



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

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**Responses to the list of issues and questions with regard to
the consideration of the combined initial, second and third
periodic report**

Djibouti*

* The present report is being issued without formal editing..



Responses to the list of issues and questions of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women with regard to the consideration of the combined initial, second and third periodic reports

Question 1: *Please provide information on the process of preparing the combined initial, second and third periodic reports, including on the contribution of public institutions at the central and regional levels and national human rights institutions, and on consultations with non-governmental organizations. Please indicate whether the report was adopted by the Government and submitted to Parliament.*

Even before the initiative of a CEDAW report was taken, a multisectoral committee was formed in 2005 and trained on report submission procedures with support from ECA experts, focusing on the CEDAW report.

In 2008, when the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, Family Welfare and Social Affairs initiated the process of preparing the report, because so much time had gone by, it was found that there had been significant attrition within the committee and that it was difficult to rely on it. A sectoral Gender Focal Points network having in the meantime been established to facilitate consideration of gender issues and their mainstreaming at the sectoral level, it seemed more appropriate to rely on that network and to consolidate the team through a national consultation.

Regular meetings were held to gather information, to discuss and implement enhancements, and to track reporting progress. It was during these meetings that central and regional public institutions were able to make their contributions.

A team was established within the Department to facilitate the editing and validation by technical sectors of the areas covered by CEDAW.

Once the inter-ministerial coordinating committee established by presidential decree to coordinate the drafting and submission of periodic reports had become operational, the draft report was submitted to it by the Ministry for the Advancement of Women. The substance of the document was examined, as well as its presentation, based on the Ministry's comments.

Once the report had been validated by the inter-ministerial coordinating committee established to coordinate the drafting and submission of periodic reports, a date was set for a national workshop to validate the combined initial, second and third periodic reports.

That workshop was duly held on Wednesday, 6 January 2009, under the chairmanship of three Ministers: the Minister of Advancement of Women, the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Health. Also involved were representatives of the sectors the report was concerned with, namely Parliament, the development partners and civil society. The workshop received wide media coverage.

The report was revised to reflect workshop participants' comments and observations.

Question 2: *Article 37 of the Constitution provides that international treaties take precedence over national laws. The report states that the courts and tribunals of the State party monitor respect for the rights and freedoms defined by the Constitution (see CEDAW/C/DJI/1-3, para. 85). Please provide examples of court cases, if any, where the Convention was invoked or directly applied and where the courts interpreted national law in the light of the Convention.*

The Convention has not been invoked or applied directly in any judicial case, nor have the courts interpreted national law in the light of its provisions, for the simple reason that the State party often, not to say systematically, strives to solve the root causes of the problem. Each time a Convention has been ratified, the State party has sought to embody its provisions in domestic law.

Hence, there is no need for litigants and practitioners to resort to international instruments when there are already equivalents thereto in Djibouti's positive law.

Taking the example of a woman facing discrimination in hiring, she is of course at liberty to take legal action against the offending employer on the basis of CEDAW, but it is easier and simpler for her to take advantage of the Labour Code, which prohibits such actions and provides for compensation for damages.

That choice may be justified by the fact that jurisprudence and doctrine have grown up around domestic law, so that litigants and practitioners better understand how the courts will interpret a given point of law.

It should be remembered that the two sources of law are not mutually exclusive; they are complementary, and the litigant may invoke both at the same time.

Question 3: Please provide more information on the impact of temporary special measures to accelerate de facto or substantive equality between women and men, in particular in the fields of education, employment, health and protection from violence, and in rural areas.

Although the structures, and the staff, of the Ministry of Education have always respected equality of treatment, certain inequalities in access to these structures do persist. Despite the beneficial effects mentioned in Questions 16 and 17, and all the special measures taken to eradicate these inequalities, it has not been possible to permanently eliminate the gaps between girls and boys.

Some — predominantly rural — areas are “resistant” to these changes, so that there is a need for a much more comprehensive, multisectoral approach to this issue.

Question 4: The report states that a new general population census is currently in progress and that the first results are expected in 2010 (ibid., para. 17). Please provide sex-disaggregated data reflecting the situation of women, including older women, rural women, women with disabilities and refugee and migrant women, in all relevant areas covered by the Convention.

The census that was in progress during the drafting of the report is now complete. Only preliminary results are available as yet. The data requested is detailed data on which the Department of Statistics and Demographic Studies (DISED) is currently working. It will be available in February 2011.

Question 5: Please provide information on the mandate and achievements of the National Human Rights Commission in advancing equal rights of women and men. Please indicate whether the current plan to enlarge the membership and scope of the Commission (ibid., para. 99) also envisages including women's organizations and strengthening the mandate and resources of the Commission.

The National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) is a rather recent national institution, established in April 2008, whose broad powers are defined by Articles 3 et seq. of the relevant decree, dated 23 April 2008. Thus, CNDH's mission is:

- To advise the relevant public authorities on all general matters relating to the promotion and protection of human rights in the Republic of Djibouti. The commission's opinions, recommendations, proposals and reports may be published either on its own initiative or at the request of the authority concerned,
- To call the authorities' attention to situations where human rights are being violated in the country, proposing initiatives to correct such situations and, where necessary, expressing an opinion on the Government's positions and reactions.

To that end, it may report on the national human rights situation in general and on more specific issues:

- To call the authorities' attention to the measures it considers conducive to the protection and promotion of human rights, particularly as regards:
 - (1) The ratification of international human rights instruments or accession to these instruments and their implementation at the national level,
 - (2) If applicable, the regularization and harmonization of legislation, regulations and practices with international human rights instruments to which the Republic of Djibouti is a party and their effective implementation,
 - (3) The expansion of human rights and the fight against all forms of discrimination, racism and xenophobia.

CNDH's achievements in the field of equal rights between men and women are quite numerous. To cite just a few examples:

- CNDH actively participated in all stages in the preparation of the national report on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and of all other reports to treaty bodies,
- CNDH has been consulted on or involved in all national policies and strategies for integrating Djiboutian women in development,
- CNDH holds regular human rights workshops and seminars for women's associations and NGOs.

Women are also quite well represented on the CNDH's governing body, as its vice-president is also the secretary general of the National Union of Djiboutian Women (UNFD), one of the many national NGOs working to promote and protect women's rights. UNFD is particularly active in the following areas:

- The fight against FGM and other harmful traditional practices,
- Girls' education and employment,
- The information, guidance and counselling centre for women victims of violence.

The State provides CNDH with human and financial resources for its operation and the pursuit of its mandate. The Commission enjoys financial autonomy.

