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Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Fifth periodic report submitted by Paraguay under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant, due in 2020*, **

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* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

** The annex to the present document may be accessed from the web page of the Committee.



Introduction

1. The Republic of Paraguay submits its fifth and sixth combined periodic reports to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in which it provides information on the efforts made, the actions taken and the progress and achievements attained, as well as the challenges and obstacles it continues to face in its implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
2. Given the time period that has elapsed since the presentation of the previous periodic report of Paraguay, the present report covers two reporting periods, from 2016 to 2024, in a single document. The combined report was prepared through an inter-agency consultation process coordinated by the Technical Unit of the Cabinet Council on Social Affairs within the Office of the President and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, within the framework of the national mechanism responsible for implementing, monitoring and reporting on recommendations, known as SIMORE Plus.¹
3. The mechanism was used to gather the information compiled in the present document, based on input provided by agencies and entities of the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government and autonomous government bodies that are part of its network of focal points. The first draft of the present document was shared with civil society organizations through the SIMORE Plus platform, which is publicly accessible.²
4. For ease of reference, the list of acronyms and abbreviations and the list of references are contained in annex I.

I. Information about the articles

Article 1

Right to self-determination and restitution of land to Indigenous Peoples

5. In 2022, there were 140,206 Indigenous persons in Paraguay, belonging to 19 Peoples and five language families. They represent 2.3 per cent of the country's population. The figure includes the populations recorded in Indigenous communities (137,507 individuals) by the fifth national population and housing census for Indigenous Peoples,³ as well as the populations recorded outside those locations (2,699 individuals) by the national population and housing census. Both censuses were conducted in 2022.⁴
6. In 2018, the authorities issued Decree No. 1039/2018 approving the protocol on consultation processes and the procedure for obtaining the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples in Paraguay. Pursuant to the provisions of the Decree, the mechanisms for the effective participation of Indigenous Peoples in decision-making were established, including the consultation procedure for Indigenous Peoples. Use of the protocol is mandatory in all cases for local, departmental and national governments, companies, international financial institutions and other public and private entities, as well as Indigenous entities that propose projects, with the aim of ensuring transparency, participation and consultation.
7. The Government undertook intersectoral efforts to establish the regulations for the mechanisms designed to ensure the efficient implementation of the protocol. In 2022, 117 consultation processes were carried out with 117 communities; consent was obtained

¹ <https://www.mre.gov.py/simoreplus/>.

² <https://gabinetesocial.gov.py/v-y-vi-informe-periodico-combinado-de-la-republica-del-paraguay-al-desc/>.

³ <https://www.datos.gov.py/dataset/iv-censo-nacional-ind%C3%ADgena-2022-resultados-finales-de-poblaci%C3%B3n-y-viviendas>.

⁴ <https://www.ine.gov.py/censo2022/>.

from Indigenous Peoples in 100 per cent of the consultations. In 2023, 172 consultation processes were carried out with 172 communities, with the same results.

8. Within the Indigenous education system, the right to self-determination is given effect by the Ministry of Education and Science through the Directorate General for Indigenous Schooling, ensuring that the right of Indigenous communities to decide their own priorities within the education system is upheld, pursuant to Section 1 of Act No. 3231/07, on Indigenous assemblies. Such priorities might include the opening of a school or the introduction of additional grades or courses in preschool, primary or secondary education, the delivery of literacy courses or other continuing education courses, or the arrangements for the teacher selection procedure. The procedure is subject to a consultation process to obtain free, prior and informed consent and is initiated and administered by the Community Assembly, a deliberative body that makes decisions with the consent of community members, on the basis of the right to autonomy.

9. In 2018 and 2019, several meetings were held as part of the national consultation process for the drafting of the National Plan for Indigenous Peoples.⁵ Rooted in broad multisectoral participation, the Plan sets out priority actions and assigns responsibility for them to the relevant institutions. It is intercultural in nature and is based on the fundamental values of Indigenous Peoples according to their worldviews, using a rights-based approach to cooperation and consultation between the State and Indigenous Peoples, with a focus on the principles of justice, democracy, respect for human rights, non-discrimination and good faith.

10. The National Plan was the result of an unprecedented participatory exercise and incorporated the vision of the 19 Indigenous Peoples of Paraguay, thereby highlighting its innovative and profoundly intercultural nature, which is based on the fundamental values of Indigenous Peoples according to their worldviews. Its strategic areas included access to economic, social, cultural and environmental rights, pursuant to the outcomes of the consultation process conducted in accordance with the procedure established in Decree No. 1039/2018 approving the protocol on consultation processes and the procedure for obtaining the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples in Paraguay.⁶

Land acquisition

11. To improve the handling of land ownership matters, the National Institute of Indigenous Affairs created the Directorate of Territorial Management as a specialized agency for land acquisition, in accordance with current regulations.⁷ During the reporting period, the National Institute of Indigenous Affairs has acquired land for 14 Indigenous communities, through the legal purchase or expropriation of private property, as follows: 3,080 hectares in 2018; 1,029 hectares in 2019; 301 hectares in 2020; 1,366 hectares in 2021; 486 hectares in 2022 and 730 hectares in 2023.

12. Under precautionary measure No. 54-13, ordered in 2016 by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, the State, through its competent institutions, is taking steps to protect the Ayoreo Totobiegosode Area of Natural and Cultural Heritage, including through the application of measures aimed at preventing deforestation and the entry of third parties. To that end, the area is constantly monitored and an early warning system is in operation with

⁵ https://www.indi.gov.py/application/files/8716/1903/8084/Plan_Nacional_Pueblos_Indigenas_-_version_digital.pdf.

⁶ <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/par198443.pdf>.

⁷ Indigenous Peoples have the right to communal ownership of land of sufficient size and quality to allow them to preserve and continue their particular ways of life. The State provides them with such land free of charge; it cannot be seized, divided or transferred, is not subject to time limits, cannot be used to fulfil contractual obligations, cannot be leased and is exempt from taxation (Constitution, 1992, art. 64). The titling process is as follows: (a) Publicly-owned real estate: adjudication pursuant to articles 16, 21 and 23 of Act No. 904/81 and in accordance with articles 17 (b) and 40 of Act No. 2419/04; (b) Privately-owned real estate: purchase using the exceptions procedure set out in articles 24 and 25 of Act No. 904/81 and article 33 of Act No. 2051/03; or, where that is not possible, by means of expropriation pursuant to the relevant provision of article 109 of the Constitution and article 26 of Act No. 904/81.

the participation of, inter alia, the National Forestry Institute and the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development. The Ministry does not grant environmental licences in the Ayoreo Totobiegosode Area of Natural and Cultural Heritage and has conducted several administrative investigations in accordance with its powers.

13. In February 2018, a specific protocol on protection against unwanted sightings or contact was approved. Drafted in line with applicable international standards, the protocol is intended to enhance the coordination of efforts to ensure respect for the Ayoreo Totobiegosode People and safeguard their rights during voluntary isolation or initial contact. In 2019, after overcoming long-standing legal obstacles, the title to 18,000 hectares of land that had been acquired by the National Institute of Indigenous Affairs many years earlier was transferred to the Ayoreo Totobiegosode People.

14. A simplified land adjudication process has been implemented for female heads of household, which has resulted in a significant increase in land titles for rural women. In the last year and a half (2022/23), 44 per cent of land titles have been granted to women, compared to the 54 per cent granted to men. This strategy is based on provisions of Act No. 1863/2002, the Agrarian Statute, which establishes that women should be given priority in access to land titling. The National Institute of Indigenous Affairs promotes the process, which was designed with a focus on strengthening communities to improve quality of life for Indigenous men and women and respecting their rights and decisions. The process is aligned with the International Labour Organization (ILO) Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) and the consultation processes and procedure for obtaining the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples.

Article 2

Adoption of measures and guarantee for the exercise of rights

Applicability of the Covenant

15. The State has incorporated into its regulatory framework the recognition of the customary rights of Indigenous Peoples and constitutional guarantees and appropriate judicial remedies for the enforceability of economic, social and cultural rights. In this context, the Supreme Court has promoted several opportunities for dialogue,⁸ aimed at judges, on compliance with treaties, as a mechanism for the application of international human rights norms, as well as on specific topics; a session was held on the right to health and justice in Paraguay,⁹ organized jointly by the Pan American Health Organization, the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare and the Supreme Court.

Institutional functioning

16. The State has a Human Rights Network within the executive branch. The Network, which was created by Decree No. 2290/09, is coordinated by the Ministry of Justice¹⁰ and is responsible for the implementation of the National Human Rights Plan (Decree No. 10747/13),¹¹ which encompasses challenges in the areas of inequality reduction, human rights, guarantees in a welfare state and human security.

17. Between 2016 and 2023, the Human Rights Network within the executive branch has drafted three action plans designed to strengthen the State's commitment to promoting sustainable human rights institutions in Paraguay. The third Action Plan of the Human Rights Network within the executive branch, covering the period 2021–2023,¹² incorporated

⁸ <https://www.pj.gov.py/notas/23213-primera-jornada-de-capacitacion-sobre-control-de-convencionalidad-con-el-presidente-de-la-corte-idh>.

⁹ <https://www.pj.gov.py/fotos/249-judicializacion-de-la-salud>.

¹⁰ <https://derechoshumanos.gov.py/red-de-derechos-humanos-del-poder-ejecutivo/>.

¹¹ https://ministeriodejusticia.gov.py/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/DECRETO_10747_13_plan_nacional_de_DDHH-01.pdf.

¹² https://ministeriodejusticia.gov.py/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/III_plan_de_accion_2021_2023_ddhh.pdf.

strategic objectives such as capacity-building in the promotion and protection of human rights, access to justice for specific groups or populations, the strengthening of the SIMORE Plus Recommendations Monitoring System, and the strengthening of interinstitutional and intersectoral coordination for the implementation of the National Human Rights Plan. Currently, the Ministry of Justice is promoting the development of the fourth Action Plan of the Human Rights Network within the executive branch, covering the period 2024–2028.

18. In 2017, with input from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, innovative solutions have been expanded and incorporated into the Recommendations Monitoring System to reinforce SIMORE Plus, for example by linking human rights recommendations with the Sustainable Development Goals and including a platform for interaction with civil society organizations, in addition to other collaborative workspaces as part of projects or initiatives with State agencies and entities.

19. The 2015–2030 Disability Plan¹³ has been designed using a human rights approach, on the basis of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the recommendations of the international promotion and protection system, which are compiled in the SIMORE Plus mechanism. The Plan has also been aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 National Development Plan. In cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the process of designing an indicator matrix was begun in 2017 and 2018 and concluded in 2019 with the approval of around 150 indicators by the National Commission on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

20. In 2020 and 2021, in a second phase, a mechanism known as the “disability label” was added to the digital platform used in the results-based planning system, with the aim of including the Disability Plan Indicator Matrices – once they have been approved and validated by the 26 State agencies and entities – in the institutional operating plans, in order to facilitate the process of reporting actions.

21. A central aspect in the continued strengthening of the institutional framework and the promotion of data-driven public policies has been the consolidation of the National Statistics System, which consists of the statistical organizations and units in Paraguay that collect, process and disseminate official statistics. Its governing body, the National Institute of Statistics, was created by Act No. 6670/2020, which also approved the modernization of the National Statistics System.

22. In addition to continuing to conduct household and other specific surveys, in 2022 the authorities conducted the eighth national population and housing census and the fourth census of Indigenous Peoples, the preliminary results of which were published in August 2024. There is room for more progress to be made in building capacity to extract statistical data from administrative records. To that end, the national strategy for the development of statistics for the period 2021–2030 was recently drafted on the basis of the outcomes of an inter-agency process.

23. As part of the process of strengthening SIMORE Plus, which is supported by the work of some 130 focal points in approximately 70 institutions of the three branches of government and autonomous government bodies, capacity-building and training sessions have been held periodically for key State officials working in the field of human rights.

24. Between 2017 and 2021, an advanced course on human rights has been delivered three times, with a particular focus on the follow-up given to recommendations emanating from the international system for the protection of human rights. In addition, there are specialized programmes on the international human rights system and topics identified as relevant in the follow-up and implementation of the recommendations made to Paraguay, using the Human Rights Education Methodology developed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

25. Since 2022, training has been focused on the specific commitments that the State has made before international human rights protection mechanisms. Calendars of ordinary and extraordinary meetings have been drawn up, on the basis of the relevant rules of procedure, with a view to expediting the drafting of national reports, preparing for constructive dialogues

¹³ <https://acnudh.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/042-Resumen-Ejecutivo-Plan-Discapacidad.pdf>.

and reviewing the recommendations received. Training and updates have also been provided on the subject matter of each commitment.

Ombudsman's Office

26. The Ombudsman's Office has a constitutional mandate to channel citizen complaints, denounce human rights violations and coordinate action to ensure compliance with the national and international human rights instruments in force in Paraguay. Following its reaccreditation process before the Subcommittee on Accreditation of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, the Ombudsman's Office has regained category A status according to the Paris Principles.

Investment in social spending

27. In a complex global economic context, combined with the recovery from the public health crisis, the containment of inflation and the loss of purchasing power, Paraguay is notable in the region for its robust economic outlook. The country stands out for its resilience to internal and external shocks, with recorded economic growth of 4.7 per cent in 2023 and projected growth of between 3.8 and 4 per cent in 2024.

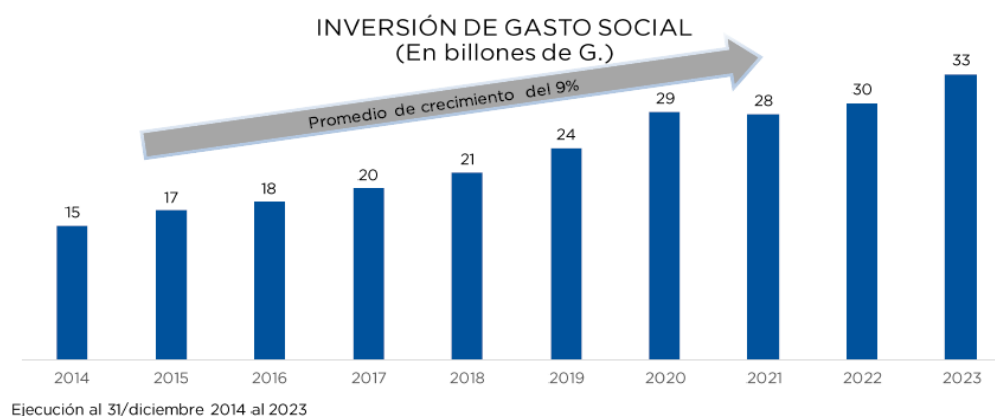
28. This result is attributed to favourable weather conditions that boosted the primary sector, which saw growth of 19.7 per cent, while the secondary and tertiary sectors showed growth of 2.2 per cent and 3.2 per cent, respectively. Public spending is optimized by aligning the real needs of the range of public institutions with the available resources.

