	1	1
5th Secretary	1	0
6th Secretary	1	0
1st Quaestor	1	0
2nd Quaestor	1	0

(b) Adopt temporary special measures, such as statutory quotas and incentives for political parties to nominate women candidates, in accordance with article 4 (1) of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 on the subject, to increase the representation of women in political and public life and in decision-making positions;

66. Act No. 9/2016 of 5 September 2016 sets the quotas for women and young people as candidates for political posts at 30 per cent and for women for senior government positions at 30 per cent. The quota rule is aimed at increasing the direct and active participation of women and young people in political life. Quotas ensure the representation of women and young people in Parliament, local councils and the offices of elective assemblies, and, in the case of women, in senior government positions. This rule is consistent with the consolidation of the democratic system and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women in the Gabonese Republic.

(c) Conduct activities to raise the awareness of the general public about the importance of the participation of women in decision-making and develop targeted training and mentoring programmes on leadership and negotiation skills for current and potential women candidates and women holding public office.

67. In order to improve the representation of women in elected positions and in decision-making forums, the network of women senators of Gabon has conducted a capacity-building programme since 2017 with the support of the United Nations system. A total of 160 representatives of political parties (the majority and the opposition, representatives of the Youth Parliament and civil society organizations trained in political leadership, mentoring, how to organize a campaign, speaking and resource mobilization).

68. Consequently, we are pleased by the entry into Government of two women graduates of the training programme and a dozen women parliamentarians.

Recommendation contained in paragraph 29: Nationality

The Committee recommends that the State party continue its efforts to ensure that all girls and boys are registered. To that end, it recommends that the State party expedite and facilitate procedures for birth registration, ensure that there are no indirect costs and establish specific goals and timetables for the process.

69. The 2019–2023 Strategic Plan for maternal reproductive, neonatal, child and adolescent health and nutrition, adopted in June 2018, provides – in order to ensure that children are legally protected (registered) – for the progressive integration of registration services into health-care facilities, through the establishment of secondary registry offices and offices to assist with registering births and deaths.

70. The National Health Insurance and Social Protection Fund expedites and facilitates birth registration by covering the costs of vaginal deliveries for all women who have health insurance. The issuance of a delivery certificate, which is a prerequisite for the generation of a birth certificate, is in fact conditional on payment of the costs of childbirth.

Recommendation contained in paragraph 31: Education

The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Strengthen its programmes to retain girls in school, including existing programmes that provide scholarships to female pupils and enable young women to return to school after giving birth;

71. The Gabonese education system is egalitarian, and as such, it does not include any programmes that specifically address the issue of scholarships for girls, or that provide help exclusively to girls who have given birth.

(b) Encourage women and men to choose non-traditional fields of education and careers;

72. Every year, the Ministry of Education and the National Scholarship Agency of Gabon jointly consider innovative training proposals, in accordance with the staffing needs (skilled employee profiles) communicated by ministerial departments. Secondary schools offer new fields of study each year (although educational opportunities remain inadequate), and information about opportunities is disseminated to encourage students, including girls, to choose non-traditional fields of education and careers.

73. In 2018, the task force established as a result of the 2010 general conference on education evaluated the employability of the students enrolled at the various existing university faculties. However, the need to match training to professional opportunities requires further consideration. There is no gender-based discrimination in the provision of career guidance. The State encourages girls to choose professions that have traditionally been considered the preserve of men.

(c) Strengthen the integration of age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health and rights education into school curricula at all levels of education;

74. Sexual and reproductive health education has been taught in schools since the 2018 drafting and adoption of a ministerial decision providing for the introduction of

sexual and reproductive health education into the curricula used in preschool, primary, general and technical secondary and teacher training institutions.

75. Ten schools – three primary and seven secondary – are currently piloting the improved curricula for the 2018–2019 school year. The promotion of sexual and reproductive health education has also resulted in:

- Awareness-raising for 32,025 students across all levels of education.
- The establishment of 21 secondary school health clubs, where information on sexual and reproductive health and rights is continuously disseminated by students for students, with support provided by the schools' specialists.
- Enhancement of the operational capacity in the area of sexual and reproductive health of the peer educators at the information, outreach and advice centre located on the premises of the Libreville teacher training institute.
- Psychological and social support for students and education staff, provided through specialized services located in secondary schools and staffed by social workers and psychologist-guidance counsellors.
- The publication, in 2017, of an investigative report on early pregnancies in the school environment.
- The preparation, approval and dissemination of a strategy for the prevention and care of early pregnancies in the school environment, in 2018.

76. The Ministry, with support from the International Organization of la Francophonie, is encouraging the adoption of protective and low-risk behaviours by extending the use of the competency-based approach to general secondary education (an approach already adopted in primary and technical secondary education).