Question 6: The report refers to the establishment of the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, Family Welfare and Social Affairs and of an intersectoral technical committee (ibid., paras. 169-170) tasked with developing a national strategy for the integration of women into development. Which institutions are responsible for the implementation of the strategy and of other policies for the advancement of women, including at the regional and local levels? What mechanisms are in place to monitor and evaluate such implementation?

There is indeed a Ministry for the Advancement of Women, Family Welfare and Social Affairs, which is involved in implementing the National Strategy for Integration of Women in Development (SNIFD). SNIFD is a legally binding instrument. Its implementation involves several sectors: the Ministry of Education (education sector), the Ministry of Health (health sector), the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Muslim Affairs and Charitable Endowments, the State Secretariat for Solidarity and the Ministry for the Advancement of Women (decision-making sector), the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Employment and Employability, and the Ministry of Trade (economic sector).

Coordination remains difficult, given the cross-cutting gender issues, but is being undertaken, with some constraints, by the Ministry for the Advancement of Women.

SNIFD underwent a mid-term review in December 2006 and a final evaluation in February 2010. Upon the conclusion of the latter, development of a National Gender Policy (NGP) was recommended in view of women's changing situation. The Ministry for the Advancement of Women has been developing the NGP since December 2010.

Question 7: *In paragraphs 180 and 181 of the report, the State party acknowledges that the objectives of the strategy were not fully achieved and indicates that "women remained at risk of poverty, vulnerability, unemployment and social exclusion". Which obstacles to the practical implementation of the strategy have been identified and how does the State party plan to address them in reviewing the strategy? Are there any plans to strengthen the role of decentralized decision-making bodies, such as municipal councils, in the implementation of the strategy and to provide for follow-up mechanisms?*

(a) The Republic of Djibouti has made great efforts to combat poverty; however, there are barriers to effective implementation of the strategy. These include:

- Sociocultural inertia,
- Insufficient financial means to support anti-poverty actions,
- Lack of capacity-building for women (especially in inland regions),
- The absence of a real concerted strategy with all partners (FDED, Djibouti Agency for Social Development, National Agency for Investment Promotion, development partners, etc.) in support of the creation of micro-enterprises run by women.

(b) The Djibouti Government established the National Social Development Initiative (INDS) in January 2007. That initiative followed on from the PRSP and aimed to address and rectify social inequalities observed mainly in inland regions. It culminated in the creation of a State Secretariat for Solidarity, in 2008, with responsibility for coordination of the preparation, implementation and monitoring, and evaluation of the INDS, on the one hand, and on the other hand of the Djiboutian Social Development Agency (ADDS), whose essential mission is to care for those excluded from growth and allow the redistribution of the fruits of growth.

(c) The decentralization process began in 1999 with the creation of a Ministry for Decentralization. Regional councils were then set up in inland districts, together with a community development fund. The purpose of the decentralization was to establish collaborative, participatory local governance and make State actions more efficient by bringing administration closer to the citizenry, to promote economic actors' participation in community development, and to foster civil society's participation in the management of public affairs.

It is in that context that the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, Family Welfare and Social Affairs (MPF) set up Regional Gender Offices whose mission it is to coordinate, monitor and supervise the activities undertaken by the MPF in inland regions.

Question 8: *The report acknowledges the persistence of deeply rooted and entrenched patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes which discriminate against women (ibid., para. 210). Please elaborate on the concrete measures taken in the areas of education and the media to eliminate such attitudes and stereotypes. Please explain the role of men in the implementation of such measures.*

To fight against patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes that discriminate against women in education, the Government has taken the initiative of increasing the number of women who can read and write. Similarly, large-scale awareness campaigns have been mounted in collaboration with all actors in society (elders, imams, traditional leaders etc.) and through training and awareness

workshops, radio and television broadcasts and commercials encouraging parents to educate their daughters.

In addition, the Ministry of Education has undertaken the widest possible dissemination of posters bearing carrying the same message throughout the country.

In the same vein, the Ministry has seen to it that all textbooks written in Djibouti are in keeping with these principles and to the extent possible has used these media as a means of communication to future generations.

In telecommunications and the information media, many women have been appointed to positions of responsibility. Women represent 40 per cent of all those working in broadcasting. Moreover, the large number of women presenting the television news in the various languages contributes to enhancing the image of women and their role in society.

Violence against women

Question 9: According to information before the Committee, violence against women is underreported and rarely investigated in the State party owing to stigmatization of victims and to customary laws and practices, such as friendly settlements between clans whereby a symbolic amount is paid to the victim's parents without consulting or compensating the victim. Please indicate whether the State party has taken steps to adopt a national action plan to combat violence against women, and specify measures the State party is taking to:

- (a) Encourage victims to report domestic violence or sexual abuse they are subject to;*
- (b) Ensure that perpetrators are prosecuted and punished;*
- (c) Ensure that victims are compensated according to the severity of the injury;*

(d) Enhance the capacity of the information, guidance and counselling centre to provide victims with medical, psychological and legal assistance (ibid., paras. 194 and 228 to 230).

Considering the shortcomings in the implementation of the provisions in force to combat violence against women, at the initiative of the Ministry for the Advancement of Women (MPF) the Government has supported a process of formulating the strategic thrusts of the national gender policy and giving priority to the fight against GBV.

Moreover, the MPF, in collaboration with the National Union of Djiboutian Women (UNFD), has implemented a comprehensive advocacy programme for the fight against GBV, including the total abandonment of FGMs.

The MPF, with support from UNFPA, has developed a legal guide on the response to GBV and made it available to civil society as part of the dissemination of the laws and procedures in force, through community outreach, to both urban and rural areas.

Support is provided to victims of GBV through the information, guidance and counselling centre established within UNFD to advise and assist them. Since its inception the Centre has received a total of 3,000 people, 96 per cent of them women.

Question 10: Please indicate whether spousal rape is criminalized in the State party and whether steps have been taken to decriminalize abortion in cases of rape. Please also provide updated sex- and age-disaggregated data on the number of reported cases, prosecutions and sentences imposed on perpetrators of rape. Please provide similar data on sexual harassment (ibid., paras. 226 to 228 and 381).

Spousal rape is undefined in Djiboutian law and so does not constitute an offence.

The State party has not taken steps to decriminalize abortion in cases of rape. The only case where the law permits termination of pregnancy is for therapeutic purposes (art. 450 of the Criminal Code).

However, to combat the crime of rape and other forms of violence of which women are usually the victims, the State party has encouraged and supported the creation within UNFD of an information, guidance and counselling centre for women victims of violence. That structure has branches across the country and produces an annual report containing, in particular, disaggregated data and statistics.