29. Between 2016 and 2023, State tax revenue rose by several million guaraníes (G) from G 11,734,694 to G 19,028,842, an increase of 62 per cent. Revenue collected through personal income tax rose from G 140,554 million to G 454,744 million, representing an increase of 223 per cent.¹⁴

Investment in social protection

30. Social investment is a category of public spending that accounts for the amount of financial resources allocated by the State to the provision of goods and services in different social sectors, mainly in education, health, social protection and housing. It includes funding for various social programmes, which give expression to public policies and government initiatives aimed at improving the living conditions of people in need.

31. Social spending investment in the last 10 years experienced average growth of 9 per cent, which in monetary terms is equivalent to an average increase of G 1.9 trillion.



Anti-corruption efforts

32. The National Anti-Corruption Secretariat is the governing, regulatory and strategic body responsible for the design, execution, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the State's public policies in the areas of anti-corruption efforts, integrity and transparency.

¹⁴ <https://www.dnit.gov.py/web/portal-institucional/estadisticas>.

During the reporting period, the following have been promoted: the Anti-Corruption Complaints Portal,¹⁵ a system for the registration and follow-up of criminal cases, case summaries and investigations,¹⁶ and the platform¹⁷ for monitoring compliance with active transparency obligations in the public sector (public access tools). In addition, the National Integrity, Transparency and Anti-Corruption Plan 2021–2025¹⁸ (Decree No. 4458/20) was approved and was implemented by the National Integrity and Transparency Team, which was established through Decree No. 3003/19.

33. To supplement the transparency guidelines already issued, the National Anti-Corruption Secretariat approved and implemented tools such as the transparency manual, which sets out minimum parameters for publicly accessible information; the Citizen Accountability Manual,¹⁹ which establishes guidelines for accountability in public institutions, with the aim of improving public management, guaranteeing social control and preventing corruption; and the Guide to creating corruption risk maps for State agencies and entities within the executive branch, which is a management tool that allows institutions to identify, analyse and monitor events that might give rise to corruption, including in terms of probability, and their likely impact.

34. In August 2023, the Office of the Presidency convened a summit of the three branches of government with the aim of establishing a road map for the drafting of a cross-cutting public policy for combating corruption. The Office prepared and published the National Anti-Corruption Strategy, which reflects the firm and irrevocable commitment made by the State and constitutional bodies to address the scourge of corruption in Paraguay.

35. Several reports have been released on the implementation of the National Integrity, Transparency and Anti-Corruption Plan;²⁰ the most recent states that the level of compliance with active transparency obligations by the State agencies and entities has increased from 61.89 per cent in 2019 to 96.6 per cent in 2023. As of 2024, there are 92 Transparency and Anti-Corruption Units, 89 of which are part of the executive branch, the other 3 being part of the other branches of government. In addition, there is a complaints system with a data dashboard available online.²¹

36. Between 2016 and 2019, 5,031 complaints were registered: 4,029 were anonymous, 611 were public and 391 contained protected data. Of the total, 758 were rejected by the National Anti-Corruption Secretariat and 907 by the Transparency and Anti-Corruption Unit of the relevant institutions; 234 gave rise to administrative proceedings and 271 to criminal complaints; and 1,057 were dismissed. Between 2020 and 2023, 6,458 complaints were registered: 5,104 were anonymous, 1,018 were public and 336 contained protected data. Of the total, 571 were rejected by the National Anti-Corruption Secretariat and 2,575 by the Transparency and Anti-Corruption Unit of the relevant institutions; 78 gave rise to administrative proceedings and 121 to criminal complaints; and 1,503 were dismissed.

37. As the body representing society, one of the commitments of the Public Prosecution Service is to strengthen the prosecutorial management and oversight system and the relevant auxiliary units in order to mitigate any risks that might give rise to poor management practices. With a view to upholding this commitment, channels have been set up to enable citizens to file confidential complaints against service providers within the Public Prosecution Service with respect to acts of corruption or acts that are detrimental to the interests of the Service or to those of society. To that end, there is a tab on the Service's website that takes users to the Service's internal anti-corruption complaints platform.²²

¹⁵ www.denuncias.gov.py.

¹⁶ <https://paneldenuncias.senac.gov.py/#/>.

¹⁷ <https://bit.ly/panel-transparencia-senacpy>.

¹⁸ <https://nube.senac.gov.py/s/jRWRXY6nH8iKmMx#pdf.viewer>.

¹⁹ The Manual was approved by Decree No. 2991 of 6 December 2019. It was declared to be of national interest, and its application is mandatory for all bodies in the executive branch.

²⁰ <https://nube.senac.gov.py/s/HE2fWd2JsPL5ewp>.

²¹ <https://paneldenuncias.senac.gov.py/>.

²² <https://www.ministeriopublico.gov.py/denuncia/index.html>.

38. The Public Prosecution Service offers specialized academic programmes aimed at improving and raising awareness of prosecutorial management as an effective anti-corruption tool, drawing on scientific and academic research and publications of the Law Review. Between 2019 and 2021, key topics were addressed with the aim of creating a space for informed debate to highlight the problem of corruption.

39. A number of anti-corruption strategies have been established, including the creation of prosecutorial management indicators for the Economic Crimes and Anti-Corruption Unit; financial investigations and asset recovery; a module on principles and ethical values for public officials in the fight against corruption; and discussions surrounding the negative effects of corruption on the realization of economic, social and cultural rights.

40. Through Decision No. 7916/20, the Supreme Court of Justice designated 2020 as the Year of the Fight against Corruption and Impunity. As part of the initiative, it launched a publication on regulations and rulings on corruption and human rights²³ and held a webinar on the issue. As part of its policy on transparency and access to information, the Supreme Court made available to the public three web platforms, including that of the Observatory for Court Cases,²⁴ with the aim of enhancing the monitoring of corruption-related cases.

41. The judiciary's Complaints and Reports Office promotes transparency and combats corruption and impunity by conducting investigations that involve the Office of the Superintendent General of Justice and the Council of Superintendents. Since 2006, the number of complaints filed has increased by 5,000 per cent, demonstrating that the transparency and anti-corruption programme is reaching a growing number of people.

42. Act No. 6814/21²⁵ established the procedure for the prosecution and potential removal from office of members of courts of appeal, judges, prosecutors, deputy prosecutors, public defenders and deputy public defenders.

43. Courts specialized in economic crimes and corruption have been established pursuant to Act No. 6379/19.²⁶ These courts, which have the power to hear, rule on and enforce decisions in cases of bribery, malfeasance and other offences, have been further strengthened through Act No. 6430/19 on preventing, criminalizing and punishing transnational bribery.²⁷ Furthermore, since 2019, the police information system has included the data category "acts involving fraud, deceit or corruption", which is further broken down into subcategories including allegations of usury, bribe-taking, fraud, unlawful enrichment, influence peddling, bribery and corruption.

44. The Public Prosecution Service has a Specialized Economic Crimes and Anti-Corruption Unit that investigates acts of public corruption and economic crimes. The Unit is located within a Deputy Prosecutor's Office and is made up of a team of 14 prosecutors. It also has a Specialized Money-Laundering Unit that investigates punishable acts of money-laundering and financing of terrorism. This Unit is located within a Deputy Prosecutor's Office and has 17 criminal investigation offices around the country. The Specialized Units have recorded significant favourable results in terms of indictments and convictions.

45. The Anti-Corruption Unit of the Ministry of the Interior became the Directorate General for Transparency and Anti-Corruption. By means of Act No. 7280/24 reforming and modernizing the National Police, and its regulations as subsequently set out in a resolution of the National Police, a new organizational structure was established, including the creation,

²³ <https://www.pj.gov.py/images/contenido/ddh/Normativas-y-pronunciamientos-sobre-corrupcion-y-DDHH.pdf>.

²⁴ <https://www.pj.gov.py/observatorio>.

²⁵ <https://www.bacn.gov.py/leyes-paraguayas/9752/ley-n-6814-regula-el-procedimiento-para-el-enjuiciamiento-y-remocion-de-magistrados-judiciales-agentes-fiscales-defensores-publicos-y-sindicos-de-quebra-y-deroga-la-ley-n-37592009-que-regula-el-procedimiento-para-el-enjuiciamiento-y-remocion-de-magistrados-y-deroga-las-leyes-antecedentes-y-sus-modificatorias>.

²⁶ <https://www.bacn.gov.py/leyes-paraguayas/9363/ley-n-6379-crea-la-competencia-en-delitos-economicos-y-crimen-organizado-en-la-jurisdicion-del-fuero-penal>.

²⁷ <https://www.bacn.gov.py/leyes-paraguayas/9225/ley-n-6430-previene-tipifica-y-sanciona-los-hechos-punibles-de-cohecho-transnacional-y-soborno-transnacional>.

within the Transparency and Anti-Corruption Department and the Office for Access to Public Information, of three additional units responsible for preventing and detecting acts of corruption.

46. The Act provided for the creation of the Directorate General of Internal Affairs, which had previously been a department, and conferred upon it responsibility for investigating police personnel who might have broken the law or violated police rules in or outside of the course of their duties. The Directorate General is also required to bring to the attention of the Public Prosecutor's Office any facts that come to its attention that might constitute punishable acts.

Article 2

Non-discrimination

47. The general normative framework on equality and non-discrimination is contained in part I, title II, chapter III of the Constitution, article 46 of which states that everyone living in Paraguay is equal in dignity and rights and clearly stipulates that discrimination is not permitted. Equality between women and men and non-discrimination on the basis of sex are enshrined in article 48 of the Constitution, which, as the supreme body of law in the legal system, takes precedence over any potentially discriminatory provisions that still exist in subordinate legal instruments.

48. Pursuant to article 45 of the Constitution, the absence of a regulatory law cannot be invoked to deny or limit any right or guarantee; in this regard, although the challenge of adopting a law prohibiting all forms of discrimination remains, by constitutional mandate efforts are being made to remove obstacles and factors that facilitate or encourage discrimination. The introduction of a number of public policy instruments has led to progress in the establishment of specific anti-discrimination regulations.

49. In 2020, a letter was signed approving the actions and inter-agency commitments to be undertaken by the European Union and the Supreme Court as part of the EUROsociAL+ Programme. Under the agreement, the judiciary proposed to conduct an analysis of the application of the principle of equality and non-discrimination, to be used as a starting point from which to strengthen the judiciary and the justice system, including judicial decisions. Plans were also made for the preparation of a guide to the application of the principle of equality and non-discrimination. In this connection, the Supreme Court approved a guide on guaranteeing access to justice for all without distinction in Paraguay. Awareness-raising and training sessions on the use of the guide were held for magistrates and officials from all judicial districts in 2021, 2022 and 2023.

50. As a strategy for strengthening and monitoring the application of the guide, the judiciary organized the first Excellence Award competition for the incorporation of the right to equality and non-discrimination in judicial decisions. The Award is presented in recognition of excellence in the judiciary in terms of incorporating a gender perspective in court decisions, as a strategy that enables progress to be made in respecting, protecting and guaranteeing human rights.

51. In addition, significant progress has been made in protecting the rights of lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual and intersex persons through the adoption of resolutions and protocols in various areas. The National Sexual and Reproductive Health Plan 2019–2023 sets out healthcare strategies aimed at lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual and intersex persons. In Resolution No. 1287/2020, the Public Defence Service approved the implementation of a protocol for lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual and intersex persons in all its offices. As a source of data for public anti-discrimination policies, the variable “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex” was included in complaints recorded in the Marandú police information system.

52. The State has made efforts to combat discriminatory gender stereotypes, both at the institutional level and in society as a whole, through actions set out in the 2030 National Development Plan, which is the first national planning document in which the perspective of equality between men and women is established as an essential principle. The Plan sets out

the need for special efforts to guarantee women's rights and prevent the propagation of traditional gender roles and stereotypes. The fourth National Equality Plan 2018–2024 also sets out strategies for achieving substantive equality between men and women and seeking to remove obstacles that hinder or prevent it and to eliminate all forms of discrimination.

53. In addition to offering public services exclusively for women in coordination with more than 13 institutions and private sector entities, the management of the Ciudad Mujer (Women's City) centre, which is part of the Ministry for Women, organizes a series of talks addressing the prevention of violence against women, the concept of equality and the main inequality gaps in the country, stereotyped roles with a view to achieving a more egalitarian culture and themes that allow reflection, awareness and awareness-raising in terms of the societal value of equality for women and girls.

54. The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security has implemented job training courses aimed specifically at rural women, with a focus on areas with high productivity and labour demand. In 2022 and 2023, 3,954 women in the rural sector received training and guidance to improve their skills and job opportunities.

People of African descent: rights and the fight against racism and racial discrimination

55. According to official data, there are 3,867 people of African descent in Paraguay, which represents less than 0.1 per cent of the country's total population. They reside mainly in three communities: Kamba Kuá, located on the outskirts of Asunción; Kamba Kokué, on the outskirts of Paraguari, a district in the department of the same name; and in the town of Emboscada, a district in the Department of Cordillera.

56. In addition, the National Secretariat for Culture has identified Yaguarón and San Roque González (formerly Tavapy), in the Department of Paraguari, and Kamba Requejo and Belén, in the Department of Concepción, as areas which are home to people of African descent. The cultural identity of people of African descent is being revived by the country's dynamic Afro-Paraguayan organizations, which have been promoting festivals and other cultural traditions for decades and, for some years now, have been participating in a range of public policy coordination bodies such as the National Council for Culture.

57. Much of the progress made in the recognition of this important cultural minority come from the cultural policies of national and international institutions. As a member of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), Paraguay participates in the Meeting of Ministers and High-level Authorities on the Rights of People of African Descent, which has developed regional planning initiatives designed to trickle down into local agendas. Other programmes and platforms, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), have contributed to their visibility through regional projects such as the Slave Route. Important inventory initiatives have been undertaken at the official level, such as at the slavery memorial sites in Paraguay.