77. With regard to the specific target relating to children living with a disability, the Government has taken the following measures:

- Provision of hearing aids for children with hearing problems, to support their social inclusion.
- Comprehensive support (tuition fees, transport and school supplies) for approximately 97 children, the majority of whom are girls.
- Establishment of the Ndossi Centre to provide care for children with autism and Down's syndrome.
- Establishment of special classes for children with hearing problems across the entire country – the project is already operational in Port-Gentil.

(d) Enforce a zero-tolerance policy with respect to sexual violence and sexual harassment at school, and ensure that perpetrators are punished appropriately;

78. The vigorous revision of the curricula used in the national education system has taken into account issues relating to the various forms of sexual violence. In order to effectively combat this phenomenon in the school environment, a revision and strengthening of the institutional and regulatory framework that shapes the education sector's response to sexual violence has been under way since 2018, with assistance from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

79. Each establishment has its own provisions (set out in the school regulations) that prohibit, inter alia, acts of sexual violence. Furthermore, on the orders of the Minister of State responsible for national education and civic training, a multisectoral committee to address violence in schools is being established.

(e) *Strengthen efforts to increase the literacy rate among women, in particular in rural areas;*

80. Literacy centres have been established in the administrative capitals of all the provinces. Six are operational (Port-Gentil, Franceville, Oyem, Tchibanga, Makokou and Boué), but most of them are experiencing operating difficulties. A capacity-building framework for teachers is being developed to reinvigorate these centres.

(f) *Revise textbooks to eliminate gender stereotypes.*

81. As part of the curricular revision, greater attention is given to new subjects, such as gender and efforts to combat sexist stereotypes and violence in the school environment. This process will involve a review of the content of textbooks with a view to eliminating gender stereotypes. This could have a significant impact on current efforts to strengthen civic education curricula.

82. Following the consideration of the various recommendations, which led to some fruitful discussions and exchanges, it was recommended that each department transmit a written report on any action taken to the committee responsible for finalising the report. Unfortunately, some technical departments were not represented, despite receiving invitations to the meetings.

83. Minister Estelle Ondo brought the work to a conclusion by thanking those who had responded to the appeal for civic involvement, as their participation had made it possible to produce a consensus document.

Recommendation contained in paragraph 33: Employment

The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) *Adopt programmes aimed at reducing the unemployment rate among women, given that employment of women is a factor in development and efforts to combat poverty;*

84. Actions taken by the Government to reduce women's unemployment include the Gabonese programme for agricultural achievement and committed citizens' initiatives (GRAINE), which includes a significant gender component. Since its inception, the programme has assisted 833 women, out of a total 1,389 beneficiaries, with the development of farming cooperatives.

85. The programme has also helped 723 cooperatives to obtain official recognition of their legal status.

86. In June 2018, 166 land titles were granted. Training courses, and agricultural support and guidance, have been provided for women's cooperatives to support them in developing their organizations.

87. In partnership with the African Development Bank Group, Gabon has initiated the Capacity Building for Youth Employability and Social Protection Improvement Project. The objectives of this project are to contribute to enhancing youth employability and increasing social inclusion. The project specifically takes girls and women into consideration.

(b) *Consider extending social protection to women and men working in the informal sector, and promote access by women to employment in the formal sector through, among other things, the provision of vocational and technical training;*

88. With regard to social measures taken by the Government of Gabon, the health-care coverage benefits provided by the National Health Insurance and Social Protection Fund are available to men and women who work in the informal sector.

The Fund also provides vocational and technical training to young women and unqualified women, to give them access to the formal sector.

89. Act No. 028/2016 of 6 February 2017, the Social Protection Code of the Gabonese Republic, contains in its section 2, chapter 4, provisions on independent and mobile workers. This Act applies to various categories of workers (men and women) in the unstructured (or informal) sector, such as traders and domestic workers.

(c) Reduce the gender wage gap, including by addressing the occupational segregation of women and applying the principle of equal pay for work of equal value;

90. The Basic Law and the Labour Code of the Gabonese Republic prohibit any wage discrimination; this applies to all sectors and all jobs. The same applies to employment applications. There is no legal provision that discriminates between men and women in recruitment.

(d) Broaden the definition of sexual harassment in the draft revised Labour Code to include conduct that creates a hostile working environment and adopt legal provisions that require employers to prevent sexual harassment and provide additional avenues for redress to victims of sexual harassment and adequate sanctions, in line with the Committee's general recommendation No. 19 on violence against women.

91. Act No. 10/2016 of 5 September 2016, on countering harassment in the workplace, defines harassment as any repeated behaviour which has the effect of violating personal dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, offensive or humiliating work environment. Harassment can take different forms: sexual or psychological. Psychological harassment is defined as conduct that subjects an employee or public official, while at the workplace or engaged in work, to repeated acts that have the object or effect of a negative impact on their working conditions, and which could violate their rights or dignity, affect their physical or mental health, or compromise their professional prospects.

