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EQUATORIAL GUINEA

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I. LAND AND PEOPLE

1. The Republic of Equatorial Guinea, with the exception of the island of Annobón, which is in the southern hemisphere, lies on the Gulf of Guinea. It has a surface area of around 28,051 km² and comprises two regions, the islands and the mainland.
2. The mainland region, also known as Río Muni, includes the islands of Corisco, Elobey Grande, Elobey Chico and the nearby islets. It has a surface area of 26,017 km² and borders in the north with the Republic of Cameroon, in the east with the Republic of Gabon and in the west with the Atlantic Ocean. The island region, which comprises the islands of Bioco and Annobón (2,017 and 17 km² in area respectively), borders in the north with Nigeria and in the east with the Republic of Cameroon, which lies around 30 kilometres away; Bioco is around 250 kilometres to the north of Río Muni.
3. Equatorial Guinea has a population of 494,271¹ and a population density of 17.6 inhabitants per square kilometre. Women make up 51 per cent of the population and men 49 per cent.² Sixty-one per cent of the population live in rural areas and 39 per cent in urban areas. By region, the estimated population of Río Muni is 385,141 (78 per cent of the total population), the majority of whom (73 per cent) live in rural areas and the remainder (27 per cent) in urban areas. The island region, where the capital, Malabo, is located, has 109,130 inhabitants (22 per cent of the total); 82 per cent of the island population live in urban areas and 18 per cent in rural areas.
4. According to recent estimates, between 1994 and 2000, the urban population of Malabo increased from 60,065 to 73,117, while the population of Bata, the capital of the mainland region, increased from 50,053 to 64,575 over the same period.
5. The above figures are evidence of a significant rural exodus and influx of immigrants, principally for economic reasons and reflecting in particular the impact of the oil industry.
6. In terms of age structure, the majority of the population of Equatorial Guinea are rather young, with 44 per cent aged under 15; 17.7 per cent aged between 15 and 24; 31.2 per cent between 25 and 59; and 7.1 per cent aged over 60.³

Ethnic groups and languages

7. Equatorial Guinea comprises five main ethnic groups: the Fang (85.74 per cent of the population) live chiefly in the mainland region; the Bubi (6.46 per cent) live mainly on the island of Bioco; the Ndowe (3.55 per cent) live chiefly along the coast of Río Muni; the Bisio (1.14 per cent) share the coastal zone with the Ndowe and the Fang; the Annobonese (1.64 per cent) live on the island of Annobón; and the Creoles (0.14 per cent) live on Bioco. The remainder (1.33 per cent) are foreigners.⁴ These percentages have naturally fluctuated over the last six years, for the reasons given above.

8. There are two official languages, Spanish and, since 1997, French. Spanish has been the main language of communication among the ethnic groups since the start of Spanish colonization; it is the main language of education and the most widely spoken in the country as a whole. Use of the local languages spoken by each ethnic group is restricted mainly to those ethnic groups. In Malabo, pidgin is also spoken: derived from English and originally used by the Creoles and the Nigerian colony, pidgin has now become one of the most widely spoken languages on the island of Bioco.

Religion

9. The majority of the inhabitants of Equatorial Guinea are Catholics, followed by Protestants and a considerable number of Muslims. The Freedom of Religion Act, passed in 1995, made it possible to establish other religious denominations, including the Baha'i faith, the New Apostolic Church, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, the Pentecostalists and the Betania Church. The remainder of the population practises animism.

Administrative structure

10. Administratively, the two main regions of the country are divided into seven provinces, 18 districts, 30 municipalities and around 1,000 village councils and residents' associations. The provincial and district administrations are headed by provincial governors and government representatives, respectively, while municipal administrations are headed by mayors, who, like the chairs of the village councils and the residents' associations, are elected by universal suffrage.

