



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

Distr.: General  
14 April 2011  
English  
Original: Spanish

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

**Consideration of reports submitted by States  
parties under article 18 of the Convention on the  
Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination  
against Women**

**Sixth periodic reports of States parties\***

**Equatorial Guinea**

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\* In accordance with the information transmitted to States parties regarding the processing of their reports, the present document was not edited before being sent to the United Nations translation services.

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## I. General information for 2004–2008

### A. Introduction

1. In accordance with article 8 of its Constitution, Equatorial Guinea reaffirms its commitment to the rights and obligations enshrined in the international covenants and conventions it has signed. These include the following human rights instruments: the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, ratified on 25 September 1987; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified on 25 September 1987; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, ratified on 8 December 2002; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment, ratified on 8 December 2002; the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified on 15 June 1992; and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, ratified on 20 December 2000. These covenants and conventions are accorded constitutional status under article 8 of the Constitution (Basic Law).

2. The Republic of Equatorial Guinea has been a State party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women since its ratification on 28 July 1984. Upon its ratification, the Convention was automatically incorporated into the domestic legal order, with primacy over other domestic laws but not the Constitution.

3. The Optional Protocol to the Convention and the amendment to paragraph 1 of article 20 of the Convention were ratified by the Government on 8 May 2009 following its approval by Parliament.

4. The Republic of Equatorial Guinea has so far submitted four periodic reports under article 8 of the Convention: the combined second and third reports (CEDAW/C/GNQ/2-3) and the combined fourth and fifth reports (CEDAW/C/GNQ/4-5). The Committee considered these reports simultaneously at the 651st and 652nd meetings, held on 8 July 2004 (CEDAW/C/SR.651 and SR.652).

5. This is the sixth periodic report that the Republic of Equatorial Guinea is submitting to the Committee responsible for monitoring implementation of the Convention. It was prepared in accordance with the guidelines established by the Committee<sup>1</sup> and therefore focuses on respond to the Committee's concluding observations on the second to fifth periodic reports of Equatorial Guinea,<sup>2</sup> the main areas of concern and the recommendations contained therein. The report also includes information on the main changes that have occurred in the period under review.

6. Responsibility for preparing this report fell to the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Advancement of Women (MINASPROM), whose functions were described in the previous periodic reports. Pursuant to the Committee's guidelines, the Ministry invited the various public authorities and institutions directly or indirectly involved in the implementation of public policies safeguarding the rights enshrined in the Convention to contribute to the reporting process.<sup>3</sup> Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)<sup>4</sup> and networks also

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<sup>1</sup> *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/57/38 [Part. II]), annex; HRI/GEN/2/Rev.1/Add.2; CEDAW/C/2007/1/4/Add.1.*

<sup>2</sup> *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/59/38 [Supp.]) part two, paras. 180 to 218.*

<sup>3</sup> The Government bodies represented on the different task teams responsible for preparing the sixth

participated. Six working groups were formed, and shared the task of preparing and collating the information. To increase familiarity with the Convention, training and awareness-raising events moderated by specialists on the issues concerned were organized for all parties involved in the reporting process. Task teams with shared responsibility for researching and preparing relevant information were also established.

7. The Government of Equatorial Guinea has given careful and detailed consideration to the Committee's concluding observations on the combined periodic reports submitted previously. Paragraph 185 of those observations, in which the Committee expressed concern "about the State party's limited understanding of its obligations under the Convention, and in particular the State party's exclusive focus on formal equality and the lack of progress in achieving de facto equality in all sectors", was accorded particularly close attention.

8. The concluding observations were particularly important in the development of corrective action and initiatives that have undoubtedly improved Equatorial Guinea's performance as a party to the Convention, as the Committee will be able to verify through its consideration of the information contained in this sixth periodic report.

9. In order to provide the detailed and candid responses the Committee merits, the sixth periodic report analyses the concluding observations in depth. The responses have been organized by grouping them in accordance with the article of the Convention to which they relate, and an update is provided on each of the principal areas of concern and the Committee's recommendation. This format was adopted to ensure the coherence of the responses, for in the concluding observations comments relating to one and the same article are referred to in various paragraphs.

10. In paragraphs 211 and 212 of the concluding observations to the previous reports, the Committee asked Equatorial Guinea to include more detailed information on the situation of women, supported by sex-disaggregated data, in its next report.

11. The Government of Equatorial Guinea wishes to register its concern with regard to these entirely fair and reasonable observations and express its apologies to the Committee that it has not always been able to provide the desired comprehensive and detailed statistics and indicators. One of the aims of the process of strengthening the State administration and other institutional bodies on which we have embarked is to address this shortcoming, of which we are well aware of, and which we are striving to overcome, since it constitutes one of the most severe obstacles to our national development.

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periodic report were: the Supreme Court of Justice, Constitutional Court, Parliament, Office of the Attorney General, Ministry of Social Affairs and the Advancement of Women (MINASPROM), Ministry for Planning, Economic Development and Investment (MINIPLANDE), Ministry for the Economy, Trade and Business Development, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, Finance and Budget Ministry, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Ministry for Fisheries and the Environment, Ministry of Mining, Industry and Energy, Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Ministry of Justice, Worship and Prisons, Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, National Human Rights Commission, Ministry of Transport, Technology, Postal Services and Telecommunications, Ministry of National Security, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Local Corporations.

<sup>4</sup> The NGOs that took part were: Asociación Solidaridad Nacional de Minusválidos, Comité de Apoyo al Niño Ecuatoguineano, Cruz Roja de Guinea Ecuatorial, Asociación de Mujeres de Lucha contra el Sida, Asociación de Mujeres Discapacitadas, Asociación de Mujeres Vicenta Ekomo Abeso, Asociación de Jóvenes Unidos para el Desarrollo, Asociación de Mujeres las Dorcas, Asociación de Mujeres del Barrio de Alcaide, Asociación para el Bienestar Familiar de Guinea Ecuatorial.

## **B. Update on the political, economic, social and cultural situation**

### **1. General information**

12. As indicated in the combined periodic reports submitted and reviewed in 2004, Equatorial Guinea is a country located in western Central Africa, along the Gulf of Guinea, with a land area of 28,051.78 km<sup>2</sup>. The mainland or continental region accounts for most of the country and is home to the majority of its population (74 per cent)<sup>5</sup> as well as to its largest urban centre, the city of Bata. The capital of Malabo is situated in the island region accounting for a fifth of the country. Equatorial Guinea is the only Spanish-speaking country in sub-Saharan Africa.

13. It should be borne in mind that Equatorial Guinea was a colony of Spain for 200 years and that, from 1959, it was legally and administratively recognized as a province of the Spanish metropolis. The system of institutional, political and administrative organization, public affairs and citizens' rights that took shape in the territory over the two centuries of colonial rule was dictated by the Spanish State and moulded by the provisions of the Spanish Constitution and other Spanish laws. The men and women of Equatorial Guinea were Spanish citizens. On 12 October 1968, 40 years ago, Equatorial Guinea gained the political independence that was to transform it into a sovereign and independent republic.

14. Since then Equatorial Guinea has undergone a historic social, political, economic and cultural transition towards a new institutional order, allowing the Republic to respond to the challenges of sovereign independence. During this process of transition the Republic has experienced turmoil of various forms — not merely political — initially extremely bloody, the worst episodes occurring during the 11-year dictatorship lasting from 1968 to 1979. Not all the problems encountered in the process of building the new Republic were of domestic origin. Many of the more severe were attributed to regional pressures associated with the construction of the nascent African States of the post-colonial decades, while others — notably those attributable to the new globalized world of which Equatorial Guinea forms part — are a side effect of the process of economic change. In recent years, Equatorial Guinea has also been subjected to attempts at destabilization organized by mercenary groups which have all, in some degree, affected the normal functioning of its public institutions, creating a climate of tension that diminishes the Government's enthusiasm for implementing human rights.

15. In the 30 years since it gained political independence, Equatorial Guinea has been constructing an identity as an independent republic within a culturally diverse, multi-ethnic historical context in which various cultural traditions and views of the world, humanity, society and community come into play. Some of these traditions are deeply rooted in the history of Africa and Equatorial Guinea, and these traditional cultural frameworks cannot always be easily reconciled in the short or medium term with the values, principles, ideologies and standards that underpin the social contract embodied in our Constitution, despite our endeavours to achieve a collectively shared peaceful and progressive cultural transformation.

16. Culturally, the people of Equatorial Guinea belong to the Bantu family comprising over 400 ethnic groups who originally inhabited much of Central Africa. The country has five ethnic groups deriving from this common core: Fang (82.9 per cent of the population), Bubi (9.6 per cent), Ndowe (5.2 per cent), Annobonesa (an estimated 1 per cent of the population) and Bissio (0.4 per cent). The Beyele, or pygmies, inhabiting the Rio Campo

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<sup>5</sup> Data from the Third General Population and Housing Census, 2002.

area of the mainland account for 0.1 per cent of the population. There is also a smaller community of Fernandino people (Creoles), an ethnic group originating in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cuba in the times of slavery.

17. Socially, the aforementioned ethnic groups are organized as amalgamations of various tribes constituting extended family groupings characterized by strong, deep-rooted, special relationships of solidarity and shared customs that sustain family traditions and are the cornerstones of the social cohesion and cultural identity of the tribes that make up a particular ethnic group.

18. Historically, the ethnic group's tribal culture is highly patriarchal and remains so to this day, despite the advances women are achieving on the back of the country's ongoing modernization, especially with the vital economic and educational reforms implemented in the past 10 years in particular.

19. The Government is aware that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women constitutes an international charter for women's rights which calls on the country to achieve a cultural shift away from the gender relationships inherited from age-old African cultural tradition and from the traditional systems of State organization inherited from its Spanish colonial past. We are also aware that this change encompasses various social systems and imposes particular demands on existing institutional systems and practices in many areas, including politics, finance, education, social security, employment, health care, the family and the courts. Because we also know that this is an ongoing process, we have been progressively increasing the prominence given to this change in public policies, and we acknowledge the weaknesses still to be overcome if we are to achieve the constitutional principle of *de facto* equality. The above notwithstanding, the Government firmly believes that the robust development and modernization that it has been achieving over the past 10 years, thanks to the favourable circumstances fuelling economic growth, have yielded numerous positive results in several areas for men and women alike. This heightens our conviction that the cultural shift towards substantive equality is possible and reinforces our firm commitment to its attainment.

## **2. Political context**

20. As established in its Constitution, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea is a sovereign, independent, republican, unitary, social and democratic State in which the supreme values are unity, peace, justice, freedom and equality. Political pluralism and the existence of political parties and universal suffrage are recognized as the cornerstones of the sovereignty of the people. There are 13 legally recognized political parties. The guiding principles of domestic legislation are: respect for the individual, their dignity and freedom; protection of the family as the basic unit of society; and recognition of the right of equality between men and women. In accordance with the Republic's Constitution, the political system is one of presidential government. The State is composed of three branches of government — legislative, executive and judicial — and is divided for administrative purposes into regions, provinces, districts, municipalities, townships and neighbourhood communities.

