



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

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

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

**Replies of Gabon to the list of issues and questions in
relation to the seventh periodic report***

[Date received: 14 February 2020]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



I. Introduction

1. In the context of the implementation by Gabon of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Government responded in its seventh report to the recommendations made following the submission of its sixth report in 2015, attesting to the progress made, four years later, in promoting the human rights of women.
2. The CEDAW Committee's introductory assessment of this seventh periodic report raised additional questions, to which Gabon provides the following responses.

II. Replies to the list of issues (CEDAW/C/GAB/Q/7)

Reply to paragraph 1 of the list of issues

3. The Constitution of the Gabonese Republic prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender, given that "the equality of all citizens before the law, without distinction as to origin, race, gender, opinion or religion" is enshrined in its article 2. Based on that provision, Gabon has addressed the question of discrimination, from a legal point of view, in a holistic manner.
4. The revision of the second part of the Civil Code, Act No. 002/2015 of 25 June 2015, amending Act No. 19/89 of 30 December 1989, has led to advances that have largely resolved the problems that arose concerning inheritance, particularly upon the death of the spouse. The second part of the Civil Code, concerning inheritance, has been fundamentally revised, with a view to correcting all the inequalities maliciously exploited by some family members of the deceased spouse.
5. The following articles of Act No. 19/89 of 30 December 1989 adopting the second part of the Civil Code have been amended: 647, 651, 652, 683, 691, 692, 696, 699, 700 to 706, 710, 747 and 906.
6. A technical committee has been established by the Ministry of Justice to revise all provisions still considered discriminatory contained in the first part of the Civil Code.
7. Article 8 of Act No. 03/94 of 21 November 1994 provides that all workers (men and women) are equal before the law regardless of nationality, religion or political affiliation. Night work, which women were previously barred from doing, is now open to them.
8. Act No. 042/2018 of 5 July 2019 establishing the Criminal Code has helped to advance women's rights.
9. Articles 402 to 414 of the Criminal Code impose harsher penalties for the offences of rape, incest, harassment, procuring and prostitution.
10. In the case of polygamy, article 412 stipulates that "except in cases of polygamy authorized by law, anyone who, having entered into a monogamous marriage, enters into another before the dissolution of the previous one or a change in matrimonial regime shall be sentenced to a minimum of six months' imprisonment and fined up to 1 million CFA francs." A public official who knowingly officiates such a marriage shall also be punished in the same manner (article 413).
11. Penalties for abandoning the matrimonial home have been harmonized in the Criminal Code (article 414). Abandonment occurs when either spouse leaves the matrimonial home without valid cause.

12. This offence is punishable by imprisonment of up to six months. Legal action may only be initiated upon a complaint from the aggrieved spouse, who may at any point request that the proceedings be discontinued.

13. The comprehensive law (specific law) is currently being drafted by the Government in close collaboration with civil society, taking into account sociocultural and human realities.

Reply to paragraph 2 of the list of issues

14. The legal framework established under Decree No. 0253/PR/MJGSDHRC of 19 June 2012 on the organization and functioning of legal aid offices governs legal aid in Gabon. Legal aid is available to both men and women. The budget allocated for this aid is insufficient, and the cumbersome processes involved in implementing the decree are making it difficult to do so. Nevertheless, victims of gender-based violence can solicit legal aid directly from the Ministry of Justice.

15. The conditions for obtaining a free medical certificate in cases of sexual violence are actively being considered, in the context of the drafting of the specific law, in order to take into account the sociocultural burdens and the vulnerability of the victims.

16. With regard to the number of judicial structures in rural areas, there is a court of first instance in the administrative capital of each province, in addition to police and gendarmerie stations in the departments and village groupings. Other ancillary officers (community leaders) are also part of the judicial system in rural areas.

17. Campaigns to raise public awareness are conducted frequently by provincial heads of service of the ministry responsible for combating violence against women and by civil society organizations working in that area. In partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Government also holds regular workshops to strengthen the capacities of the various stakeholders involved in addressing violence. In 2019 and 2020, these capacity-building and awareness-raising activities are being carried out for judicial police officers and, for parliamentarians, judges, lawyers and prosecutors, during Women's Rights Day observances.

18. The plan of action of the Decade of the Gabonese Woman is being implemented. A midpoint evaluation was conducted in 2019 with UNFPA support.

19. With the support of organizations of the United Nations system (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); UNFPA), legal officers, police officers, prison guards, community radio broadcasters, doctors and professionals caring for victims of gender-based violence are being trained.

Reply to paragraph 3 of the list of issues

20. The budget allocated to the Directorate General for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality has not increased since 2016. No specific budgetary allocation has been made for gender equality.