II. POLITICAL REFORMS

11. The passage in 1992, by general referendum, of Equatorial Guinea's constitutional reform, marked the start of the process of democratization in the country. The Constitution recognizes political pluralism (art. 1) and a series of general rights and freedoms. It also provides, in article 22, that the State should protect individuals from the moment of conception; and children are protected in order to foster their normal development and ensure their moral, psychological and physical integration, as well as a family life. Various laws have been enacted since then, including the Political Parties Act, the Assemblies and Demonstrations Act, the Multi-Party Elections Act and the Press and Publications Act. As a result, 13 political parties, which now make up the country's political spectrum, have been given legal recognition since 1992.

12. In early 1993, a national pact was signed between the Government and the country's legally recognized political parties, under which the Government and the parties undertook to adopt measures to guarantee political pluralism and respect for human rights.

13. A number of elections have been held under the new pluralist political system, both at the municipal and the national levels, and with the participation of the majority of the political parties.

III. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

14. Human rights are protected at two levels in Equatorial Guinea:

(a) Authorities with jurisdiction in the area of human rights:

(i) Judicial bodies:

Local area court;

District court;

Court of first instance and investigation;

Appeal Court;

Supreme Court of Justice.

(ii) Administrative bodies:

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and la Francophonie;

Ministry of Justice and Worship;

Ministry of Social Affairs and the Status of Women;

National Human Rights Commission.

(iii) National institutions:

National Children's Rights Committee, which is to be established nationwide;

(b) In addition to these bodies and institutions, there is ample legislation reflecting the spirit of international instruments: the 1992 Constitution, the 1990 Labour Act, the 1997 Press, Publications and Audiovisual Media Act, the 1995 Education Act, the 1992 Employment Policy Act, the 1992 Associations Act, the 1992 Civil Service Act, the 1996 Family Planning Act and the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) Act.

IV. NATIONAL POLICIES

15. In 1992, the Government ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and drew up a national plan of action for children and women for 1992 to 2000, in accordance with its obligations under the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s, adopted by the World Summit for Children, held in New York at the beginning of that year. It also adopted the Labour Act, which, among other things, regulates child labour.

16. The Civil Service Act was passed in 1992, recognizing, inter alia, women's right to work. The National Drinking Water and Environmental Health Committee was established by law in 1994, as regulator in the preparation, execution and follow-up of projects to supply drinking water to the entire population. The Education Act was promulgated in 1995, establishing, inter alia, free compulsory primary education. The Family Planning Act, passed in 1996, regulates family planning and lays the foundations for mother-child protection in Equatorial Guinea.

17. In 1996, the Government and UNICEF jointly organized a national forum on implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Equatorial Guinea. The National Children's Rights Committee was established by Decree No. 100/1997, of 30 September, and its members were appointed on 21 September of the same year.

18. In 1997, the Government adopted its medium-term economic strategy for 1997 to 2001, which provided the basis for the work of the first national economic conference, organized by the Government in Bata in September 1997, and attended by donors, NGOs and civil society. The main aim of the conference was to agree on the rational use of oil revenues.

V. CIVIL SOCIETY

19. Several laws have been enacted since 1991 to enable the formation of associations and non-governmental organizations, including the 1991 Cooperatives Act, the 1992 Associations Act and the 1992 Trade Unions Act. Given the proliferation of such associations, however, and the confusion surrounding their nature, aims and activities, the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) Act was promulgated in 1999 in order to provide an institutional framework. There are currently 83 NGOs and associations operating in Equatorial Guinea, some of them more active than others.⁵ Only three of these work exclusively with children: the Committee for the Support of the Children of Equatorial Guinea (CANIGE) in Malabo; and SOS - Kinderdorf International and REMAR, both in Bata.

20. In the area of protection of human rights, the Government established the National Human Rights Commission, a Parliamentary body, in 1990. The Centre for the Promotion of Human Rights and Democracy was established in 1998.

VI. THE MEDIA

21. There have been great improvements in the media since the advent of political pluralism in Equatorial Guinea, and particularly since the passage of the Press, Publications and Audiovisual Media Act in 1997.