21. The Constitution establishes that gender equality shall be one of the State's guiding principles (art. 5). In addition, article 8 of the Constitution establishes that the rights and obligations enshrined in the treaties of international organizations and institutions to which it has acceded shall have constitutional status. Article 15 of the Constitution establishes that all acts of discrimination on the basis of tribal origin, ethnicity, gender, religion, social status and political affiliation, *inter alia*, shall be punishable by law.

### 3. Economic context

22. Equatorial Guinea ranks among the African countries that have enjoyed the most substantial economic expansion in the region, especially in the last 10 years. Between 1996 and 2006 it experienced explosive growth in gross domestic product (GDP), which increased 35-fold in the course of that decade. At the root of this phenomenal growth is Equatorial Guinea's status as the third largest oil-producing nation in sub-Saharan Africa. Oil accounts for 85 per cent of GDP, 95 per cent of tax revenues and virtually all the country's exports.

23. The need to accommodate this exceptional and accelerated growth resulted in a raft of Government resolutions on national development objectives which led principally, but not exclusively, to accelerated infrastructure and urban development, especially in sectors where the deterioration following the country's political independence was undeniable. At the same time, the economy of Equatorial Guinea is confronted with structural weaknesses that render the promising growth fuelled by the oil boom somewhat fragile. These weaknesses include:

(a) The relative backwardness of the country's institutions, and its human resources' limited capacity to respond to the technological and administrative challenges of accelerated growth;

(b) The decline in traditional methods of agricultural production which, in the case of coffee and cacao, accounted for 60 per cent of domestic output 30 years ago but today account for a mere 3 per cent;

(c) The persistence of many of the characteristics of poverty, despite the considerable increase in GDP per capita (from 2,200.00 dollars in 2000 to 16,747.00 in 2006);

(d) Inadequate or dilapidated economic and social infrastructure that fails to guarantee the sustainability of production and universal access to services.

24. These acknowledged shortcomings notwithstanding, the public policies adopted by the Government of Equatorial Guinea in the past 10 years of GDP growth have steered the country on to a path that should lead to more effective use of the untold resources stemming from its natural hydrocarbon wealth. Two years ago, the Government resolved to move resolutely towards sustainable human development with technical support from specialist international agencies, to free the country, in the medium term, from its dependence on oil production and bring its people essential social services, and certain poverty reduction. To prepare for the challenges posed by the so-called "Second Oil Decade", the Government framed a development strategy entitled "Equatorial Guinea Horizon 2020" which was adopted at the second National Economic Conference, held in Bata in November 2007. This strategy sets out an Agenda 2020 for diversifying growth sources and clearly charts the country's intended economic and social course for this second decade. Finalization prior to its definitive adoption are already under way.

25. Agenda 2020 analyses the country's weaknesses in depth, while also recognizing the strengths that could add economic diversification and increased competitiveness to its vast wealth of energy reserves, of which crude oil is only one component. It also analyses the challenges ahead, outlining strategies for a progressive social transformation that eliminates poverty, increases the active participation of an entrepreneurial middle class, improves economic and social welfare indicators and affords the population a protagonistic role in the nation's development.

26. This rough sketch is intended to portray a country that has taken stock of its shortcomings, acknowledges their existence and has the political will to overcome them. It outlines a process of active construction in which the well-being of the population is the

primary objective. This is an ongoing process which falls within the framework of the Republic's longer-term construction efforts.

#### **4. Social and cultural context**

27. Despite persistent shortcomings in our public authorities' capacity to produce systematic and timely statistics and indicators, the figures we do have allow us to sketch a profile of the social situation and the challenges that Agenda 2020 must address in this area. The State administration is aware of the need to improve statistics, and programmes and projects to this end are already in place and are beginning to yield some partial, though as yet insufficient, results.

28. Although the Constitution and other domestic laws establish clear rights and safeguards in respect of people's social and economic needs, it is true that they are inadequately enforced and are deficient on various levels. Some of the deficiencies, particularly those affecting the protection of health and labour rights, can be attributed to the fact that the pertinent legislation only recently has been passed and the public services needed to support its effective implementation are not yet in place. In the case of employment, for example, the changes that have affected the domestic economy over the past 10 years have had an impact not only on the efficiency of the public sector administration but also on the private sector's competitive capacity to respond efficiently to the demands of the labour market, and the corresponding legislation (Act No. 2/1990 of 4 January (Labour Act) and Act No. 6/1994 (Employment Policy Act)) has not been effectively enforced. There is also a lack of vocational guidance services, and there are too few vocational training centres, to meet demand for skilled labour or provide the training required for oil production and modern infrastructure construction, currently the twin mainstays of the economy.

29. While existing laws contain clear mandates for the protection of groups described as at-risk including persons with disabilities, single female heads of household, women with HIV/AIDS, child victims of domestic violence, young unemployed orphans and the elderly, their provisions are not effectively enforced and public social welfare services are inadequate.

30. Declining agricultural production — and the consequent shortfall between domestic output and existing demand — has left Equatorial Guinea highly dependent on food imports, a situation that affects both the proportion of the population with access to imported foodstuffs and the proportion with access to local products. What is more, the fact that the Government's road infrastructure construction programmes is yet to reach large parts of the regions with the greatest potential for agricultural production, making them inaccessible, restricts marketing of these regions' produce, and reduces their food-production potential.

31. Despite progress on the construction of health-care and water supply infrastructure, 33 per cent of the population continues to use traditional latrines (especially in rural and densely populated urban areas). Access to water and public sanitation has been adversely affected by the population growth driven by increased economic activity, resulting in the development of human settlements devoid of adequate infrastructure for these services. In 2006 only 46 per cent of the population had access to drinking water, although an accelerated programme of well installation, especially in rural areas, is expected shortly to increase the number of beneficiaries, most of them at present living in urban areas. These problems have generated a growing awareness of the need for urban planning on the part of the State authorities, who are now beginning to address the issue and working to ensure proper implementation of existing environmental legislation (Act No. 7/2003 of dated 27 November, regulating the environment in Equatorial Guinea, and its annex).

32. With regard to education indicators, no up-to-date aggregate figures are available for the years under review in this report. We can, however, report that between 1994 and 2001 the literacy rate rose from 77.1 to 88.7 per cent. The gross enrolment rate is 39 per cent at the preschool level, 51 per cent in primary schools, 23 per cent in secondary schools and 3 per cent in higher education. There has been an increase in the overall literacy rate, which rose from 77 to 88.7 per cent between 1994 and 2001, the year for which the most recent figures are available.

33. Some health indicators continue to cause concern, despite observable improvements in the past four years. The main sources of concern are: the fact that only 64 per cent of pregnant women benefit from antenatal consultations and voluntarily agree to submit to HIV testing; only 5 per cent of the population use contraceptives; 40 per cent of children under 5 years of age suffer from malnutrition; and malaria causes 38 per cent of deaths among the under-fives. The maternal mortality rate is 352 per 100,000 live births and the infant mortality rate is 123 per 1,000 live births.<sup>6</sup>

34. In 2006 the need to improve social services led the Government to create a Social Development Fund financed from State resources but with the cooperation and technical assistance of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The Fund's current priorities are to develop social infrastructures and provide high-quality services, improve public administration capacities, increase the range and quality of services and refine and strengthen the statistical and health systems. Between 2008 and 2010, 15 per cent of appropriations from the Social Development Fund were used to improve aspects of obstetric health care and the self-employment conditions for rural women. Each year until 2012, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Advancement of Women will receive almost one third of the estimated budget for Social Development Fund projects.

## **II. Current status of issues that were the subject of particular concern to the Committee during consideration of the previous periodic reports and follow-up on its recommendations**

35. As the opening paragraphs of this periodic report, indicate the document containing the Committee's concluding observations on the second to fifth periodic reports of Equatorial Guinea was carefully analysed by the Government. This analysis determined that the Committee's observations concerned issues relating to articles 2, 4 to 7, 9, 10, 14 to 16, and 18. The Committee's concluding observations<sup>7</sup> on the articles of the Covenant extended to 31 paragraphs. Since one and the same article was sometimes referred to in various paragraphs, we decided to group the Committee's observations and our responses according to the order of the articles of the Convention, in line with the reporting guidelines.

### **Article 2 Anti-discrimination legislation and policies**

36. The Committee's observations on issues relating to this article are contained in paragraphs 185, 186, 188, 190 and 212.

<sup>6</sup> *Source:* United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report 2007–2008.

<sup>7</sup> *Official Records ...* (see note 2 above), paras. 183 to 213.

**Paragraph 185 of the concluding observations***Specific definition of discrimination in national legislation*

37. The Constitution does not yet fully define the non-discrimination mandate in the terms established by the Convention. However, it does include a prohibition on sexual discrimination in article 15, which stipulates that “any act of bias or discrimination committed on the basis of tribal origin, ethnicity, gender, religion, social status, political affiliation, corruption or other similar reasons shall be punishable or punished by law”. Additionally, the constitutional principle of equality is very clearly established in article 13, subparagraph (c), on the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens, which states that all women “irrespective of their civil status, shall have equal rights and opportunities to men at the civil, political, economic, social and cultural level in all areas of public, private and family life”.

38. Although not explicitly developed as an overarching mandate in recently enacted legislation, non-discrimination is provided for in various laws, including the Labour Act, article 4 of which stipulates that the State “shall guarantee equality of opportunity and treatment in respect of employment and occupation. No person shall be subjected to discrimination, that is, to distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, political opinion, national extraction, social origin or union membership.”

39. Although legislative and other measures prohibiting, and establishing penalties for, all forms of discrimination against women are still inadequate, the fact that Equatorial Guinea has ratified the Convention and that the Convention is incorporated into the domestic legal order means that the content of article 1 of the Convention, which prohibits discrimination, has the validity of a legal mandate in domestic law. It is also a demonstration of the State party’s political will and an important point of departure for the implementation of all the Convention provisions. As indicated in the earlier periodic reports, the non-discrimination mandate is recognized as one of the main objectives of Government policy in documents including the National Policy for the Advancement of Women and the National Multisectoral Action Plan for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equity (2005–2015).

*Lack of legislation in important areas covered by the Convention and insufficiency of existing legislation*

40. The Government, through the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Advancement of Women, is currently drafting a draft bill on comprehensive protection aimed at preventing, punishing and eliminating violence against women in Equatorial Guinea, which is due to be submitted to Parliament at its next ordinary session. Definitions and penalties, albeit quite general, for the offences of homicide and assault exist in current domestic law – specifically in Title VIII, sections 1 and 4, of the current Criminal Code. Hence, the drafting of specific legislation, a perceived need that is being addressed.

41. Recent progress in this area includes improvements to the legislation governing equality in civil and family matters. Article 5 of the Constitution establishes that “recognition of the right to equality between men and women” shall constitute one of the principles that govern the society of Equatorial Guinea, and although this Constitutional rule is not yet reflected in specific, individual laws, some relevant legal provisions are in place, such as those of the aforementioned Labour Act guaranteeing equality of opportunity and treatment in respect of employment and occupation. The International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value (No. 100) of 1951 has also been incorporated into the domestic legal order.

**Paragraph 186 of the concluding observations**

42. One advance is the priority the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Advancement of Women has assigned to an early start on drafting a bill on equality and equity between women and men, to serve as an overall reference framework or national policy based on the Convention. A start has already been made on selecting a team of experts to draft the bill.