58. The State promoted the National Action Plan on Population and Development 2018–2019,²⁸ which included a section on people of African descent that covers issues such as rights and combating racism and racial discrimination. The Plan is aimed at promoting the development of people of African descent through affirmative action plans and programmes, with special emphasis on adolescents and women of African descent, and the implementation of the provisions of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

59. In July 2022, a historic milestone was reached as a result of the participatory process involving Afro-Paraguayan organizations and the trickle-down process of coordination of public policies, namely the enactment of Act No. 6940, which establishes mechanisms and procedures to prevent and punish acts of racism and discrimination against people of African descent, such as the development of a National Plan for the Promotion, Development and Protection of Human Rights, the introduction of fines to punish acts of discrimination and

²⁸ <https://www.stp.gov.py/v1/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Plan-de-acción-nacional-en-población-y-desarrollo.pdf>.

the creation of the National Registry of People of African Descent. By Decree No. 2915 of 26 November 2024,²⁹ the executive branch issued the regulations to accompany the Act and created the National Afro-Paraguayan Council, a consultative body that backed the Act. Data and statistics on this population group are very scarce, given the small number of people who self-identify as being of African descent.

Article 3

Equal rights of men and women

60. The fourth National Plan for Equality is aimed at achieving legal and substantive equality, equal opportunities and equal outcomes. It sets out clear goals and objectives to be achieved and the obstacles to reaching those goals and objectives and applying them in the different sectoral policies and competencies. The Plan is aligned with the five rights-based axes (non-discrimination, empowerment in decision-making, physical autonomy, economic empowerment and access to justice) and the four cross-cutting axes (equality between men and women, human rights approach, elimination of discriminatory stereotypes, and intercultural and bilingual approach) established in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The Ministry for Women is the State's lead agency for the Plan and works to ensure that the gender perspective is mainstreamed in all spheres of society, including aspects related to poverty, education and training, health, violence, economy, power and decision-making, human rights, the media and the environment.

61. The National Development Plan is 92 per cent aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. To ensure the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda, a national inter-agency commission was established in 2016 with responsibility for the monitoring and follow-up of the Sustainable Development Goals. The commission was restructured in 2020 through Decree No. 3581, which strengthened the participation of the Ministry for Women in the relevant management, operational and technical bodies. A specific subcommittee was created for Sustainable Development Goal 5, on gender equality and women. The Ministry for Women is the subcommittee's lead agency, and other State agencies working on gender-related issues participate in it. The subcommittee's functions include intersectoral coordination to compile information on actions related to gender equality, collaboration with the National Institute of Statistics to design national indicators, and promotion and coordination of activities related to Sustainable Development Goal 5. The drafting of the multisectoral thematic report on that Goal is an important task undertaken by the subcommittee. The report serves as a baseline against which to assess the country's performance in relation to the Goal's targets and to seek alternative means of achieving them.

62. In the legislative arena, two bills were introduced to address gender-related wage disparities and promote equality in the workplace. Bills No. S-199205³⁰ and No. S-2211034³¹, which establish equal salaries for men and women in the public and private sectors, are in their first reading.

63. In 2020, the Supreme Court instituted the Gender Equality Seal programme for public institutions, at the initiative of the United Nations Development Programme. The programme is aimed at closing persistent gender gaps in the workplace by supporting public and private institutions with tools, advice and specific evaluation criteria to ensure favourable implementation and certification. In this context, thanks to the efforts of the judiciary's Gender Secretariat, the highest judicial instance was awarded the Gender Equality Seal for public institutions at the silver level. The award marked an important milestone, making the judiciary the first public institution in Paraguay to receive such international recognition.

²⁹ <https://decretos.presidencia.gov.py/api/norma/download/6745cabb05d174130733e071>.

³⁰ Bill on the establishment of wage equality between men and women in the public and private sector, introduced on 28 November 2019. See <http://silpy.congreso.gov.py/expediente/108883>.

³¹ Bill on the establishment of wage equality between men and women in the public and private sector, introduced on 4 August 2022. See <http://silpy.congreso.gov.py/expediente/126328>.

Article 5

Criteria for interpreting the Covenant

64. The State does not permit any restriction or impairment of any of the fundamental human rights. On the contrary, the Constitution states that the list of rights and guarantees contained therein should not be understood as a denial of others not expressly contained therein that are inherent to human beings. The absence of a regulatory law cannot be invoked to deny or limit any right or guarantee.

Article 6

Right to work

65. Between 2009 and 2019, the service sector has predominated, accounting for 52.8 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in 2019, followed by secondary activities, which accounted for 35.3 per cent of GDP in 2019. Agricultural and livestock activities, which accounted for 11.9 per cent of GDP in 2019, have nevertheless continued to play a key role in the economy, accounting for 20 per cent of employment and, together with hydroelectric power exports, representing an important source of export revenue. Paraguay is also the world's fourth largest exporter of soybeans and the ninth largest exporter of beef. Exports of soybeans and their derivatives, such as residues and oils, represent 35 per cent of total exports. They are followed by hydroelectric power exports at 20.4 per cent.

66. The State approved the National Employment Plan 2022–2026,³² which sets out the following goals: stimulate public and private efforts to generate formal employment based on economic growth; promote more sustainable and productive economic activities; and promote workers' access to social security, improvements to their income and the transition to the formal sector.

67. The national workforce in the first quarter of 2024 stood at 70.5 per cent (3,082,606 people), a statistically significant increase of 1.6 percentage points compared to the same period of 2023, when it had stood at 68.9 per cent. Taking into account distribution by area of residence, there was a significant increase of 2.4 percentage points in rural areas. This increase is mainly due to growth in the number of women in the workforce.

68. Employment continued to grow at a positive rate in the first quarter of 2024, with the creation of 76,402 new jobs, most of which were generated in the private sector, with a majority being filled by women. Job creation in the private sector was accompanied by the growth of labour formalization. More than 22,000 new private sector workers were registered in formal employment, representing nearly 30 per cent of the total.

69. During the first quarter of 2024, approximately 212,740 people were unemployed, representing 6.9 per cent of the workforce. Compared to the same period in 2023, the unemployment rate increased slightly, by 0.4 percentage points (6.5 per cent versus 6.9 per cent). At the national level, in the first quarter of 2024, the combined rate of unemployment and underemployment due to insufficient working hours was 9.8 per cent. Compared to the same period in 2023, the rate decreased slightly, by 0.4 percentage points (10.2 per cent versus 9.8 per cent).

Unemployment and underemployment

70. In 2017, open unemployment at the national level stood at 5.2 per cent. It then remained relatively stable, increasing to 7.2 per cent in 2020, 6.8 per cent in 2021 and 5.2 per cent in 2023. In 2017, the combined rate of unemployment and underemployment at the national level was 10.6. It increased to 11.5 in 2018, 12.3 in 2019 and 14.0 in 2020 and then dropped to 11.4 in 2021 and 8.4 in 2023.

71. In the area of employment, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security is working to strengthen services to address labour issues, with a special focus on paid domestic work and workplace violence. Service delivery protocols are being harmonized,

³² https://www.mtess.gov.py/application/files/8116/5235/9204/plan_nacional_empleo.pdf.

and checks are being made to ensure that breastfeeding rooms are available in workplaces. In addition, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security offers education and training programmes to improve women's access to formal employment, including management or decision-making roles. The "Employ Equality" and other strategies have been launched, and platforms such as EmpleaPy³³ have been set up to facilitate access to the labour market. At the Ciudad Mujer (Women's City) centre, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security coordinates the economic empowerment module, which offers a range of courses and training and provides employment guidance and assessments, capacity-building for female entrepreneurs and information on women's economic rights.

72. According to data provided by the skills assessment department of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security with respect to the activities conducted with Indigenous communities, sign-up sessions were held by the Ministry's job search office in 2021 as part of the economic recovery project in the Department of Concepción consisting of the opening of a world-class industrial plant to process eucalyptus pulp. As a result, 54 people from the Redención Indigenous community have applied for vacancies in the construction sector and for training as pulp plant operators in the aforementioned project. Between 2020 and 2023, the Ministry has registered 533 people from Indigenous communities (248 women and 285 men).

73. The National Labour Training System develops job training projects for the Indigenous population in partnership with non-governmental organizations working in the interests of this population group. Between 2021 and 2023, 856 Indigenous persons were certified (359 men and 497 women).

74. The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security conducts general and targeted inspections to verify claims of workplace violence, including mandatory pregnancy and HIV testing requirements in hiring procedures. In addition, it has adopted Resolution No. 388/19, which creates an office responsible for tackling and preventing workplace violence and establishes the procedure for responding to cases of violence, bullying or sexual harassment in the workplace,³⁴ and is working on a specific inspection and oversight protocol for cases of physical, sexual or psychological violence in the workplace and of required pregnancy or HIV tests in the workplace, with the aim of ensuring enhanced monitoring of regulatory compliance and the application of corresponding sanctions.

75. The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security works in coordination with the Saraki Foundation to provide training and job placements for persons with disabilities, pursuant to Act No. 4962/2013, which establishes incentives for employers to encourage the hiring of persons with disabilities in the private sector,³⁵ and promotes the use of the Inclusive Companies Seal. The initiative is designed to recognize and promote the work carried out by private companies, civil society organizations and public bodies in the areas of labour inclusion and accessibility.

76. Through the SAPE'A 2.0 Programme, in partnership with Plan International Paraguay and financed by the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security works to ensure access to vocational training and decent employment, using an inclusive and differential approach, and training to improve the employability of young people in vulnerable situations in the Departments of San Pedro, Caaguazú, Guairá and Central, with a special focus on women. Among the main results of the project, 193 training courses were developed, reaching 4,788 young people between 17 and 29 years of age, of whom 64 per cent are women, 20 per cent are persons with disabilities and 3 per cent belong to Indigenous communities.

77. The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security is making efforts to promote equal rights and decent working conditions for domestic work. The adoption of Act

³³ <https://bolsa.mtess.gov.py/buscadore/login.php?return=true&>.

³⁴ <https://www.mtess.gov.py/index.php/documentos/resolucion-mtess-n-3882019>.

³⁵ <https://www.bacn.gov.py/leyes-paraguayas/1165/establece-beneficios-para-los-empleadores-a-los-efectos-de-incentivar-la-incorporacion-de-personas-con-discapacidad-en-el-sector-privado>.

No. 6338/19, amending article 10 of Act No. 5407/15,³⁶ brought wages in this sector into line with the legal minimum wage. The Labour Affairs Service of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security receives complaints about non-compliance with labour regulations and offers free legal advice.

78. In the public sector, the Office of the Deputy Minister for Human Capital and Organizational Management, within the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance, promotes policies for the management and development of people, with merit-based processes for entry into the civil service. Legislation is in place setting minimum quotas for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the civil service; the number of persons with disabilities employed by the civil service must not drop below 5 per cent of the total number of employees. A requirement is also in place for persons belonging to Indigenous communities to make up at least 1 per cent of appointed officials in public institutions.³⁷

Statistical data on persons with disabilities in the public administration, by sex³⁸
Persons with disabilities in the public administration

<i>Year</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
2018	67.24 %	32.76 %
2019	65.06 %	34.94 %
2020	65.05 %	34.95 %
2021	62.93 %	37.07 %
2022	62.42 %	37.58 %
2023	61.47 %	38.53 %
2024	60.14 %	39.86 %

79. The Office of the Deputy Minister for Human Capital and Organizational Management periodically prepares a report on the composition of the civil service of the three branches of government, by gender, category and salary level. The reports for 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 are available online.³⁹

80. There are also public policy instruments such as a protocol for dealing with cases of workplace violence;⁴⁰ a methodological guide to incorporating the gender perspective, non-discrimination and proper treatment in the institutional regulations of the State agencies and entities;⁴¹ the second Equality, Inclusion and Non-Discrimination Plan 2020–2024;⁴² and a guide for the preparation of plans for the inclusion of persons with disabilities, which was drafted through a participatory process.

81. Act No. 5508/2015 on promotion and protection of maternity and provision of support for breastfeeding was amended and extended by Act No. 6453/2019 to include the Supreme Court, the Public Defence Service, the Public Prosecution Service and higher education

³⁶ <https://www.bacn.gov.py/leyes-paraguayas/8840/ley-n-6338-modifica-el-articulo-10-de-la-ley-n-540715->.

³⁷ Act No. 3585/2008 amending articles 1, 4 and 6 of Act No. 2479/2004 establishing the mandatory hiring in public institutions of persons with disabilities. <https://www.bacn.gov.py/leyes-paraguayas/1111/modifica-los-articulos-1-4-y-6-de-la-ley-n-247904-que-establece-la-obligatoriedad-de-la-incorporacion-de-personas-con-discapacidad-en-las-instituciones-publicas>.

Act No. 6279/2019 establishing the mandatory hiring in public institutions of persons belonging to Indigenous communities. <https://www.bacn.gov.py/leyes-paraguayas/8691/ley-n-6279-establece-la-obligatoriedad-de-la-incorporacion-de-las-personas-pertenecientes-a-las-comunidades-indigenas-en-las-instituciones-publicas>.

³⁸ Source: Open Data Portal, Office of the Deputy Minister for Human Capital and Organizational Management, available at: <https://datos.sfp.gov.py/visualizaciones/resumen>.

³⁹ <https://www.sfp.gov.py/vchgo/index.php/noticias-2-4/datos-sobre-el-funcionariado>.

⁴⁰ https://www.sfp.gov.py/vchgo/application/files/1817/3107/2279/Protocolo_-_Perspectivas_de_Genero_-_acoso_laboral.pdf.

⁴¹ https://www.sfp.gov.py/vchgo/application/files/5717/3107/2098/Guia_-_Perspectivas_de_Genero_-_acoso_laboral.pdf.

⁴² https://www.sfp.gov.py/vchgo/index.php/download_file/view/2124/314.

institutions and to establish sanctions for non-compliance with the provision of breastfeeding rooms.

82. The National Care Policy,⁴³ which recognizes the importance of sharing domestic and family responsibilities between men and women and the shared responsibility for care between families, the State and society, is in the process of being approved. The adoption of the Policy is a national priority, and significant progress has been made in its implementation, including the creation of the Inter-Agency Care Commission and the preparation of the corresponding action plan.