92. Violation of the Act incurs criminal penalties.

Recommendation contained in paragraph 35: Health

The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Strengthen the measures taken to reduce the maternal mortality rate and prevent cervical cancer;

93. The measures taken to reduce the maternal mortality rate include:

- The adoption of the 2003–2015 National Policy on Reproductive Health, which is aimed at improving the sexual and reproductive health of women, young people, adolescents and men.
- The promotion, or advocacy, of family planning, under the third strategic pillar (improvement of maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health) of the operational health plan that forms part of the Strategic Plan for an Emerging Gabon.

94. The objective of the Government is to reach zero unwanted pregnancies, zero unregistered deaths and zero childbirths without attendance by skilled birth personnel, as envisioned in the Campaign on Accelerated Reduction of Maternal, Newborn and Child Mortality in Africa.

95. The promotion of family planning and use of modern contraception methods, in particular by adolescents, will contribute to reducing the number of early and undesired pregnancies, and also sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS.

96. Family planning, accompanied by a national pro-birth policy, is focusing on:

- Preventing maternal and infant death and combating the “four toos” of pregnancy (too young, too often, too many and too old).
- Preventing clandestine abortions.
- Preventing undesired and high-risk pregnancies.

97. With regard to the prevention of cervical cancer, the State has established the National Cancer Prevention and Monitoring Programme, which provides all women with free, walk-in cancer screening at health centres. The Programme also provides training for health practitioners (midwives), NGOs and community health liaison workers.

98. Additionally, the information, education and communication programme offered at health centres is designed to make all users aware of the importance of screening.

99. With a view to preventing women’s cancers, civil society and local hospitals (public and private) participate in the Pink October campaign by promoting screening, building awareness, and encouraging women aged 25 years and older to get screened. In addition, the First Lady of Gabon founded an organization called *La Maison d’Alice*, which provides women cancer patients with accommodation and covers the cost of their treatment.

(b) Increase access for women and girls, in particular rural women, to basic health-care services, including by increasing the funding allocated to health care, the number of health-care facilities in rural areas, the provision of medicines in health-care centres and the number of trained health-care providers;

100. The creation of a mandatory health insurance system, with a special fund for the poor (low-income Gabonese people) that covers 80 per cent of health-related costs, including medications, has expanded women’s access to basic health-care services.

101. In 2018, Gabon launched a programme to make childbirth free of charge for all women, regardless of income or place of residence (rural or urban). This programme entitles women to:

- Free prenatal consultations and laboratory work
- A full birthing kit, including medications
- A full caesarean section kit
- Payment of all fees associated with childbirth, including delivery by caesarean section
- A baby clothing bundle and a postnatal consultation.

102. For several years now, national campaigns to encourage women to have cervical and breast cancer screening have been conducted jointly by the Ministry of Health and the Sylvia Bongo Ondimba Foundation, including at the departmental level.

(c) Strengthen measures to widely promote education on sexual and reproductive health and rights, including by conducting awareness-raising campaigns about modern contraceptive methods, increase access to safe and affordable contraceptives throughout the State party and reduce the rate of teenage pregnancy;

103. Awareness-raising activities are being carried out across the country on issues relating to sexual and reproductive health by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, and civil society organizations, with support from technical and financial partners. The most recent awareness-raising campaign provided information for 32,025 students in urban and peri-urban areas.

(d) Ensure that abortion is legally available not only in cases of threats to the life of the pregnant woman but also in other circumstances, such as threats to her health, rape, incest and serious malformation of the foetus;

104. The draft bill on revision of the Penal Code, which is in the process of being adopted by parliament, provides in article 377 that therapeutic termination of pregnancy is authorized or permitted on the advice of a physician in the cases specifically listed below:

- When it has been established that the child conceived will be born with serious or incurable physical deformities
- When the pregnancy seriously threatens the life of the mother
- When conception is the result of rape or incest, or when the minor is in a state of severe distress.

(e) Intensify measures to reduce the disproportionately high prevalence of HIV/AIDS among women and the mother-to-child transmission rate.

105. In order to reduce the disproportionately high number of women living with HIV/AIDS, the Government, through the Directorate General for AIDS Prevention and the national programme to combat sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS, adopted strategies to strengthen the HIV/AIDS response and contribute to reducing the scale of the epidemic in order to mitigate its impact on the general population and on mortality indicators. In accordance with United Nations and the African Union recommendations, the country has adopted a number of good practices which contribute to combating HIV/AIDS and are based on three main elements:

- The existence of a body to coordinate preventive interventions for the HIV/AIDS response and the Directorate General for AIDS Prevention
- A high level of commitment of the authorities to awareness-raising campaigns, both for the general public and targeted
- The principle of free HIV screening and antiretroviral treatment
- The development of a third-generation national strategic plan for the period 2018–2012
- Participation in the international plan ITME
- The integration of care for persons living with HIV/AIDS in the health system's health-care facilities
- Free treatment for pregnant women, especially for those who are HIV-positive, provided by the National Health Insurance and Social Protection Fund
- The establishment of universal health coverage (by the national health insurance fund) to reduce the cost of medical care for persons living with HIV.