Again, the Ministry for the Advancement of Women is planning to produce a guide for women who have been raped or sexually abused, explaining in particular how to proceed when a relative or you yourself have been victims of rape. The draft guide also gives valuable recommendations, to wit:

- Holistic care for the victim should be provided by the State at all stages of the proceedings and until her complete recovery,
- There should be more female investigating officers (police and gendarmes responsible for conducting the preliminary investigation), as it has been found over time that women victims of rape are more forthcoming when the investigation is conducted by a woman.

Question 11: Please indicate whether the State party is giving consideration to adopting legislation to explicitly prohibit corporal punishment of girls and boys in all settings, including at home, and whether steps are being taken to raise awareness among parents, teachers and the general public about positive, participatory and non-violent forms of discipline. Please also indicate whether the State party has conducted any studies or surveys on the particular vulnerability of girls to being subjected to corporal punishment and on the specific impact of corporal punishment on girls' development and physical and psychological well-being.

Although the legislation does not specifically address the issue of corporal punishment by providing for and punishing acts that constitute corporal punishment, there are other sources of law that do limit or prohibit corporal punishment of children in general.

Hence, the legislation governing the Djiboutian education system does not clearly prohibit corporal punishment. However, the chapter on teachers' rights and duties does set out their rights and duties.

Moreover, the educational system has internal rules for secondary and middle schools providing penalties for students convicted of offences and prohibiting corporal punishment.

At the primary level, although there is no specific training module on this subject during initial training, school boards see to it that corporal punishment does not become systematized in the classroom and punish offending teachers if any.

As part of Djibouti's national integrated early childhood development policy (PNDIPED), in force since 2005, parent education and awareness actions are taken during which the issue of corporal punishment is also discussed.

Question 12: Please provide detailed information on the measures taken by the State party to combat female genital mutilation (ibid., paras. 455 et seq.), in particular in rural areas, by:

- (a) *Prosecuting perpetrators under article 333 of the Criminal Code criminalizing female genital mutilation (ibid., paras. 155 and 482);*
- (b) *Providing mandatory training to the police, prosecutors and judges on the strict application of article 333 (ibid., para. 161);*

(c) *Raising awareness among practitioners, families, traditional and religious leaders and the general public about the negative impact of female genital mutilation on women's and girls' rights (ibid., paras. 160 and 463 to 464).*

Please also provide information on the medical follow-up provided to victims of female genital mutilation in cases of complications and on the sentences imposed on perpetrators since 2005.

Female genital mutilation is the commonest kind of violence. Although FGMs are no longer practised in medical settings because of the prohibition imposed by article 333 of the Penal Code, they do continue, often under dire conditions, and create many complications for women throughout their lives.

PAPFAM survey data from 2002 and EDIM data from 2006 show a slight decline in the prevalence of FGMs practised on women aged 15 to 49, which has fallen from 98 per cent to 93.1 per cent. In contrast, a school survey conducted in 2006 shows a significant drop in the incidence of FGMs among girls (55 per cent of girls aged 7 and 14 per cent of 13-year-olds had not undergone FGM), which would seem to demonstrate that Djiboutians have begun to abandon the practice. However, there is little sign of that societal change in rural areas and among certain cohorts of the population, especially the less educated.

Faced with this public health problem, the Government of Djibouti has taken targeted action to achieve the total abandonment of all forms of excision at the national level:

- Development of the national strategy for the total abandonment of all forms of FGM in 2006
- Establishment within the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, in September 2007, of a coordination unit responsible for ensuring the implementation of each component of the strategy
- Establishment by presidential decree of a national committee for the total abandonment of all forms of excision, whose mission is to ensure coordination and synergy between initiatives and measures for the total abandonment of the practice of all forms of excision
- Establishment of an informal education programme based on human rights
- Adoption of a human rights approach at the expense of the health approach
- Launch of a joint programme in May 2008, under the patronage of the First Lady, to accelerate the total elimination of all forms of FGM
- Development of a communications strategy to focus public debate on the issues that tend to perpetuate the practice, the reasons given for its continuation in spite of the known harmfulness of excision, including the perception that it violates the human rights of women and children.
- Strengthening of the legislation aimed at achieving the total abandonment of all forms of FGM through amendments made in 2009 to two main pieces of legislation: article 7 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, to allow associations to bring a claim for damages, and article 333 of the 1995 Penal Code, to condemn the practice of FGM. Harsher penalties have been provided for perpetrators of these harmful practices, as they are now liable to fines and heavier prison sentences.

(a) Even though civil society organizations can now bring civil actions before criminal charges are preferred, programmes have been established to retrain excisers as traditional birth attendants and to provide food as an inducement for them to give up the practice of FGM. Also,

public awareness campaigns about the harm caused by FGMs have been conducted across the country, focusing in particular on rural areas where the practice is heavily entrenched.

(b) Training workshops have been held for judges, court clerks and police officers on the popularization and implementation of article 333 of the Penal Code, banning FGM, while similar workshops will be held for the same target groups on the amended articles of the Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure.

(c) A number of advocacy, awareness and training actions have been conducted at the national level to raise awareness of the harm caused by FGM:

- A travelling show entitled “Plus jamais ça à ma fille” [never do that to my daughter again] toured inland areas, highlighting the harmful effects of FGM on the health of mother and child; it was followed by discussions and debates with the local communities
- A seminar was chaired by an international consultant from Al-Azhar on the religious aspect of excision in an attempt to reach a religious consensus on the issue between conservatives and the avant-garde
- A network of religious leaders was set up to promote the abandonment of FGM, then expanded to include female religious leaders. These male and female religious leaders hold awareness campaigns year-round at mosques and associations’ headquarters
- Awareness seminars were conducted on the harmful effects of FGMs, complications, etc. for the following target audiences: health workers (clinics, maternity, paediatrics), teachers and students (middle and high school), women’s groups, religious and political leaders, court personnel (judges, clerks, police officers), and journalists
- A seminar was organized in collaboration with the National Union of Djiboutian Women (UNFD) to create a reliable partnership with the national media on the issue of FGM with the support of the NGO AIDOS and UNICEF
- Radio and television broadcasts were produced in local languages
- A survey of religious leaders, policymakers and youth was done in collaboration with the University of Djibouti and Paris Descartes and the survey results were publicized
- An anthropological study on the analysis of decisions relating to the practice of FGM was conducted in conjunction with the University of Paris V Descartes.