83. Under the SAPE'A 2.0 Programme, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security provided capital to rural women entrepreneurs in the Departments of San Pedro and Caaguazú. It also granted certifications, technical assistance and support for the formalization of enterprises, benefiting hundreds of rural women in Paraguay. The Ministry's Directorate General for the Advancement of Women in the Workplace is responsible for strengthening comprehensive labour policies, with the aim of improving compliance with labour laws that protect workers and their working conditions. The Labour Affairs Service provides specialized legal advice in employment matters and facilitates the referral of complaints, with a view to improving compliance with labour laws that protect working women and their working conditions. The specialized service is also available at the various regional labour offices nationwide.

84. Available data demonstrate that between 2018 and 2023, a total of 54,196 women, including 497 Indigenous women, have received training through the National Labour Training System. The training is delivered in all parts of the country, covering both rural and urban areas.

Training delivered through the National Labour Training System⁴⁴

<i>Year</i>	<i>Courses</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Total</i>
2018	427	4 767	6 562	11 329
2019	547	5 624	9 007	14 631
2020	500	5 069	8 620	13 689
2021	738	7 203	14 604	21 807
2022	431	4 653	9 129	13 782
2023	378	3 324	6 274	9 598
2024	121	1 347	2 282	3 629

Article 7

Conditions of work

85. Since 2016, the executive branch has been empowered to consider adjustments to the minimum wage as proposed by the National Minimum Wage Council, based on the year-on-year variation of the consumer price index and its impact on the national economy, as at June each year. Using this calculation method, six wage adjustments were made between 2017 and 2023, giving an average annual variation of 4.6 per cent.⁴⁵

86. Following the creation of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security pursuant to Act No. 5115/13, emphasis has been placed on strengthening the labour inspection system. The system for digital and standardized labour law compliance inspections was launched in December 2018 with the aim of streamlining the work of labour inspectors. Training has been conducted on the application of all ILO Conventions ratified

⁴³ <https://mujer.gov.py/que-es-la-politica-nacional-de-cuidados-del-paraguay/>.

⁴⁴ Data for 2024 reflect the period between January and July.

⁴⁵ <https://www.mtess.gov.py/noticias/salario-minimo-se-reajusto-en-promedio-46-en-los-ultimos-siete-anos#:~:text=Para%20el%20presente%20periodo%2C%20la,desde%20el%20primero%20de%20julio.>

by Paraguay, particularly the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

87. Pursuant to ILO Conventions No. 29 and No. 105, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security coordinates the National Commission on Fundamental Labour Rights and Prevention of Forced Labour, a tripartite body responsible for the coordination of policies on the prevention and eradication of forced labour. The Commission's main tools are the National Strategy for the Prevention of Forced Labour 2021–2024⁴⁶ and the Tripartite Inter-Agency Guide to Intervention in Cases of Forced Labour,⁴⁷ which constitutes its road map. The Commission has received support from ILO since its creation and from the Paraguay Okakuaa project, which is funded by the United States Department of Labor, since 2018.

88. The Supreme Court issued Resolution No. 1669/2022 approving a mechanism for handling cases of workplace violence in the judiciary, with the general objective of establishing a practical action guide for protecting judicial employees from workplace violence, preventing such violence, responding to any cases that do arise and handing down punishments.

Article 8

Right to form trade unions and to strike

89. The right to form trade unions and to take strike action is enshrined in the Constitution, namely article 96, on freedom of association, and article 98, on the right to strike and to participate in work stoppages. In addition, article 42 defines the scope of freedom of association and article 32 defines the scope of freedom of assembly and of demonstration. The legal regulations stipulate the relevant exceptions, enshrine trade union freedoms and independence and place limits on any State intervention that might hinder their exercise.

90. In the public sector, all matters relating to the formation of trade unions are regulated in Act No. 1626/2000 on the civil service, namely chapter XVI on the formation of trade unions. Act No. 213/93, the Labour Code, as amended by Act No. 496/95, addresses the issue in chapter II (articles 268 to 325) on the formation of trade unions. Currently, it can be argued that there are no restrictions; rather, there are only requirements that must be fulfilled, in terms of form and substance, to qualify for final registration.

91. At the administrative level, the regulation of the procedure for the registration of trade unions was updated through Resolution No. 1390 of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, dated 4 October 2021, which simplified the registration process, which is done online using the Trade Unions Registration System.⁴⁸ The aim is to streamline the process and ensure that any documents submitted remain confidential; the files of each trade union have been migrated into the computer system and efforts are being made to raise workers' and employers' awareness of the system.

92. With respect to collective bargaining mechanisms, in 2021, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, through its Facebook page for the general public,⁴⁹ known as the Citizens' Channel (Canal Ciudadano), shared information about the aspects that must be taken into account when drafting collective bargaining agreements, negotiations between

⁴⁶ <https://www.mtess.gov.py/application/files/5616/4382/0503/Estrategia-Nacional-Trabajo-Forzoso-2021-2024-web.pdf#:~:text=La%20Estrategia%20Nacional%20de%20Prevenci3n%20y%20Erradicaci3n%20del%20Trabajo%20Forzoso,realizados%20en%20Asunci3n%2C%20Boquer3n%2C%20Alto.>

⁴⁷ https://www.mtess.gov.py/application/files/1215/5913/3250/Guia_TRAFOR.pdf.

⁴⁸ <https://www.mtess.gov.py/servicios/sistema-de-registro-gremial>.

⁴⁹ <https://www.mtess.gov.py/noticias/en-canal-ciudadano-del-mtess-por-facebook-informaron-sobre-contrato-colectivo-y-reglamento-interno-de-trabajo>; <https://www.facebook.com/MinisteriodeTrabajoPy/videos/canal-ciudadano-;tess/883890932203617/>; <https://m.facebook.com/MinisteriodeTrabajoPy/videos/canal-ciudadano-;contrato-colectivo-de-trabajo/4247142612045510/>.

employers and workers and the requirements for ensuring that such agreements conform with the relevant regulations. An electronic procedure was also launched for aligning and registering individual contracts and collective bargaining agreements from different areas of the country, through the Ministry's web page.⁵⁰

93. With respect to the right to strike, the legislation in force sets out procedures and guarantees for public and private sector workers. In the case of the public sector, the legislation sets out which public services are considered essential and must not be affected by strike action.⁵¹ Article 127 of Act No. 1626/2000 on the civil service states that public sector workers belonging to unions, by decision of their respective assemblies, have the right to resort to strike action as an extreme measure in case of conflict of interests, in accordance with the limitations established in the Constitution and in the Act itself. It should be noted that employees are understood to be workers. Members of the armed forces and the police do not enjoy this right.

94. As a mechanism for reporting violations of trade union rights, the Office of the Deputy Minister for Human Capital and Organizational Management has a protocol for handling and intervening in complaints⁵² submitted by unions of civil servants or public employees.

Article 9

Right to social security

95. The regulatory framework of the Social Security System in Paraguay is based on the provisions of the Constitution, the international agreements ratified by the country and the laws that create the agencies responsible for providing the System's services, as well as the relevant regulations as issued through decrees and resolutions. The Social Security System in Paraguay is composed of two types of social security funds, and participation is mandatory for all public and private employees. Both are regulated by the executive branch.

96. The contributory social security system is composed of several social security schemes administered by different agencies. The legislation in force provides for eight public social security funds which each differ from one another in terms of contributions, benefits, requirements, administration, responsible bodies, beneficiaries and other aspects of social security administration. In terms of universal coverage, Paraguay has made progress in implementing a social security system aimed at guaranteeing social protection for the entire population.

97. The retirement and pension funds that make up the social security system are: the Social Security Institute; the Retirement and Pension Fund of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance (Fiscal Fund); the Retirement and Pension Fund for bank employees in Paraguay; the Retirement and Pension Fund for municipal workers; the Retirement and Pension Fund for members of the legislative branch (Parliamentary Fund); the Social Security Fund for railway workers and employees (Railways Fund); the Retirement and Pension Fund of the National Electricity Administration (National Electricity Administration Fund); and the Paraguay Retirement and Pension Fund for employees of Itaipú Binacional.

98. In this respect, it is important to point out that family assistance is regulated in the Labour Code, which establishes that until such time as a legal compensation system for family allowances is introduced as a benefit within the Social Security System, every worker has the right to receive an allowance equivalent to 5 per cent of the minimum wage for each

⁵⁰ <https://www.mtess.gov.py/noticias/el-mtess-lanzo-nuevo-procedimiento-electronico-para-homologar-y-registrar-contratos-individuales-y-convenios-colectivos-de-trab>.

⁵¹ Act No. 1626/2000, article 130: Public services are considered essential for the community if their total or partial suspension would endanger the life, health or safety of the community or a part thereof. Essential public services shall include: (a) healthcare and hospital care; (b) the production and distribution of drinking water, electricity, gas and other fuels; (c) the transportation of passengers; (d) all levels of education; and (e) telecommunications.

⁵² Resolution No. 96/2014 of the Civil Service Secretariat approving the protocol for handling and intervening in complaints.
https://www.sfp.gov.py/sfp/archivos/documentos/resolu%2096_pn67pxo9.Pdf.

child, whether born in or out of wedlock or adopted, and that the provision of such benefit remains the responsibility of the employer.

99. The relevant legal regulation provides for the family allowance to be received by the beneficiary from the outset of his or her employment, by means of a written request addressed to the employer, accompanied by the pertinent legal requirements, such as birth certificates and proof of address, which presupposes that the employee makes such a request and that the employer will accede to that request. The bill creating unemployment insurance, entered in the National Legislative Information System as File No. S-2401234, is also currently being considered.⁵³

100. With regard to the difficulties in implementing social security in Paraguay, challenges include the need to improve management and governance in the social security system. The largest entity in the Social Security System in Paraguay is the Social Security Institute, both because of its large number of contributors and because it is the only entity that provides health, retirement and pension benefits. In accordance with its charter, it also provides coverage in the following categories: surviving spouses; temporary and permanent disability; maternity; ordinary and occupational illness; ordinary and occupational accidents; and medical care.

101. Pursuant to Act No. 4290/2011, the Social Security Institute grants the following types of pension: (a) ordinary; (b) disability due to ordinary illness; (c) disability due to occupational accident or illness; and (d) partial. The regulations of the Social Security Institute also establish the right of surviving spouses to receive a pension in line with the provisions of national legislation. In this regard, it should be noted that reference is made to insured persons who died as a result of an accident or ordinary illness.

102. With respect to the economic value of social security benefits, the amounts of the regular payments for the old-age pension, the occupational accident and illness benefit, the disability benefit and the surviving spouse benefit are reviewed in line with any significant variation in average earnings resulting from changes in the cost of living. Other pensions and benefits are updated according to variations in the consumer price index (unconditional indexation), while the benefits paid by the Parliamentary Fund, the National Electricity Administration Fund and the Itaipú Binacional Fund are adjusted in accordance with changes in salaries. Adjustments that fall below the consumer price index (conditional indexation) can be made only for the Retirement and Pension Fund for bank employees, the Retirement and Pension Fund for municipal workers and the Railways Fund.

103. Act No. 438/94, which establishes the Social Security System, and its regulatory decrees, set out the minimum amounts for old-age and retirement pensions. However, it is important to remember that these amounts may vary due to a range of factors including the length of the contribution period and the average salary.

104. In the Social Security Institute, the value of retirement and old-age pensions must be studied and reviewed by the Office of Actuarial Calculations and updated every three years, according to its charter. The minimum amount of retirement benefits and old-age and permanent disability benefits is set at a level equivalent to 33 per cent of the minimum legal wage in force, pursuant to Resolution C.A. No. 031-001/2024, dated 7 May 2024, which extends Resolution C.A. No. 029-002/2024, which replaced Resolution C.A. 017-001/2021, dated 16 February 2021, which approved the increase of the minimum retirement benefit for recipients of old-age and retirement pensions paid by the Social Security Institute and established the relevant rules of application.

105. Decree No. 933 of 27 December 2023 regulated Act No. 5741/2016 establishing a special system of benefits, within the Social Security System (Social Security Institute), for small business owners. Pursuant to the Decree, small business owners can obtain health insurance and retirement coverage from the Social Security Institute by making contributions equivalent to 23 per cent of the current legal minimum wage. In December 2023, Act No. 7235/23, which regulates State oversight of retirement and pension funds, in compliance with article 95 of the Constitution, was enacted. Pursuant to the Act, and on the basis of a

⁵³ <https://silpy.congreso.gov.py/web/expediente/134023>.

historic agreement between the trade unions, employers' and retirees' associations and the Government, a social security reform process was initiated in Paraguay in order to guarantee equitable access to quality pensions and health services, promoting financial sustainability and solidarity among citizens.

Article 10

Family protection

106. Paraguay has taken on the important challenge of strengthening the protective role of the family. Recognized in the Convention as the foundation of society, the family is the natural setting for care of children and adolescents and is seen by the Government as a strategic ally for their protection and harmonious and comprehensive development and for the enjoyment of all rights by other members.

107. In this context, social protection is the first step in ensuring access to rights. The Ñaime Porãvéta National Poverty Reduction Plan⁵⁴ is the flagship programme of the Paraguayan social protection system. Through its social protection, economic inclusion and social advancement pillars, institutions, plans, programmes and strategies are coordinated under a systemic, life-cycle and results-based management approach in order to ensure an adequate standard of living for families.

108. This integrated social protection system, which has a direct impact on the rights of women, children and adolescents, older persons, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable persons, reinforces sectoral initiatives in the areas of family life, education, health, nutrition, identity and protection against violence and sexual and labour exploitation.

109. The Directorate General of the Civil Registry ensures the right to identity of all citizens through a central register of persons that permits the online registration of vital events such as births. This provides citizens with a recognized legal identity, which is essential for them to obtain access to other rights and benefits, including health, education and social services. To improve efficiency and access to information, the Directorate General has introduced the central register system in 18 registry offices located in hospitals throughout the country, facilitating the timely registration of newborns and the immediate issuance of documents. The Directorate General has broad national coverage, with 521 registry offices, including one attached to the National Institute of Indigenous Affairs, and so is able to reach the entire population and promote effective social inclusion through the right to identity.

Child labour

110. Act No. 5407/15, the Domestic Labour Act⁵⁵ establishes the minimum age of 18 years for domestic work, thus helping to protect the rights of children and adolescents. The Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security is taking steps to disseminate the Act and raise public awareness about the conditions and rights of girls who perform domestic work. In cooperation with the Ministry for Children and Adolescents, a nationwide awareness-raising campaign has been implemented for focal points at municipal advisory services on the rights of children and adolescents. In addition, virtual training sessions have been held for these focal points throughout the country.