**Paragraph 188 of the concluding observations***Promotion of gender equality as an explicit component of national development policies and plans*

43. The Government has not developed a strategy for gender mainstreaming in its development plans which completely fulfils all the methodological and technical gender mainstreaming requirements originally defined by the Economic and Social Council in its 1997 report.<sup>8</sup> However, in the latest efforts to shape national development strategies, equality criteria have been included in all national policies and plans in areas where gender gaps that constitute discrimination against women and obstacles to their qualified inclusion in development efforts and the expansion of democracy have been detected. The National Plan for Economic and Social Development “Equatorial Guinea Horizon 2020” includes the following strategies in resolution No. 19.2.4, Social Affairs and Gender Subsector:

- (a) Promoting women and encouraging gender equity;
- (b) Strengthening the institutional framework for the promotion and protection of the rights of women and children;
- (c) Promoting economic independence for women;
- (d) Promoting free access for women and children to quality basic social services (education, health, nutrition and sanitation);
- (e) Strengthening existing mechanisms of official institutions and civil society organizations to enable women to claim their rights;
- (f) Promoting development policies for persons with disabilities.

44. The accelerated economic growth mentioned in the first part of this report has caused great turmoil and brought certain needs, shortages and requirement to light. Programmes have been launched to resolve some but not all of these issues. The 10 years that have elapsed have not sufficed to address all matters relating to the rights of the country’s men and women.

*Women’s human rights in all development cooperation programmes with international organizations and bilateral donors*

45. The Government has begun a review of the protocols for requests for, applications and analysis of, offers of multilateral and bilateral cooperation, to ensure that they include support for developing women’s rights. This issue has now been included in the technical

<sup>8</sup> *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 3 (A/52/3/Rev.1), ch. IV, sect. A:* “Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.”

assistance agreements with Cuba for secondary and higher education and literacy training to ensure that girls and young women are not excluded. The issue of women's rights is assigned great importance, especially in work with the organizations of the United Nations system (the United Nations Development Programme – UNDP – and the United Nations Population Fund – UNFPA) that support Government efforts to implement the National Plan for the Advancement of Women and the National Multisectoral Plan of Action, centred on four main themes: (a) strengthening the legal and institutional framework; (b) promoting economic independence for women; (c) ensuring women's access to basic social services; and (d) strengthening institutional mechanisms for the protection of women's rights. In this connection, UNFPA is very actively involved in the project to strengthen the overall framework for the advancement of women and gender issues. The United Nations system is also very actively involved in the anti-HIV/AIDS programme. The same approach is also adopted in agreements with other bilateral partners such as the European Union, the World Bank, the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA), the African Union and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), which advises on projects and programmes involving teacher training, alternative schools and institutional strengthening, in which equal support for women and men is a priority.

46. Regarding bilateral cooperation, the Self-employment for Rural Women Project (PRAMUR), carried out with technical support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and funded by the Government through the Social Development Fund, provides financial and technical support for women's groups engaged in agricultural production and for the development of women's cooperatives. Other projects carried out in cooperation with Spain, Morocco, Cameroon, Nigeria and other bilateral partners include gender equality aspects intended to improve women's standard of living and economic, social and cultural independence.

#### **Paragraph 190 of the concluding observations**

47. The most important advances made in reforming and improving legislation to protect women's human rights are the draft personal and family code, which has now reached the final consultation phase in a process that spanned several years of adjustments and negotiations; on the customary marriage bill, which has involved a similar process because of cultural diversity issues that make it difficult for ethnic groups to reach agreement; and the bill on comprehensive protection to prevent, punish and eliminate violence against women in Equatorial Guinea. Given their scope and powers and the very diverse ethnic groups they cover, all three bills are subject to referendum in order to achieve full consensus and their perfect internalization in all sectors of society and among all the country's ethnic groups. These legal instruments are intended to reconcile the differing ethnic or social attitudes to equality between men and women in civil and family matters. They are intended to tackle cultural patterns that discriminate against women within the family and society regarding, inter alia, inheritance, parental authority, children's filiation, decision-making power within the family, status of head of the household, single mothers, and children born out of wedlock. The draft personal and family code is especially important because it is expected to involve regulations on traditional institutions such as polygamy and dowry, even though these traditions are now undergoing spontaneous transformation and have ceased to be followed by a part of the population, although the majority maintains a strong belief in tribal cultures. This is no trivial issue, because the passing of a law that radically transforms values that are part of the ethos of an ethnic culture could provoke tribal conflicts the peaceful resolution of which, from past experience, would be an arduous task for the State. For this reason, consultations have been extended so as to publicize the bill and acquaint the public with it beforehand.

**Paragraph 212 of the concluding observations**

48. The Optional Protocol to the Convention and the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention were ratified by the Government on 28 May 2009 following approval by Parliament.

**Article 4  
Special measures****Paragraph 200 of the concluding observations**

49. To date no special measures have been adopted to boost the representation of women in managerial positions in the public sector or in elective office. Positive measures have been adopted, however, in the field of education, as outlined in the paragraphs corresponding to the Committee's observations on article 10 of the Convention concerning education.

**Article 5  
Modification of social and cultural patterns**

50. The Committee's observations on issues relating to this article are found in paragraphs 189, 190 and 192–196.

**Paragraphs 189, 190 and 192–194 of the concluding observations**

51. As the Committee rightly indicates, with regard to the lack of full protection of the rights enshrined in article 5 of the Convention, entrenched customs in Equatorial Guinea undermine the effective enjoyment of human rights for most women in the country, as described in the previous periodic report. The Government has recognized its responsibility to improve this age-old situation and has launched an array of measures intended to gradually overcome it. To this end, the strongest emphasis has been placed on courses, seminars, conferences and radio and television broadcasts to raise awareness of all sectors of the nation and of the general public in order to prevent discriminatory cultural attitudes. Impressive strides have been made in that while no accurate statistics are available, a growing trend towards monogamy is evident. More and more marriages are entered into with no payment of a dowry, and early marriages, determined by the family without the bride's or groom's consent have almost entirely disappeared. Families also tend to support their sons' and daughters' schooling equally, and boys and girls now bear their mother's surname as well, all of which signify considerable progress in this struggle.

52. Despite these achievements, however, further progress is still needed in areas to do with traditional culture and ways of life, still to be found in varying degrees in rural areas. This is true of decision-making in the family: the number and spacing of children, and a married woman's freedom to choose her residence as stated in the Convention. The latter is an issue likely to conflict with very deeply rooted norms regarding the institution of the family, which is held in high esteem by society in Equatorial Guinea. As stated in previous sections, these changes will not be instantaneous, given that they involve deep-seated cultural attributes that are key features of identity and social integration. The Government is therefore working progressively on these key issues, raising awareness among the responsible State institutions about these rights and developing the various human and institutional capacities necessary for sustainable and continuous change, without provoking cultural, ethnic- or religion-based conflicts that cannot be peacefully resolved.

53. With a view to overcoming these difficulties, the Government has taken sustained measures aimed at preparation and awareness-raising, as follows:

(a) In 2005, the National Conference on the Situation of Women and Girls was held in Bata on 7–9 February. One of the recommendations made by the Conference was to expand MINASPROM's technical role in providing social assistance in each district, and the district representatives with material and human resources. In response to this recommendation, vehicles have been supplied to the 18 provincial and district representatives throughout the country. Another recommendation was to conduct the necessary technical studies to determine the scope, causes and consequences of domestic violence. In response to this recommendation, a national study on domestic violence against women and children is being carried out only in the island region and has not yet been completed;

(b) In 2006 training was provided for 120 members of the judicial branch (magistrates, judges and court clerks) throughout the country to acquaint them with a person's rights in family and social relationships (relating to human rights, violence against women, annulment, divorce and inheritance from a spouse in the law of Equatorial Guinea);

(c) In 2006 a national study on the protection of children was conducted on the island of Bioko, the results of which can be found in the paragraphs below on general recommendation No. 19. This study was followed by successive awareness-raising campaigns in all provincial capitals to reduce the incidence of violence;

(d) In 2006 advocacy and awareness-raising activities were carried out for the drafting and adoption of a personal and family code;

(e) The draft personal and family code was, accordingly, prepared and includes four books on persons and family relations, minors, inheritance, gifts inter vivos (between living persons), wills and intestate succession (without a will). This document, submitted by MINASPROM, is currently before Parliament and is the subject of extensive consultations;

(f) In October 2008 MINASPROM held a seminar for 100 members of the House of Representatives of the People for purposes of information awareness-raising on gender perspective so as to elicit their commitment to women's rights;<sup>9</sup>

(g) In November 2008 MINASPROM held a seminar to provide information and raise awareness about cultural and traditional practices that violate women's rights, targeting 118 representatives of civil society organizations (women's and social organizations) and 64 delegates and advisers from the Ministry and from neighbourhood communities in the district of Malabo, the nation's capital. Its primary objective was to provide information, raise awareness and make the participants conscious of the issue, so as to elicit their commitment to women's human rights;

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<sup>9</sup> The contents of the seminar included: the conclusions of United Nations international conferences (the Beijing Platform for Action, the Cairo Programme of Action, and the Millennium Development Goals) the gender concept and its dimensions, and gender analysis. Analysis tools; working groups; application of the concept of gender in Equatorial Guinea, using gender analysis tools (access to basic social services: education, training, qualifications, health, reproductive health, drinking water and adequate food, for both men and women; access to and control over resources and benefits: productive resources, reproductive resources, and personal resources for men and women; access to decision-making in the family, in the community; and in society in general, for men and women; the exercise of fundamental human rights: knowledge of rights, application of rights, and exercise of rights by men and women).

(h) In 2008 a multisectoral programme was formulated to combat gender-based violence by fostering independence for women;

(i) In 2008 the first national campaign entitled “No to Violence against Women in Equatorial Guinea” was launched, using various direct and indirect media outlets, especially at grass-roots level;

(j) In February 2009 MINASPROM held a seminar to provide information and raise awareness about cultural and traditional practices that violate women’s rights, targeting 120 members of the judiciary (magistrates, judges and court clerks).<sup>10</sup> Its primary objective was to inform the participants and raise their awareness of forced and early marriage, widowhood practices, levirate marriage, payment of dowries, etc., in order to secure their commitment to women’s rights;

(k) In May 2009 a seminar was held to provide information and raise awareness about cultural and traditional practices that violate women’s rights, targeting 100 members of the legislative branch. Its primary objective was to provide information, raise awareness and make the participants conscious of forced and early marriage, widowhood practices, levirate marriage, the use of dowries, etc., so that they might make a commitment to women’s rights;<sup>11</sup>

(l) In 2009 a seminar was held to raise awareness and provide information about traditional practices that violate women’s rights, targeting the 68 members of the executive branch, during the Inter-Ministerial Council in Malabo. Its objective was to inform the participants and raise their awareness of forced and early marriage, widowhood practices, levirate marriage, payment of dowries, etc., so that they might make a commitment to women’s rights.

54. In addition, in 2002 MINASPROM proposed a bill governing customary marriage in Equatorial Guinea. Great progress having been made in the past two years, it is now awaiting adoption by Parliament. The Parliamentary Committee on Justice of the House of Representatives of the People during the fifth legislature drafted a consensus text that was returned to the executive branch, which set up a Joint Executive/House Commission to study the text.