106. At the operational level, efforts to combat sexually-transmitted diseases and HIV are the responsibility of the entities that implement the relevant government policy and provide services for the public, in particular:

- The Directorate General for AIDS Prevention.
- The national programme to combat sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.

- The Outpatient Treatment Centre.
- There are currently 23 health facilities providing care for people living with HIV. However, implementation is scheduled with gradual training of all medical practitioners at public and private entities, with support from the World Health Organization.
- Since 2011, the Government has taken measures to reduce the very high prevalence of HIV/AIDS among women and the mother-to-child transmission rate of HIV. Those measures are:
 - A significant increase in the national medical solidarity fund to 2,500,000 for the purchase of anti-retroviral medication and preventive actions
 - Decentralization of comprehensive care for HIV throughout the country
 - Free anti-retroviral treatment for all persons living with HIV in Gabon
 - Free prenatal care and delivery care for pregnant women living with HIV
 - In addition to free HIV screening, the National Health Insurance Fund provides laboratory tests and treatment of opportunistic infections.

107. The inclusion of activities for prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) and post-exposure chemoprophylaxis (PECP) in reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health services, including nutrition (SRMNIA-N), with intervention strategies.

108. Capacity-building for human resources of SRMNIA-N services for PMTCT/PECP since (2015) through:

- Training of health providers providing care for mothers and children in all health facilities in the country
- PMTCT/PECP supervision activities
- The participation of the staff of the PMTCT Unit at international conferences and meetings on early access to antiretroviral treatment for children and adolescents and the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV.

109. Increasing the material resources of reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health services, including nutrition, through:

- The provision of inputs (screening tests, antiretroviral drugs and consumables) for screening and treatment for pregnant and breastfeeding women and children.
- Nutritional support for HIV-exposed children fed with artificial milk substitutes.
- Preparation and provision of standard-setting documents on PMTCT/PECP (participant's book, manual on provider-initiated testing and counselling, manual for post-exposure chemical prophylaxis, manual on delegating tasks for HIV services provision, pocket guide on PMTCT, mapping of sites for PMTCT).
- Scaling up PMTCT/PECP activities.
- Delegation of tasks for the provision of HIV services.
- Prescription of antiretroviral treatment by trained health providers.

110. In addition, the aforementioned interventions have led to the significant results presented in the following table:

<i>Indicators/Year</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>
No. of persons living with HIV	47 948	50 493	51 000	56 426
No. of persons living with HIV receiving ART	14 646	27 037	30 372	33 249
Total rate of ART coverage	30.55 per cent	53.79 per cent	59.55 per cent	//
Rate of ART coverage among adults	32.48 per cent	54.48 per cent	62.22 per cent	//
Rate of ART coverage in children	11.30 per cent	34.97 per cent	38.50 per cent	//
No. of people newly infected with HIV	2 848	2 485	2 200	//
No. of adults (over 15 years of age) who have been tested and know their results	//	39 075	9 033	108 484
Number of HIV-positive adults	//	9 257	1 912	9 083
No. of women who know their results	//	28 144	5 784	76 917
No. of women testing positive	//	5 971	1 354	6 597
No. of women over 15 years of age living with HIV receiving ART	//	5 478	2 536	2 688
No. of children living with HIV receiving ART	//	1 375	1 438	1 448
<i>HIV prevalence among pregnant women.</i>	5.8 %	5.8 %	5.8 %	5.8 %
<i>No. of pregnant women who know their HIV status</i>		12 754	1 323	23 504
<i>Rate of ART coverage in pregnant women</i>	36.3%	60%	75.6	64%
<i>New infections among children</i>	569	352	243	23
<i>Rate of mother-to-child transmission of HIV;</i>	11%	//	4.44 %	//
<i>Rate of ART coverage in children</i>	11.30 %	34.97 %	38.50 %	//

Source: programme data.

Rural women Recommendation contained in paragraph 37

The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) *Pay special attention to the needs of rural women and ensure that they can participate in decision-making processes, including community decision-making processes and development planning in rural areas; ensure that they have equal access to basic services and infrastructure, including health services, education, public transportation, nutrition, water, sanitation and economic opportunities on an equal basis with men and also with their urban counterparts, including through the adoption of temporary special measures, in accordance with article 4 (1) of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 on the subject;*

111. Consolidation support was provided for 2,280 cooperatives, 1,408 of which are headed by women. Cooperatives headed by women received 266 land titles.

(b) *Take measures to address cultural barriers that restrict women's access to land;*

(c) *Expand women's access to microcredit at low interest rates so as to enable them to engage in income-generating activities and to start their own businesses;*

(d) *Consider developing the use of modern communications technology to address the isolation of the rural population, including women, and to facilitate development.*

112. Rural women play an active role in the decision-making process within their communities when they have responsibilities as heads of associations or village chiefs. This participation is increased through community associations and agricultural cooperatives. The table below shows the number of women in decision-making positions.