21. While the human resources of the Directorate General for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality are insufficient to meet the Directorate's needs, capacity-building is provided regularly at the local and international levels.

22. The appointment of three women to the post of provincial governor is one of the measures taken in implementation of the Quota Act (No. 9/2016).

23. The Directorate General for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality has presented the Government and development partners with a project to develop a

gender-responsive database. This database would serve as a relevant tool to ascertain the actual situation of women in Gabon.

Reply to paragraph 4 of the list of issues

24. The National Commission on Human Rights has not requested accreditation because the instrument that governs it does not comply with the Paris Principles. To that end, a workshop on the harmonization of Act No. 19/2005 of 3 January 2006 establishing the National Commission on Human Rights of Gabon was held in November 2019 with the support of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa. At the end of the workshop, a road map was drawn up, and a small working committee was formed to redraft the Act.

Reply to paragraph 5 of the list of issues

25. To date, Gabon has adopted Act No. 9/2016 of 5 September 2016, which sets the quotas for women and young people as candidates for political elections at 30 per cent and for women for senior government positions at 30 per cent.

Reply to paragraph 6 of the list of issues

26. Measures to ensure the effective implementation of Act No. 38/2008 aimed at combating and preventing female genital mutilation:

- Apart from the establishment of the indicator concerning the number of excision cases, reported annually in the bulletin of child protection indicators, no other measures have been taken. No cases of excision have been brought.

27. With regard to the adoption of legislative measures to eradicate child marriage in Gabon:

- Act No. 041/2018 of 11 June 2019, amending article 203 of the first part of the Civil Code, prohibits child marriage in its new article 203: “Men and women may not enter into a marriage before the age of eighteen”;
- In addition, the ongoing dissemination of the Children’s Code will enable those involved in the child protection system to take greater ownership of these provisions and to combat child marriage more effectively;
- Widowhood and levirate (or even sororate) marriages are traditional practices that will be addressed under the specific (or comprehensive) law on gender-based violence currently being drafted and as part of the ongoing revision of the Civil Code.

Reply to paragraph 7 of the list of issues

28. The Criminal Code establishes penalties for domestic violence and sexual harassment.

29. The penalty for rape is commensurate with the seriousness of the offence (minimum 15 years’ imprisonment), especially in cases where the victim is rendered particularly vulnerable by pregnancy, physical or mental disability; and in cases of incest, gang rape, rape with mutilation, rape resulting in the death of the victim and rape of minors under 15 years of age (articles 8 and 9 of Act No. 019/2013 of 21 August 2013).

30. The Gabonese legislature is of the view that there can be no rape between spouses, hence the absence to date of a law criminalizing marital rape.

31. Article 355 of Act No. 042/2018 establishing the Criminal Code, promulgated by Decree No. 00099/PR of 5 July 2019 prescribes a sentence of life imprisonment for murder committed for the purpose of removing organs, tissue, blood or any other element or items from the body of the victim. Murder followed by removal of such elements for commercial or ritual purposes shall carry the same sentence.

32. There are no shelters or rehabilitation services for victims of gender-based violence. However, at the end of the 16 days of activism organized to commemorate International Women's Day in 2019, the Prime Minister pledged to provide the country with shelters for victims of gender-based violence within a short period of time.

Reply to paragraph 8 of the list of issues

33. Two bilateral agreements were concluded in 2018 to combat and prevent trafficking in persons and to provide protection and assistance to trafficked women and girls.

- The cooperation agreement between the Government of the Gabonese Republic and the Government of the Togolese Republic on combating child trafficking, signed at New York on 25 September 2018;
- The cooperation agreement between the Government of the Gabonese Republic and the Government of the Republic of Benin on combating child trafficking, signed at Libreville on 8 November 2018.

34. The Shelter for Children in Difficult Social Circumstances and the Arc-en-Ciel/Espoir Association provide attention and psychosocial support to child victims of trafficking of both genders.

35. Girls with hearing and visual impairments are educated at the National School for Hearing-Impaired Children in the capital city of Libreville.

36. Protective measures against violence cover all categories of women and girls, regardless of their area of residence and personal status.

37. With regard to marriage, Act No. 41/2018 of 11 June 2019 sets the legal minimum age for marriage at 18 years.

38. Fifteen cases were investigated and prosecuted during the period from 12 February 2014 to 2 December 2019:

- Three cases were tried during the March 2019 criminal session;
- Twelve cases are under investigation.

39. The punishments for the three perpetrators convicted were:

- Ten years' imprisonment;
- Ten-year ban from residing in Gabon;
- Sentence (14 and 8 years).