55. The bill is intended to improve various aspects of the status of women, for example through the following provisions:

(a) Customary marriage shall be constituted on the basis of equal rights and obligations for both spouses and the right to exercise their professions or trades;

(b) Both spouses shall share parental authority over under-age children;

<sup>10</sup> The contents of the seminar included: the conclusions of United Nations international conferences (the Beijing Platform for Action, the Cairo Programme of Action and the Millennium Development Goals) the gender concept and its dimensions, and gender analysis. Analysis tools; working groups; application of the concept of gender in the judiciary, using gender analysis tools. Working groups: (a) women’s knowledge of their rights; (b) the application of women’s rights by the judiciary; (c) women’s exercise of their rights; (d) access to justice for women – access to the justice system in general and access to legal aid; (e) women’s access to decision-making powers in the judiciary; (f) recognition of women’s human rights by the religions practised in Equatorial Guinea. This seminar was conducted with the technical support of the expert adviser on gender from MINASPROM and the financial support of the United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA).

<sup>11</sup> The contents of the seminar included cultural and traditional practices that are positive and those that violate women’s rights. This seminar was conducted with the technical support of the expert adviser on gender from MINASPROM and the support of UNFPA.

(c) If the marriage is dissolved, any children under age 7 shall always remain in their mother's care;

(d) Domestic violence shall constitute a ground for the dissolution of customary marriage;

(e) A dowry shall not be subject to return in the event of domestic violence, unjustified repudiation, the husband's death, marriages of longer than 30 years, and the existence of children in the marriage;

(f) The rights of wives are protected in the case of polygamy. For example, any of the wives unjustifiably repudiated has the right to compensation in the amount of 15 per cent of the marital property;

(g) The spouse's equal treatment of his consorts;

(h) Reciprocal respect for spouses and their free consent to marry;

(i) If one of the widows is repudiated by the deceased husband's family she shall receive compensation in the amount of one fifth of the total value of the property;

(j) Under no circumstances shall the obligation to return the dowry result in the imprisonment of the woman or her family.

56. In an effort to ascertain actual progress in the situation of girls and protection for their rights, between 2008 and 2009 MINASPROM conducted a nationwide study on the protection of children, the objectives of which were:

(a) To analyse the protection environment for children and teenagers at home, at school and in the community, as well as in Government bodies, social organizations, NGOs and cooperation agencies;

(b) To explore the causes, magnitude, implications and perception of violence in the home, at school and in the community; child labour and labour exploitation; and sexual violence;

(c) To evaluate progress on the creation of a protective environment for children in order to glean good practices and lessons learned.

57. The study, the results of which are still being processed for the drafting of the full report, polled a sample of 749 children, 357 of them boys and 392 girls, as well as 100 teachers — 53 men and 47 women — and 152 parents — 63 men and 89 women. Although the final figures are not yet available, it is known that 80 per cent of children and adolescents have faced physical punishment or verbal abuse within the family.

58. However, the obstacles raised within the family which hinder girls' access to education — such as the traditional view that it is their job to help their mothers with household chores — are on the wane, as is the custom of early marriage for girls, which is extremely prohibited by the Civil Code, article 45.1, which establishes, in the first place, that "it is prohibited for unemancipated minors to marry without the permission of those empowered to grant it", while adoption of the Personal and Family Code will also reinforce the relevant norms.

59. In 2009 MINASPROM proposed a study on school attendance by girls in Equatorial Guinea with the main objective of analysing the situation. The study's specific objectives included:

(a) Discovering and analysing the main causes of the poor rate of school attendance by girls;

(b) Examining and analysing girls' drop out from school for negative sociocultural reasons, such as early pregnancy and marriage, parental incest, rejection of the use of contraception, etc.;

(c) Examining and analysing the reasons that girls' education is a low priority for families.

60. Also in 2009, MINASPROM developed a National Programme for education of adult, young and adolescent females, which has already been adopted and aims to eradicate female illiteracy in Equatorial Guinea. The programme is part of Government social policy on the education, training and literacy of adult, young and adolescent females who have dropped out of school, young people outside the formal education system, and illiterate women, so that they can join an informal adult education scheme that enables them to participate in the country's socio-economic development through vocational training in income-generating activities.<sup>12</sup> Families today are rejecting these old customs, and girls are educated just as boys are and receive family support during their schooling. The figures on increases in enrolment found in later paragraphs confirm this assessment, although those increases are certainly not as large as might be hoped.

### **Paragraph 195 of the concluding observations**

61. The decree prohibiting the imprisonment of women for non-repayment of dowries on separation or divorce has been distributed to all judicial bodies for enforcement, and women are no longer imprisoned for that reason, according to the report of the National Human Rights Commission on its latest visit, conducted during the last quarter of 2008, in which it found that no women were detained or imprisoned on that ground.

62. Rather than the traditional dowry system in which the groom's family pays a dowry to the bride's, there is currently a growing trend whereby, both families defray the costs of the couple's setting up home. Indeed, the use of the dowry in national traditional culture served to symbolize the legal binding together of the spouses in matrimony. Accordingly, in principle, it was never intended as a sale of the bride for her family's economic gain, as it has been interpreted, but rather as a symbol of the couple's consent to the marriage. When a dowry is paid, the bride ceremonially presents it to her family, while the groom expresses his consent by presenting the dowry to the bride's family. This custom is disappearing in the wake of changes linked to growing modernization and increased education of the population, especially in urban areas.

## **Article 6**

### **Suppression of exploitation of women and girls**

63. The Committee's observations on issues relating to this article are contained in paragraphs 201 and 202 of its concluding observations on the previous report.

64. As stated in previous periodic reports, the problem of prostitution has various causes linked to the rapid and somewhat unforeseen changes associated with the oil boom, the

<sup>12</sup> The specific objectives of the national programme for the education of adults, young and adolescent females are: (a) to train participants to use written and spoken Spanish, perform basic mathematical operations, and adequately tackle problems experienced in everyday life; (b) to train participants to effectively perform daily tasks and income-generating activities; (c) to establish institutional mechanisms to encourage their participation in the economic life of the country; and (d) to provide infrastructure for the programme to operate. This programme will be carried out within the framework of the Equatorial Guinea Social Development Fund.

decline in traditional labour sources, and a steady stream of migrants seeking quick profits from the growing national income. The rise of poorly controlled prostitution is something the Government has had to face without the necessary international instruments, norms or qualified staff. However, although the problem has not been accorded priority in Government policies thus far, the authorities are not ignoring it and have been giving it consideration since 2005. In that year juvenile prostitution, HIV/AIDS and labour and sexual exploitation were addressed during the National Conference on the status of women and girls. The conference identified the reasons why many girls turn to prostitution — helping their families or defraying the costs of their own education — and found that sexual exploitation is linked to undereducation, poverty, low purchasing power, and the dominant culture that encourages overtly sexist male behaviour, and sexual slavery and servitude. The conference recommended the adoption of legal mechanisms to regulate prostitution, although this has not come about.

65. In default of an official programme to combat or address the problem, Ministerial Order No. 1/2003 of 3 July serves to prohibit the use of tourist facilities as “pick-up joints” for prostitution and other immoral practices. The Ministry of the Interior and Local Communities, in cooperation with the Ministry of National Security, organizes night raids on these establishments to suppress and punish this practice. The Judiciary Organization Act is also being implemented, and states in its article 53 that: “The courts of Equatorial Guinea shall also be competent to hear cases involving acts committed by its nationals or by foreigners outside its territory that, according to the Criminal Code of Equatorial Guinea, may be classified as one of the following offences: ... (e) offences involving prostitution and the corruption of minors or persons without legal capacity.”

66. Among the greatest obstacles to the solution of the problem are the growth of the phenomenon and the lack of specialists in the field, the sophistication of the establishments where prostitutes operate, and the lack of any study or analysis of the issue in order to comprehend its scope, causes and consequences. These obstacles can be overcome only with the aid of an action plan with effective strategies and activities.

## **Articles 7 and 8**

### **Equality in political and public life**

67. The Committee’s observations on issues relating to these articles are contained in paragraphs 199, 200 and 211.

#### **Paragraphs 199 and 200 of the concluding observations**

68. No special measures have as yet been adopted to boost the presence of women in public office and law enforcement.

69. Despite the absence of positive measures to increase women’s representation in decision-making in the government, an analysis of the trends in recent years, as shown in Table 1, indicates an increase in the presence of women in the executive branch from 9.6 per cent in the period 2004–2006 to 13 per cent in the period 2007–2009. Increases in Government posts (ministers, deputy ministers, secretaries of state), presidential advisers, ambassadors and permanent secretaries of ministries in particular should be noted. The increase in number of women ambassadors is a positive step towards implementation of article 8 of the Convention. Unfortunately, no further statistics on the number of women assigned to other posts in the foreign service are available, but that the number has also probably risen, given the increase in women ambassadors.

Table 1  
**Women in public office**

	<i>Public bodies</i>				<i>Total (men and women)</i>	
	<i>2004–2006</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>2007–2009</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>2004–2006</i>	<i>2007–2009</i>
<b>Executive branch</b>						
Members of government	3	6	12	15	<b>47</b>	<b>80</b>
Presidential advisers	1	6	4	9	<b>17</b>	<b>44</b>
Ambassadors	1	7	4	17	<b>14</b>	<b>17</b>
Government representatives	1	6	2	4	<b>18</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Legislative branch</b>						
Members of Parliament	23	23	10	10	<b>100</b>	
<b>Judicial branch</b>						
Magistrates, judges, court clerks	7	8	27	18	<b>84</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>Local governments</b>						
Mayors	6	20	3	8	<b>30</b>	<b>36</b>
Town councillors	-	-	76	23.2	-	<b>328</b>
<b>Public officials</b>						
Secretaries General	0	-	1	5	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>
Directors General	18	13	30	17	<b>135</b>	<b>177</b>
Grade A officials <sup>1</sup>	25	8	68	11.5	<b>311</b>	<b>588</b>
Grade B officials <sup>2</sup>	508	22.9	590	22.2	<b>2 218</b>	<b>2 646</b>
Grade C officials <sup>3</sup>	1 297	40.8	1 928	44.8	<b>3 172</b>	<b>4 299</b>
Grade D officials <sup>4</sup>	582	54.4	656	55	<b>1 067</b>	<b>1 192</b>

*Source:* Decrees No. 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43 and 58 of 8, 9, 14 and 16 July 2008. Decrees No. 57 and 59 of 30 October and 20 November 2008 respectively. Decree No. 56/2009 of 30 March 2009 appointing the staff of the judicial branch. Decree No. 50/2004 of 16 June appointing the directors general. Decree No. 49/2004 of 16 June 2004 appointing the secretaries general. Decree No. 43/2004 of 15 June 2004 appointing the remaining members of Government. Decree No. 5/2007 of 9 January 2007 appointing the directors general. Decree No. 2/2007 of 7 January appointing the secretaries general. The 2005 and 2008 censuses of public officials, Ministry of the Civil Service.

<sup>1</sup> Officials holding a postgraduate degree.

<sup>2</sup> Officials with a university bachelor's degree.

<sup>3</sup> Officials holding a high school diploma or second level vocational training.