Question 13: *In paragraph 240 of its report, the State party acknowledges that, to prevent and punish trafficking in human beings, in particular women and girls, relevant criminal law provisions must be more effectively applied. Please describe the measures taken to ensure and monitor the strict application of such criminal law provisions, such as mandatory training for law enforcement officers on the strict application of articles 394 to 400 of the Criminal Code and of Act 210/AN/07/5th L on human trafficking. Please also explain whether steps have been taken to decriminalize victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation (ibid., paras. 221 to 225 and 231 to 240).*

See combined answer to questions 13 and 14.

Question 14: *Bearing in mind that women and children, including migrants and women and children with disabilities, are specifically vulnerable to becoming victims of trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labour, please provide information on the measures taken to prevent trafficking in women and children, remove them from prostitution and forced labour and provide them with legal, medical, psychological and social assistance to rehabilitate and reintegrate them into their communities, including by providing them with alternative income opportunities.*

In response to questions 13 and 14, the Republic of Djibouti has, since gaining its independence, been regularly confronted with massive flows of people from neighbouring countries beset by political instability and natural disasters. Such situations are conducive to the development of illegal immigration and trafficking in human beings.

To prevent and combat that, the State party has taken additional measures in addition to the legislation already mentioned in the report. These measures, undertaken with the support of its technical and financial partners (IOM, UNHCR, IGAD, AU etc.), focus on awareness and training activities. Commercials on the dangers of trafficking are regularly broadcast on TV. More importantly, training workshops and seminars are held either at the national or the regional level for stakeholders (police, gendarmes, judiciary, regional prefects etc.) on the fight against smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings. In that connection, the Government and its partners have within the past six months conducted:

- A training workshop on the management of mixed migratory flows (7-8 August 2010)
- A regional seminar on the topic of “Mobility, Migration and Vulnerability to HIV” (26-29 October 2010)
- A workshop to validate the report of the baseline survey on trafficking in Djibouti (13-14 November 2010)
- A regional seminar (nine countries of IGAD and ECEA) on the implementation of the Ouagadougou Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, Especially Women and Children (6-8 December 2010) and
- A seminar on direct assistance to victims of trafficking (19-20 December 2010).

Two other ongoing projects may be reported: first, the construction of a “Migration Responses Centre” in Obock, a city where potential emigrants bound for the Arabian Gulf countries via Yemen assemble; and second, the establishment of a national body responsible for coordinating work on a plan of action against trafficking in human beings.

That plan of action will be based primarily on the suggestions and recommendations made at the various workshops mentioned above. Those recommendations will focus on the following:

- Legislation: to supplement and clarify existing legislation, outreach and awareness, and to harmonize the bodies of domestic law of the countries in the subregion
- Strengthening of human and material resources: creation of a unit within the Ministry of Justice tasked with identifying the victims of trafficking, creation of a system for victim identification, information centralization, prevention and identification

Establishment of a victim assistance centre: creation of an intake centre, support for self-sufficiency, and repatriation to victims’ countries of origin

Question 15: Please explain whether the State party plans to take additional measures, including temporary special measures in line with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention, to increase the representation of women in the National Assembly and regional and municipal councils, the Government, including at the ministerial level, the public administration, the judiciary, the foreign service, especially at the level of Ambassador, and international organizations (ibid., paras. 66 and 248 et seq. and HRI/CORE/DJI/2010, para. 101). Please also explain whether the State party plans to introduce sanctions for violations of Act 192/AN/02/4th L of 13 November 2002 and its 2008 implementing decree requiring minimum quotas for women’s representation on candidate lists of political parties (10 per cent) and in senior civil service posts (20 per cent) (see CEDAW/C/DJI/1-3, paras. 174 and 175, 251 and 252 and 268 and 269) and whether it is giving consideration to raising such quotas.

The law instituting the quota system for elected office and State administration, with its 2008 implementing decree, is an affirmative action measure that resulted in women's being elected to Parliament at the parliamentary elections of 2003. It stipulates, in article 2, that in parliamentary elections, political parties presenting candidate lists must include on their lists a proportion of candidates of either sex at least equivalent to 10 per cent of the seats. To date, no political party has been created by women. However, political parties whose candidate list does not include at least 10 per cent women candidates are barred from participating in elections.

As regards a possible increase in the quotas, these are at least 10 per cent, which means they may be as much as 90 per cent, but can in no event fall below the threshold of 10 per cent.

Thus, the first group of women MPs from the parliamentary elections of 2003 consisted of 7 women out of 65 MPs, or a 10 per cent quota. At the 2008 elections 9 women were elected, or 14 per cent of the total. Accordingly, it is not out of the question for the quota to be increased in future legislation. That will be facilitated by the fact that women are increasingly joining political parties as members. In some of the parties, they sit on decision-making bodies.

Question 16: The report states that the reform of the education system has brought about unprecedented growth in school enrolment (ibid., para. 315). At the same time, the tables on trends in primary and preparatory school enrolment in paragraph 319 indicate a persistent gender enrolment gap. Please explain why girls have not derived equal benefit as boys from education reform and indicate how the State party intends to close the gender enrolment gap, in particular at the secondary level. Please also provide information on scholarships available for girls and on awareness-raising, special support schemes and incentives to encourage parents to send girls to school.

The problem is almost resolved at the primary school level. However, sociocultural phenomena such as poverty, not to mention the remoteness of middle schools, have long impeded the schooling of girls, especially in rural areas.

Moreover, these factors are compounded by the fact that school facilities designed to ensure girls' full development, such as separate latrines and separate dormitories, are lacking or inadequate.

That same combination of factors has long fortified parents in their decision to favour boys over girls.

Today, the building in subprefectures of schools called "fundamental" (comprising primary and middle school in a single physical structure) and the construction and/or rehabilitation of latrines for girls in 86 per cent of all establishments — although the purpose of the work has been to bring an overall improvement in living and working conditions for the entire school community and to bring schools closer to the community — has significantly increased the percentage enrolment of girls, especially in middle school. Indeed, girls' enrolment, which was only 41.6 per cent of the total in 2008, now accounts for 46 per cent on the average, a net increase of 4.4 percentage points in two years.

At the primary level, despite the implementation of the scholarship programme (which affected only 1,000 girls) and the WFP-supported programme to supply food for the families of girls enrolled in rural schools, it is undeniable that new enrolments of girls are stagnating, especially in the Obock and Dikhil areas, where in 2010 they accounted for 41.4 per cent and 40.2 per cent, respectively, of the total.