40. Fines range from 2 to 10 million CFA francs.

41. Measures are taken to locate, monitor, protect and assist trafficked girls and to raise public awareness. Various stakeholders representing the relevant entities partner with UNICEF every year in a systemic effort to rescue girl children from trafficking networks. These entities include the National Police (Office of the Commissioner and Directorate General of Documentation and Immigration), the Directorate General of Social Affairs, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the community, as well as the diplomatic missions of the countries of origin. Rescued children are then placed

in reception and transit centres while they await reintegration into their societies of origin.

Reply to paragraph 9 of the list of issues

42. Act No. 1/2018 of 12 January 2018, through which the Constitution was revised, establishes in its preamble, in paragraph 24 (new), that the State promotes equal access for women and men to elected office and political and professional positions of responsibility. Through that paragraph, the Constitution establishes the principle of gender parity at both the political and the professional levels.

43. With regard to political participation, women have less of a presence despite being a majority of the total population (52 per cent).

44. Gabon has taken several innovative measures to promote the advancement of women, including the adoption of Act No. 9/2016 of 5 September 2016, which establishes a quota for women and young people for elected office and senior government positions.

45. Thus, to date:

- Three of the nine provinces of Gabon have women governors (30%);
- Thirty per cent (9 of 30) government ministers are women, including the defence minister.

46. A woman presides over the Constitutional Court, the country's highest judicial institution, which is composed of nine members, five of whom are women.

47. Similarly, a woman presides over the Senate, the upper chamber of parliament.

48. The quota has not been met in parliament: in the lower chamber, there are 23 women and 120 men, and in the Senate, there are 18 women and 84 men.

49. An analysis of the figures presented in the national report shows that quotas are being met and even exceeded for positions in which women perform supporting roles. This is the case, for example, for the posts of deputy secretary-general (36 per cent), deputy director-general (45.8 per cent) and chief of service (51.1 per cent).

50. Proposed measures:

- For elected positions, political parties are encouraged to include women as substantive candidates on candidate lists;
- Women with the same training as men should be promoted to positions of responsibility in senior management and in the private sector;
- Repeal and redraft of Act No. 009/2016, which contravenes the Basic Law;
- Proposal of a draft bill on the leadership of political parties, with a view to achieving gender parity.

Reply to paragraph 10 of the list of issues

51. Eleven per cent of children in Gabon are not registered with the civil registry.

52. In December 2018, the Minister of Justice issued 2,000 supplementary judgments in favour of Gabonese children whose births were not entered in the records. This operation was conducted with the financial and technical support of UNICEF (Afric Direct online newspaper, 20 December 2018).

53. In 2019, the Directorate General of Welfare issued birth certificates and provided health insurance to 1,433 children.

54. Civil society is also working to regularize the status of many children without birth certificates.

Reply to paragraph 11 of the list of issues

55. There is no discrimination in education in Gabon: girls and boys receive the same education in mixed classes.

56. The only condition for obtaining a scholarship is an average score of 10/20 or higher in the Baccalaureate examination.

57. There are no discriminatory measures in Gabon preventing pregnant girls from continuing their education, whether before or after giving birth.

58. In order to reduce dropout rates, consideration has been given to offering remedial classes for pupils of both genders experiencing academic difficulties, in addition to running support courses at the parents' expense. The remedial classes are to be piloted starting at the end of the second trimester of the current school year.

59. With regard to school curricula on sexual health education, in 2019 the Ministry of Education, in partnership with UNFPA and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), launched the Sexual and Reproductive Health Education programme in life and Earth sciences, civic education, English, Spanish, French, family and social economy and arts, which is in the second year of its pilot run. This programme is open to all students, boys and girls alike. In addition, it will be extended to preschool and all general and technical schools. It is taught according to the level of schooling (sixth, seventh, eighth grade etc.), not according to age.

Primary school repetition rate for the country as a whole in 2018

Distribution of repetition rates by province, gender and group in 2018

Provinces	Repetition rate (%) in 2018			Classes that do not administer exams (2018)	Classes that administer exams (2018)	Total
	Boys	Girls	Total			
Estuaire	31.1%	33.3%	34.2%	39.03%	34.52%	36.77%
Haut-Ogooué	42.9%	41.9%	42.4%	48.94%	22.37%	35.65%
Moyen-Ogooué	46.3%	44.5%	45.4%	46.89%	35.33%	41.11%
Ngounié	45.6%	47.4%	46.4%	18.37%	32.21%	25.29%
Nyanga	44.5%	42.6%	43.6%	7.08%	49.14%	28.11%
Ogooué Ivindo	48.7%	49.2%	49%	28.09%	37.77%	32.93%
Ogooué-Lolo	44.5%	43.5%	44%	40.27%	24.39%	32.33%
Ogooué-Maritime	27.4%	27.7%	27.6%	19.58%	40.53%	30.05%
Woleu-Ntem	42%	40.8%	41.4%	22.22%	30.91%	26.56%
Public						
Boys			47 703	12 407		60 110
Girls			53 524	14 146		67 670
Total students			101 227	26 553		127 780
Girls promoted			38 426	10 809		49 235
Boys promoted			43 876	12 457		56 333
Girls repeating the school year			9 277	1 598		10 875