<sup>4</sup> Officials holding a school-leaving certificate or equivalent vocational training.

70. Meanwhile the legislative branch has seen a sharp decline in the representation of women from 23 per cent in the period 2004–2006 to 10 per cent in the period 2007–2009. Conversely, the judicial branch experienced a significant increase in women's representation from 8 per cent in the period 2004–2006 to 18 per cent in the period 2007–2009. A significant number of women can also be found at the various grades of the public service. In local government, for which data is not yet available for the period 2004–2006, the presence of women increased significantly in the period 2007–2009.

### Paragraph 211 of the concluding observations

71. While women are a minority in decision-making positions within political parties, the reality is that women actively participate in the formation, organization and management of political parties and actively support them.

72. Article 13, paragraph (k), of the Constitution (Basic Law) of Equatorial Guinea establishes freedoms of association, assembly and demonstration. On the basis of this constitutional right, the Government has adopted Associations Act No. 11/1992 of 1 October 1992, and Act No. 1/1999 of 24 February 1999 regulating non-governmental organizations (NGOs). As a result, NGOs in Equatorial Guinea engage in active dialogue with their Government counterparts, as is the case with the women's organizations that have brought to the discussion table a number of genders, health, education, employment, HIV/AIDS, agriculture, sports and culture issues. Civil, religious and cooperative associations also carry out income-generating projects for women microentrepreneurs in rural and urban areas. Their offices also work on strengthening citizenship capacities to promote social development and prevent domestic violence.

73. Women's organizations are myriad. There are currently 345 producers' associations for rural women, 24 producers' cooperatives run by women, and 1 financial cooperative. Officially registered NGOs and associations have also been established to work in various fields, such as caring for the elderly and persons with disabilities and supporting women's health, education, job training, family well-being, and their fight against HIV/AIDS. The most prominent include: Asociación de Centros Católicos de Guinea Ecuatorial (Catholic Centres Association of Equatorial Guinea), Asociación para el Bienestar Familiar de Guinea Ecuatorial (Equatorial Guinea Family Welfare Association), Comité de Apoyo al Niño Ecuatoguineano (Equatorial Guinea Children's Support Committee), Asociación de Mujeres en la Lucha contra el Sida (Association of Women against AIDS), Asociación de Pequeñas Empresarias (Association of Women Microentrepreneurs), Asociación de Apoyo a Mujeres Africanas (Association to Support African Women), Asociación de Prensa de Guinea Ecuatorial (Equatorial Guinea Press Association), Asociación Wangari Muta para el Desarrollo de la Mujer (Wangari Muta Association for the Development of Women), Asociación Guineoecuatorial para el Cuidado y Defensa de la Edad Avanzada (Equatorial Guinea Association to Support and Protect the Elderly), and the Organización Nacional de Ciegos de Guinea Ecuatorial (Equatorial Guinea National Organization for the Blind).

74. For its part, MINASPROM promotes and coordinates programmes and actions providing training, advice, information and professionalization, with a view to capacity-building for various stakeholders, including rural women. One notable thread in the fabric of women's associations is the small women's associations in covering social sectors and known as *Djangue*, which means economic mutual benefit society and is a group comprising an unspecified number of women who periodically (daily, monthly or weekly) each pay a fixed sum, all of which goes to the person whose turn it is. The purpose is to strengthen women's economic development in order to improve the lives of their families.

75. Relations between the various public institutions and the NGOs, associations and cooperatives depends on the areas of competence of each institution. For example:

(a) Authorization to operate and move about the country is obtained from the Ministry of the Interior and Local Communities upon submission of their reports and programme of activities;

(b) MINASPROM provides financial and material support, training in farming techniques, management and microcredit for women's agricultural associations as part of the Rural Women Self-Employment Project. The various phases of the project, included countrywide measures and activities relating to human rights, violence, justice, sustainable development, education and family, health and disability, all fully funded by the State;

(c) The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry provides agricultural material and credit for farming groups and cooperatives.

76. The projects for which support has been sought address specific women's issues, including income earning opportunities for rural women, the importance of education for girls, awareness-raising among women and their children who are victims of violence, and the design and implementation of initiatives to support peaceful options for gender equity and social development in the country.

## **Article 9 Nationality**

77. The Committee's observations on this issue are contained in paragraphs 207 and 208.

78. To date, nothing has been done to prevent foreign women from losing their nationality of origin when they marry a man from Equatorial Guinea. However, reform of the Nationality Act is under way, but article 22 of the current Act provides for bilateral treaties between Equatorial Guinea and a second State once dual nationality has been accepted in Equatorial Guinea.<sup>13</sup>

## **Article 10 Education**

79. The Committee's observations on this issue are contained in paragraphs 191 and 192.

80. It has not been possible to calculate the current female literacy rate with any degree of accuracy because a new census has not been held in the country. Be that as it may, the data provided in this report stem from the latest general population and housing census, conducted in 2001. They are still current, given a census period covers every 10 years. Hence, according to the figures provided by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, found in the national report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and gathered during the last general population and housing census, there is still a disparity between the male and female literacy rates, which stand at 90.8 per cent and 86.7 per cent respectively. These figures show that illiteracy is more prevalent among women (23.3 per cent) than men (9.2 per cent). The Ministry of Education, Science and Sports has provided data on school enrolment for the 2007/08 school year showing that 41,686 boys (51 per cent) and 39,413 girls (49 per cent) were enrolled in primary education.<sup>14</sup> The report on the MDGs indicates that girls account for 24.9 per cent of students enrolled in secondary education.

81. The increase in the female literacy rate in the past four years is due to the Government's efforts through the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports to improve education in the country. While this process was not created and implemented with the exclusive aim of improving women's education, it does cover both genders and has generated enormous benefits for girls and women. It includes the following objective and concrete actions:

- (a) Appointing and hiring 350 preschool teachers;

<sup>13</sup> Ministry of Justice, Worship and Penitentiary Institutions, Act Governing Nationality in Equatorial Guinea.

<sup>14</sup> *Source:* Statistical Yearbook "PRODEGE", Ministry of Education, Science and Sports.

- (b) Appointing and hiring 2,000 primary schoolteachers;
- (c) Training or qualifying 1,650 preschool childcare workers;
- (d) Designing new curricula for preschool, primary and secondary education;
- (e) Drafting, publishing and distributing textbooks for the those educational levels since 2005;
- (f) Developing and conducting teacher-training courses on their effective use;
- (g) Implementing a nationwide literacy programme for female adults, youth and adolescents. The programme is gender-sensitive and involves the participation of both young and adult males. MINASPROM has conducted this programme since 2008, with the general objective of educating female adults, youth and adolescents to enable them to participate effectively and equally in the country's development.

82. The Government has also undertaken a major programme to develop modern school infrastructure, greatly enhancing access to education for children and young people, which will decidedly raise education levels attained by women in Equatorial Guinea, an assessment that will be made in the coming months. This programme includes:

- (a) Building 36 new national schools in 36 municipalities in the country;
- (b) Renovating and expanding the existing education centres in the country, such as the Luther King and Argentine Republic National Institutes, both in Malabo; the Dougan school in Luba; and the Papa Bacabo school in Riaba;
- (c) Building and operating a specialized centre for deaf-mute children.

83. The private sector has also played a role in female literacy support initiatives. The Rotary Club, for example, runs literacy courses with emphasis on reading and writing skills. More than 150 women have benefited from this programme. Religious denominations also contribute significantly. They conduct comprehensive literacy programmes that include vocational training, reading and writing, and are active in the provincial capitals, districts and municipalities.

84. The female school dropout rate has declined significantly. The 2001 National Education Plan indicated a rate of 22.2 per cent, compared to 16.6 per cent in 2008. This decrease is the result of action on the part of the Government, international cooperation agencies, NGOs and others to mobilize resources for girls' education.

85. There has been no up-to-date technical study of the connection between the female school dropout rate and pregnancy and early marriage in the country to determine the factors causing these phenomena, a situation that has led MINASPROM, with the support of the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation, to schedule a study to be conducted on school enrolment among girls in Equatorial Guinea and its determinants.

86. Family support for girls' education has improved over time. Indeed, the issue was given considerable attention by the First National Conference on the Situation of Women and Girls in Equatorial Guinea organized by MINASPROM in 2005, during which the obstacles to the development of women and girls were identified, and a commitment was made to raise social awareness of the need for a new attitude that encourages the development of female adults and children. MINASPROM and the United Nations Development Programme have also agreed to conduct an awareness-raising campaign on the issue in schools, parents' associations and neighbourhood communities.

87. The organization and expansion of preschool education in the country, undertaken with support from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Equatorial Guinea Social Development Fund, has had a positive effect on girls' education. In order to

continue this collective effort, a programme has been developed to raise awareness among parents as part of the work of the Parent Association. In addition, 1,650 childcare workers have been trained as part of the expansion of preschool education.

88. Activities have been undertaken to boost literacy and access to all levels of education for women and girls. The country's women and girls enjoy opportunities for vertical integration in the education and training system. The country has two pilot centres providing literacy training for women — the Nana-Mangue vocational centre in Malabo and the María Jesús Oyaregui centre in Bata — and there are plans to expand this service to all district capitals. At the Nana-Mangue Centre, established in 1987 and directly managed by MINASPROM, 60 students were enrolled in the 2008/09 course, only one of them was male. The centre provides literacy training (reading and writing, nursing training, cookery and dressmaking courses and general training, etc.). The María Jesús Oyaregui Centre in Bata, subsidized by MINASPROM, has been in operation since 1989 and offers childcare and health care for women and children, primarily prenatal care. For the 2009/10 year there are plans to begin vocational training courses that will help women to become more economically independent through basic training in a trade (catering, cookery, dressmaking, etc.).

89. Regarding the Committee's concern about what has been done to ensure that girls remain in school and can return to school after pregnancy, two centres have been opened in Bata and Malabo for post-school-age students. They are particularly helpful for girls who have interrupted their studies because of pregnancy. They are both private and come under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports. There are currently 798 students enrolled, 513 of them girls, which is an exceedingly large number.

90. Various initiatives have been undertaken to increase school enrolment among girls, including the building of new comprehensive public centres in the largest urban areas (Bata, Malabo and Mongomo) and the building of public schools in the more isolated townships and the municipalities. One of the most promising and effective measures for boosting school girls' enrolment is the constant development of public, and especially parental awareness, of the importance of girls' education. This awareness-raising is carried out by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports in collaboration with UNICEF as part of the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), which conducts constant awareness-raising tours to the district capitals.

91. In response to the Committee's request, special measures have been adopted to boost girls' education. For example, the National University of Equatorial Guinea made it its business to award scholarships to young women, making for impressive numbers of scholarshipholders for the 2008/09 academic year. The university's scholarship commission has provided the following figures:

(a) Malabo: a total of 252 students received scholarships, 84 of them women, representing 33.3 per cent;

(b) Bata: 400 students received scholarships, 190 of them women, representing 47.5 per cent.

92. Young women holding scholarships pursue studies in the following areas: medicine, health-care technician training, educational sciences and teacher training, arts and social sciences, and business management and technical engineering.