111. The Ministry for Children and Adolescents launched the #HayPromesasPeligrosas (Some Promises are Dangerous) campaign to prevent and raise awareness about trafficking for the purposes of sexual and labour exploitation of children and adolescents. The initiative is supported by funding from the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation. The second stage of a project on prevention and the improvement of care for child and adolescent victims of trafficking was implemented in 2024. The project is being carried out mainly in the Departments of Central, Alto Paraná, Itapúa, Caaguazú, Amambay, Alto Paraguay and Boquerón. Its second stage includes training in schools and colleges in these seven departments, and training for departmental focal points, on the prevention of trafficking,

⁵⁴ https://www.mds.gov.py/application/files/9317/0117/3568/PNRP_NAIME-PORAVETA-2023-2030-27-11-DIGITAL.pdf.

⁵⁵ <https://www.bacn.gov.py/leyes-paraguayas/4392/ley-n-5407-del-trabajo-domestico>.

including unpaid domestic child labour (*criadazgo*). The project will be decentralized and rolled out in additional territories once qualified personnel have been recruited.

112. The National Commission for the Eradication of Child Labour developed the National Strategy for the Eradication of Child Labour and the Protection of Adolescent Workers 2019–2024,⁵⁶ which was approved by the National Council for Children and Adolescents and officially launched in April 2019 with the aim of focusing and coordinating public policies to prevent children and adolescents from being exposed to the worst forms of labour.

113. On 16 August 2024, the Chamber of Deputies committee for children, youth and development presented a bill to guarantee the right of children and adolescents to protection from *criadazgo*,⁵⁷ which is currently being discussed and analysed by the different committees of the Chamber of Deputies. One of the aims of the bill, which was drafted by an inter-institutional working group with the participation of the Ministry for Children and Adolescents, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security and the Ombudsman's Office, is to raise awareness about the situation of children and adolescents who perform unpaid domestic labour in Paraguay.

114. To decentralize the work of the National Commission for the Eradication of Child Labour, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security adopted Decision No. 3316/19 on the functioning of departmental commissions for the eradication of child labour. These are tripartite bodies, coordinated by regional labour directors with the goal of disseminating and implementing actions under the National Strategy for the Eradication of Child Labour and the Protection of Adolescent Workers. Since 2019, departmental commissions have been set up in the Departments of Cordillera, Concepción, Itapúa, Boquerón, Alto Paraná, Ñeembucú, Paraguari, Central, Guairá, Amambay and San Pedro.

115. Within the framework of the National Strategy, measures were taken to monitor adolescent labour and ensure decent conditions; they included training on the Adolescent Workers Register, in several districts, for representatives of municipal advisory services on the rights of children and adolescents. In addition, companies were inspected to detect child or unprotected adolescent labour, and steps were taken to suspend and fine those that violated adolescent labour rights.

116. In order to promote the use of the Adolescent Workers Register, in 2021 the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security adopted Decision No. 56/2021 approving the digital registration form of the Adolescent Workers Register with the aim of collecting data on adolescent workers in real time, in the best interests of the child.

Migrants and their national integration

117. A new Migration Act⁵⁸ entered into force in 2022, establishing a migration regime in accordance with the Constitution, international human rights instruments and the current migration policy. To guarantee the rights of migrant workers and members of their families, the Act incorporates the principles of universality, equality, non-discrimination, social, gender and intergenerational equity, reciprocity, transparency, family reunification, respect for cultural diversity and labour rights, social integration, legality, rationality, efficacy, the general interest and non-refoulement.

118. The migration policy⁵⁹ adopted by Decree No. 4483/2015 provides a framework for a new regulatory and institutional system that will improve migration management in accordance with the Constitution and ratified international instruments, ensuring full respect for human rights. The policy lays down a number of governing principles for implementation, including those of equality and non-discrimination.

⁵⁶ https://www.mtess.gov.py/application/files/9715/6926/1549/Estrategia_Nacional_-_para_impresion.pdf.

⁵⁷ <https://silpy.congreso.gov.py/web/expediente/135181>.

⁵⁸ <https://www.bacn.gov.py/leyes-paraguayas/10973/ley-n-6984-de-migraciones>.

⁵⁹ <https://migraciones.gov.py/politica-migratoria/>.

119. Paraguay receives migrants who explicitly state their desire to reside temporarily or permanently in the country, without any discrimination, and they are accorded the same constitutional and legal rights and guarantees as Paraguayan nationals, including the rights to decent work, social security, education and health, family reunification, the sending and receiving of remittances and access to justice and due process.

Trafficking in persons and violence

120. Under Act No. 4788/12, the Comprehensive Act against Trafficking in Persons, when a trafficking case is detected, the protection and assistance mechanisms of the Inter-Agency Board to Prevent and Combat Trafficking⁶⁰ are activated, as recommended in the handbook on operational procedures⁶¹ and in protocols for the certification of trafficking victims,⁶² victim support and referral management,⁶³ case registration⁶⁴ and assessment of risks to victims.⁶⁵

121. The Act provides for a national programme to prevent and combat trafficking and to assist victims and for a fund, with resources allocated from the budget of the Ministry for Women from 2018 for prevention, reporting and comprehensive protection through campaigns and outreach; inter-institutional coordination and the establishment of departmental and district offices; and the provision of specialized assistance to victims. The National Plan to Prevent and Combat Trafficking in Persons⁶⁶ was adopted by Decree No. 4473/20.

122. The Referral Centre provides comprehensive social, psychological and legal support for victims, while the temporary shelter for women victims has a multidisciplinary team that provides protection, food and clothing. The aim of the Social Reintegration Programme, for its part, is social reintegration through empowerment and support for physical, psychological, social and community recovery. For this purpose, there is a handbook on reintegration⁶⁷ and activities are coordinated by the Victim Assistance and Support Commission of the Inter-Agency Board. Since 2016, the Ministry of Social Development has supported the reintegration of victims through the Tekoporã and Tekoha Programmes.

123. The Ministry for Children and Adolescents runs the Programme on Comprehensive Assistance to Victims of Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation, under which the Ñasaindy Protection Centre was opened in 2024, offering long-term protection and comprehensive care for victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation aged between 12 and 17 years.

124. By Attorney General's Office Decision No. 3473/08, the Public Prosecution Service established a Special Unit to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, whose purpose is to provide effective responses in the fight against all forms of trafficking in persons and the sexual exploitation of children. It is composed of a deputy prosecutor, three criminal investigation units based in Asunción (with national

⁶⁰ Composed of representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Public Prosecution Service, the Supreme Court, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Ministry for Women, the Ministry for Children and Adolescents, the Secretariat for Paraguayan Returnees and Refugees, the National Secretariat for Tourism, the Ministry of Social Development, the Directorate General of Statistics, Surveys and Censuses (now the National Institute of Statistics) and the National Directorate of Migration, Itaipú and Yacyretá.

⁶¹ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CMW/Shared%20Documents/PRY/INT_CMW_ADR_PRY_39744_S.pdf.

⁶² https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CMW/Shared%20Documents/PRY/INT_CMW_ADR_PRY_39745_S.pdf.

⁶³ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CMW/Shared%20Documents/PRY/INT_CMW_ADR_PRY_39746_S.pdf.

⁶⁴ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CMW/Shared%20Documents/PRY/INT_CMW_ADR_PRY_39747_S.pdf.

⁶⁵ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CMW/Shared%20Documents/PRY/INT_CMW_ADR_PRY_39748_S.pdf.

⁶⁶ https://www.presidencia.gov.py/archivos/documentos/DECRETO4473_gl0myec9.PDF.

⁶⁷ https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CMW/Shared%20Documents/PRY/INT_CMW_ADR_PRY_39749_S.pdf.

jurisdiction) and a prosecution unit in Alto Paraná. The Technical Support Directorate of the Public Prosecution Service has professional psychologists, social workers and lawyers who ensure access to justice, social reintegration and the restoration of victims' rights.

125. Also in force is Act No. 5683/2016, which makes it obligatory to display signs in public places stating that trafficking, especially for the purpose of sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, is a crime in Paraguay, and urging the public to report such cases. Decree No. 8307 of 27 December 2017 lays down the regulations of the Act, which stipulate that the implementing authority is the Ministry for Children and Adolescents and that municipal governments are responsible for oversight and punishment. In addition, Act No. 6202/18 establishes standards for the prevention of sexual violence and for the provision of comprehensive care for children and adolescents who have been sexually abused.

126. The National Policy on Children and Adolescents 2014–2024, which was implemented through the National Plan for Children and Adolescents 2022–2024,⁶⁸ targets children and adolescents of any nationality who are in the national territory, without distinction as to their migratory status. It provides the framework for the implementation of plans, programmes and projects for the protection of children and adolescents, such as the Abrazo Programme, the “Guardian Families” national alternative care and adoption programme,⁶⁹ the Comprehensive Programme for Children and Adolescents Living on the Streets, the Programme for Prevention of Sexual Abuse and the Provision of Comprehensive Care for Child and Adolescent Victims, the Programme on Comprehensive Assistance to Victims of Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation and the early childhood care programme.

127. The State has been adapting its legislative framework and has increased the penalties for sexual abuse offences through the promulgation of Act No. 6002/19. In addition, the Senate has studied and adopted a bill (file No. S-2401027)⁷⁰ amending article 1 of that Act in order to broaden the offence of sexual abuse of children and provide for additional forms of conduct.

128. The Ministry for Children and Adolescents, by Decision No. 04/2021, adopted a road map for a comprehensive response to the sexual abuse of children and adolescents,⁷¹ which had been developed and agreed upon through dialogue between State agencies and civil society. By Decision No. 03/2023, the National Council for Children and Adolescents adopted the Programme for Prevention of Sexual Abuse and the Provision of Comprehensive Care for Child and Adolescent Victims, with the aim of preventing and reducing sexual abuse, providing comprehensive care for victims and restoring their rights.

129. The Ministry for Children and Adolescents has been conducting a campaign for the prevention of sexual abuse with the slogan #TodosSomosResponsables (“We Are All Responsible”),⁷² highlighting the important role of society in preventing all forms of violence and ensuring that they are viewed as unacceptable. A guide to the prevention of child sexual abuse,⁷³ launched in 2024, addresses prevention, rights and self-care issues and seeks to empower children and adolescents to recognize risk situations and seek help. It also provides parents, educators and other community reference points with tools and strategies to protect children and adolescents. To date, the dissemination of the guide among the population is as follows:

<i>Department</i>	<i>Number</i>
Alto Paraná	10
Asunción	34
Central	17

⁶⁸ https://www.minna.gov.py/archivos/documentos/2022_Plan%20Nacional%20de%20la%20Ni%C3%B1ez%20ok_phocpzwe.pdf.

⁶⁹ <https://www.minna.gov.py/pagina/4771-programa-nacional-de-cuidado-alternativo-y-adopcion.html>.

⁷⁰ <https://silpy.congreso.gov.py/web/expediente/132021>.

⁷¹ https://www.minna.gov.py/archivos/documentos/RUTA%20INTERINSTITUCIONAL%20DE%20ATENCION%20INTEGRAL%20VICTIMAS%20DE%20ABUSO_lugavv6d.pdf.

⁷² <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1BZ7G7xICp3sV9EKu01IPXRbZIwy6Dsar?usp=sharing>.

⁷³ <https://www.minna.gov.py/pagina/4701-guia-de-prevencion-del-abuso-sexual-.html>.

<i>Department</i>	<i>Number</i>
Cordillera	4
Itapúa	1
Misiones	27
Total	93

<i>Training activity</i>	<i>Children (aged up to 17)</i>		<i>Adults</i>		<i>Total</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>F</i>	
Dissemination of the guide to the prevention of sexual abuse	709	1 031	145	701	2 586

Source: National Observatory on Childhood and Adolescence, August 2024.

130. The National Observatory on Childhood and Adolescence has provided the following data on training activities carried out at the national level on issues related to violence, sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking in persons:

Number of participants

<i>Training activity</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>2021</i>	<i>2022</i>	<i>2023</i>	<i>2024</i>
Positive parenting	47	157	427	3	427
Workshops on prevention of violence	162	501	1 662	5	5 583
Workshops on trafficking, <i>criadazgo</i> and child labour	9	11	19	13	6 010
Dissemination of the guide to the prevention of sexual abuse	0	0	0	0	2 586
Total	218	669	2 108	21	8 625

Source: National Observatory on Childhood and Adolescence, August 2024.

Number of training activities

<i>Training activity</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>2021</i>	<i>2022</i>	<i>2023</i>	<i>2024</i>
Positive parenting	7	19	22	3	26
Workshops on prevention of violence	22	50	29	2	145
Workshops on trafficking, <i>criadazgo</i> and child labour	8	10	18	11	28
Dissemination of the guide to the prevention of sexual abuse	0	0	0	0	74
Total	37	79	69	16	273

Source: National Observatory on Childhood and Adolescence, August 2024.

131. Act No. 7349/2024, establishing a pension for children, adolescents and persons with disabilities who are indirect victims of the femicide or homicide of a parent in a domestic violence context, was promulgated on 29 October 2024. Its purpose is to create a system of monthly economic assistance, in the form of a pension, for persons who have been left in a vulnerable situation by the femicide or homicide of a parent in a domestic violence context. The pension, which is equivalent to 15 times the minimum daily wage for miscellaneous

activities,⁷⁴ for each recipient, will be paid by the State until the beneficiary reaches the age of majority or for as long as he or she has a disability level of at least 50 per cent.

Article 11

Right to an adequate standard of living

132. The Paraguay 2030 National Development Plan⁷⁵ has been the guiding instrument for government action since December 2014. The Plan, which is binding on the public sector and indicative for the private sector, defines strategy areas⁷⁶ and cross-cutting lines of action⁷⁷ whose objectives converge with those of the 2030 Agenda. It was updated and aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals in 2021. In this way, it sets out the national development vision, strategic and specific goals and national targets.

Poverty

133. Income poverty increased as a result of the pandemic. In 2018, it affected 24.2 per cent of the population; that figure rose to 26.9 per cent between 2020 and 2021 and then dropped to 22.7 per cent in 2023. Significant gaps exist at the territorial level and between different age and ethnic groups. According to the National Institute of Statistics, if cash transfer programmes to the most vulnerable households had not been implemented during the pandemic, overall poverty would have affected 28.8 per cent of the population, meaning that these programmes prevented about 139,000 people from falling below the overall poverty line.