<i>Total</i>	<i>Heads of cantons</i>		<i>Heads of associations</i>		<i>Village chiefs</i>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>W</i>
<i>146 cantons</i>						
<i>806 associations</i>						
<i>2 304 villages</i>	138	08	709	97	1 855	449

Source: Directorate General for Territorial Administration.

- In the area of health, Gabon has made enormous efforts to support women, including rural women. In fact, women receive a number of benefits, including systematic registration for health insurance (with the National Health Insurance and Social Protection Fund) and free health care during pregnancy and childbirth. However, the existing facilities are limited in number, distant from women in rural areas, and under-resourced in terms of equipment and staff.
- With regard to education, schooling is compulsory for all from 3 to 16 years of age (Act 21/2011). However, school facilities in rural areas are often distant, poorly equipped and lacking staff.
- Nevertheless, special emphasis is placed on training and capacity-building for rural women in farming techniques, conservation and product processing.
- As for public transport, rural women face enormous difficulties because the road network remains problematic and is an obstacle to mobility and product marketing. There is much still to be done with regard to transport, as rural women are economically vulnerable.
- With regard to nutrition, Gabon has developed a national food and nutritional security policy for the period 2017–2025. The policy, in its second strategic area, provides for an increase in nutrition-specific interventions. It also provides for support for the nutrition of adolescent girls and women of reproductive age, through food interventions and the provision of micronutrient supplements.

113. In that regard, rural women should be encouraged to develop value chains in the production of crops of high nutritive value (fruit, vegetables and rice), short-cycle livestock products, livestock farming, fish production and non-timber products.

(a) Regarding rural women's access to safe drinking water, the Directorate General for Water Resources currently has no programme in that area for lack of funding. Existing infrastructures are old by lack of maintenance by communities. The developments in that area are private initiatives, and the Ministry of Water and Energy is responsible for the approval of works.

(b) Regarding measures to address cultural barriers that restrict women's access to land, efforts to ensure the distribution of land and land titles are being undertaken through the GRAINE project (seed project). As part of that project, the State has distributed land to women members of agricultural cooperatives, as inclusion in the project does not depend on gender.

(c) Regarding expansion of women's access to microcredit at low interest rates, the State has established a funding mechanism: the National Fund for Social Action.

114. In 2018, the National Fund for Social Action conducted training and capacity-building courses for 825 women from 45 associations. As a result, 54 women received financing for small production units (see the table below).

No.	Sector	Estuaire	Ogooué-Maritime	Haut-Ogooué	Ogooué-Ivindo	Woleu-Ntem	Total
1	Agriculture			2		3	5
2	Fisheries			1			1
3	Animal husbandry			1			1
4	Services	24	7	5	5	6	47
6	Small-scale processing						
Total		24	7	9	5	9	54

Source: National Fund for Social Action, 2018.

115. A total of 144 women with disabilities received training in project set-up, small-business accounts and the requirements for associations and cooperatives. Those women have opened bank accounts.

116. A partnership was established with the microfinance company LOXIA (9 per cent interest) and UNICEF (0 per cent interest) to finance small projects, as well as income-generating activities (AGR) through associations and cooperatives of women living in rural and urban areas. Those areas include Akiéni, Mékambo and Minvoul.

117. In addition, 15 women have received e-money chips financed by the National Fund for Social Action and have been introduced to electronic banking in rural Mékambo (five women), Akiéni (five women) and Minvoul (five women). It is a pilot project, and may be extended to other cities.

(d) With regard to new information and communications technology in rural areas, we note that Gabonese women become entrepreneurs to support their families rather than as a professional activity. However, they are also constrained in their efforts by the lack of access to information and technologies that would help them to expand their activities.

118. In 2015, the State launched high-value-added products (3G and 4G) that have led to the development of innovations and financial inclusion through electronic transfers, electronic payments and online savings accounts for populations not served by traditional banks, especially those living in rural areas. (see communiqué from the Ministry of Communication).

Economic empowerment of women

Recommendation contained in paragraph 39

The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) *Review the distribution of State resources to provide the necessary financing to programmes for sustainable development and poverty eradication and integrate a gender perspective into those programmes;*

(b) *Ensure that the strategy on growth and poverty reduction is effectively implemented and that issues relating to gender equality are sufficiently reflected therein.*

119. Gabon has established a wealth redistribution policy through an assistance programme for the most deprived social groups, so that the State distribution of

resources allocates the required funding to sustainable development and poverty eradication programmes, as well as to gender mainstreaming.

120. The assistance programme provides for access to health care (National Health Insurance and Social Protection Fund), microcredits for income-generating activities (National Fund for Social Action), food aid, assistance to girl mothers and assistance for widows, the elderly and persons with disabilities.