93. Ever since the Government institutionalized higher education in the country with the establishment of the National University of Equatorial Guinea in 1995, both the number of students enrolled and the number of faculties and specializations at this level have expanded rapidly. The National University of Equatorial Guinea currently comprises the Faculties of Philosophy and Arts, Medicine, Environmental Studies, Engineering,

Educational Sciences, Business Administration, Law, and Political Science. There were 2,377 students enrolled in higher education for the 2007/08 academic year, 519 of them women, constituting 21.8 per cent. While this percentage shows that women are still a minority in higher education, it nevertheless represents an important step forward when one considers that when the university opened in 1995 only 0.3 per cent of its students were women. There are 34,300 students enrolled in secondary education (2007/08 academic year), 14,715 of them female (42.9 per cent). In preschool and primary education, the coverage and performance rates for girls exceed those for boys, according to the study on curricular reform in Equatorial Guinea carried out in 2007 with the support of UNICEF and the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation. The study indicates a 34.3 per cent pass rate for boys, compared to 37.1 per cent for girls in primary education (2004/05 school year). Girls account for 51.8 per cent of the total number of students enrolled at the preschool level. According to the same study, a total of 1,253 students were enrolled in vocational training during the 2007/08 school year, 465 of them female (37.1 per cent). Their areas of study were business administration, motor mechanics, woodwork, metalwork, machinery and tools, construction and works, and electricity.

## **Article 12**

### **Health**

94. The Committee's observations on this issue are contained in paragraphs 203 to 206.

#### **Paragraphs 203 and 204 of the concluding observations**

95. Regarding the Committee's concern as to improved access to health-care services for women and girls, the answer is in the affirmative, thanks to the significant initiatives the Government has undertaken to improve conditions for the population as a whole. Since all the health establishments in the country date from the colonial era and were very run-down, in 2006 the Government began a project to renovate and build health-care infrastructure. A new state-of-the-art referral hospital has been built on the mainland, with specialized care provided in various areas, considerably reducing the need for patients to be sent abroad. The regional hospitals in Malabo and Bata have been renovated, as well as the Luba hospital and others. In parallel with this Government programme, the private sector has also helped by building private health-care establishments in Malabo, Bata and Mongomo (Guadalupe I, Guadalupe II, Santa Isabel, Doña Marta and others). A modern biomedical testing laboratory has also been built.

96. One of the most serious obstacles to the population's access to health-care services was the lack of road infrastructure. In recent years, geographical accessibility has improved considerably, thanks to a series of related projects to guarantee access, such as:

- (a) Countrywide highway construction;
- (b) Supply of ambulances in the 18 districts and 17 hospitals where they were needed for emergency transport;
- (c) Acquisition of motorcycles to reinforce the primary health-care teams, as part of the strategy to bring basic health services to every community.

97. Access to health-care services has also been improved with the assignment of 200 general practitioners trained at the Faculty of Medicine in Equatorial Guinea and the University of Cuba. This has considerably reduced the chronic lack of qualified medical staff that has plagued the country for years. A programme in specialized medicine was established in the country in 2008, with 41 doctors being trained in various specializations, including obstetrics, gynaecology and paediatrics.

98. As shown in Table 1 below, the distribution of medical staff in Equatorial Guinea has improved considerably with regard to the standards set by the World Health Organization (WHO) in the relevant areas.

Table 1

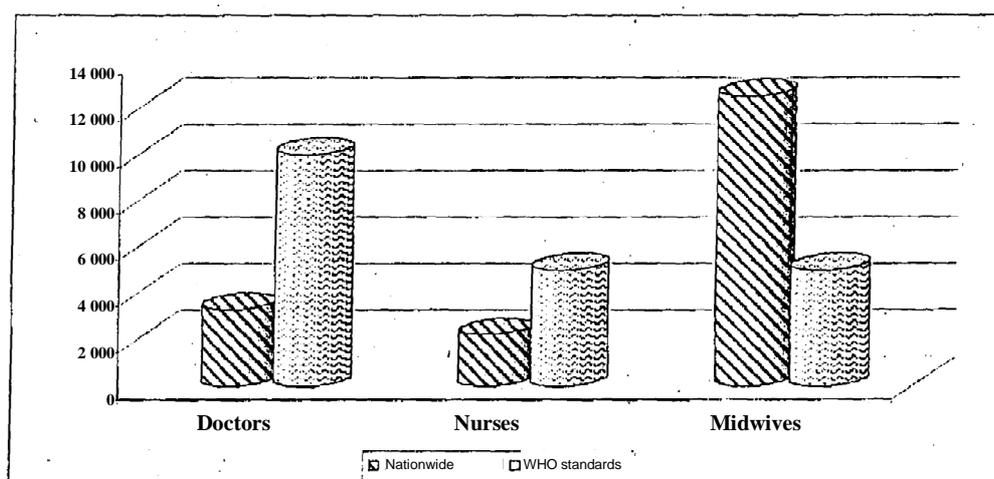
**The situation of medical staff in 2009 compared to WHO standards**

<i>Staff category</i>	<i>Situation in Equatorial Guinea</i>	<i>WHO standards</i>
Doctor	1 doctor per 3 300 inhabitants	1 doctor per 10 000 inhabitants
Nurse	1 nurse per 2 200 inhabitants	1 nurse per 5 000 inhabitants
Midwife	1 midwife per 12 500 inhabitants	1 midwife per 5 000 inhabitants

99. The information in Diagram 1 shows a significant improvement in health-care coverage with regard to the number of available doctors and nurses in comparison with WHO recommendations. The equitable distribution of medical staff between rural and urban areas and the causes behind that distribution is an issue that has still not been completely resolved. The Ministry of Health is seeking to do so with the implementation of its new Plan for the Development of Human Resources, currently being drafted.

Diagram 1

**Numbers of medical staff in Equatorial Guinea compared to WHO recommendations**



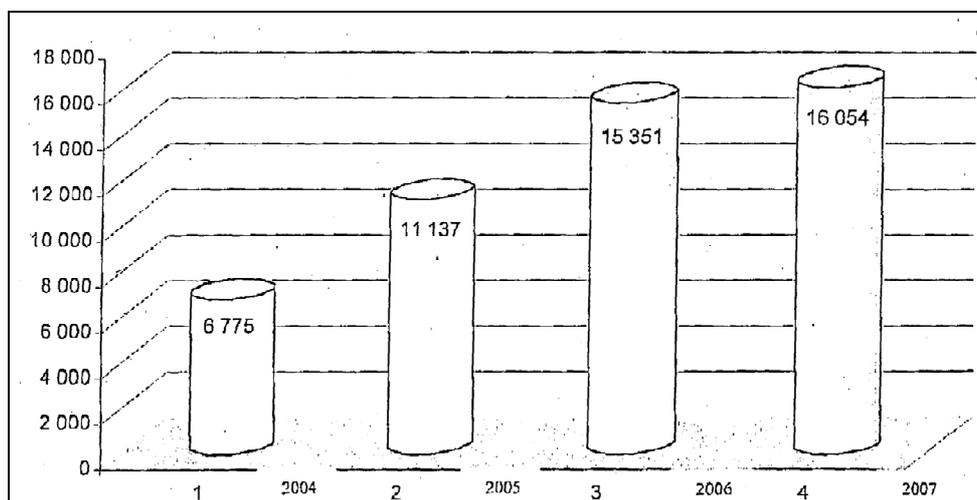
100. As for the geographical coverage of health-care services in Equatorial Guinea, the number of inhabitants per type of health-care establishment and the level of health-care services available are clearly satisfactory by WHO standards (see Table 2) and in the light of the current situation in health-care infrastructure development. This is especially evident in Ministry of Health projections for up to 2013 based on the implementation of the recommendations in the Economic and Social Development Plan concerning the new, modern hospital policy the State is putting into effect, which provides for expanding the scope of primary health-care coverage for citizens through the Government's Social Development Fund and extensive private sector participation.

Table 2  
**Health-care infrastructure compared to WHO recommendations**

Type of infrastructure	Situation in Equatorial Guinea	WHO standards
Health centre	1 health centre per 11 267 inhabitants	1 health centre per 10 000 inhabitants
Hospital	1 hospital per 28 166 inhabitants	1 hospital per 150 000 inhabitants

101. Prenatal health-care services, including free distribution of iron and folic acid supplements, are provided in all public and private health centres throughout the country by staff trained in reproductive health-care standards and procedures. Antimalarial drugs such as Fansidar, and treated mosquito nets or netting are also distributed. In 2007, an impressive 70 per cent of women nationwide had received a first prenatal consultation, thanks to awareness-raising among the general public, and pregnant women in particular, and to the availability of essential medicines and treated mosquito nets, which were distributed free of charge to the pregnant women during the consultations.

Diagram 2  
**Increase in births assisted by trained staff from 2004 to 2007**



102. The Government has announced free access to malaria prevention and treatment for pregnant women and children under age 15. With this measure, by 2008 as many as 79 per cent of homes in the island region had been fumigated, and 76 per cent of children in the region slept under treated mosquito nets. On the mainland 38 per cent of children slept under treated mosquito nets in 2008; this disparity is due primarily to the late start of malaria prevention activities on the mainland. These efforts by the Government and the country's development partners has reduced the prevalence rate of malaria among children under age 15 on the island of Bioko from 45 per cent in 2004 to 23 per cent in 2008. On the mainland the percentage was 60.9 per cent in 2007 and 58.33 per cent in 2008, for the reasons outlined above.

103. Regarding the increased number of births attended by trained staff, since the country does not yet have a demographic and health survey, the relevant data were collected directly from maternity wards and from health centres equipped to provide adequate care during childbirth, making it possible to calculate the progress achieved in the number of births attended by qualified staff. The figure rose from 6,775 (31.44 per cent) in 2004 to 11,137 (37.33 per cent) in 2005 and 15,351 (51.27 per cent) in 2006, finally reaching an

encouraging 16,054 (53.33 per cent) in 2007, as indicated in the diagram above (*Source*: Ministry of Health and Social Welfare/Sexual and Reproductive Health).

104. Government efforts to improve children's health have also led to the expansion and strengthening of immunization coverage of children under age 5 through the Reach Every District strategy, which involves large-scale purchase of vaccines, motor vehicles and the equipment needed to maintain the cold chain. Through these efforts, routine DPT3 (diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis) immunization coverage of children under age 5 increased from 34 per cent in 2007 to 41 per cent in 2008. With the latest accelerated immunization campaign carried out at the end of 2008, immunization coverage of this age group rose to 81 per cent. In order to strengthen and maintain immunization coverage at the minimum rate of 80 per cent, the Government has designed and financed a five-year plan to strengthen the comprehensive immunization programme for the period 2009–2013.

105. The Government has established the Social Development Fund, with a budget equivalent to more than 40 million dollars for the period 2008–2014 in order to consolidate this progress made towards reaching the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and accords priority to maternal, neonatal and child health; the fight against obstetric fistula, uterine cancer and malaria; and primary health care. The Government has also adopted and financed a road map to speed up the reduction of maternal and neonatal mortality. The United Nations, national and international NGOs and the private sector have also provided key financial and technical assistance for these and other activities to improve mother-and-child health.