134. As a complement to the measurement of income poverty, State institutions developed the multidimensional poverty index for purpose of identifying rights that must be addressed in order to effectively reduce poverty, and for monitoring the effectiveness of public policies aimed at improving the quality of life of people living in poverty. The multidimensional poverty index analyses deprivation in four areas: access to employment and social security; housing and services; health and environment; and education. In 2018, it was estimated that 29.6 per cent of the population was in a situation of multidimensional poverty, a figure that decreased to 20.76 per cent in 2021. By combining both measurements, it was found that, in 2021, 869,416 people, or 12 per cent of the population, were affected by both types of poverty and consequently limited in their development potential.

Multidimensional poverty

Incidence of poverty (H)

135. The percentage of people in multidimensional poverty decreased between 2016 and 2022. At the national level, the figure fell from 34.28 per cent in 2016 to 17.19 per cent in 2023, a reduction of 17.09 percentage points. This trend, observed in both urban and rural areas, was more pronounced in rural areas, where the incidence dropped from 59.57 per cent to 33.09 per cent, a decrease of 26.48 percentage points. In urban areas, a fall of 10.66 percentage points (from 18.16 per cent to 7.50 per cent) was recorded.

Intensity of poverty (A)

136. The intensity of poverty abated between 2016 and 2023. In 2016, the figure stood at 40.90 per cent, while in 2023 it was 36.67 per cent, a reduction of 4.23 percentage points. The reduction was steeper in rural areas, falling from 42.13 per cent to 37.51 per cent (down

⁷⁴ In 2024, 15 days' minimum wage for unspecified miscellaneous activities was equivalent to approximately US\$ 205; however, the Act provides that the amount will increase in line with the automatic adjustments foreseen in national legislation.

⁷⁵ <https://www.stp.gov.py/pnd/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/pnd2030.pdf>.

⁷⁶ Poverty reduction and social development; inclusive economic growth; and the place of Paraguay in the world.

⁷⁷ Efficient and transparent public administration; land management and development; and environmental sustainability.

4.62 percentage points), than in urban areas, where it fell from 38.33 per cent to 34.43 per cent (down 3.9 percentage points).

Multidimensional poverty index (M0)

137. In 2023, the index at the national level stood at 0.063, with significant differences according to area of residence, as shown in the analysis of incidence (H). In urban areas it was 0.026 and in rural areas 0.124. The index can be interpreted in percentage terms, so that, in 2023, the multidimensional poor experienced 6.3 per cent of all the possible deprivations that could have affected the population of Paraguay. For the population of urban areas, the figure would be 2.6 per cent and, for that of rural areas, 12.4 per cent.

138. Between 2016 and 2023, the multidimensional poverty index for the whole country decreased by 55 per cent, from 0.140 to 0.063. For rural areas, the index fell by 50.59 per cent, from 0.251 to 0.124, and for urban areas by 62.86 per cent, from 0.070 to 0.026.

139. In 2021, 18.3 per cent of the population was living in relative poverty, defined as having less than 50 per cent of the median income – an indicator that showed little change from 2018 (19.1 per cent). The gap between urban and rural areas is striking: in 2022, in urban areas, 8.8 per cent of the population was living in relative poverty, while in rural areas, the figure was 33.2 per cent.

140. Inequality requires the redoubling of efforts to advance towards a fairer society. In 2018, the Gini coefficient or inequality index stood at 0.461; by 2023, it had fallen to 0.4446. That year, the poorest 10 per cent of the population (poorest decile) had an average monthly per capita income of about US\$ 42, accounting for 1.7 per cent of total income. The richest decile had an average monthly per capita income of about US\$ 850, accounting for 35.7 per cent of total income. Per capita income in urban and rural areas is unequal: in urban areas, it is 1.7 times higher. The richest decile has a share of total income 20 times greater than that of the poorest decile.

141. In 2021, 46.1 per cent of households had access to basic services,⁷⁸ an improvement on the 36.9 per cent recorded in 2018. In rural areas, only 9 per cent of households have basic services, compared with 67.7 per cent in urban areas. Only 25.9 per cent of households living in poverty have access to basic services.⁷⁹

142. To address this problem, for almost two decades the country has been implementing plans and public policies to combat poverty, including through the Tekoporã⁸⁰ and Abrazo⁸¹ Programmes since 2005 and under Act No. 3728/2009 on the Right to a Food Allowance of Older Persons in Poverty since 2010. These programmes are complemented by other initiatives such as the Comprehensive Food and Nutrition Programme, the Family Health Units, the social tariff of the National Electricity Administration, the Tenonderã⁸² and Tekoha⁸³ Programmes and a programme to help fishing communities.⁸⁴

143. As of September 2024, 183,655 families were included in the Tekoporã Programme. Of these, 30,757 were Indigenous families, amounting to 91,289 people, including 50,138 women. Of the total number of beneficiaries, 41,528 were children and adolescents, 48,987 were between 18 and 64 years of age and 774 were older persons. There were also 32,940 people with disabilities, including 21,410 with severe disabilities and 628 from Indigenous communities. The Tenonderã Programme provided protection to 79 Indigenous families in 17 communities.

144. The food allowance programme for older persons was transferred to the Ministry of Social Development by Act No. 7232/2024 and updated by Act No. 7322/2024, which

⁷⁸ Refers to systems for the provision of public services that meet basic human needs, such as drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, energy, use of clean fuels and waste collection.

⁷⁹ <https://ods.ine.gov.py/objetivo.php#collapse-2>.

⁸⁰ <https://www.mds.gov.py/index.php/programas/tekopora>.

⁸¹ <http://www.minna.gov.py/pagina/229-abrazo.html>.

⁸² <https://www.mds.gov.py/index.php/programas/tenondera>.

⁸³ <https://www.mds.gov.py/index.php/programas/tekoha>.

⁸⁴ <https://www.mds.gov.py/index.php/programas/asistencia-pescadores>.

universalized the provision of this allowance to all persons aged over 65 years, persons with disabilities aged over 60 years and Indigenous persons aged over 55 years. As of September 2024, 304,670 adults were receiving this allowance, the amount of which is set at 25 per cent of the current monthly minimum wage.

145. The social protection system was declared to be in the national interest by Decree No. 4775/2021, while Decree No. 357/2023 designated the Cabinet Council on Social Affairs as the body in charge of promoting, coordinating and directing the management of the Government's social policies and programmes. Within this framework, specific inter-institutional coordination measures have been taken. On the basis of the income poverty and multidimensional poverty indices, 22 districts in seven departments were given priority for the implementation of the social protection system. Cooperation agreements have been signed with these districts and departments. In this context, the principle of public action requires State institutions to create conditions in which all inhabitants can enjoy their rights. The State's intervention strategy is based on the three pillars of the social protection system: social integration, entry to the productive labour market and social welfare.

146. The Ministry of Urban Planning, Housing and the Human Environment administers programmes that provide housing solutions for the population in response to various socioeconomic problems. It aims to build social housing for families living in poverty and extreme poverty, including in Indigenous communities. The Ministry completed 25,903 housing projects between 2016 and 2019 and 25,115 housing projects between 2020 and 2023. Between January and June 2024, the Ministry managed 10,530 housing units, prioritizing the most vulnerable sectors in rural and urban areas.

147. The Ministry is responsible for the National Housing Fund, which was set up by the State as a stable source of funds to subsidize social housing programmes with the aim of reducing the housing deficit throughout the country and boosting the national economy. It is also responsible for the comprehensive project Che Tapýi, which is designed to reduce the housing shortage for people living in extreme poverty by building low-cost housing in urban and riverside areas. The Ministry of Urban Planning liaises with the Ministry of Social Development to help families become beneficiaries of social programmes.

148. In terms of access to water, in 2018, 87.2 per cent of the population was living in a household with access to an improved water source. Coverage gradually increased in subsequent years, reaching 90.6 per cent of the population in 2022.⁸⁵

Food security

149. Regarding the right to food security, the Comprehensive Food and Nutrition Programme of the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare is a mechanism that is used to address the health problems affecting Indigenous Peoples. This food and nutritional assistance programme had a target of reaching approximately 125,000 people a year.

150. In 2018, training was provided to Indigenous midwives from the Mbyá Guaraní, Sanapaná, Angaité, southern Enxet, northern Enlhet, western Guaraní, Guaraní Nandéva and Nivacle Peoples in the Concepción, Caaguazú, Caazapá, Presidente Hayes and Boquerón health regions. They were given advice on the correct preparation of milk and the ingredients and quantities to be used.

151. Regular activities are carried out to guarantee access to healthcare for Indigenous communities, including promotion and prevention activities with a human rights approach, and food security is strengthened by the regular delivery of fortified milk under the Comprehensive Food and Nutrition Programme. One of the outstanding achievements of the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare is the joint work done by health personnel and Indigenous midwives to ensure that pregnant Indigenous women benefit from assisted delivery in a health facility, which is achieved through the exchange of knowledge.

⁸⁵ <https://ods.ine.gov.py/ine-main/ods/agua-limpia-y-saneamiento-6/meta-6.1/indicador-152>.

152. The aim of the Support Project for Community Canteens⁸⁶ of the Ministry of Social Development is to improve the food and nutritional security of people living in poverty and vulnerability who use community canteens. As of September 2024, the project had assisted 10,876 people.

153. The main objective of the “Zero Hunger in Schools” feeding programme⁸⁷ is to ensure that the approximately 1.3 million students enrolled in public educational institutions have access to a varied and good quality diet. It is intended that the programme will significantly improve performance in food and nutritional security indices by providing school meals for all students up to the ninth grade, with plans to gradually extend coverage to secondary education. Act No. 7264/2024 designated the Ministry of Social Development as the implementing authority and lead agency tasked with developing policies, programmes and projects in this area. The first stage of the “Zero Hunger in Schools” tendering process, covering 34 per cent of the country’s districts, concluded in 2024.

Article 12

Right to free, high-quality healthcare

154. Article 68 of the Constitution provides that the State must promote and protect health as a fundamental right of the individual and in the interest of the community. Act No. 5099/2013 establishes that health services provided in facilities of the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare are exempt from fees.

155. On the basis of the primary healthcare strategy, the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare extended the coverage of the Comprehensive and Integrated Health Service Networks by providing high-quality, humane care to which free access is guaranteed, in accordance with the principles of universality, comprehensiveness, equity and participation. Strategic lines of action are based on the establishment of Family Health Units staffed by multidisciplinary teams, working in communities, with a focus on rights, while respecting interculturality and promoting integrated policies.

156. Progress in the implementation of the National Health Policy 2015–2030 was made possible by the adoption and application of the following tools:

- A guide for the implementation of the Comprehensive and Integrated Health Service Networks in Paraguay⁸⁸
- The National Policy on Quality Healthcare 2017–2030⁸⁹
- The National Health Research and Innovation Policy 2016–2021⁹⁰
- The National Health Research and Innovation Priorities Agenda 2017–2020⁹¹
- The National Medicine Policy⁹²
- A handbook on the functions of Family Health Units⁹³
- A guide to working in primary healthcare⁹⁴

⁸⁶ <https://www.mds.gov.py/index.php/programas/proyecto-de-apoyo-comedores-de-organizaciones-comunitarias>.

⁸⁷ <https://hambrezero.gobiernodelparaguay.gov.py/>.

⁸⁸ <https://www.mspbs.gov.py/dependencias/portal/adjunto/c03a70-GuiadelaRIISS.pdf>.

⁸⁹ <http://portal.mspbs.gov.py/mecip/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/1.2.-RSG-N%C2%BA-316-17-Politica-Nacional-de-Calidad-en-Salud-2017-2030.pdf>.

⁹⁰ <https://www.mspbs.gov.py/portal/10821/entra-en-vigencia-la-politica-nacional-de-investigacion-en-innovacion-en-salud-2016-2021.html>.

⁹¹ <https://www.mspbs.gov.py/dependencias/planificacion/adjunto/c724df-AgendaNacionalsalud4sept.pdf>.

⁹² <http://portal.mspbs.gov.py/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/POLITICA-FINAL-a-Gabinete-26-05-15-5.pdf>.

⁹³ <https://www.mspbs.gov.py/dependencias/portal/adjunto/7aa3c3-ManualdefuncionesdelasUSF1.pdf>.

⁹⁴ <https://www.mspbs.gov.py/dependencias/portal/adjunto/5aadfa-GUIADETRABAJOENAPSPDF.pdf>.

157. The Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare has signed inter-institutional agreements with the Social Security Institute to improve care for citizens through reciprocal technical assistance, the exchange of experiences and technical information and the joint use of human resources, medicines, medical devices, infrastructure and logistics.

158. The Ministry leads the health and social welfare subcommission of the National Commission on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Within this framework, the first edition of the technical guidelines for health workers on the appropriate and respectful treatment of persons with disabilities⁹⁵ was approved by Decision No. 867 of 20 December 2023. This document is the outcome of a participatory drafting process – itself centred on the appropriate and respectful treatment of persons with disabilities – with the clear goal of contributing to equal conditions and opportunities, preventing all forms of discrimination against persons with disabilities and strengthening the culture of appropriate and respectful treatment, which in turn will build trust, dispel fears and give health workers the knowledge to deal with persons with disabilities, facilitating the enjoyment of the right to health for this group.

159. All vaccine-related information, including on campaigns, up-to-date coverage data, monitoring and other information of interest, is available on the Ministry web page dedicated to the National Programme on Vaccine-Preventable Diseases and the Expanded Programme on Immunization.⁹⁶

160. The National Plan for the Prevention of Gender-based Violence and Care for Victims within the National Health System 2020–2025 was adopted by Decision No. 784/2020. Activities carried out within that framework include awareness campaigns on violence prevention, gender equality and respect for human rights, and training courses on children's and adolescents' rights, including an online course that was held from 25 to 27 September 2023 (videos of the National Strategic Directorate of Human Resources for Health, with more than 2,000 views, are available on YouTube⁹⁷).

161. One of the main tools of this Plan is the handbook on the comprehensive care to be provided in the health system to victims of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence,⁹⁸ adopted by Decision No. 638 of 23 August 2021. In 2023, 3,870 health workers received training using the handbook, while 702 individuals attended training of trainers⁹⁹ in 2024.