121. When implemented, the measures contained in the strategy will benefit various low-income households. There are many initiatives providing access to health services (National Health Insurance and Social Protection Fund).

Disadvantaged groups of women Recommendation contained in paragraph 41

The Committee calls upon the State party to gather disaggregated data on the status of disadvantaged groups of women, including refugees, girls living on the streets, older women, women with disabilities, widows, migrant workers, prisoners and women living in poverty, focusing on the intersecting forms of discrimination that they encounter and paying special attention to their needs to ensure that they enjoy equal access to basic services.

Women refugees

122. Act No. 5/98 of 05 March 1998 confers on refugees in Gabon the same rights as nationals. There is no discrimination against them. Refugees in Gabon are not housed in camps. They are settled in the main cities, live in harmony with the local population and go freely about their business.

123. As regards employment, they enjoy the same benefits as expatriates and may obtain a permit from the Ministry of Labour to work in the civil service.

124. In education, refugee children enjoy the same rights as Gabonese (school is compulsory for children aged from 3 to 16 years).

Older women

125. With regard to older persons, the Government's actions address the issues of abandonment and isolation. To that end, a strategy for the care of older persons has been developed.

126. Protection policies and programmes have been developed for the care of older persons:

- Decree No. 269 of 31 May 1971 on social assistance in Gabon, repealed by Decree No. 792 on the procedure for providing social assistance in the Gabonese Republic.
- Act No. 10/82 of 24 January 1983 on the Social Security Code: State employees, self-employed workers and indigent persons are subject to the social security regime. It is in this context that the Melen Gerontology/Geriatrics Service was established in May 1976.
- Programme of assistance to older persons, established in 2009 by the Ministry of Social Affairs.
- In the context of Catholic humanitarian work in Gabon, the Brotherhood of St. John was created in 1994 to assist vulnerable older persons.

127. According to the 2013 General Census of Population and Housing, Gabon has 71,492 persons aged 65 years or over and 100,937 persons aged 60 years or over. Those figures amount to ageing ratios of 3.9 per cent and 5.6 per cent, respectively. There are three women for every two men in the group aged 65 years or over.

128. The distribution of older persons by sex shows that there are more older women than older men, mainly due to women's greater longevity. The population aged 65 years and over consists of 42,990 women and 28,502 men, or a ratio of 3 women to every 2 men.

Number of persons aged 65 years and over and 60 years and over and their percentage in the total resident population by sex and area of residence (2013 General Census of Population and Housing)

Place of residence/Sex	65 years and over		60 years and over	
	Number of older persons	% of the resident population	Number of older persons	% of the resident population
Urban				
Men	17 338	2.1	29 018	3.6
Women	25 618	3.4	35 084	4.6
Total	42 956	2.7	64 102	4.1
Rural				
Men	11 164	9.2	14 971	12.4
Women	17 372	15.4	21 864	19.4
Total	28 536	12.2	36 835	15.8
Gabon				
Men	28 502	3.1	43 989	4.7
Women	42 990	4.9	56 948	6.5
Total	71 492	3.9	100 937	5.6

129. With regard to health insurance, approximately seven out of ten persons have coverage (72 per cent).

130. In general, the proportion of women with insurance is slightly higher than the proportion of men (74 per cent compared to 70 per cent). Nine out of ten insured persons have insurance through the National Health Insurance and Social Protection Fund and 18 per cent through the National Social Security Fund (2013 General Census of Population and Housing).

Women with disabilities

131. Gabon has 37,789 persons aged 1 year or over living with disabilities, and half of them are women, which amounts to a national prevalence rate of 2.2 per cent. The prevalence rate is two and a half times higher in rural areas than in urban areas.

132. From 2015 to 2018, 1,047 women with disabilities received an annual allowance of 75,000 CFA francs paid by the National Health Insurance and Social Protection Fund; 15 women with disabilities received social housing through the National Society for Social Housing.

133. The Ministry of Social Affairs has provided a large number of mobility aids to low-income persons living with disabilities, as reflected in the table below:

Mobility aids

<i>Category</i>	<i>Number</i>
White canes	13
Forearm crutches	36
Crutches	6
Walking aids	2
Electric wheelchairs	36
Cane tips	3
Electric tricycles	2
Scooters	16
Manual wheelchairs	99
Prostheses	2
Total	215

Source: Office of Social Affairs (2015–2018).

Widows

134. The National Observatory for the Protection of the Rights of the Family (ONPDF), according to article 4 of its mandate, is responsible for “the collection, centralization, analysis and dissemination of information and data on issues relating to the rights of children, surviving spouses, orphans, persons with disabilities, equity and gender, as well as to policies to benefit those groups.”

135. According to the 2013 National Census of Population and Housing, Gabon has 29,707 surviving spouses. Women are over-represented in this group (26,436 surviving spouses), including in rural areas (10,091). Indeed, the overwhelming majority of surviving spouses (89 per cent of the total) are women (26,436), while women account for only 48 per cent of the total population.