106. Regarding the Committee's justifiable concern about developments in family planning, since 2008 family planning services have been available at over 60 per cent of the health centres overseen by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. However, no up-to-date statistics are available on the rate of contraceptive use, which was rather low in 2002 at 5 per cent. The urban and peripheral centres are still the most accessible and have contraceptives and better trained staff at their disposal; the same cannot be said of rural areas. In 2009 a community strategy was launched to distribute services across rural areas with the help of community workers trained and motivated by the Government, who provide information, skilled counselling and modern contraceptives. This strategy helps to expand coverage and respond to family-planning needs at grass-roots level.

107. General family-planning services are available at centres virtually throughout the country and are accessible to adolescents and young people in urban areas, where staff supply information, sex education and guidance, although they are not, specifically designed to provide services exclusively for young people. Various NGOs perform awareness-raising activities for young people and have a presence right down to district level. They also organize public promotional activities, educational talks and conferences, and, above all, provide information and counselling during HIV/AIDS testing. Conferences, presentations and discussions on reproductive health issues are also organized in schools and target students and teachers.

108. Condoms are also distributed free of charge. In an effort to support condom use among young people, there are plans for an extensive social marketing campaign to promote condoms and other contraceptives to cover all the country's needs. It will be implemented in 2009 to guarantee the availability of contraceptives and condoms, in conjunction with appropriate messages mainly targeting young people between 15 and 24 years of age.

#### **Paragraphs 205 and 206 of the concluding observations**

109. A national HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment programme provides services completely free of charge. The measures taken to combat HIV/AIDS have considerably

increased the public's knowledge and awareness of the AIDS pandemic in the country. The programme for women includes the following measures: prenatal monitoring, free testing, free distribution of antiretroviral drugs, free distribution of milk for children of HIV-positive mothers, and counselling at health centres. In recent years institutional changes have strengthened the management of the nationwide fight against HIV/AIDS, they include the establishment of the Executive Secretariat for the Fight against HIV/AIDS and the Directorate-General for Multisectoral Coordination in the Fight against HIV/AIDS, and the implementation of a Government initiative providing free antiretroviral drugs and other HIV/AIDS prevention services countrywide. More specifically, with regard to prevention, a national poll is being conducted as part of the First Demographic Health Survey in order to collect accurate statistics on HIV/AIDS in the country. The number of women who undergo voluntary HIV testing is progressively increasing, especially among pregnant women, as part of measures to prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission. In 2009, the country benefited from the extension of the Project for the Prevention of HIV/AIDS in Central Africa financed by the Government of Germany through OCEA/Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CAEMC). This project includes a large-scale campaign to promote condoms and other contraceptives, targeting primarily adolescents and young people.

110. The quality of AIDS diagnosis and treatment has progressively improved as a result of specialized training for staff, newly cutting-edge technical equipment and antiretroviral drugs, hand in hand with a large-scale programme to raise awareness and provide patients with psychosocial assistance so as to encourage them to stick with the treatment.

111. The protocol for clinical diagnosis and treatment has been updated in order to strengthen prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV. In 2009 a medium-term (18-month) action plan was launched to combat HIV/AIDS, focusing on the actual needs of young people and women of childbearing age.

112. In an attempt to reduce marginalization of persons infected with AIDS or affected by the pandemic and discrimination against them, the Government adopted Act No. 3/2005 of 9 May 2005 on preventing and combating HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases and defending the human rights of those involved. The Government has also taken urgent measures, through Decree No. 107/2006 of 20 November 2006, to stem the spread of HIV/AIDS in the Republic of Equatorial Guinea. By the same token, steps have been taken to encourage the active participation and direct involvement of persons affected by HIV in the fight against the pandemic. They have been implemented for the most part with the support of NGOs and associations dedicated to HIV prevention work and involved in all aspects of the plans and actions to combat HIV/AIDS in Equatorial Guinea and the Central African Economic and Monetary Community.

113. This series of actions has enabled the percentage of women in prenatal consultations who agree to be tested for HIV to rise to 64 per cent. As far as HIV/AIDS is concerned, 86 per cent of the population can name at least one sexually transmitted disease, while 76 per cent are aware of mother-to-child HIV transmission. However, although 65 per cent believe that AIDS-infected persons have neither the right to employment nor, in the case of students, to continue their studies, 95 per cent are still willing to be tested for HIV/AIDS. The prevalence of condom use was 15 per cent in 2006.

## **Articles 11 and 14**

### **Access to employment and social security, and rural women**

114. It was decided that these two articles would be reported on jointly, since the Committee's observations on both were combined in paragraphs 187 and 188.

115. Equatorial Guinea suffers from high poverty rates, the hardest hit being rural areas, and women are the worst affected. This poverty has denied the inhabitants the benefits of the economic growth of the last decade, a situation exacerbated by past disinterest in coming to grips with the underlying causes and signs of the phenomenon. The Government is increasingly aware of the obstacles that high poverty rates pose to individuals' fulfilment of their economic potential, which also benefits the nation. Some aspects of the current anti-poverty strategy have an enormous impact on the country's development. Most have to do with agricultural production, not only as a food source to reduce dependence on imports, but also as a source of employment and income generation. The Government has made rural women's groups a cornerstone of this strategy.

116. The National Multisectoral Action Plan to Promote Women and Gender Equity, Vision 2005–2015, part of the National Plan for Economic and Social Development, Horizon 2020, focuses Government action in the period 2004–2008 on three key goals: (a) economic independence for rural women; (b) access to basic health-care services and the fight against HIV/AIDS; and (c) access to education.

117. The following actions have been taken to promote economic independence:

*Restarting the Rural women's self-employment project*

118. The first phase of the Rural women's self-employment project was launched in 2001 with technical and financial support from the Canadian Cooperation Agency. Its objective was to promote employment among rural women, the first phase of which focused on market-garden produce. Training was given to 25 rural organizers, 18 of them women, who were tasked with providing technical assistance to 40 women's groups comprising 320 women from rural areas. The project was later redefined to move beyond the market-garden cultivation, not common on the mainland. The second phase, begun in 2007, aims to diversify crops grown for domestic consumption. It receives Government funding through the Social Development Fund in the amount of 2,466,900,000 CFA francs, equivalent to 5,443,172.04 dollars.<sup>15</sup> During this period, specific objectives have been developed with a view to strengthening the women's groups food-production capacity; improve their organization, management, administration, preservation and marketing capacity; strengthening their organization and steering them towards food processing and marketing microenterprises; increasing women's income and their families' well-being; strengthening the groups by offering highly attractive microcredit terms; supporting their efforts at better marketing of their products, including adoption of a savings and loan culture.

119. The following results have been achieved since 2007:

(a) All women's groups involved in agricultural production were identified through an exhaustive census, showing 345 women's groups spread over the country's 35 municipalities;

(b) A study to identify problems, actual needs and feasibility among each of the groups identified by the census;

(c) On the basis of findings, a representative sample of 24 groups covering all districts was chosen to serve as pilot or experimental groups in the early stages of the second phase of the project;

(d) Other project activities are training, technical assistance, and financial support in the form of credit.

<sup>15</sup> At an exchange rate of US\$ 1 to 453.21 CFA francs.

*Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry*

120. Since 2004, efforts by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry have significantly improved the poverty situation of rural women, through actions such as:

(a) Establishment of a warehouse in the largest city on the mainland for the storage and subsequent sale of farm produce, most of it grown by rural women. There are plans to build a similar warehouse in the island region;

(b) Creation of the National Programme for the Marketing of Agricultural Products in 2007. This is a network for transporting farm produce from the source to the markets and is intended to help peasants, especially women, by providing low-cost transport, securing markets for their products and creating household savings. Owing to a lack of statistical data, it is not known how many women have benefited from this service thus far;

(c) Purchase and distribution of tools to help the agricultural groups modernize their cropping systems, enabling them to work more land and increase productivity;

(d) Credit to the groups. Early in 2007 the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry identified 243 agricultural groups, 99 (40 per cent) of them headed by women. In November 2007 all of the groups identified received loans on very favourable terms. The total amount of the loans was more than 640 million CFA francs, equivalent to 1,412,148.9 dollars, with more than 551,620.67 dollars going to women's groups.

*Office of the First Lady*

121. The Office of the First Lady engages in activities to benefit the women's agricultural groups, in particular through economic support and exchanges of experience with other countries. The lack of statistical data available for evaluation makes it difficult to quantify their results or evaluate their impact.

122. When it comes to access to educational services, rural women are among the primary beneficiaries of the National Programme for the Education of Female Adults, Young People and Adolescents, the details and scope of which are outlined above in the paragraphs on article 10. In its pilot phase this programme focuses on teaching 4,500 women from urban and peri-urban areas to read and write. Its five major components are literacy training; vocational training; the institutional strengthening and capacity-building for NGOs and associations; social mobilization, information and awareness-raising; and microcredit. The budget for the project is 8.56 trillion CFA francs, equivalent to 18,887,491.45 dollars, all of it funded by the Government of Equatorial Guinea. Rural women also benefit from the literacy courses and vocational training provided by some civil society groups, mainly religious communities. Although no statistical data are available, these groups are known to be engaged in significant educational work and have trained many women and men, young people and adolescents in the districts where they are located.

123. Health services for the rural population are centred on the primary health-care programme implemented through the health posts built in all townships throughout the country (more than 1,000 are currently in the process of being reopened), health centres (more than 35) and hospitals of various levels.

124. Plans for improving women's health comprise two main programmes: (a) the National Anti-Malaria Programme and (b) the National Reproductive Health Programme.

125. The National Anti-Malaria Programme was launched in July 2004 with the threefold purpose of vector control, prevention and treatment. Prevention is achieved by spraying all homes at least twice per year and providing all homes and health centres with mosquito

nets. Medication anti-malaria medicines are given free of charge at all health establishments to pregnant women and children under age 5. As a result, the mortality rate among children under that age has fallen by 60 per cent. No maternal mortality statistics are available for measuring the impact of these initiatives.

126. The primary objective of the Reproductive Health National Programme launched in July 2004 is to reduce maternal and child mortality through four components: (a) women's health; (b) maternal health; (c) child health; and (d) youth and adolescents health. Its actions are centred primarily on: (a) prenatal and post-natal care for pregnant women; and (b) family planning services for mothers, young people and adolescents. In rural areas, these services are offered at health posts, health centres and district hospitals.

127. Since 2006, two projects have been carried out under this programme: one entitled "Strengthening early diagnosis of cervical cancer" for the prevention and treatment of cervical-uterine cancer; and another entitled "Strengthening the prevention and treatment of obstetric fistula". A total of 1,670 women 26–60 years of age were screened for cervical cancer; of those, 6.3 per cent had cancer and underwent surgery, an unknown number were from rural areas. In the first campaign to treat obstetric fistula, of the 72 cases detected, 28 underwent successful surgery. All the cases detected in this campaign were among rural women. Another project benefiting rural women is the National Programme to Prevent Mother-to-Child HIV Transmission, the details and scope of which are described in the paragraphs pertaining to article 11 above.