162. The handbook, which was updated, contains a protocol of action for the health sector based on the provisions of Act No. 5777/2016 on the Comprehensive Protection of Women from All Forms of Violence and Act No. 6202/2018 on the Prevention of Sexual Abuse and the Comprehensive Care of Child and Adolescent Victims of Sexual Abuse. It incorporates a road map of care, including interdisciplinary care in the health sector, reporting forms and mechanisms for reporting and coordinating with other competent institutions.¹⁰⁰

163. Regarding vector-borne diseases such as arboviruses, dengue and chikungunya, services such as “Teledengue”¹⁰¹ have been developed. One notable service is that of evening consultations,¹⁰² which, according to uptake figures, have been well received by the public.¹⁰³

164. The National Cancer Institute set up several oncology centres outside the capital to facilitate the distribution and administration of cancer medications, thus ensuring that patients do not have to travel long distances, relocate or bear the associated costs. These

⁹⁵ <https://www.mspbs.gov.py/dependencias/porta/adjunto/6ceb9e-LineamientoTratoAdecuadoTrabajadoresSaludPCD.pdf>.

⁹⁶ <https://pai.mspbs.gov.py/>.

⁹⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/@dnerhsmspybs>.

⁹⁸ https://dirgen.mspbs.gov.py/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Manual-de-Violencia_WEB.pdf.

⁹⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/@dnerhsmspybs/search?query=NI%C3%91EZ>.

¹⁰⁰ <https://dirgen.mspbs.gov.py/manuales-y-guias-de-otros-sectores/>.

¹⁰¹ <https://www.mspbs.gov.py/porta/29492/teledengue-mas-de-16-mil-pacientes-monitoreados-y-50-mil-llamadas-realizadas.html>.

¹⁰² <https://www.mspbs.gov.py/porta/28195/consultorios-nocturnos-iquestque-son-y-cuales-son-sus-ventajas.html>.

¹⁰³ <https://www.mspbs.gov.py/porta/29460/en-consultorios-nocturnos-ya-se-realizaron-mas-de-138-mil-atenciones.html>.

centres are located in Encarnación, Ciudad del Este, Pedro Juan Caballero, Villa Hayes and Pilar. In Pilar, a medical oncology clinic was established. In the Department of Central and the Capital District, centres were set up within the National Hospital of Itauguá, San Pablo Hospital and the Niños de Acosta Ñu Paediatric Hospital. Agreements were also signed with the Hospital de Clínicas and the Social Security Institute for the same purpose.

165. A long-awaited reform of mental healthcare commenced with the entry into force of Act No. 7018/2022, the Mental Health Act, and its regulations under Decree No. 9811/2023. The purpose of this body of law is to protect mental health through humane, person-centred care that is also focused on the patient's psychosocial background and the full enjoyment of human rights.

166. The Mental Health Directorate drafted the National Mental Health Policy¹⁰⁴ and the National Mental Health Plan, which include strategies and measures to increase decentralized coverage and broaden the range of available mental health facilities. The Directorate, through its regional coordinating offices on mental health, has always promoted the prevention of substance abuse, mainly through a community-focused psychological and educational approach. In addition, the "Sumar" Action Plan against Drug Abuse is being implemented as a State strategy to prevent, combat and treat addiction.

167. Another noteworthy measure was the training of more than 200 health professionals with a view to providing comprehensive care in Family Health Units for persons with mental, neurological and substance use disorders. In May 2024, third-year resident physicians specializing in psychiatry commenced their rotation, benefiting 267 patients in different health centres. To complement these initiatives, the authorities are working to set up the 155 mental health crisis hotline as a 24-hour service to provide immediate assistance to people in crisis situations. In addition, the number of available places for the specialized study of psychiatry has doubled.

Improvement of maternal and child health

168. The maternal mortality ratio has progressively decreased over time and has levelled off in recent years. In 2020, 81 maternal deaths were recorded, of which 50 (62 per cent) were due to direct causes and 31 (38 per cent) to indirect causes. In 2021, 166 maternal deaths were recorded, causing the maternal mortality ratio to rise to an estimated 159.9 per 100,000 live births. Of these deaths, 49 (30 per cent) were due to direct causes and 117 (70 per cent) to indirect causes.

169. In 2020 and 2021, the most common direct cause of maternal death was toxæmia. Among the maternal deaths due to indirect causes in 2020, four were attributed to HIV, accounting for 5 per cent, three to dengue (4 per cent) and one to coronavirus disease (COVID-19) (1 per cent). In 2021, COVID-19 was the most common indirect cause, accounting for 92 maternal deaths, or 55 per cent of the total. In 2023, according to provisional data up to October, the number of maternal deaths stood at 93. Indigenous women are at greater risk of dying from causes related to pregnancy and childbirth.

170. A mid-term evaluation of the National Sexual and Reproductive Health Plan carried out in April 2023 confirmed the relevance of the tool and allowed for an assessment of the level of achievement of the proposed targets. Although two years of the Plan's implementation period were affected by the pandemic, once the critical phase was overcome all services were available for all types of pathologies, including obstetric complications.

171. To maintain the positive trajectory enabled by the National Sexual and Reproductive Health Plan 2019–2023, the national campaign to reduce maternal, fetal and neonatal mortality and the Neonatal Alliance, in August 2023, the Government launched two valuable tools to improve sexual and reproductive health and reduce maternal, fetal and neonatal mortality through the Comprehensive and Integrated Health Service Networks: a comprehensive men's healthcare model with a focus on maternal and child health (first

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.mspbs.gov.py/dependencias/portal/adjunto/78753a-PoliticaNacionaldeSaludMental20242030.pdf>.

edition)¹⁰⁵ and a plan to reduce maternal, fetal and neonatal mortality in Paraguay for the period 2023–2030.¹⁰⁶ This plan includes indicators for evaluating the implementation of its strategic lines of action, through which the Government aims to optimize the use and availability of resources and inputs; the training of professionals in accordance with current guidelines and handbooks and guidance for pregnant women, families and communities; and the use of technology for improving access to information and reducing maternal, fetal and neonatal morbidity and mortality.

Sexual and reproductive health

172. While Paraguay does not have a specific law on sexual and reproductive health, the State recognizes and safeguards the right to health and sexual and reproductive rights as fundamental rights of all people, as established in the national legal framework. The Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare, as the lead agency in the health sector, has implemented the National Sexual and Reproductive Health Plan 2019–2023, which is based on legal and regulatory frameworks that promote high-quality care with a rights and gender perspective. The Plan is used to coordinate considerations related to management, systematic production processes, refresher training and resource allocation, through strategies for improving priority indicators for sexual and reproductive health in the country. A new national sexual and reproductive health plan is currently at the validation stage.

173. Ninety-five per cent of the budget of the Directorate for Sexual and Reproductive Health of the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare is used to purchase contraceptive methods and medications or supplies for delivery kits, thereby fulfilling strategic objective 4 of the National Sexual and Reproductive Health Plan, which consisted in securing supplies and medications for sexual and reproductive health. Between 2019 and 2023, training was provided to 2,747 healthcare professionals on family planning, to 2,888 professionals on the “Code Red” strategy, to 2,557 professionals on prenatal care and to 200 professionals on delivery care and management.

174. As part of its sexual and reproductive health programming, coordinated by the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare, the Ciudad Mujer (Women’s City) Centre offers gynaecological services, family planning services, Pap smears and colposcopies, mammograms, bone density scans, nutrition services, dental services, vaccinations and breast ultrasound scans, placing emphasis on preventive and comprehensive healthcare for women. Sexual and reproductive health services are the most in demand and frequently provided of those offered by the Centre, having been used by 39,532 women during its first six years of operation (2018–2024), with 177,898 services provided.

175. The Centre also conducts campaigns to promote early detection services, referrals for positive diagnoses and prevention services, with information provided by qualified professionals.

176. The regulations of the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare are developed for all persons without discrimination. A project to expand access to and coverage of maternal and child healthcare in remote rural areas, Indigenous communities and border hubs in the Chaco region is currently being implemented. In addition, an inter-institutional team involving the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry for Children and Adolescents and the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security is carrying out a project for the prevention of adolescent pregnancy. The aim is to prevent pregnancy among girls and adolescents and situations of sexual abuse or violence by scaling up inter-institutional strategies for outreach, communication and education in non-school settings and applying the comprehensive healthcare model for adolescents and the inter-institutional road map for comprehensively addressing sexual abuse affecting children and adolescents, which will serve the Indigenous population in rural and urban areas.

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.mspbs.gov.py/dependencias/porta/adjunto/915522-ModelodeAtencinSaludHombre20230802.pdf>.

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.mspbs.gov.py/dependencias/porta/adjunto/a8190d-PlanReduccionMMFMN20230802a.pdf>.

177. Regarding the prevention of teenage pregnancies, the Directorate General of Health Programmes, through the Directorate for Sexual and Reproductive Health, the Directorate for Comprehensive Health of Children and Adolescents and the Directorate of Gender, organizes training days for health professionals in the health regions. During these sessions, professionals are trained in comprehensive adolescent health, sexual and reproductive health in adolescents, counselling and guidance on contraceptive methods, prevention of adolescent pregnancy and comprehensive prevention of violence against victims of sexual violence and abuse.

178. By law, the healthcare system offers antenatal, childbirth and postnatal care free of charge in Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare health facilities. The Comprehensive and Integrated Health Service Networks are constantly strengthened, reducing delays in the provision of services and increasing the capacity of health teams at the different levels of care.

179. Primary healthcare facilities offer a portfolio of services for people of all ages with a comprehensive and intercultural approach, providing health promotion services, prevention services, outpatient care, emergency care and diagnostic support to women of childbearing age, including pregnancy groups; family planning services; vaccination services following the standard vaccination schedule of the Expanded Programme on Immunization; breast exams; collection of samples for Pap smears; comprehensive care for women; preconception, prenatal and postnatal care; comprehensive sexual and reproductive care; and emergency care.

180. Expanded health units provide comprehensive care for low-risk vaginal delivery, among other services set out in the organizational handbook on primary care, adopted by Decision No. 560/2022,¹⁰⁷ according to which all Family Health Units must have a qualified nurse and a qualified obstetrician on their staff.

181. Since 2017, 136 new Family Health Units have been established, so that the total currently stands at 936 across the country's most vulnerable areas. A key objective is to continue to establish Family Health Units in order to increase primary healthcare coverage, which currently stands at 37 per cent.

Number of Family Health Units¹⁰⁸

<i>Health region</i>	<i>Number of Family Health Units</i>
Concepción	52
San Pedro	76
Cordillera	45
Guairá	56
Caaguazú	64
Caazapá	51
Itapúa	71
Misiones	36
Paraguarí	50
Alto Paraná	111
Central	151
Ñeembucú	25
Amambay	22
Canindeyú	49
Presidente Hayes	21
Boquerón	15

¹⁰⁷ <https://www.mspbs.gov.py/dependencias/porta/adjunto/508623-ManualdeOrganizaciondelPrimerNiveldeAtencion.pdf>.

¹⁰⁸ Source: Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Directorate of Primary Care, Department of Standards.

<i>Health region</i>	<i>Number of Family Health Units</i>
Alto Paraguay	8
Capital	33
Overall total	936

182. Decision No. 146/2012, requiring access to quality health services and care without discrimination, with full confidentiality and medical secrecy, remains in force. The medical file used for managing health service delivery, which was developed pursuant to Decision No. 527/2010, states that all information contained therein is confidential and must be handled in a manner that ensures absolute respect for the privacy of patient data.

183. Paraguay has enacted laws aimed at strengthening activities for the prevention, early detection, treatment and provision of psychological support for women and girls with cancer. Act No. 6266/18 on Comprehensive Care for Persons with Cancer¹⁰⁹ ensures that all persons with cancer have timely and quality access to dignified and comprehensive healthcare. The Act encompasses various aspects of cancer care, including health promotion, disease prevention, early detection, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation, mental health and palliative care. Act No. 3331/2007, establishing the National Programme for the Prevention, Early Detection and Treatment of Cervical and Breast Cancer, was amended by Act No. 6949/22¹¹⁰ in order to promote more effective measures for the prevention and early detection of these types of cancer.

184. Cervical cancer remains one of the neoplastic diseases with the highest rates of incidence and mortality in the country; it is a public health problem despite being a preventable disease. The Government is striving to mitigate the toll of a disease that lays bare existing gaps and inequalities. For example, it has set specific targets, such as the introduction of the human papillomavirus test as the primary screening method in the country pursuant to Decision No. 1104/2021, with the aim of expanding coverage for women in at-risk age groups using this highly sensitive test.

185. To provide cutting-edge tools to professionals working on the prevention, early diagnosis and treatment of cervical cancer and its precursor lesions, a handbook on standards and procedures for the prevention and control of cancer of the female lower genital tract was updated in 2022.

186. Furthermore, a vaccine that prevents this disease is available and is included in the standard vaccination schedule. Doses are administered at Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare educational and immunization units. Human papillomavirus sampling and testing were expected to be launched in 2024 in departments with high rates of cervical cancer prevalence and mortality, such as Alto Paraná and Central. The Government is also working on the draft national plan for early breast cancer detection, which envisages the purchase of additional mammography machines and the training of imaging professionals.

187. Act No. 6993/2022 on the Free Provision of Period Products,¹¹¹ adopted in 2022, establishes a national requirement to ensure that period products are provided free of charge to girls, adolescents and women in public educational facilities, public health facilities, detention facilities and day and night shelters for persons living in street situations.

188. The National Action Plan for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2015–2030 includes measures to ensure that women and girls with disabilities have access to appropriate and discrimination-free health services. The specialized care model of the Ciudad Mujer (Women's City) Centre provides for differentiated accessibility and care protocols for

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.bacn.gov.py/leyes-paraguayas/8708/ley-n-6266-de-atencion-integral-a-las-personas-con-cancer>.

¹¹⁰ <https://www.bacn.gov.py/leyes-paraguayas/10550/ley-n-6949-modifica-los-articulos-11-y-13-de-la-ley-n-33312007-que-crea-el-programa-nacional-de-prevencion-deteccion-precoc-y-tratamiento-del-cancer-de-cuello-uterino-y-mama>.

¹¹¹ <https://www.bacn.gov.py/leyes-paraguayas/10893/ley-n-6993-provision-gratuita-de-productos-de-gestion-menstrual>.

women with disabilities. The “Towards Inclusive Health” guide to sexual and reproductive healthcare for adolescents with disabilities is in use.

189. A plan for the introduction in Paraguay of self-administered HIV testing was adopted by Decision No. 50/2024 in view of the need to provide different population groups, in particular those at risk of HIV, with a variety of testing options. Similarly, the National Strategic Plan for Responding to HIV/AIDS and Other Sexually Transmitted Infections 2019–2023 was adopted by Decree No. 346/2020; and a clinical protocol and therapeutic guidelines for HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis, as part of combined prevention for priority populations, were adopted by Decision No. 558/2022.

190. The number of comprehensive care services for adolescents run by the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare increased from 24 in 2019 to 107 in 2023. The technical standard for comprehensive adolescent care in health facilities¹¹² is in use as part of the comprehensive care model for adolescents. This standard provides for programming on mental health, life planning, healthy habits, nutrition, oral health and other areas key to the well-being of adolescents.

191. In addition, the table of procedures for the integrated management of adolescents and their needs has been revised and updated. A guide has also been developed for Family Health Unit teams on establishing clubs for adolescents to promote their health and prevent risk factors.

Indigenous health

192. The National Directorate for the Health of Indigenous Peoples, established pursuant to Act No. 5469/15, is a component of the national health system with the functional, technical and administrative autonomy to fulfil its mandate to ensure that Indigenous Peoples have access to health services and that their own systems of care are recognized, respected and strengthened. The National Council for the Health of Indigenous Peoples and health secretariats established in several departmental governments are building capacity for the care of Indigenous Peoples.

193. As part of the National Health Policy 2015–2030, consultations were held with the representatives of 19 Indigenous Peoples who make up the National Council for the Health of Indigenous Peoples on the drafting of the implementing regulations of Act No. 5469/2015 and the guide to the functions of the National Directorate, which is the technical office through which Indigenous Peoples have universal, comprehensive, equitable, participatory and free access to all levels of a health system informed by an intercultural perspective.

194. In 2019, family health teams worked constantly to bring public health services closer to the communities located farthest from health facilities. Services provided to the population of the Department of Presidente Hayes included medical care, vaccination, deworming, testing, and talks on handwashing and nutrition. Training on cold-chain management in emergencies, additional storage capacity for emergencies, effective vaccine management, temperature monitoring, storage capacity, maintenance and inventory management was also provided.

195. The Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare is working to build national capacity – including that of State agencies and Indigenous organizations – to apply an intercultural, linguistically relevant approach to health and health management. In this context, the Indigenous Hospital has a target of caring for 9,000 people with ailments and diseases each year: it achieved 60.7 per cent of this target in 2018 and fully achieved it in 2019. In 2019, the Paraguay Public Health Sector Strengthening Project was carried out in accordance with the Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework.

¹¹² Adopted by Decision No. 018/2017, available at <https://www.mspbs.gov.py/dependencias/portal/adjunto/fe12e9-2017018RESOLUCIONSG0182017.pdf>.

Article 13

Right to education

196. The right to education is enshrined in the Constitution, article 73 of which guarantees the right to comprehensive and continuing education with a view to promoting the development of the personality, freedom, peace, social justice and respect for human rights, and sets out the aims of eradicating illiteracy and providing work training. The Constitution also guarantees the right to learn and freedom to teach; access to culture, science and technology without discrimination; and the right to religious education and ideological pluralism (art. 74).

197. Pursuant to the Constitution, Act No. 1264/1998, the General Education Act, provides that all inhabitants of Paraguay have the right to comprehensive and continuing education and that the State is responsible for ensuring access to education and creating genuine equality of opportunity for the whole population. Accordingly, educational services at all levels are aimed at all people. The purposes of the education system include the full development of the personality, the improvement of education quality, the promotion of proficiency in the official languages, the preservation of culture, and the provision of job training and of education in democratic values and fundamental rights.

198. Under the Constitution and the General Education Act, the Ministry of Education and Science is the governing body of the national education system and is therefore responsible for formulating national education policy in accordance with national development plans. Government policy on the promotion of, access to and retention in education is organized, at all levels and in all types of education, according to demographic, territorial, efficiency, quality and results criteria and the economic characteristics of the region.

199. Education services are organized on the basis of the individual's level of development and sociolinguistic and cultural reality, with an inclusive approach, while specific institutional profiles ensure the creation of differentiated spaces provided with technological and teaching resources appropriate to each profile. Following legal guidelines, the Ministry of Education and Science implements educational policies and programmes within a framework of equal opportunities in access and guaranteed conditions for the timely completion by students of the different levels or types of education; in other words, it promotes comprehensive, continuing and non-discriminatory education.

200. The Ministry of Education and Science has a platform for displaying data on enrolment by level or type of education and other factors.¹¹³ According to the data for 2023 available on this platform, 68 per cent of students enrolled in the education system (1,053,028 students) lived in urban areas and 32 per cent (495,525) in rural areas. Approximately 50.3 per cent (778,860) were male and 49.7 per cent (769,693) female; 78.7 per cent (1,218,256) attended State schools, 10.1 per cent (156,036) private schools and 11.3 per cent (174,261) subsidized private institutions.

201. The Directorate General for Inclusive Education of the Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for developing educational equality and inclusion strategies to overcome inequality and discrimination within the school system and ensure the application of a rights-based approach (Act No. 5749/2017, art. 62). To promote the effective application of the Inclusive Education Act, the following tools have been developed:

- Decision No. 17267/2018, pursuant to which the guidelines for an inclusive educational system were adopted with a view to developing criteria for the effective inclusion of students with specific support needs
- Decision No. 1188/2022, on procedures for the adoption of educational measures and curricular options for intellectually gifted students
- Decision No. 31561/2018, under which the textbooks for all levels that are purchased by the Ministry of Education and Science must be available in editable digital media

¹¹³ https://mapaescolar.mec.gov.py/mapa_escolar/contenido/datos_educativos.

in formats accessible to persons with visual impairments and other persons who have difficulty reading printed matter

Percentage of schools that admit students with disabilities

Percentage of institutions that have enrolled at least one student who reported having a disability or condition, by department

<i>Department</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Asunción	63.6
Concepción	35.6
San Pedro	33.7
Cordillera	37.9
Guairá	39.2
Caaguazú	32.0
Caazapá	28.5
Itapúa	41.3
Misiones	45.1
Paraguarí	39.7
Alto Paraná	42.7
Central	72.4
Ñeembucú	29.8
Amambay	32.6
Canindeyú	33.2
Presidente Hayes	34.5
Boquerón	33.6
Alto Paraguay	21.1
Overall average	42.6

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, Directorate General for Educational Planning, Single Register of Students 2023, initial data set.

202. Continuing education is intended to provide all young people and adults with adequate learning opportunities through formal programmes of bilingual basic education, secondary education and vocational training, in addition to non-formal literacy and post-literacy programmes. It is geared towards the inclusion of vulnerable persons, including residents of informal and riverside settlements (*bañados*), persons in detention, members of Indigenous communities, campesino women and migrants.

203. The Directorate General for the Continuing Education of Young People and Adults is the office responsible for formulating and proposing the national policy on formal and non-formal literacy and post-literacy, which covers basic education, secondary education and vocational training, for young people and adults throughout their lives (Act No. 5749/2017, art. 60).

204. The Ministry of Education and Science runs temporary remedial education programmes, which are accessible in the event that regular attendance is impossible. It also provides nutritional supplements as part of the services provided by inclusive educational institutions, specifically the educational inclusion support centres and the Remedial Education Support Service in Asunción. The aim of the School Meals Programme of Paraguay is to improve children's academic performance and ensure that they stay in school.

205. Once the organizational structure of the Directorate General for Indigenous Schooling, which was established pursuant to Act No. 3231/2007, had been defined, Indigenous representatives were appointed to the Indigenous School Education Area Council; the National Indigenous Education Council, with representatives of 19 Peoples, was formed; and

a permanent post for an area director of Indigenous education was created. The National Intercultural Bilingual Education Plan, promoted by the National Bilingualism Commission with the support of education agencies and the Secretariat for Language Policy, was adopted by Decision No. 11643/17 of the Ministry of Education and Science. Provision was made for gradual application of the Plan until 2030.

206. During 2022 and 2023, culturally relevant bilingual educational materials were provided to 18 Indigenous Peoples under the Indigenous Peoples' Multilingual Education Plan. In all, 386 teaching guides for teachers and community educators were delivered, in addition to 1,066 collections of learning material for 3- and 4-year-old children, 990 literacy sets in Indigenous languages and Spanish, 10 language and literature podcasts, 10 podcasts on human rights and the rights of Indigenous Peoples and 310 supporting texts for mathematics learning circles. There are currently 35,320 students enrolled in the Indigenous education system, including at the levels of preschool, basic education, secondary education and continuing education, with 2,265 teachers.

207. To ensure access, retention and completion in the education system and improvement in the quality of education, the State provides school meals, school kits, scholarships and discounted transport tickets for students, in accordance with the provisions in force.

208. By Decision No. 1848/2015, a teaching support protocol was adopted for at-risk students in preschool, basic, secondary and continuing education. Its aim is to ensure the enrolment, retention and learning processes of at-risk students and students in situations of vulnerability due to their exposure to threats and traumatic events such as the violation of their sexual and reproductive rights, victimization or health problems.

Article 14

Free, compulsory primary education

209. Article 46 of the Constitution establishes the free and compulsory nature of basic education, while Act No. 4088/2010 declares preschool and secondary education to be free and compulsory in all public institutions. The aim of this law is to promote education at all levels, upholding the right of every person to comprehensive and continuing education with equal opportunities. The Act is regulated by Decree No. 6162/2011. The Ministry of Education and Science gives effect to these laws by transferring funds from treasury resources to public educational institutions.

Article 15

Right to culture

210. Act No. 5621/2016 on the Protection of Cultural Heritage¹¹⁴ protects Indigenous territories and sites of remembrance and, in particular, highlights the heritage value of assets that are movable or immovable, tangible or intangible, environmental or built, secular or ecclesiastical, or public or private, insofar as they are inherently important for culture.

211. During the period covered by the present report, several laws were enacted to update the legal framework for the promotion of culture and cultural heritage, including Act No. 6871/2021 amending article 7 of Act No. 4199/2010, which introduced social security for self-employed musicians, authors, composers and artists;¹¹⁵ Act No. 7140/2023 on the Promotion of Reading and Books,¹¹⁶ Decree No. 5430/2021 regulating chapter III, on the National Heritage System, of the Act on the Protection of Cultural Heritage; and Decree No. 7837/2017 regulating the procedures for preventive measures, preliminary investigations

¹¹⁴ <https://www.bacn.gov.py/leyes-paraguayas/5259/ley-n-5621-de-proteccion-del-patrimonio-cultural>.

¹¹⁵ <https://www.bacn.gov.py/leyes-paraguayas/10180/ley-n-6871-modifica-el-articulo-7-de-la-ley-n-41992010-que-establece-el-seguro-social-para-musicos-autores-compositores-y-cultores-del-arte-en-general-sin-relacion-de-dependencia>.

¹¹⁶ <https://www.bacn.gov.py/leyes-paraguayas/11927/ley-n-7140-de-fomento-de-la-lectura-y-del-libro>.

and the application of the administrative penalties foreseen under article 42 of the Act on the Protection of Cultural Heritage.

212. Between 2019 and 2023, the National Secretariat for Culture issued 27 decisions designating sites of remembrance or historical sites, 39 decisions on intangible heritage, 13 decisions on heritage collections and 4 decisions on territories with heritage value. It has also set aside special budget allocations for direct transfers to the private sector through the “Culture Funds” mechanism, supporting 480 citizen projects with community impact.

213. Technical support for Indigenous communities in relation to cultural aspects has been provided through activities such as the registration and documentation of traditional festivities; assistance for their participation in free, prior and informed consultation processes; technical assistance for craftsmen and craftswomen; training workshops for participation in fairs and the marketing of products; interculturality workshops; discussions on the rights of Indigenous Peoples; and national exhibitions by Indigenous artists.

214. Awareness of cultural diversity has been promoted through campaigns such as “I Am Different, I am Paraguayan” and “Let’s Support Minorities and Vulnerable Groups”; the organization of a festival of cultures; a photography competition on the theme of cultural diversity in the country; the establishment of sectoral committees on people of African descent and migrants and the Paraguayan Coalition for Cultural Diversity; the production and screening of short films and documentaries on migrants and Indigenous Peoples; annual cultural diversity fairs; and the production of a cultural directory that lists 1,525 cultural organizations and 1,445 companies involved in cultural activities.

215. Paraguay actively participates in programmes promoted and supported by various cultural funds, such as Iberescena, Ibermúsicas, Ibercultura viva y comunitaria and Iberbibliotecas. In addition, the Municipality of Asunción has a municipal fund for culture and the arts. Funding under these programmes varies according to the projects approved in each case.

216. The National Directorate of Intellectual Property has a traditional knowledge and genetic resources department that works with Indigenous Peoples and local communities on public policies to promote collective rights and protect their knowledge from misappropriation and exploitation. In this context, the National Directorate leads a task force responsible for promoting traditional knowledge, which brings together representatives of 11 State institutions, nine Indigenous Peoples’ organizations, nine civil society representatives (including artisans and people of African descent) and international cooperation agencies (the United Nations Development Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations). This task force has conducted prior consultations with Indigenous and local communities on the draft bill on traditional and ancestral knowledge in Paraguay, reflecting a commitment to inclusion and cultural respect.

217. Regarding the enforcement of intellectual property rights, the National Directorate received more than 100,000 trademark registration applications between 2020 and 2023. The authorities have conducted operations to combat counterfeiting and piracy directly, seizing goods worth US\$ 27,028,045 – a significant loss for those who operate illegal schemes.

Bilateral cooperation projects

218. Between 2016 and 2019, as part of the “Mba’apo porã rekávo” project implemented with support from the Government of China (Taiwan), 10 departmental secretariats of culture were provided with equipment necessary for their operations; the national counterpart delivered identical equipment to the remaining 7 departmental secretariats.

219. Between 2020 and 2023, a project was carried out to establish and equip public libraries in the parts of the country with the highest poverty rates, thereby strengthening the national network of public libraries. In addition, 24 bilateral cooperation projects, offering artistic internships, were undertaken with the Ministry of Culture of Argentina through the Iberescena programme and cooperation with other institutions.