136. The most common type of union is customary marriage, and 84 per cent of surviving spouses had contracted such a union with their deceased spouse.

Number of surviving spouses and distribution by sex, province and area of residence

<i>Province</i>	<i>Urban</i>			<i>Rural</i>			<i>Gabon</i>		
	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Total</i>
Estuaire	995	7 689	8 684	147	954	1 101	1 142	8 643	9 785
Haut-Ogooué	384	3 289	3 673	275	1 573	1 848	659	4 862	5 521
Moyen-Ogooué	53	389	442	85	375	460	138	764	902
Ngounié	107	1 260	1 367	131	1 043	1 174	238	2 303	2 541
Nyanga	72	653	725	36	220	256	108	873	981
Ogooué Ivindo	55	487	542	70	480	550	125	967	1 092
Ogooué-Lolo	42	444	486	69	519	588	111	963	1 074
Ogooué-Maritime	150	1 004	1 154	30	145	175	180	1 149	1 329
Woleu-Ntem	162	2 381	2 543	408	3 531	3 939	570	5 912	6 482
Gabon	2 020	17 596	19 616	1 251	8 840	10 091	3 271	26 436	29 707

Source: Directorate General for Territorial Administration.

Migrant women workers

137. The 2013 General Census of Population and Housing does not include an “international migration” module as such, which means that international migration flows cannot be measured directly. It is possible, however, to estimate the number of international immigrants living in the country at the time of the census through the questions on nationality and country of birth.

138. By combining the information on nationality and place of birth, foreign nationals who entered Gabon from another country (first-generation international immigrants) and foreign nationals born in Gabon (second- or third-generation immigrants) can be identified. The combined information can also be used to identify Gabonese persons born abroad who currently reside in Gabon. Gabon is a land of international immigration. It hosts more than 352,600 foreign nationals, who make up 20 per cent of the country’s resident population.

Distribution of the foreign resident population by province, sex and area of residence (according to the 2013 General Census of Population and Housing)

Province	Gabon	Area of residence		Sex	
		Urban	Rural	Men	Women
Estuaire	192 766	190 771	1 995	118 477	74 289
Haut-Ogooué	62 360	52 296	10 064	45 024	17 336
Moyen-Ogooué	7 159	5 229	1 930	4 884	2 275
Ngounié	10 854	8 581	2 273	7 550	3 304
Nyanga	6 836	5 177	1 659	4 387	2 449
Ogooué Ivindo	4 887	2 176	2 711	3 900	987
Ogooué-Lolo	10 974	8 818	2 156	8 560	2 414
Ogooué-Maritime	26 240	25 029	1 211	16 108	10 132
Woleu-Ntem	30 539	20 234	10 305	18 765	11 774
Total	352 615	318 311	34 304	227 655	124 960

139. According to Act No. 21/2011 on general guidance for education, training and research “education and training are mandatory in Gabon and are provided to all young people, whether Gabonese or foreign nationals resident in Gabon, from 3 to 16 years of age”.

140. In the legal sphere, in January 2019 meetings to reflect on the development of a national action plan to combat trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants in Gabon were organized by the Ministry of Justice, which is responsible for human rights, in collaboration with the ACP-EU Migration Action programme of the European Union and African, Caribbean and Pacific States, and with the support of the International Office for Migration.

Women prisoners (detained women)

141. In general, prisoners have access to health services, education and training and social protection. Regarding access to health care, each detention centre has an infirmary which provides care for all patients. For more serious cases, a detained woman is sent to a university hospital, accompanied by a prison officer. If a prisoner does not have medical insurance, her family is responsible for the cost of health care.

142. At the time of collecting the data, the central prison in Libreville alone has 109 women detainees. Of the 109 women detainees, 39 have medical coverage (National Health Insurance and Social Protection Fund) and 70 have not been registered for various reasons.

143. Through a partnership between the Lions Club and the State of Gabon, a campaign for diabetes screening and eye tests was organized in December 2018.

144. In education, there is a school for juvenile female prisoners, which at the end of the course can provide a diploma (junior secondary school diploma (BEPC), primary school certificate (CEP) or baccalaureate (BAC)). The courses are given by teachers trained by the prison security service.

145. Knitting courses have been provided by NGOs such as ARC-EN-CIEL.

146. Women living in poverty are registered with the National Health Insurance and Social Protection Fund.

Recommendation contained in paragraph 43

The Committee urges the State party to put an end to sexual violence against indigenous women and the practice of enslaving indigenous people, including by prosecuting and punishing perpetrators, and ensure that indigenous people, including women, have non-discriminatory access to education, health care and birth registration and unobstructed access to their ancestral lands.

147. On Women's Day in 2018, the Directorate General for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality organized talks and discussions on the theme of the inclusion of rural and indigenous women as a guarantee of inclusive and sustainable development; during the day those groups stated their expectations.