Question 17: Please elaborate on the nature and the impact of measures, including temporary special measures, taken to:

- (a) *Bring schools closer to the communities, in particular in rural areas;*

- (b) *Provide separate sanitary facilities for girls in primary schools;*
- (c) *Conduct literacy campaigns for women and girls in remote areas (ibid., paras. 185 and 346);*
- (d) *Increase women's access to higher education (ibid., para. 329) and to teaching positions (ibid., paras. 341 and 342);*
- (e) *Enhance educational opportunities for girls with disabilities;*
- (f) *Increase girls' access to sports and recreational activities (ibid., paras. 343 and 512).*

The Ministry of National and Higher Education (MENESUP), in its endeavour to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG 2), has, with the support of bilateral and multilateral partners, initiated various programmes to improve access to education in the framework of respect for equity.

Thus, small educational structures called “neighbourhood schools” have been built in the most inaccessible areas in the regions. Similarly, the “fundamental” schools mentioned in Question 16 have been established, obviating the need for students to move to regional capitals to complete their primary education. At the institutional level, too, parents’ involvement in school management has improved with the creation of administrative centres in regional capitals and, especially, the institutionalization of co-management structures and students’ parents groups at each school.

Furthermore, in view of the barriers to girls’ education, work has been undertaken at all primary schools to expand, upgrade or build, as the case may be, appropriate latrines and dormitories for girls to ensure their safety during the time they spend at the facility — the same standards being applied in new construction.

All these achievements have resulted in a significant increase in the number of girls completing the fundamental education cycle; at the primary school level, there has been a decrease in dropout and repeat rates among girls.

The natural result has been that girls are embarking on graduate studies and are more likely to complete them. Moreover, because MENESUP remains a major public service employer, many girls join the national education ministry and become teachers.

As regards girls with disabilities in particular, educational structures have been established for children with special needs, which structures are to be expanded to all regions of the country once the resource challenges, both financial and human, have been resolved.

With respect to the other issues raised in the question, it should be noted that the Republic of Djibouti provides equal access, de jure and de facto, to jobs in the public service and to higher education so long as the claimants meet the requirements (age, qualifications etc.). In terms of sports activities, MENESUP has always required all girls as well as boys to take courses in physical education, and all sports events it organizes include women’s events.

Question 18: Please describe the impact of measures taken to provide professional training for girls not attending school, promote their integration into the labour market, reinforce education on important life skills both at school and in community development centres, and fight the exploitation of girls in the worst forms of child labour (ibid., paras. 186, 187, 193 and 348).

To meet the needs of the many young female school leavers both in Djibouti City and inland, important steps have been taken:

- Strengthening of literacy and refresher programmes targeting mainly girls and women who have become literate and seeking to provide them with skills (in sewing, cooking,

hairdressing, computer skills) and the equipment necessary to perform the activity (hairdressing kit, sewing machine, cooking utensils);

- Professional training at training centres in the fields of pottery, embroidery, computer skills and maintenance, hospitality, and janitorial work;
- Establishment of the adapted military service programme (SNA) run by the national army for young school leavers of both sexes. Training is given on driving various types of equipment (trucks, self-propelled machinery ...), mechanics, electricity, masonry, etc.

In addition, the community development centres set up in all neighbourhoods of Djibouti City and in the inland regions are places where activities are organized to raise awareness on different topics (HIV/AIDS, immunizations, etc.), as well as sports, cultural, recreational and play activities.

All these initiatives have helped to train many young girls, to facilitate their social integration and transition to working life, and to empower them. In addition, they help to reduce youth unemployment and the disruptions it can engender, to forge bonds of solidarity among young people and to strengthen their cultural roots.

Question 19: In the light of women's high unemployment in the private and public sectors and their concentration in insecure jobs in the informal economy (ibid., paras. 34 and 484 to 503), please provide further information on measures taken to eliminate traditional attitudes impairing the equality of men and women in the labour market and discriminatory employment practices, such as laying off women during or following pregnancy; to promote equal participation of men and women in education, training and employment in the private and public sectors; and to address the situation of women working in the informal economy, for example by ensuring equal access to credit.

The recent forum on vocational training and employment held on 28 and 29 November 2010 helped highlight the problem of youth unemployment and appropriate solutions to redress the balance between labour market requirements and the training offered at the various training centres. This point, of youth employability and (especially) non-discrimination in access to employment, was also noted as one of the key recommendations of this forum. It was brought up as well in connection with the question of what action the Government has taken to promote women's employability, deter discrimination against them, and increase their labour force participation rate.

Moreover, in order to cope with women's insecure employment status, the Government of the Republic of Djibouti has, under its National Anti-Poverty Strategy (INDS), put a great deal of energy into facilitating investment by women in the informal sector, which is more important as a source of income for women than for men, as through no fault of their own they are excluded from the formal sector. Furthermore, the development of microcredit and microfinance has led to the creation of over 2,800 jobs between 2001 and 2006. Today, more than 4,000 women have access to these resources free of any discrimination.

On employability through trades training, we can cite in particular the following actions, which have allowed women in difficulty to better integrate into the country's socio-economic fabric:

- Grand Prize of the Head of State established: grants of more than DJF 50 million since 2000
- A driver training project for girls launched: 50 girls trained for licences B, C and D
- 30 female drivers integrated into the public and private sectors
- Training organized for female solar energy technicians in partnership with Barefoot College in India
- Post-literacy training programmes established: kitchen, computer skills, sewing. 500 girls have attended these courses and, once trained, entered the labour market

- Sewing: 100 girls
- Hairdressing: 100 girls
- Computer skills: 100 girls
- Literacy: 200 girls

On the legislative front, as regards access to employment and equal pay, the Republic of Djibouti has adopted a decree officializing competitive recruitment for all Government personnel.

Article 1 of Decree No. 2002-0170/PRE provides that, in order to ensure equal opportunity and access to work, for the efficient and effective functioning of Government and State institutions, officials and agents contracted by the State or by public enterprises and institutions should be recruited through competition as of 1 September 2002.

Djibouti's adoption of that decree demonstrates the Government's willingness to end discrimination in the employment sector suffered by women and vulnerable persons, especially inasmuch as the decree makes no distinction between men and women, so that any qualified person may apply. This was an important measure for the Government to adopt as it promotes labour market equality between men and women and promises to end discriminatory employment practices in the public sector.

Article 137 of Djibouti's Labour Code adds that for work of equal value, all workers shall receive equal pay irrespective of their origin, sex, age, status and religious denomination, as provided in the Code.

That article sets out the mandatory requirement that for equal work, men and women should receive equal pay.

Question 20: What steps have been taken to enable women to better balance professional, private and family life, for example by increasing the number and capacity of childcare facilities and preschools (ibid., paras. 316 to 318)? Please provide statistical data on the actual use by fathers of their entitlement to three days' parental leave following childbirth (ibid., para. 376).