Boys repeating the school year	9 648	1 689	11 337
Total promoted	82 302	23 266	105 568
Total repeating the school year	18 925	3 287	22 212
% of promoted girls	82	88	83
% of promoted boys	81	87	82
Girls repeating the school year	18	12	17
Boys repeating the school year	19	13	18
% of overall students promoted	81	88	83
% of overall students repeating the school year	19	12	17

Reply to paragraph 12 of the list of issues

Literacy

<i>Province</i>	<i>Number of public literacy centres</i>	<i>Budget allocated for each literacy centre</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Total No. of learners</i>	<i>Total No. of trainers</i>
Estuaire	Nkembo	1 500 000	Men	233	7
	Carrefour Hassan	400 000	Women	185	22
	Derriere La Prison	700 000	Total No. of learners	418	29
	SNI Owendo	400 000			
Haut-Ogooué	Functioning literacy centre	400 000	Men	3	3
			Women	6	0
			Total No. of learners	9	3
Nyanga	Functioning literacy centre	400 000	Men	6	1
			Women	4	1
			Total No. of learners	10	2
Ogooué-Ivindo	Functioning literacy centre	400 000	Men	12	4
			Women	10	0
			Total No. of learners	22	4
Ogooué-Maritime	Ngadi	400 000	Men	34	1
	Salsa	400 000	Women	20	2
	Total No. of learners	54	3		
Woleu-Ntem	Oyem	400 000	Men	15	2
	Bitam	300 000	Women	31	3
	Total No. of learners	46	5		
Total 11 functioning public centres		Total allocation 5 700 000	Total men	303	18
			Total women	256	28
			Grand total	559	46

Reply to paragraph 13 of the list of issues

60. This question would be addressed in relation to the constitutional, legislative and institutional frameworks.

61. The Ministry of Employment, Public Service, Labour and Vocational Training, which is responsible for social dialogue, is currently undertaking an ambitious reform of the Labour Code, with a view to adapting that instrument to the country's modern demands in terms of labour and employment.

62. With regard to the provisions aimed at ensuring that all discriminatory provisions are repealed, the new Labour Code under consideration sets out significant changes, such as:

- A broader range of provisions criminalizing sexual harassment, supplementing Act No. 10/2016 of 5 September 2016 in the new code;
- Disciplinary measures and legal action against any employer or employee guilty of moral or sexual harassment;
- A reinforced equal right of access to work;
- An entire chapter of the Code on the protection of pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women.

63. With regard to discrimination and reducing women's unemployment, the draft Labour Code strengthens the protection of workers against discrimination by incorporating a more comprehensive definition of the concept. For example, article 8 of the draft Labour Code stipulates that:

“All workers are equal before the law and enjoy the same protection and guarantees. Any discrimination in respect of employment opportunities, selection, recruitment and working conditions on the basis of, inter alia, race, colour, sex, marital status, family status, pregnancy, religion, political opinion, trade union membership and/or activity, national extraction, social origin or supposed or actual state of health is prohibited. For the purposes of the draft Labour Code, discrimination is defined as any distinction, exclusion or preference which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment with respect to employment or occupation”.

64. Specific measures have been taken to reduce youth unemployment in general, including women's unemployment. For example, measures to promote youth internships have been codified and strengthened.

65. In this respect, articles 1 al, 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the draft Code stipulate that:

For the purposes of this Act, “apprentice” means any person, without distinction as to sex, who is invited to work in a company or establishment or under a craftsman or manufacturer in order to acquire the theoretical and practical professional knowledge that will enable him or her to join the workforce.

“Intern” means any student of a technical or vocational school or of a specialized institution of higher education who is required by the statute of his or her establishment to spend a given period of time in work placement in order to consolidate in a practical manner the theoretical knowledge acquired during his or her studies.

A pupil or student at least 16 years of age enrolled in a school or university course and wishing to acquire professional experience not linked to a diploma validation course and a traineeship agreement for up to a maximum of three months during the school holidays is also considered an intern.

66. At the same time, the draft Labour Code incorporates new contract types to help young people, including young women, secure employment, in particular, by facilitating access to the labour market and job retraining.
67. For example, with regard to apprenticeship (articles 99 to 120):
- The purpose of the youth apprenticeship contract is to offer young workers released from compulsory schooling any practical and theoretical training provided through work placement, thereby allowing them to obtain a professional qualification. It is aimed mainly at young people 16 to 25 years of age without diplomas or qualifications who are registered with the national employment management body;
 - The objective of the apprenticeship/employment contract is to offer young people enrolled in a technical and vocational training institutions all relevant training that enables them to obtain work placement in order to obtain a professional qualification. It is aimed mainly at young people 18 to 28 years of age who are registered with the national employment management body and enrolled in a recognized technical and vocational training institution.
68. With regard to vocational training (articles 124 to 135):
- The objective of vocational training is to enable young people to obtain a professional qualification or to supplement their training with additional experience in order to secure a particular work placement position. It is aimed mainly at young graduates 18 to 30 years of age who are having difficulty finding work and who are registered with the national employment management body;
 - The objective of vocational adjustment training is to promote vocational integration or reintegration by providing additional training or immersion through work placement, to enable the job applicant to obtain a qualification that will help him or her adjust to or receive training for a new job or type of employment.
69. It is aimed mainly at trainee employees and any job applicant registered with the national employment management body.
70. With regard to employment, the following measures have been taken to reduce the unemployment rate of the population in general and of women in particular:
- Establishment of the Agricultural Development Agency of Gabon;
 - Phase one of the GRAINE Programme Support Project;
 - Phase two of the Agricultural and Rural Development Project;
 - Acquisition of 44,543 ha of land for the establishment of protected agricultural zones by the Ministry of Agriculture under the National Land Use Plan.
71. With regard to inspections in the area of agriculture, a general census of agriculture in Gabon is under way. It was launched on 18 November 2019 and is aimed at providing the country with a better picture of the agricultural situation in Gabon.
72. With regard to the principle of equal pay for men and women, article 140 of Act No. 3/94 of 21 November 1994 establishing the Labour Code stipulates that “the basic salary for equal work, qualifications and performance shall be the same for all workers, irrespective of their origin, views, sex and age”.
73. The principle of equal work and pay in Gabon is emphasized in article 8 et seq. of the Labour Code. According to that principle, workers of all sexes, nationalities,

religions, etc., are equal. Hence, any discrimination with regard to work or pay is prohibited.

74. Act No. 028/2016 of 6 February 2017 establishing the Social Protection Code of the Republic of Gabon provides for social protection for workers in unstructured sectors; part 2, chapter 4, of the Act provides for a scheme known as the “scheme for mobile and self-employed workers”. The Act takes into account categories of workers (men and women) in unstructured (informal) sectors, such as traders and domestic workers.

75. In accordance with laws on the guaranteed interprofessional minimum wage in the Republic of Gabon, in particular Decree No. 855/PR/MTE of 9 November 2006, all employers in Gabon in all sectors, whether structured or not, are required to pay all workers without discrimination.

76. Women’s employment and pay in the areas of agriculture and domestic work are governed by laws and regulations. Statistics disaggregated by sex and place of residence (rural or urban area) are currently incomplete, and therefore unreliable. It should be noted that, although statistics are not available to date, the Ministry of Labour is carrying out inspections in the areas of agriculture and domestic work, and specific measures have been set out in the new draft Labour Code. These measures include the codification of seasonal contracts, taking into account the specificities of agriculture, and those of domestic work, in accordance with the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) of the International Labour Organization, although Gabon is not yet a party to that Convention.

77. There is no discrimination in pay for equal work and equal skills before the law for men and women, irrespective of their status.

78. With regard to social protection, under the Labour Code and the Social Protection Code, all employers are required to register their workers, irrespective of sex, with the National Social Security Fund and the National Health Insurance Fund within eight days of their recruitment.

79. The State has also taken measures to register persons classified as economically depressed. This means that all persons should currently be registered with the National Health Insurance and Social Security Fund.

80. Ratification of the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) is currently under way. However, the State had already structured that field of work according to two factors:

- Whether workers can be registered with the National Social Security Fund;
- Whether it is possible to differentiate among types of domestic work.

Reply to paragraph 14 of the list of issues

81. Act No. 1/2000 of 18 August 2000 establishing certain measures for the social protection of women, mothers and children in the Republic of Gabon has led to progress in addressing sexual and reproductive health. It has also led to the establishment of mechanisms for the provision of health care to women, mothers and children (free prenatal and neonatal care, free childbirth and related kits). Furthermore, contraception is legalized in Gabon. However, “comfort” abortions are prohibited.

82. The Government and its development partners, specifically the World Health Organization (WHO), have established the National Health Development Plan, aimed at improving health indicators in our country; it provides for the strengthening of health systems up to the level of primary health care, in order to ensure equitable and

universal access to a full range of health services. The Plan, which covers a four-year period, is designed to ensure that the people receive proper health care and sets out the measures to be taken to that end.