148. Furthermore, as part of the large-scale operation to identify children in need of birth certificates, the Government and UNICEF have initiated a procedure for issuing birth certificates for those children. Outreach to indigenous populations has been facilitated. (See data from the Directorate General for Welfare).

Marriage and family relations

(a) The Committee recommends that the State party review, as a priority and within a clear time frame, existing discriminatory provisions relating to marriage and family relations in order to bring them fully into line with articles 2 and 16 of the Convention. To that effect, the State party should:

(i) Repeal without delay all discriminatory provisions relating to marriage and family relations in the Civil Code, including those relating to polygamy (arts. 177 and 178), the lower minimum age of marriage for girls compared to boys (art. 203), differences in spousal obligations (art. 252), the husband's role as the head of household (art. 253), the choice of residence being solely that of the husband (art. 254) and his right to forbid his wife to continue to work (art. 261), the practice of repudiation (art. 265) and the administration of family property solely by the husband (art. 335);

(ii) Raise the legal minimum age of marriage for girls to 18 years so that it is equal to that for boys and adopt legal provisions that prohibit polygamy, levirate, widowhood rites and child and early marriage;

(iii) *Review all discriminatory provisions of the Penal Code, repeal sanctions that are applied only to women in cases of adultery (art. 267) and provide equal sanctions for men and women in relation to killings motivated by adultery (art. 54);*

(b) *Adopt all legislative means necessary to protect the rights of women upon dissolution of customary marriages, regardless of their registration status, in particular with respect to their inheritance rights.*

149. With regard to marriage and family relations, the Committee referred to a number of articles of the Civil Code that discriminate against women (arts. 177, 178, 203, 252, 253, 254, 261, 265 and 335).

- The Gabonese Civil Code, in its article 177, recognizes two types of matrimonial regime (polygamous and monogamous). However, the regime is chosen by the two spouses by consensus.
- Accordingly, the husband cannot opt for the polygamous regime without the consent of his wife (article 178).

150. The draft Children's Code adopted by Parliament in 2018 sets 18 years as the minimum age of marriage for girls and boys in Gabon.

151. Articles 252, 253, 254, 261, 265 and 335 are still being reviewed.

Amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention Recommendation contained in paragraph 46

The Committee encourages the State party to accept, as soon as possible, the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee.

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Recommendations contained in paragraphs 47 and 48

The Committee calls upon the State party to use the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in its efforts to implement the provisions of the Convention. The Committee calls for the integration of a gender perspective, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, into all efforts aimed at the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and into the post-2015 development framework.

152. All of the measures taken by Gabon for the advancement of women are generally consistent with the various texts on development to which Gabon is a signatory, including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals.

153. Accordingly, in addition to the aforementioned replies, reference may be made to the following developments:

- The introduction of health insurance for all working persons and also for low-income Gabonese nationals who are not working. Registration is also available for refugees.
- In order to improve living conditions, the State, through the National Health Insurance and Social Protection Fund, provides free care for pregnant women and provides training for low-income women, single mothers and girl-mothers.

154. The Government has also introduced a human investment strategy by providing micro-credit in rural areas since 2016 (see the recommendation contained in paragraph 37 (c)). In addition, there is the GRAINE programme and the Departmental

Initiative Fund set up in each of the country's departments to finance development projects as a means of empowering each Department

155. With regard to decision-making and legal reforms, the Quota Act has been promulgated and implemented.

156. As for the issue of gender equality, Gabon has begun its work towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals with a package of measures including:

- The reform of certain discriminatory provisions of the Civil Code, by reviewing the first and second parts of the Code (arts. 203, 177, 178, 252, 253, 254, 261, 265 and 335).
- The adoption of the Quota Act, which specifies that women and young people should account for 30 per cent of candidates for decision-making posts.

Dissemination

Recommendation contained in paragraph 49

The Committee recalls the obligation of the State party to systematically and continuously implement the provisions of the Convention.

157. Gabon is working to implement and follow up on the provisions of the Convention as defined therein. Since ratification of the Convention in 1983, Gabon has submitted a number of documents to the Committee. The present report is the seventh that the State has submitted to the Committee.

158. With regard to continuous implementation, it should be noted that following the presentation of the sixth report to the Committee, a workshop was held to disseminate the recommendations and bring them to the attention of parliamentarians, civil society and government bodies.

Technical assistance

Recommendation contained in paragraph 50

The Committee recommends that the State party link the implementation of the Convention to its development efforts and that it avail itself of regional or international technical assistance in this respect, including through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

159. With regard to the recommendation for a comprehensive law on women, UNFPA has offered to support Gabon through the Directorate General for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality, which has started work on a draft legal text. The same agency also provided Gabon with support in 2017 for capacity-building for the essential services package for women and girls subject to violence.

160. As part of the efforts to prevent violence against women, the World Health Organization is assisting Gabon with the preparation of national guidelines for the care of victims of sexual violence.