128. The main obstacles to ensuring an optimum level of health care for rural women are:

- (a) The shortage of qualified medical staff, whose numbers are insufficient to provide reproductive health and other services in all health-care establishments;
- (b) The lack of data needed for well-designed projects and evaluate the impact of those already carried out;
- (c) The dearth, or late availability, of funds for the various plans, programmes and projects, resulting in little or no implementation;
- (d) The lack of inter-agency coordination mechanisms;
- (e) Difficult access to prenatal care for some pregnant women, owing to poor road infrastructure in the areas where they live;
- (f) Difficult access to certain health services for pregnant women, owing to their high cost (e.g., Caesarean sections);
- (g) Challenges posed by cultural traditions in townships, where people prefer relatives to deliver a firstborn despite the difficulties that may arise;
- (h) There is another problematic cultural tradition whereby in difficult situations the decision-making is always left to the husband;
- (i) The lack of regular and continuing training for traditional midwives who deliver babies, given that more than 60 per cent of rural births do not take place in a health institution.

## **Articles 15 and 16**

### **Legal and civil equality, marriage and the family**

129. It was decided that these two articles would be reported on jointly, the Committee's observations on both issues having been combined in paragraphs 188–190 and 193.

130. Officially, women have always enjoyed the same access to the courts as any other citizen without any formal restriction, especially with regard to marital separation. The courts provide anyone wishing to institute proceedings concerning a particular right with information on legal procedures. That having been said, there is no guarantee that women are fully aware of their rights, including the procedures required for access to justice. Nevertheless, while the process of adopting the aforementioned Personal and Family Code is still under way, the Government, through MINASPROM, is taking initiatives to benefit the general public, and the female population in particular, such as those mentioned in paragraph 49 above. There are plans to reinforce those initiatives through available programmes such as the National Multisectoral Action Plan to Promote Women and Gender Equity and the national Economic and Social Development Plan “Equatorial Guinea Horizon 2020”.

131. Civil cases involving marriages celebrated solely by traditional ritual still fall under the jurisdiction of the customary law courts, in accordance with chapter I, article 28, and chapter IX, articles 68–71, of Act No. 5/2009 of 18 May 2009, amending Organization Act No. 10/1984 governing the judiciary. The Act defines and provides for the competence of the traditional courts to hear in first instance civil cases concerning the annulment, separation or dissolution of traditional marriages, as well as the effect on the spouses’ finances and inheritance. This legislation obliges women to continue to suffer under traditions that restrict their right to equal treatment in marriage issues. The Government and other State institutions are aware of this situation and are working to end it once and for all.

132. The paragraphs of this report corresponding to the Committee’s observations on issues pertaining to articles 2, 5 and 10 in particular provide information on Government actions to resolve the problems arising from customary family laws, particularly the awareness-raising initiatives, and improvements made in the new legislation on the issues addressed in the previous concluding observations.

### General recommendation No. 19: Violence

133. In the light of the Committee’s extensive observations on violence, Government initiatives to combat this problem take into account the aspects highlighted in the Committee’s general recommendation No. 19 on violence against women, insofar as they are relevant to the Committee’s observations, which appear mainly in paragraphs 197 and 198.

134. Given the importance of statistics on violence, MINASPROM, with the support of the community services in the country’s 18 districts, records, inter alia, complaints filed by women victims of various types of violence. The table below indicates the number of cases of violence against women reported in the districts of Malabo and Bata (the country’s main districts) between 2006 and 2009.

<i>Type of violence</i>	<i>Years</i>			<i>Total number of cases</i>	
	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008–2009</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Physical	60	128	143	<b>331</b>	<b>42</b>
Psychological	11	117	209	<b>337</b>	<b>43</b>
Sexual	-	-	2	<b>2</b>	<b>0.2</b>
Economic	15	41	15	<b>71</b>	<b>9</b>

<i>Type of violence</i>	<i>Years</i>			<i>Total number of cases</i>	
	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008–2009</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Repudiation	8	15	19	42	5.3
Violence resulting in death	-	-	4	4	0.5
<b>Total number of cases</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>787</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: MINASPROM.

135. The table shows that psychological violence against women accounts for 43 per cent of all forms of violence, followed by physical violence at 42 per cent, and economic violence at 9 per cent. Although only a small proportion, 5.3 per cent, there are cases involving the repudiation of women, yet another form of violence against women's human rights. Add to these the most disturbing of all forms of violence against women — murder — the consequences of which have an adverse effect on the offspring and impoverish family as a whole. The yearly increase in some of the figures should not necessarily be interpreted as an increase in the phenomenon itself; it is mainly because of more widespread use of the complaints mechanism, thereby making for more accurate figures.

136. MINASPROM is in the process of preparing for submission to Parliament, a draft bill on comprehensive protection to prevent, punish and eliminate violence against women in Equatorial Guinea. The bill is quite exhaustive and includes the following:

(a) An explanatory comment covering articles 5, 13 and 15 of the Constitution, which deal with equality between men and women in all facets of public, private and family life; in civil, political, economic, social and cultural matters; the rights and freedoms of every citizen of Equatorial Guinea; the international and regional instruments on human rights in general and on the rights of women and children in particular, which Equatorial Guinea has ratified; and relevant national legislation such as Decree No. 79/2002 of 27 May 2002 adopting the National Policy on the Promotion of Women and, implementing the policy, the National Multisectoral Action Plan to Promote Women and Gender Equity;

(b) General provisions on issues such as the scope of application, its objectives, the rights it protects, the definition of violence against women, different types of violence and the form they take, the National Policy on the Promotion of Women, guiding principles, the competent body and its powers, State enabling measures and priority;

(c) Establishment of the National Observatory on Violence against Women, and its composition, mission and functions;

(d) Provisions on general administrative procedures, as well as administrative procedures regarding violence against women, and complaints filed by third parties;

(e) Court cases concerning violence against women with specific as well as common rules;

(f) Preventive measures;

(g) Sanctions and penalties concerning violence against women and the methods used to inflict violence;

(h) Public Prosecution Service (*Ministerio Fiscal*);

(i) A repeal provision and a final provision.

137. In July 2009 MINASPROM began publicizing the draft bill on comprehensive protection to prevent, punish and eliminate violence against women in Equatorial Guinea,

distributing it for consideration among district and provincial authorities, leaders of township and neighbourhood community councils, advisers on social affairs and the promotion of women to the township and neighbourhood community councils, and the general public in all the country's 18 districts, the primary objective being to inform these groups and raise their awareness, in order to hear their views as to which issues should be added to the draft bill. This was done by means of special training and awareness-raising sessions, through a combination of training and interactive dialogue.

138. In June 2009 MINASPROM held a technical planning workshop on the multisectoral programme entitled "Combating gender-based violence through independence for women in Equatorial Guinea". The aim of the workshop was to encourage the participation of cooperation agencies, civil society, women's organizations and the various ministries in an effort to organize a national response to the problem.

139. The national partners involved in carrying out this initiative are:

- (a) MINASPROM;
- (b) The Ministries of Justice and Health, which promote medical and legal assistance as part of the chain of prevention and assistance;
- (c) The Ministry of National Security, which engages the police in citizens' defence actions, with priority given to protecting the rights of women and girls;
- (d) The Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, as part of its mandate to educate children and women, and in collaboration with the National Programme for the Education of Female Adults, Young People and Adolescents;
- (e) The Ministry of Information, Tourism and Culture, which collaborates with the media through campaigns to alert the public to the human rights of women and girls;
- (f) The Ministry of the Interior and Local Communities, which collaborates with neighbourhood communities and township councils to carry out the programme activities;
- (g) The Ministry of Planning, Economic Development and Public Investment, which collaborates with the Follow-up Unit to ensure multisectoral implementation of the programme and the introduction of a system to produce reliable and coherent statistics.

140. International partners include the agencies of the United Nations system operating in Equatorial Guinea (the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)). They will contribute fully to the proposed programme to be conducted as part of the Action Plan for the United Nations Inter-agency Thematic Group on Gender Equality in Equatorial Guinea, of which UNFPA is the lead agency.

141. This programme comprises various strategies and activities, with varying results. They include courses to raise awareness about violence against women for members of Parliament, officials from the justice system, the civil service and law enforcement, and health-care providers. The details and dates of the specific initiatives carried out to raise awareness among and provide information to the legislative, executive and judicial branches and civil society, and the various radio and television publicity campaigns held in recent years to increase public awareness are described in the section on article 5 of the Convention.

142. Added to the above are other very intensive and systematic activities, such as the first "No to Violence against Women in Equatorial Guinea" campaign (17 to 25 November 2008). Its scope, as described below, is a testament to the Government's determination to eradicate this scourge:

- (a) Awareness-raising and information on violence against women provided by female MINASPROM district-level representatives trained in Bata during the seminar held at the preparatory stage of the campaign. They were supported by provincial and regional female representatives in collaboration with civil society in each district;
- (b) Publicity spots about violence against women broadcast on Radio and TV Asonga in Bata and Malabo;
- (c) Publicity spots about violence against women broadcast on Radio Television of Equatorial Guinea (RTVGE);
- (d) Awareness-raising and information forum on violence against women, with representatives from NGOs, women's groups and associations, and female MINASPROM advisers to the neighbourhood communities of Malabo district;
- (e) Awareness-raising and information session on violence against women for members of the executive branch during the Inter-Ministerial Council in Malabo;
- (f) Discussion and reflection forum on violence against women, held in the nation's capital and attended by women committed to combating gender-based violence: women members of the executive branch, wives of members of the executive branch, wives of members of the judicial branch, wives of members of the legislative branch, women members of the legislative branch, women leaders of political parties, and women educational leaders in Malabo;
- (g) Start of an opinion poll on violence against women in Equatorial Guinea, polling 500 persons from different social strata;
- (h) Round table on violence against women with professionals from the judicial branch, national security, health and social welfare, education and MINASPROM, moderated by the President of the Association to Support African Women (ASAMA) on Radio Asonga in Bata;
- (i) Round table on violence against women with professionals from MINASPROM and the Ministries of National Security, Health and Social Welfare, and Education, moderated by the Ministry of Information, Tourism and Culture on RTVGE in Malabo;
- (j) Production and distribution of 400 posters and placards about violence against women, in both the mainland and island regions;
- (k) Production and distribution of 2,000 T-shirts pointing up violence against women, in both the mainland and island regions;
- (l) Production and distribution of 5,000 pamphlets and leaflets about violence against women, in both the mainland and island regions;
- (m) A play entitled *Lagrimas* (Tears) about violence against women, in Bata and Malabo;
- (n) Production of 20 protest banners with real photos of women victims of violence for the mass demonstration on 25 November and for continuous awareness-raising in the 18 MINASPROM provincial and district offices;
- (o) Production and distribution of 2,000 women's uniforms for the peaceful mass demonstration against gender-based violence, held in Malabo on 25 November 2008, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women;
- (p) Production of 500 men's uniforms for the peaceful mass demonstration against gender-based violence, held in Malabo on 25 November 2008, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women;

(q) Tour by the Minister of Social Affairs and the Advancement of Women to the mainland districts of Niefang, Añisok, Mongomo, Ebibeyín, Micomiseng, Evinayong and Bata, in support of awareness-raising activities on violence against women as part of the celebrations for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November;

(r) Peaceful mass demonstrations against gender-based violence in the provincial and district capitals throughout the country on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and the final day of the campaign;

(s) Coordination meetings with the various national and international stakeholders: women's groups and associations, MINASPROM advisers in neighbourhood communities, the Spanish cooperation agencies Agrupación Ayuda en Acción and InteRed, UNFPA, and other collaborators.

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