In the Republic of Djibouti, education is compulsory and free for children aged 6 to 16. Thus, daycares and pre-schools are more fully developed in the private sector, and enrolment of children at these establishments before they enter school is at the parents' discretion, according to their financial means.

However, given that it is increasingly recognized that pre-school attendance and early socialization improve children's learning experience once they enter primary school, the Ministry of National and Higher Education has created pre-school classes for five-year-olds at schools in disadvantaged areas of Djibouti City and in five inland regions.

The Ministry for the Advancement of Women, for its part, has since 2008 developed a policy of setting up community daycares in the same areas for 3- to 4-year-olds. There are now 14 of these.

There are also many private daycares and pre-schools, whose rates range from DJF 5,000 to DJF 30,000 or more.

What is lacking at the moment are nurseries, which are very rare: there are only one or two. It should be noted that this is in a context where the nuclear family may still rely on members of the extended family, especially if they have relations in rural areas. They may find someone within the family to look after the young child or children on a voluntary or paid basis. Again, they may hire someone from outside the family, for pay. In that way, women's work can be lightened and they can achieve better balance between their working, private and family lives.

On the question of whether fathers actually make use of their right to three days' leave for the birth of their child, there are no statistics. But the three days' leave is automatic upon presentation of a birth certificate. Whether the leave is taken immediately after the child's birth or later is for each person to decide.

Question 21: Please indicate whether the State party has taken steps to amend article 259 (4) of its Labour Code, which refers to equal remuneration for equal work rather than equal remuneration for work of equal value, to bring it into conformity with article 137 of the Labour Code (ibid., para. 362) and article 11, paragraph 1 (d), of the Convention. Please also indicate any steps taken to develop objective job evaluation methods based on non-discriminatory criteria, such as skills, responsibility, working conditions and physical and mental effort, including in the context of collective bargaining. Please provide information on the working conditions and remuneration of refugee women, in particular those without residency or work permits.

The Republic of Djibouti has developed and adopted a labour code in compliance with all conventions of the International Labour Organization that it has ratified.

The Labour Code has been in force since 28 January 2006 in accordance with law 133/AN/05. Article 259, which sets out the concept of "equal remuneration for equal work" has not been amended to bring it into conformity with article 137 of the Code which enshrines the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value, which confirms the Government's commitment embodied in its ratification of ILO Convention 100 of 1978 on equal pay for men and women.

Also, the Government has taken the initiative of promoting tripartism (employer/State/employee representative) in order to promote social dialogue. Women's representation in these various organizations has been steadily growing over the past 10 years.

The employers' group is headed by a woman. Salary levels are up by some 25 to 30 per cent depending on the agreements by industry and area of activity. The Ministry of Economy and Finance and the Ministry of Employment are looking into the technical possibility of raising employment salaries in the 2011 budget for all public servants, an increasing number of whom are female in this socioprofessional category (more than 23 directors, more than 10 magistrates, 14 municipal councillors, 5 technical advisers, officers, etc.).

In terms of work and compensation for refugees, under the Labour Code adopted in Djibouti in January 2006 it is strictly prohibited for any person with refugee status to engage in employment in Djibouti.

Question 22: Please provide information on women's integration into the labour market, by occupational category. Please also provide information on social protection and pensions for women, including rural women, who are not covered by either of the two protection schemes mentioned in paragraph 365 of the report (see also paras. 364, 366 to 368 and 533) owing to labour market segregation or to their engagement in unpaid work or in the informal economy.

The Government's range of economic orientations have led to easier integration of women into all sectors of national economy through:

- Integration of the gender mainstreaming approach into the 2002-2005 strategic anti-poverty framework, and strengthening of the national initiative for social development (2007-2012).
- Development of the master plan for the 2009-2013 period to reduce poverty and achieve greater equity between the sexes.

Advancement of women within the economic fabric remains a central concern of the Government of Djibouti. In that connection, the National Social Development Initiative of January 2007 confirmed the progress made in that regard by setting major objectives for women's development and made possible the creation of the Djiboutian Social Development Agency (ADDS) as part of an integrated approach that includes infrastructure, community development, capacity building and microfinance. The Agency's mandates are essentially: to participate in the fight against poverty; to help assuage inequalities in order to avoid social exclusion of vulnerable people. Hence, the Agency must concentrate on sensitive areas, both rural and periurban, and promote higher incomes and better living conditions for women.

Furthermore, the role of women in public administration indicates that despite some progress, their presence in senior positions is still insufficient. Gender-based management planning in hiring or promotion in conjunction with the employer departments and the Ministry of Finance is likely to be highly beneficial in the light of the decree imposing a quota of at least 20 per cent in senior administrative posts by 2008.

Women aged 15 and up make up only 26.7 per cent of the working population, in part because of their low labour force participation. Of these, 43.3 per cent are self-employed, 29.8 per cent are employed in the public sector and 21.6 per cent in the private sector. The Djiboutian Household Survey (EDAM 2) put the average labour supply rate for women at 34.6 per cent, as against 73.5 per cent for men.

In the private sector, access to employment remains difficult despite the labour code adopted in 2006, which bans gender discrimination but does allow for different treatment for women in the event of maternity leave or pregnancy.

In the Republic of Djibouti, all salaried workers (public servants and contractual workers in the public or private sector) are members of a single social protection plan (NSSF). However, discrimination exists with respect to women's retirement pensions: in the event of his wife's death, a husband does not receive a survivor's pension, while women do receive one when their husband dies.

The NSSF was established by Act No. 151/AN/02/4 L establishing the National Social Security Fund (NSSF), whose mandates are:

In the short term:

- To pilot reforms to pension plans and funds, including in technical and political terms,
- To provide policy information to fund members and beneficiaries of social protection with respect to the contents of the reform,
- To advise the Government on the progress of reform.

In the medium term:

- To ensure consistency and coordination between funds and plans by all possible means;
- To seek to optimize management methods and costs, in particular by establishing common rules for information and management systems or, if necessary, by fostering the emergence of a shared informatic and organizational master plan and a set of common procedures.

Health

Question 23: Please provide detailed information on the impact of measures taken by the State party to reduce the very high maternal and infant mortality and malnutrition rates, such as awareness-raising activities to encourage exclusive and continued breastfeeding, ensuring affordable access to prenatal, perinatal and post-natal health services, including in the interior regions, and reinforcing

community health structures to assist in childbirth (ibid., paras. 26, 54, 189, 190, 397, 401 to 405, 410 to 419 and 427 and HRI/CORE/DJI/2010, para. 49).