83. Gabon has made considerable efforts in the area of public health financing. In 2015, the health budget nearly doubled to CFAF 104,330,705,751 billion, and, in 2018, reached CFAF 119,937,663,102 billion, the largest health budget in four years.

84. However, the distribution of funding needs by level of care shows that the greatest needs are at the primary (departmental) level, which accounts for approximately 64 per cent, or CFAF 283,964,662,966. This is due to the need for significant investment in construction, rehabilitation and equipping of departmental clinics, health centres and hospitals. The tertiary (central) level comes in second, accounting for almost 19 per cent of financing needs, followed by the secondary (regional) level, which accounts for about 15 per cent, and community health, which accounts for 2.6 per cent of funding, reflecting a gap in the health system.

85. With regard to health human resources, the national physician-to-population ratio is 1 general physician per 6,610 people, which is in line with the standard ratio of 1 general physician per 5,000 to 10,000 people recommended by WHO. Analysis of ratios by health region reveals disparities, with some regions such as Libreville-Owendo, West and South having ratios above the national average. Conversely, others, such as the Maritime and North regions, have significantly lower ratios.

86. The country's training system is relatively well developed, with three levels of training: the postgraduate and university level for medical and administrative training, the professional undergraduate level for associate managers and the secondary level for regular staff.

87. Training of medical and paramedical staff is mainly provided by the Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy of the University of Health Sciences of Owendo, and by the National Institute for Training in Health and Social Affairs of Libreville.

88. Despite the existence of these training institutions, the average national production of health human resources is far below demand. For example, the Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy's average annual health human resources production is 40 doctors, 9 midwives, 14 senior medical biology technicians and 8 senior anaesthesia technicians. Since its inception in 2010, the National Institute for Training in Health and Social Affairs has trained only 26 paramedical instructors, 30 public health managers and 24 nurse midwives.

89. In addition, the measures taken by the President in December 2017 to ensure free childbirth and free prenatal and postnatal consultations have helped to improve access to sexual and reproductive health care, in particular for vulnerable persons. Other efforts have been made on a strategic level to improve the health of women and girls, including:

- Neonatal maternal death surveillance and response through the analysis of maternal deaths in public and private health facilities, and through weekly notifications of deaths by public health facilities. Providers have been trained and neonatal maternal death surveillance and response tools have been made available to them in 8 out of 10 health regions. The third Demographic and Health Survey, currently under way, will provide evidence of changes in the maternal mortality ratio.
- Adoption of the Strategic Plan for Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health and Nutrition for 2019–2023;
- Implementation of the “classes for mothers” strategy in public health facilities;

- Adoption of the strategy to combat early pregnancies in schools by the Ministry of Education in 2018;
- Provision of information to 32,025 students at all levels of education on early pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS and their consequences, etc.;
- Availability of specialized services in secondary schools to address the psychological and social needs of students and other education personnel;
- Preparation and approval of the strategy for the prevention and management of pregnancies in schools, conducted in 2017.

90. There are 52 health departments in the country, and sexual and reproductive health services are available in the majority of them.

91. However, according to the National Health Development Plan for 2017–2022, adolescents and young people have inadequate access to high-quality sexual and reproductive health care. The aim of the Plan is thus to ensure that at least 50 per cent of adolescents and young people receive high-quality sexual and reproductive health care at all levels of the health-care pyramid by end-December 2021.

92. In Gabon, reducing maternal mortality requires promoting family planning and the use of modern methods of contraception, in particular among adolescents, in order to reduce the number of early and unwanted pregnancies, and developing refocused prenatal consultations. Pregnancy monitoring, including prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS, tetanus vaccination and administration of intermittent presumptive treatment for malaria, remains essential to pregnancy management.

93. With regard to the State health insurance system, the National Health Insurance and Social Security Fund has a fund for health coverage for economically depressed Gabonese. The fund covers 258,629 primary-insured economically underprivileged Gabonese, 27,588 primary-insured students, 7,088 non-beneficiary primary-insured students and 55 primary-insured religious figures, as well as 223,310 beneficiaries from all these social categories, bringing the total number of persons registered covered through the fund to 516,666. By law, the National Health and Social Security Fund may provide health coverage to students and children through the fund, although such persons are not considered to be economically depressed.

94. According to the results of the last registration campaign for the fund for economically depressed Gabonese, the National Health Insurance and Social Security Fund indicates that 183,157 primary insured and 53,768 beneficiaries, or 236,925 persons, have been registered. However, those persons will only be incorporated into the database of the National Health Insurance and Social Security Fund when social surveys have been conducted to remove from the list those Gabonese with reported incomes. The Fund fully reimburses only the health-care costs of mothers. It reimburses 80 and 90 per cent of other covered medical expenses in the case of chronic conditions; the remaining 20 or 10 per cent is paid by the insured patient.

Reply to paragraph 15 of the list of issues

95. Significant progress has been made on abortion, a social reality which has become a public health problem, as a result of its decriminalization by the legislature under the new Criminal Code. Voluntary termination of pregnancy is now authorized in Gabon, provided that one of the requirements established by the legislature is met.

96. Act No. 042/2018 of 5 July 2019 establishing the Criminal Code includes provisions on abortion.

97. Under its article 377, a woman who has obtained or attempted to obtain an abortion for herself, or who has consented to use methods indicated or prescribed to her for that purpose, is subject to imprisonment for up to two years and a fine of up to CFAF 1,000,000, or to either of those two penalties.

98. However, therapeutic termination of pregnancy is authorized or permitted with approval from a doctor, in the special cases indicated below:

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

99. Article 378 stipulates that therapeutic termination of pregnancy may only be carried out before the tenth week and may only be performed by a doctor in a hospital.

100. However, the University Hospital Centre of Libreville continues to record cases of clandestine abortions, the main complication of which is uterine bleeding due to the retention of ovular debris, which leads to secondary infertility in the majority of cases, and sometimes to the death of patients. This finding may be confirmed by statistics from the Demographic and Health Survey of Gabon currently under way.

Reply to paragraph 16 of the list of issues

101. With regard to the economic empowerment of women, the Government has established several mechanisms, including the National Social Welfare Fund, which has supported several initiatives aimed at building the capacities of vulnerable women in associations through training and access to credit for vulnerable and/or economically depressed women, in particular young mothers, elderly women, women from forest communities and women with disabilities.

102. According to information from the National Investment Promotion Agency, 4,103 business were created in 2018, including 1,246 by women. This demonstrates the willingness of women to participate in entrepreneurship as a result of awareness-raising and of the strengthening of relevant entities.

103. With regard to transformational leadership training, 90 young girls received microcredits in 2018 under the Idyanja project carried out in the province of Ogooué-Maritime.

104. A notable development regarding access to new technologies is the engagement of the private sector, including the mobile telephone company Airtel, which supported the "Train My Generation – Gabon 5000" project, launched in 2014 in partnership with UNESCO in order to facilitate access to new technologies for young people, in particular young girls.

105. Between 2015 and 2018, the project contributed to the training of 5,192 young people in information and communications technology, including 1,644 girls.

106. With regard to strengthening women's organizational and technical capacities, with the support of the National Social Welfare Fund, 825 women belonging to 45 associations have been trained in loan management, accounting, business plan development, etc. The establishment of a network of 100 cooperatives of women processors under the auspices of the National Federation of Processors of Agricultural Products in Gabon has helped to increase arable land and strengthen production by women farmers. In addition, in 2017 the Poverty Directorate-General strengthened the capacities of 85 associations in product processing, in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Similarly, 72 associations focusing primarily on

women were trained in food safety and hygiene measures in 2018, in collaboration with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

107. The 2015 Human Investment Strategy of Gabon, aimed at effectively combating poverty and social exclusion, gives effect to the country's poverty reduction policy.

108. Under a public-private partnership, the Government, in collaboration with the company Olam, recently organized the launch of training in heavy-machine operation for 50 women. The objective of the training is to reduce unemployment and promote women's access to decent, value-added jobs, and to jobs heretofore ostensibly (culturally) reserved for men.

109. Gabon has been embarking on a strategy to strengthen women's economic empowerment, particularly in the context of the GRAINE project. The strategy's objectives range from the distribution of land and agricultural equipment to cooperatives, in particular those mainly comprising women, to the provision of financing. Similarly, women regularly receive capacity-building support for creating and managing income-generating activities.

110. A comprehensive national programme aimed at ensuring the economic empowerment of vulnerable women, including economically depressed single mothers and female victims of violence, rural women and women living in forest communities, was launched in 2018 on 17 April, National Women's Day.

111. Exhibitions and trade fairs are regularly organized for women from women's associations. They are thus often given the opportunity to exhibit their skills and to market the products from their agricultural, artisanal, culinary and traditional medicinal activities.

112. In addition, several of them receive training in the processing and preservation of local products.

113. In that connection, it is relevant to note the continuing support of FAO for women in Gabon, which has enabled them to develop a value chain in order to improve the processing, preservation and packaging of local products so that they can be marketed more effectively at the national and even international levels.

Reply to paragraph 17 of the list of issues

114. With regard to measures taken to ensure the provision of good-quality educational and health services and access to improved sanitation infrastructure for all women and girls living in rural areas, it should be noted that education is compulsory irrespective of area of residence in Gabon. However, the Human Investment Strategy includes a component on the educational and professional reintegration of economically depressed young and single mothers. That component provides for full financing, by the National Health Insurance and Social Security Fund, of the costs of their education and vocational training in secondary schools, training centres and public and private institutions of higher education.

115. There is a regional hospital centre with adequate services to address the needs of rural populations in the administrative capital of each province.

116. In order to eliminate barriers limiting women's access to land, the Government of Gabon has established a special procedure to speed up secure access to land, as decided by the President of the Republic. The procedure has enabled several women's cooperatives to own land. A total of 166 land titles have been granted to these cooperatives under the GRAINE project, which is aimed at increasing national agricultural production and combating hunger. The procedure has also led to a reduction in unemployment through (direct and indirect) employment in the agricultural sector.

117. With regard to measures taken to increase land registration and distribution, farm ownership rates among women and the participation of women in cooperatives, notable initiatives include the establishment of the National Land Use Commission, bringing together several departments, and the ongoing conduct of the general agriculture census, which will eventually ensure the availability of updated national statistics on farm ownership rates among women.

118. The GRAINE programme, established in March 2015, received funding of CFAF 48 billion under a public-private partnership between the State and the Singaporean company Olam, in order to build the capacities of agricultural cooperatives to improve their productivity. Nearly 843 cooperatives comprising 17,406 members, 64 per cent of whom are women, have been registered.

119. Support from the programme has contributed significantly to the development of agricultural areas, leading to an increase in arable land and the opening of roads leading to those sites, thus making women's work less onerous. Furthermore, produce marketing, through the purchase of the cooperatives' entire production by the private partner SOTRADER (agricultural processing and rural development company), enables female members of cooperatives to increase their income in order to repay their loans and meet their needs.

120. Currently, the proportion of women involved in agricultural production and post-harvest activities ranges between 20 per cent and 70 per cent.

121. According to the National Strategy for Gender Equality and Equity of Gabon, women represent 70 per cent of workers in the agricultural sector, offering development potential in agriculture and food processing.

122. Efforts to inform rural women of their rights to property and land ownership and use, and to empower them to claim those rights, are being made under the GRAINE programme and consist primarily of formalizing communities' rights to ownership over certain agricultural lands. However, scope for improvement remains on the issue of agricultural land in Gabon. Restrictions related to the reservation of mining or forest land limit access to agricultural land by all.

Reply to paragraph 18 of the list of issues

123. Most of the data currently available remain as indicated in the seventh report ([CEDAW/C/GAB/7](#)).

124. However, the Arc-en-Ciel Association shelter recorded 6 young people living on the streets during the period from September 2019 to January 2020.

125. The Shelter for Children in Difficult Social Circumstances recorded 29 female victims of trafficking during the period from 2018 to 2019.

Reply to paragraph 19 of the list of issues

126. The legislature introduced the offence of trafficking in persons into the Criminal Code in order to combat traditional practices encouraging the marriage of children and young girls. Furthermore, customary marriage of a 16-year-old girl is punishable by law.

Reply to paragraph 20 (a) of the list of issues

127. Those provisions are all contained in the first part of the Civil Code, which has not yet been revised.

128. However, work is currently under way to revise the Civil Code completely. A technical unit has been established for that purpose in the Ministry of Justice.

129. However, article 203 of the Civil Code was repealed, and replaced by Organic Act No. 003/2018 of 8 February 2019 establishing the Children's Code (Decree No. 0018/PR of 8 February 2019 promulgating Organic Act No. 003/2018), with the harmonized minimum age for marriage for boys and girls set at 18 years.

Reply to paragraph 20 (b) of the list of issues

130. Prohibition of polygamy is under consideration by the technical committee responsible for revising the first part of the Civil Code.

131. Levirate and sororate marriages and other widowhood rites were abolished when the second part of the Civil Code, relating to inheritance, was amended. However, a specific (comprehensive) draft law on gender-based violence currently under development will help to address all harmful cultural practices.

Reply to paragraph 20 (c) of the list of issues

132. All those discriminatory provisions were removed following the amendment of the Criminal Code of 2013, and are absent from the Criminal Code of 2019.

Reply to paragraph 20 (d) of the list of issues

133. The technical committee in charge of revising the first part of the Civil Code is responsible for proposing solutions with regard to the legalization (or not) of customary marriage, and for determining the related conditions.

Reply to paragraph 21 of the list of issues

134. Although the incorporation of gender considerations into all activities carried out by all administrative entities is not required by law, women and men are taken into account in policies and strategies at the national level.

135. A project to develop a gender database is currently under way; it will ensure the availability of gender-specific sectoral indicators.