A. The press

22. Print is the oldest medium of communication in Equatorial Guinea, dating from 1940, when the official newspapers of the colonial period first appeared - *Ébano* in Santa Isabel, now Malabo, and *Poto-poto* in Bata. Significant developments have also taken place in the private press. The most widely-read publications are the weeklies *La Gaceta* and *El Correo Guineoecuadoriano*. Two rather newer publications, also privately owned, are *La Opinión* and *El Tiempo*. Also published regularly are *El Patio*, a cultural review, *AYO*, a magazine for young people, *El Pige*, an advertising publication, and *Medjo m'Anuan*, a university information bulletin. There are also some information bulletins published by political parties, such as *La Voz del Pueblo*, *La Verdad* and *Tu Guía*. For educational institutions, *El Educador* is published in Bata.

B. Television

23. Equatorial Guinea currently has two television corporations. The State-owned TVGE has been in existence since independence in 1968 and has a station in Malabo, which covers all the island of Bioco and part of the mainland region, and another in Bata, which does not, however, cover the whole of the mainland region. Asonga, a new, privately-owned channel, has a single station located in Bata. TVGE broadcasts in the two official languages and all the local languages, while Asonga broadcasts in Spanish and French.

C. Radio

24. Radio is the dominant medium of communication in Equatorial Guinea, dating from the 1950s and the launch of Radio Santa Isabel, now the central studios of Radio Nacional de Guinea Ecuatorial (RNGE). In the early 1970s, Radio Ecuatorial Bata was established. In 1976, under a cooperation agreement between the Government of Equatorial Guinea and the Government of China, a new transmitter was built in Bata, and this is now the RNGE station for the mainland region. In 1997, RNGE launched a third radio station, *La Voz de Kie-Ntem*, located in Ebibeyin. RNGE broadcasts on short wave and FM. All three stations broadcast in the official languages and the local languages. Radio Asonga, which is privately owned, has been broadcasting for three years (on FM) and has two transmitters, one in Bata and the other in Malabo; it places special emphasis on topics relating to young people and broadcasts in Spanish and French. In mid-1995, under the cooperation agreements between the Governments of Equatorial Guinea and France, a Radio France Internationale relay antenna (via satellite from Paris) was installed on Pico Basilé and broadcasts on FM in French 24 hours a day. Two new rural FM stations are currently being installed, one in Mongomo, the other in Evinayong.

25. Selected basic socio-economic indicators are provided below.

A. Social indicators⁶

Literacy rate	77.1%
School enrolment rate	
Pre-school	43.5%
Primary	89.1%
Infant mortality rate	111/1 000
Maternal mortality rate	352/1 000 000
Life expectancy	55.3 years
Vaccination rates ⁷	
Polio	93% (1999)
Measles	53% (1993)
Tetanus and whooping cough	68% (1996)
Diphtheria	60% (1993)
Tuberculosis	84% (1993)
HIV/AIDS prevalence	3.48%
Incidence of absolute poverty ⁸	60%

B. Economic indicators

Per capita income⁹: US\$ 1,300

Trends in gross domestic product (GDP) (millions of CFAF)¹⁰

Year	Oil	Non-oil	Total
1993	6 500	39 883	46 383
1994	7 078	41 297	48 375
1995	8 956	45 677	54 633
1996	24 751	50 329	75 080
1997	86 973	58 526	145 449
1998	118 425	53 936	172 391
1999	147 666	64 677	212 343
2000	168 398	82 023	250 421

Notes

¹ Population and Housing census, 1994.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ *Análisis de situación de la infancia y la mujer* (Situation analysis of children and women), Government of Equatorial Guinea/UNICEF, September 2000, p. 24.

⁶ Population and Housing Census, 1994.

⁷ *Plan de Acción de las Jornadas Nacionales de Vacunación en la República de Guinea Ecuatorial* (Plan of action for national vaccination days in Equatorial Guinea), MINISABS, 1999.

⁸ World Bank, cited in the Common Country Assessment, United Nations agencies in Equatorial Guinea, 1999.

⁹ Bank of Central African States (BEAC), cited in the Common Country Assessment, United Nations agencies in Equatorial Guinea, 1999.

¹⁰ Department of Statistics.