The fundamental role of health policy in reducing maternal and infant mortality is based on the quality of care during pregnancy and childbirth.

Strategies for improvement of care depend primarily on the introduction of qualified personnel in remote areas and at referral hospitals.

The main actions undertaken include:

- Effective management of so-called “normal” pregnancy and childbirth and strengthening of mobile teams to provide care and deliver health promotion messages regarding mother and child
- Management of risky pregnancies, the main challenge for doctors and health workers being the timely detection of pregnancies having the highest risk of complications either before confinement or during the process of labour and delivery
- Development of an innovative initiative, the “mutual health plan”: to help reduce maternal and infant morbidity and mortality, community mutual health plans were established in 2008 with an expansion phase in 2009
 - o 40 communities in five regions were identified and had mutual health plans set up, with a donation of USD 500 each;
 - o 40 mutual health management committees were trained in the concept of a community mutual health plan;
 - o A second expansion phase was initiated in 2010 at 33 additional sites;
- Development of support infrastructure for pregnant women.

In the area of malnutrition, the National Nutrition Programme has set up nutrition rehabilitation units that are now operational at health facilities.

These units have equipment to measure all vital statistics (e.g., weight, height). There is a care protocol and a basic reference guide.

Five hundred community stakeholders are working in collaboration with the Ministry of Health to screen malnourished children, who are then referred to health facilities for proper care and monitoring by the appropriate personnel.

The management of severe malnutrition among children under 5, from screening to treatment, is one of the programme’s main lines of action.

The management of moderate malnutrition among children under 5 is its second line of action.

The management of moderately malnourished children covers some 68 per cent of all cases.

The programme’s third focus is nutrition for infants and young children, and especially the Baby-Friendly Hospital initiative. Its concern is to promote a healthy, balanced diet for children in general and, in particular, breastfeeding, especially exclusive breastfeeding.

The community component, social mobilization and communications play an important role in this regard.

All these actions have helped to:

- Improve the quality of services and service providers
- Bring services closer to the direct beneficiaries (women and children)
- Reduce maternal and infant mortality
- Produce greater community involvement
- Improve practices at the family and community level.

Question 24. *What further measures is the State party taking to ensure access for girls and young women to sexual and reproductive health services, including confidential counselling and family planning services, free contraceptives, and education on sexual health and rights at school, especially at the secondary level, as well as outside school, in order to increase the contraceptive coverage rate, reduce HIV/AIDS and the number of teenage pregnancies and prevent unsafe abortions (ibid., paras. 407 and 421 to 426)?*

In terms of improving sexual and reproductive health, activities focused on:

- Stepping up the fight against female genital mutilation (FGM), to achieve a significant reduction in its prevalence in the short and medium term
- Increasing the prevalence of contraception through activities including the preparation of adolescents to be sexually responsible and healthy
- The spread of family planning counselling and postnatal consultations
- Creation of the “HOUSSEINA” reproductive health referral centre, which among other roles serves as a cancer screening centre for women.

Women are the population group most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS in Djiboutian society.

Given their social vulnerability, it follows that their ability to negotiate safer sex is only moderately recognized according to their responses to the 2006 KAP survey (55 per cent with no difference by gender, age or region).

Although women do develop parallel strategies in the informal sector or through microcredit to break the vicious circle of vulnerability and risk taking, the population of young girls do not have that alternative. They suffer from the lack of an organized community framework from which to gain strength. Though community development centres (CDCs) are ideal places for young men, they do not seem to appeal to young girls. So the strategy is to identify appropriate spaces for young girls (at the CDC or not) and to integrate the gender dimension and life skills that should enable them to reduce their vulnerability. There is a need to conduct information, sex education and life skills activities specific to girls so that their concerns are taken into account.

Over the next five years, prevention efforts must take advantage of all socialization channels in order to develop information and awareness actions and build the capacity to maintain preventive attitudes.

Question 25: *In light of the feminization of the HIV/AIDS epidemic (ibid., para. 441), please indicate whether the State party has adopted a national action plan on HIV/AIDS and prevention programmes specifically targeting women and girls and aimed at involving fathers in the prevention of parent-to-child transmission. What measures are being taken to raise awareness of safe sex practices (ibid., paras. 453 and 454), destigmatize women living with HIV/AIDS and train health professionals to respect the rights of HIV/AIDS patients?*

The Prevention of Parent To Child Transmission (PPTCT) programme is hampered by the non-participation of fathers in the process, voluntary testing, neglect of results, and the difficulty of

supporting the wife — during confinement and antiretroviral prophylaxis — and the child, for medical and biological monitoring. These are some of the major obstacles to HIV-positive pregnant women's obtaining treatment and care. The plan's goal is to achieve a figure of more than 14,000 women screened and knowing their HIV status, with a prevalence of around 1.3 per cent in 2012.

The strategies implemented include: fathers' involvement in post-natal consultations; developing strategies for social mobilization around the PPTCT programme; strengthening IEC activities at all health care facilities.

People living with HIV are still strongly stigmatized and subject to various forms of discrimination. Despite the formation of five associations of people living with HIV and the adoption of a law defining the rights and duties of persons living with HIV in the Republic of Djibouti, it is clear that HIV-positive people have no public voice.

This, together with the stigmatization of the populations most at risk, severely limits access to support services and the voluntary counselling and screening centres, as may be seen by the gap between the number of reported cases and the estimates. This conclusion is reinforced by the late detection of AIDS cases.

A preliminary analysis of the 3,309 reported AIDS cases from 2004 through 2008 indicates that HIV transmission is predominantly heterosexual. Mother-to-child transmission is the second most common mode of contamination, accounting for 2 per cent of reported cases.

The mode of transmission is unspecified for 15.9 per cent of reported cases. There could be a number of reasons for this: for many, fear of a stigma probably related to the mode of transmission; multiple risk factors such that the person cannot specify the mode of transmission; and finally, failure of the reporting and documentation system for reported cases. Accordingly, appropriate measures must be taken.

Women and girls with disabilities

Question 26: Paragraph 197 of the report refers to special measures taken by the State party to enhance access by disadvantaged and vulnerable groups (women and girls) to services meeting their priority needs in the areas of health, education and social protection, and to microcredit. Please describe these measures and clarify whether they apply to women and girls with disabilities and also cover education in sexual health and rights and the provision of information in accessible and age-appropriate formats to women and girls with disabilities.

The special measures announced in paragraph 198 are described in paragraphs 319 and 350 for the field of education, in paragraphs 391 and 430 for the field of health, and in paragraphs 360, 366 and 377 for protection.

Microcredit, and specifically that extended by the Social Fund for Development, is intended only for women, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds without access to traditional financial structures, i.e. banks. Amounts ranging from DJF 30,000 to 80,000, awarded through NGOs, have enabled female beneficiaries to engage in income-generating activities.

Since 2008, savings banks and credit unions have taken over. Indeed, since its establishment, the Social Development Agency (ADDS) has been taking numerous measures for disadvantaged social groups, including women, developed social assistance through the granting of funds by the national savings and loan fund (CNEC), eased access to basic infrastructure, and provided support for community development activities.

Thanks to a line of credit of DJF 150 million from ADDS, the *Caisse Populaire d'Épargne et de Crédits* (CPEC) opened for business in January 2009; its main mandate is to support low-income households so they will have access to credit and be able to put money aside.

CPEC has over 3,000 members (women and men) receiving funds as individuals or associations. CPEC has three times as many female clients — a testament to the effort women are making to improve living conditions for themselves and their households and to overcome economic insecurity. That breakdown also reflects the programme's gender dimension and the Government's strategy of involving women in the development process.

Marriage and family

Question 27: Please indicate whether the State party is taking steps to repeal discriminatory provisions in articles 31 and 39 of the Family Code (Act 152/AN/02/4th L), whereby the husband is the head of the family whose prerogatives the wife must respect, women filing divorce are subject to stricter penalties or requirements than men and a woman's or girl's inheritance share is only half of that of a man or a boy (ibid., paras. 588 to 590 and 594).

See combined answer to questions 27 and 28

Question 28: Please provide information on any challenges encountered by the first instance personal status courts established under the Family Code, which adjudicate on family law matters, and the Ma'adoun Al Chari responsible for concluding and dissolving marriages (see HRI/CORE/DJI/2010, paras. 75 and 105 to 111) in reconciling discriminatory customary or religious law provisions governing marriage, divorce and succession with the rights and principles enshrined in the Convention.

In response to questions 27 and 28, the Family Code, and in particular one of the articles therein referred to in the questions, provides for two types of divorce:

- Divorce by mutual consent
- And the more traditional divorce, which might be called litigious divorce.

In the first case, the divorce takes place before the Ma'adoun Al Chari, an unofficial magistrate, who will first attempt to reconcile the spouses. If reconciliation fails, he draws up the act of divorce and records the reconciliation terms in an enforceable official document.

In the second case, the divorce is litigious, that is to say it takes place in court and takes the form of a trial in which the parties' rights are fully protected. These are public, adversarial proceedings in which the parties are entitled to be represented by counsel, and may appeal if they are dissatisfied with the decision.

Therefore, women's rights are fully guaranteed at all stages of the couple's life.

As regards the discriminatory provisions in question, namely the husband's role in the family and women's share of an inheritance, these cannot be amended as they are rooted in our country's higher sociocultural and religious values.

Question 29: Please provide information on the measures taken to end the continuing practice of polygamy. Please clarify whether, upon dissolution of a polygamous marriage, a wife is entitled to maintenance for herself and for common children (ibid., paras. 568 and 577 to 582). Please also provide information on civil remedies and on measures to ensure that women receive maintenance for themselves and for their children in case of abandonment by the husband, such as automatic enforcement of maintenance orders and local mediation mechanisms.

The 2002 Family Code put an end to a legal vacuum that had existed with respect to polygamy, which is now strictly regulated and limited. The wife whose husband is considering polygamy now has rights. She may, under article 22 of the Family Code, apply to the court for an assessment of the damage caused by this new marriage.

The next paragraph of the article also reflects a willingness to restrict polygamy, since the ma'adoun can solemnize the new marriage only after:

- Performing due diligence by investigating the husband's socio-economic status
- Recording the opinion of the current wife or wives.

The divorced wife is assured of child support if she has custody of the children. The breach of that obligation by the husband may have quite serious consequences, both civil and criminal.

A divorced woman having child custody may assert her rights before the Court of Personal Status, which renders a binding decision notwithstanding any recourse available.

Refusal to pay alimony is considered family abandonment under the law and constitutes a criminal offence. Perpetrators are liable to a term of imprisonment.

Question 30: Please indicate whether the State party intends to set a threshold for exceptions to the minimum age of marriage of 18 years and whether it plans to establish additional safeguards for granting such exceptions apart from requiring the consent of the child's guardian. Please provide information on any steps taken to initiate an open debate on early marriage, in particular in rural areas, as well as on sanctions and their enforcement in practice for violations of article 14 of the Family Code (ibid., paras. 194 and 569 to 572).

In order to combat early marriage, which nowadays is commonly considered a form of gender-based violence or a harmful traditional practice, the legislator has clearly set the legal age of marriage at 18 years. The ma'adoun solemnizing the marriage cannot override that provision and permit the marriage of minors unless all interested parties, namely the future spouses and their guardians, are willing.

In the Family Code, consent is the essence of the marriage contract. Thus, article 7 states that marriage is contracted only with the consent of both spouses. Article 8 reinforces this protection and states that the marriage certificate must explicitly mention any consent or authorization required by law in the case of a minor.

These provisions are mandatory. Their violation results in nullity of the marriage.

Beyond these purely legal replies, the Government regularly conducts information and education campaigns to prevent such practices.

Free and compulsory education until the age of 16, which was established by the 2000 law on the orientation of the education system, is also proving an effective way to deter early marriage and other harmful traditional practices.

Appendix

List of abbreviations

ADDS	Djiboutian Social Development Agency
AU	African Union
CDC	Community Development Centre
CDV	Voluntary Counselling and Screening
CES	middle school
CNDH	National Human Rights Commission
CNEC	National Savings and Loan Fund
CNSS	National Social Security Fund
CPEC	<i>Caisse Populaire d'Épargne et de Crédit</i>
CPN	Post-Natal Consultation
DISED	Department of Statistics and Demographic Studies
EDAME	Djiboutian Household Survey
EDIM	Multiple Demographic Indicators Survey
FDED	Fund for Djibouti's Economic Development
FGM	female genital mutilations
GBV	gender-based violence
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
INDS	National Social Development Initiative
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MPF	Ministry for the Advancement of Women, Family Welfare and Social Affairs
OPJ	criminal investigation officer
PAPFAM	Pan Arabic Project For Family Health
PPTCT	Prevention of Parent to Child Transmission programme
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SNA	Adapted Military Service Programme
SNIFD	National Strategy for Women's Integration in Development
UNFD	National Union of Djiboutian Women
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees