



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

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

**Sixth periodic report submitted by Eritrea under article 18  
of the Convention, due in 2019\***

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\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



## Acronyms

<b>ACHPR</b>	Africa Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
<b>ANC</b>	Anti Natal Service
<b>BCC</b>	Behavioral Change Communication
<b>BCG</b>	Beille Calmette-Guerin immunization
<b>BBM</b>	Better Migration Management
<b>CDC</b>	Control Division of Communicable Diseases
<b>CCE</b>	Introduction of complementary elementary education
<b>CCE</b>	Complementary Elementary Education
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women
<b>CLTS</b>	Community Led Total Sanitation
<b>CRC</b>	Convention on the rights of a child
<b>CSW</b>	Commercial Sex Workers
<b>CSW</b>	Commission on the Status of Women
<b>CSA</b>	Civil Service Administration
<b>DHIS2</b>	Health Information system 2
<b>EIT</b>	Eritrean Institute of Technology
<b>EPLF</b>	Eritrean Peopl's Liberation Front
<b>EPHS</b>	Eritrean Population Health Survey 2010
<b>ENWDVA</b>	The Eritrean National War Disabled Veteran's Association
<b>(EASSI)</b>	East Africa Sub-regional Support Initiative
<b>ESDP</b>	Education Sector Development Program
<b>EWAA</b>	Eritreans Women in Agribusiness Associations
<b>GER</b>	Gross Enrolment Ratio
<b>GoSE</b>	Government of the State of Eritrea
<b>IGME</b>	Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation
<b>IHEs</b>	Institutions of higher Education
<b>ILO</b>	International labour organization
<b>IMNCI</b>	Integrated management of new born and childhood illness
<b>LQAS</b>	Lots Quality Assurance Sampling
<b>MCAs</b>	Ministries, Commissions, Associations
<b>MCWG</b>	Ministerial core working group
<b>MIHAP</b>	Minimum Integrated Household Agricultural Package
<b>MoLWE</b>	Ministry of Land , Water and Environment
<b>MoLSW</b>	Ministry of labor and Social Welfare
<b>MoFA</b>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<b>MoND</b>	Ministry of national Development
<b>MoE</b>	Ministry of Education
<b>NAEWD</b>	National Association of Eritrean War Disabled
<b>Nacfa</b>	Eritrean Local currency
<b>NARI</b>	National Agricultural Research Institute
<b>NAVCO</b>	National Centre for Vocational Training
<b>NCE</b>	National Charter for Eritrea
<b>NCEW</b>	National Confederation of Eritrean Workers

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<b>NEPF</b>	Nomadic Education Policy Framework
<b>NER</b>	Net Enrolment Ratio
<b>NMR</b>	Neonatal Mortality Rate
<b>NSO</b>	National Statistics Office
<b>NTA</b>	National Teachers Association
<b>NUEW</b>	National Union of Eritrean Women
<b>NUEY</b>	National Union of Eritrean Youth
<b>OAG</b>	Office of Attorney General
<b>SBR</b>	Still Birth Rate
<b>SDGEA</b>	Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SMPC</b>	Saving & Micro Credit program
<b>SPCF</b>	Strategic Partnership and Cooperation Framework
<b>TCCE</b>	Transitional Civil Code of Eritrea
<b>TPCE</b>	Transitional Penal Code Eritrean
<b>TVET</b>	Technical and Vocational Training
<b>UAM/C</b>	Under Age Marriage /Committee

## I. Introduction

1. Eritrea is a state party to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) since 1995. This reflects its commitment and action to prohibit all forms of discrimination against women and bring tangible progress on women equality and empowerment. Accordingly, it submitted its combined initial, second and third periodic report in 2004 and 4th and 5th periodic reports in 2008 and 2012 respectively.

2. After the constructive dialogue on the combined 4th and 5th CEDAW periodic report in Feb.2015, NUEW organized orientation and consultation meetings with all stakeholders at local, regional and national levels. CEDAW and its provisions, the five consecutive reports and the questions raised as well as the concluding remarks and recommendations posed by the CEDAW committee were disseminated and discussed.

3. The preparation of the 6th periodic report benefited from a consultation process that involved line ministries, national unions, national associations, and communitybased organizations (CBOs). This ascertained ownership and collective responsibility in the mainstreaming of women's equality and empowerment as well as the follow up of CEDAW recommendations.

4. The Government of the State of Eritrea strongly believes that promoting gender equality and harnessing the productive potential of women is a necessity that ensures the success of sustainable socio-economic development initiatives. To this end, it has developed targeted interventions on women through programs and policies that progressively safeguard their decisive participation and contributions in the all-round development of the nation.

5. Despite the challenges posed during the two decades of existential external threats including the UN sanctions imposed on Eritrea, Eritrea achieved significant progress within the limitations of the situation and capabilities. It also achieved the MDGs on women's dignified life including health and education and is mobilizing and organizing capacity for the effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

6. The sixth periodic report is presented at a time of a new reality of peace between Eritrea and Ethiopia and the revitalized dynamics and efforts for regional peace, security and development. The rapprochement between Eritrea and Ethiopia has created amity and a sense of hope for the peoples of the Horn of Africa. These developments will have a far-reaching positive effect in the peace, security, economic development and promotion of human rights. Eritrea is determined to seize this historic opportunity to redouble its development efforts, consolidate the progress achieved and address the huge challenges faced and problems imposed on it during the last 20 difficult years.

7. The report at hand reflects on the efforts made at implementing and fulfilling Eritrea's international reporting obligation and follow-up of CEDAW as per article 18 of the convention and covers the period 2013–2017. Eritrea values the observations forwarded by the CEDAW committee and serious effort has been made to consider them in in the promotion, protection and fulfillment of women's rights.

8. NUEW is mandated to follow up the implementation of the CEDAW and prepare the CEDAW periodic report in consultation with various stakeholders, including line ministries, commissions, and associations, CSOs, CBOs, and UN Agencies.

9. In the abover context, a policy level meeting was organized in August 2016 between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and the National Union of Eritrean

Women (NUEW), to finalize a national framework for the process and preparation of the CEDAW 6th periodic report. Accordingly, a Core Working Group (CWG) coordinated by NUEW was established from relevant government bodies and stakeholders to prepare a draft report. The National Confederation of Eritrean Workers (NCEW), National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students (NUEYS), National Union of Eritrean War Veterans (NUEWV) Eritrean Teachers Association and other Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) as well as professional organizations were actively involved in the process.

10. In addition to this, an assessment to define the status on women's empowerment was conducted at regional level (in all the six regional administrations) during June–December 2017. This led to a productive national level symposium. The process involved regional Governors, regional assembly members, department heads in ministries, religious leaders sub-regional administrators, anti- female genital mutilation/underage marriage (FGM/UAM) committees, local level national associations and other interest groups in each region. The public consultations assessed the achievements made and the challenges encountered in the political, social, economic and cultural empowerment of women. They also served to familiarize and sensitize the provisions of CEDAW. The findings of the public consultations have been incorporated in this periodic report.

11. Furthermore, technical support and training by an international expert from the UN country team in Eritrea contributed in the familiarization of the harmonized reporting guideline and building capacity for report writing. A Validation Workshop was organized on January 17, 2019 by the NUEW in collaboration with the MoFA, where representatives of Ministries, Commissions, Associations (MCA) and CSOs participated and contributed in the discussion of the draft report. The draft was then submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for official submission through the proper channels.

12. Eritrea continues to widely publicize the convention through workshops, focus group discussions and commemorations during the occasions of the March 8 International Women's Day, the 16 Days of Activism on violence against women (every November), International Day of Zero tolerance of FGM/C (February 6), and International Girls Day (October 11 ) and other gatherings and occasions.

13. It is to be noted that the GoE has signed and ratified more than 108 International Conventions and Instruments (See Annex 1) and is a state party to 6 out of the 9 core human rights treaties. Moreover, Eritrea in 2014 ratified the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment as well as the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children.

14. Eritrea is committed to the goals and principles of African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR). Above all this is manifested in its accession and signing to the ACHPR on January 14, 1999 and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child on 22 December 1999. Eritrea is also part to 16 other regional conventions at various levels and affirms its commitment and effort to regional engagement and cooperation on human rights.

15. As part of its Regional commitment and in accordance to article 62 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the State of Eritrea presented its initial and combined reports to the African Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) covering the period between 1999 and 2017 on February 2017 and was presented in the 62nd session of ACHPR. Moreover, the government of the State of Eritrea ratified the Maputo declaration in 2012, submitted a country report on the African Women Decade 2010–2015 and SDGEA was submitted to the African Union Women, Gender and Development Directorate in December 2015. Furthermore,

NUEW is a board member and actively participates in the East Africa Sub-regional Support Initiative (EASSI) established to promote and advocate for the implementation of the Beijing declaration and platform of action by the East African countries.

16. NUEW actively participates in the annual meetings organized by the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). NUEW regularly delivers statements on the progress and experiences of women in Eritrea on all the identified thematic areas of the Beijing declaration. NUEW has submitted consecutive reports on Beijing +20 to the CSW. Since 2014, NUEW annually presented its progress and experiences on the following themes:

- CSW 58th session in 2014: Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals;
- CSW 59th Session in 2015: Implementing the Beijing Platform of Action;
- CSW 60th Session in 2016: Women’s Empowerment and the link to sustainable development;
- CSW 61st Session, 2017: Women’s Economic Empowerment in the changing world of work;
- CSW 62nd Session in 2018: Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls.

17. NUEW conducted two side events on women equality and empowerment in the New York CSW sessions and participated and shared experience during ministerial and expert level panel discussions. Similar side events were also organized during the 31st session of Human Rights Council (HRC) in Geneva in 2016 and the 62nd Session of ACHPR in Nouakchott – Mauritania.

## **II. CEDAW Implementation progress and response to the concluding observations**

### **Part One: Articles 1–6**

#### **Article 1: Definition of discrimination**

18. Discrimination on the grounds of sex is prohibited in all national laws. The essence of the CEDAW definition of discrimination is reflected in the national laws and practically implemented in real life. Article 8 of the Transitional Civil Code of Eritrea (TCCE) provides that “every natural person enjoys rights and freedoms earned by the nation’s liberation struggle and in that respect no regard shall be made to race, color, religion or sex of persons.” Similarly, Article 4 of the TPCE contains similar provisions that guarantees the equality of all persons in the application of the criminal law; without any discrimination. The principles enshrined in the 1994 National Charter (NCE) of the People’s Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) also aim the equality of both sexes. It also avoids regional, ethnic, gender etc. discriminations.

19. Continuous effort is made to to implment the legal and institutional provisions on women equality and empowement. Despite the progress made there are still challenges and problems at large. The indirect or unintentional implications of discrimination in particular is a challenge emerging due to lack of awareness and the existing customs and traditions. Continous awareness campaign and education is thus an essential element of the strategy.

## Article 2: Legal and policy measures to eliminate Gender discrimination

### *Equality before the law*

20. The Government of the State of Eritrea (GoSE) has clear principles and policies on women's rights. At independence in 1991, the Government repealed and amended all the colonial laws that discriminate women on the basis of their sex. This has been clearly promulgated by Proclamations No.1-5 of 1991 immediately after independence. All the subsequent laws are based on the principle of equality before the law. According to Article 1 of the Transitional Civil Code of Eritrea (TCCE), the human person (which constitutes male and female) is the subject of rights and duties from birth to death. Accordingly, Article 8 et al, states every physical person shall enjoy the rights of personality and the liberties guaranteed in the laws, without distinction of race, color, religion or sex of persons.

21. The National Charter as a political road map of the (PFDJ), underlines the respect of equal rights as the essence of its political program and further states that, the "issue of women is a major social issue, a society that does not respect the rights and equality of women cannot be truly liberated society."<sup>1</sup>

22. As stated in the previous reports, the scope of the obligations to eliminate discrimination and abolish discriminatory laws include:

- All adopted colonial laws were reviewed and all discriminatory laws repealed;
- The Transitional laws of Eritrea ensured equal rights and protection in marriage and divorce, inheritance, child custody and adoption, equal access to judiciary, legitimizing three forms of marriage, legal age marriage of 18 for both sexes, etc;
- All laws that have been enacted include safety clause to avoid any ambiguity of interpretation of adjectives, includes a statement stating "a word importing the masculine gender shall include the feminine as well", and further clarified that all national laws treat both sexes equally without any discrimination.

23. Furthermore, the following new proclamations were also enacted to respect, protect and fulfill the rights of women and abolish gender-based discrimination:

- Nationality proclamation No.112/1992 that ensured equal nationality and citizenship rights, that any person born of an Eritrean father or mother is an Eritrean by birth;
- The land tenure proclamation No.58/1994 ensured equal access to land use for habitat, for subsistent and commercial farming. According to this proclamation, land is a property of government and citizens have usufruct rights only;
- The labor proclamation No. 118/2001 that ensured equal employment right, equal pay for equal work of the same value, protection of pregnancy, paid maternity leave, equal treatment & opportunity etc.;
- Proclamation No. 82/1995 ensured equal participation in National Service;
- Proclamation No. 86/1996 for the Establishment of Local Governments, that promoted an affirmative action in public and political participation, reserved 30% seats for women and allows women to compete in the remaining 70% equally;
- Proclamation No.158/2007 abolished Female Circumcision and underlines that "FGM violates women's basic human rights by depriving them of their physical

<sup>1</sup> NCE, page 35, section on respecting equal rights.

and mental integrity, freedom from violence and discrimination, and in extreme case, their life’;

- Proclamation No.128/2002 (on Business licensing) ensured women equal access to engage in any business activity and hold business license without consent of spouse or farther, the only limitation being not being an employee of public service, Art.9(4).

24. The following institutional measures were taken during the reporting period:

- A five years Gender Action Plan (GAP) (Refer Annex 2) which covered the period 2015–19 was developed in consultation with line Ministries and national civic organizations. The GAP ensures women’s empowerment and gender mainstreaming in all development programs. Currently, seven (MOE, MOH, MOLSW, MOI, MOTI, MOA) out of the 17 Ministries have so far managed to develop sector GAP and have appointed gender focal persons. The rest are in the process of developing GAP;
- Pursuant to Proclamation No.58/1994, land utilization directive No. 2/29.09/2014 (Refer Annex 3) was issued by the Ministry of Land Water and Environment (MoLWE) in 2014 to clarify the interpretation of the land tenure law. Land allocation committees at all levels are elected by the community, and one seat is necessarily reserved for women. The plot of farm land allocated for married couples was normally registered in the name of the husband. This directive has corrected (amended) the practice and the plot of farm land is equally divided and registered on under both. In case of divorce she takes her share, i.e. her own part of the land. In rare cases of polygamy among Muslim community, each wife gets her own plot of land and in case of divorce gets her share back. Housing land is a common property registered under both names of the couple and in case of divorce is divided equally. A symbolic recent example in the implementation of the directive is the allocation of farm land initiated in the Serejaka sub-region (Zoba Maekel); 1094 plots of farm land (36.75%) were allotted for female headed house holds and unmarried females and 1572 farm land for married couples;
- In 2017 a National Steering Committee (NSC) encompassing the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labor and social welfare and the National Union of Eritrean Women was established. It aims to coordinate activities and create functional synergy in addressing the common issues that relate to harmful practices, such as FGM, underage marriage and other forms of violence against women. All the anti FGM-C and underage marriage committees at regional, subregional and administrative villages are now coordinated under the NSC. The effort has ensured higher cooperation with UNICEF and UNFPA as partners in the overall effort;
- To safeguard the rights of Eritrean domestic workers abroad, the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare in collaboration with Ministry of foreign affairs of Eritrea and the Saudi Embassy in Eritrea has developed an agreement with Saudi Employment agencies (See Annex 4). Recruitment by private travel agencies, outside of the tripartite arrangement has been prohibited since 2017. This has ensured the rights, safe working environment and secure salary and benefits of the Eritrean domestic workers in Saudi Arabia;
- In general, women equality is guaranteed by a strong legal and institutional basis. The low-level awareness and knowledge on the gender sensitive laws both among women and the general public still remains a challenge. The MOJ in coordination to the MOI has expanded the awareness raising programs on TV, radio (in four local languages) and the daily news paper (Hadas Eritrea) twice a

week and has created a significant impact. The NUEW has media campaign slots on TV, radio and print medias. Furthermore, its legal counseling and advisory units in the six regional offices raise awareness and provide support and advisory services for women. In 2016/17 1,167 women were provided with legal counseling and 139 victims of violence given financial support.

### **Article 3: Enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms of women**

25. NUEW was established in 1977 during the Eritrean liberation struggle pursuant to the 1st Congress of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) resolution and held its founding congress in November 1979. The 7th NUEW Congress was convened by the 420 delegates on September 2014 and adopted a new Constitution. (See annex No 5). The Congress in Article 2 reasserted the organizational mandate of the Union to strengthen its alignment and role in the national building aims and goals of the nation. In this regard, NUEW continues to:

- Represent the Government of the State of Eritrea on the affairs of women, and coordinate with sector ministries and other agencies to develop policies and programmes on women equality and empowerment;
- Advocate and provide guidance on the mainstreaming of gender perspectives and engage sector ministries and other agencies to develop gender policy document and integrate gender issues in all sector development programmes;
- Represent the government and the organization itself in all national, regional and international forums and represent the interest and rights of Eritrean women at international level.

26. NUEW deploys diverse means and ways to mobilize financial resources and the following are some of the important ones:

- The Government of the State of Eritrea regularly provides annual budget support to the NUEW. This has increased from 3 million Nakfa (local currency) in 2010 to 8 million in 2015. Furthermore, a total of 800,000USD was allocated by the government from the UN-Strategic Partnership Cooperation Framework SPCF 2013–2016 and the Global Fund earmarked as part of cooperation agreement in the advancement of women equality and empowerment programs;
- NUEW runs the Aragg sanitary pad factory and the products are sold at affordable prices, with limited profit as a source of self-financing. Some of the NUEW regional offices also run gift shops, internet cafés, gyms, etc.;
- Furthermore, membership fee and contributions from NUEW members inside the country and in the Diaspora is an important source. Eritrean Women Diaspora also contributes in various women empowerment projects. A symbolic experience is the construction of training centers (with kindergarten facilities, conference halls and NUEW offices), in the towns of Keren, Barentu, Mendefera, Adikeih, Senafe, Hiacota, Teseney. Two delivery waiting rooms are also established in Kerkebet (Gash Barka region) and Tio (Southern Red Sea region). The total cost of these projects is 177,202,674.90 Nakfa and Diaspora contribution amounted 15.3% (27,272,638.28 Naka, including procurement of training materials, IT accessories & computers and fixture and furniture).

27. Human resource capacity and development of the organization remains an important priority. NUEW has 379 employees (12.9% male) in its six regional offices. About 44% are between 18–40 of age. The educational profile encompasses 29.9% professionals, and the rest are high school graduates active in mobilization and organization of NUEW programs. Upgrading and training courses have continued during the reporting period provided to consolidate and build organizational capacity

in conjunction with local colleges as well as through distance learning and provision of scholarships at higher education level (3 masters; 2 diploma, 9 certificates, and 348 in 3-month management and leadership courses). However, shortage of legal professionals to strengthen NUEW legal counseling and the research and documentation units still remains an important priority.

#### *Freedom of Association and Assembly*

28. Eritrean women have the right to association and assembly in various capacities and diverse interest groups. NUEW as a women's organization has 163 branches, 481 sub-branches and 4343 basic groups. Membership is open to all Eritrean women above the age of 16 and has more than 329,314 female members. The the average yearly increase currently is estimated at 7%. NUEW has offices in all six regions, 58 sub-regions and 2460 villages (out of a total 2862) inside the country as well as in the Diaspora. In terms of age 34% of the members are in the age range of 16–30 and about 22% in the range of 31–40 and women farmers constitute 43% of the total.

29. Women's organizational capacity and participation is also diversified along various associations established for various social groups and goals. This includes the disabled, workers, youth, teachers, sport federations, war veterans. etc. Women constitute about 30–35% of the leadership in all the respective organizations. The War Disabled Veteran Association for instance has a women's department mandated to follow issues related to disabled womens rights, organize self-help groups and conduct workshops to increase awareness. The Association has 19,161 registered members, and 18% are female (3449).

30. The regulatory framework for establishing result oriented and non-profit Associations, is set by Eritrean laws (the transitional Civil Code Eritrea Articles 404–482). It gives Eritrean citizens the right to form association, establish memorandum of associations and statutes. These Organizations have their own structure, leadership, program and source of income. They also participate and contribute in the nation development progammes. Examples of such women's organizations are the following:

- Eritreans Women in Agribusiness Associations, EWAA.
- Association of Eritrean Women Artists and Handcrafters, AEWAH.
- Association of Eritrean Women Entrepreneurs, Dejen.
- Association of Eritrean women veterans, Bilequatt. etc.

#### *Media programs and campaigns*

31. The Ministry of Information in collaboration with the NUEW broadcasts a twice per week radio program in 5 local languages (Tigrigna, Tigre, Arabic, Saho and Afar) under the banner of the 'Voice of Eritrean women'. The Noorit, Seida and Shiebet TV programs are similarly broadcasted twice a week. A column in the official newspaper (Hadas Eritrea) on women equality is published in four languages. The campaigns have raised public awareness on women's rights, against prejudices and stereotyping roles, legal and political rights of women and success stories in the economic empowerment and educational development of women. The contribution of the 238 journalists that encompasses regional correspondents (45%), editors (48.4%) and media technicians (34.5%) is significant in portraying the importance of women equality and empowerment in the society. Furthermore, NUEW quarterly women's Magazine (under the title Ageizo, meaning emancipation of women) also publishes 15,000 copies of eqch issue to raise consciousness and social responsibility on women's issues. Furthermore, two documentary films on FGM/C and women empowerment were produced and used during various campaigns.

### *Other Fundamental Human Rights*

32. Women's dignified life assumes a major part in the social sector strategy of the Government and ensures their rights to basic education, health service, safe water housing. Women's right to acquire business license and usufruct right to land use is guaranteed. Furthermore, the right to vote, elect and be elected, etc. is ensured by the Eritrean laws (is discussed broadly in the following articles). Currently elections are running at village and locality levels as well as for the community courts. The trend in the level of their participation seems to have increased, however, the elections are still ongoing and no data could be reflected in this report.

#### **Article 4: Adoption of special measures**

33. Affirmative action is taken as a transitional measure to create leverage in women's equal participation and aims at accelerating equality. It is a political stance reflected in the National Charter, sanctioned by national law and the provisions of Proclamation No.86/1996. Special institutional measures are thus implemented by many sector ministries as per the government policies and the following are some examples:

- Public, political as well as communal participation: 30% seat in elected position in national, regional and local assemblies, at least one seat in community courts, 30% seat in water management teams in rural areas, one seat in sport federations leadership and at least one seat in the land committees;
- Education: Some of the notable examples and initiatives include, entrance requirement for higher education is slightly lower for girls and is 2 GPA points for boys and 1.8 for girls; reserving minimum of 30% participation allocation for girls in technical and vocational education and training; day-care centers are opened within schools to encourage female teachers; hostels and boarding schools built to promote participation of rural girls in education; sanitation facilities built in schools, including preparing affordable sanitary towels for girls, free school uniform and books for economically disadvantaged girls, free bicycles for girls with outstanding performance, provision of donkey and canvas for fetching water thereby saving time for schooling, provision of solar, makeup classes ,.. etc. could be mentioned;
- Economy - Special measures through credit and loan schemes are considered to encourage women entrepreneurs to borrow a loan exceeding 30,000 Nakfa. Female entrepreneurs are not required to present a business license as a guarantee, if they are eligible in the group loan category (a requirement for male businesses - SMCP 2016);
- Health:
  - Waiting homes for pregnant women in rural areas free of charge for at least two weeks before delivery provided; Fistula treatment free of charge; testing for HIV and syphilis during the ANC period and early detection for free (2014); procurement of stretchers for transportation of laboring mothers in remote, not accessible villages (2016);
  - Provision of basic nursing training program that includes midwifery courses as a requisite for the completion of undergraduate level so that every nurse that graduates from the nursing program is well versed in the management of ante- and pre-partum conditions; supplementary in-service courses dealing with birth and neonatal resuscitation are given in as Life Saving Skills (LSS) courses;

- Opening of daycare centers in the health facilities for their kids under 4 years to facilitate continued employment for female health care workers;
- Free post-exposure prophylaxis treatment for HIV, STI and pregnancy for women and victims of rape within 72 hours is guaranteed as anti-retroviral treatment and is available at the primary care level complete with counseling. A guideline that allows adolescent youth of contraception without parental consent is adopted and in use. The Adolescent and Youth Friendly Sexual and Reproductive Health services (AYFSRH) strategy was adapted in 2014 and implementation was started in 2017;
- Introducing community based therapeutic feeding program at village level to tackle problems of malnutrition.
- Rural development - Installation of water pumps in the vicinity of a village (reduce excessive domestic chores of girls and women); introduction of voluntary resettlement of scattered villages in a conducive location for social transformation and access to social services (electricity, clean water, education, health, transport etc).

34. On Gender disaggregated data: All Ministries and associations have committed themselves to collect data disaggregated by gender. The Ministry of Agriculture and the Saving and Micro Credit Program (SMCP) have launched a new data collection program that transformed their data collecting mechanism since mid-2017.

#### **Article 5: Measures for modifying the social and cultural patterns of conduct**

35. One of the six basic goals stated in the PFDJ National Charter (ENC) is cultural revival and social justice. Under section 5 (page 35), the National Charter states that “we are striving to make Eritrea a country of justice and equality where dignity and basic human rights are respected for women, workers, children, refugees, handicapped and others who deserve assistance”. Hence, transforming the social fabrics to accommodate women equally and avoid the stereotyping roles and prejudices is a principle asserted by policy and in practice. Pursuant to stated government policy, all national laws have been strictly reviewed and all articles, clauses, statements, adjectives even words that discriminate and belittle women were either repealed or amended and new laws enacted that promote women’s rights, such as abolition FGM practices, inheritance rights, land ownership, marriage and divorce rights.

36. A major effort of significance is the concerted ongoing cultural transformation that takes into consideration equality and the enhanced role of women in all aspects of life. This includes the consolidation of the proper upbringing that considers the empowerment of the family as a social institution system and further includes the emerging national educational system and its role in promoting knowledge, skills professional capabilities and attitudinal change, the national service, the summer work programme:

37. Various socio-cultural measures also taken to to transform the socio-cultural patterns.

- Establishing Friends of NUEW clubs in every region with the aim of fighting against cultural prejudices, where elders, religious leaders, youth and other influential persons are members;
- The role played by theatrical arts, literary work, music, dance, dramas, annual national community festivals, bi annual Youth festivals to challenge the cultural prejudices on women was immense. The growing number of women artists, musicians, drama directors, actresses, poets, writers, cyclists, footballers, role

models and exemplary citizens has impacted in influencing the traditional patterns and mind-set of communities. etc.;

- Revising school curriculum and teaching materials including various presentations to be gender sensitive, promote girl's education, criminalize abduction, bigamy etc. are major interventions that contributed in influencing sociocultural pattern of behavior;
- Reward system to modify behaviours in particular for women and girls have been introduced by NUEW, NUEYS and various government ministries and agencies.

38. At present, popular movement to ban FGM-C and UMC in many Sub-regions is gaining momentum. Official declaration of religious leaders, both Muslim and Christian, in Central Region in November 20, 2016 categorically condemned and resolved to abolish FGM-C, under-age marriage and rape. (See attachment). A grassroots movement has also led to a total mobilization in the Anseba Region. It started at local levels in two sub regions with the active role of junior and secondary school students, religious leaders and elders and declaration has been issued in the meeting conducted at region level to ban the practices and followup mechanisms have been agreed. In general, zero FGM in a short time in particular in has been the main goal. The work and organization has resulted in zero FGM-C villages in the Habero and Asmat Sub-regions of the Anseba Region (predominantly Muslim communities). A similar movement has also started in the North Red Sea Region and similar declarations have been issued in the Nakfa and Afabet sub regions.

39. The remnants of customs and traditions that discriminate women still remain a challenge in women equality. Nonetheless, through equal participation in work and equal access in education, the stereotyping roles are becoming rejected showing promising progress. In addition, women are organizing themselves under the NUEW and other national associations, interest groups etc. to assert their rights and contribute in the transformation of the society.

#### *Criminalization of all forms of violence*

40. Violence against women is prohibited by law as it has psychological, physical, economical and social impacts. Rape, FGM, physical assault and marriage under the legal age (i.e.18) are crimes punishable by the Transitional Penal Code of Eritrea (TPCE). There is no provision of marital rape in the Eritrean laws. On the other hand, in accordance to article 636 of the TCCE, respect, support and assistance as well as duty of fidelity among spouses is required.

41. Anyone who commits crime related to violence against women, such as rape (Art 589), sexual outrages accompanied by violence at various levels (Art 590-599), physical assault (Art 537), grave injury (Art. 538/539), FGM-C (Art.4 of the Proclamation) is brought to the court by public prosecution and all criminal cases are duly adjudicated by the criminal courts only. Mediation by elders or religious leaders is not allowed.

42. Rape case falls on the jurisdiction of the high court, not the lower courts (Community court and regional courts) as they constitute grave crimes. Parents of the victim, the victim herself file their complaints to the police immediately after the crime happens. The concrete practice consolidated by law enforcement agents is to register the rape complaint of the victim and simultaneously forward the victim to a health station. Accordingly, the victim is given post-exposure prophylaxis injection within 72 hours as a preventive measure on HIV/AIDS. Both reports from the police and health stations are then forwarded to the public prosecutor office for immediate action of detaining the perpetrator and follow up of legal proceedings. As part of the

Civil redress, compensation for moral and material damages are issued in accordance with Section 3/ articles 2090–2161 of TCCE.

*Evidentiary, medical and forensic procedures*

43. Forensic procedures are conducted by police investigators while medical examinations are done by health professionals in accordance to standard procedures applicable under the law. The forensic evidence collected by the Forensic Unit of the Eritrean Police Force and the report from the health facilities are submitted to the public prosecution office for legal action by the courts. Shortage of modern forensic laboratories and equipment is a major challenge.

*Campaigns to Combat Violence against Women*

44. As part of the measures to redress gender stereotyping in all spheres of life, massive awareness raising and sensitization programs to combat gender stereotyping have been conducted in Government institutions, National Civic Associations and the Communities at large. Administrations at national, regional and local are involved in organizing campaigns, through dramas, parades, cultural shows and other activities and have helped in challenging the existing attitudes and stereotype roles. Accordingly:

- During the reporting period, about 7,842 seminars, campaigns, workshops, have been conducted (152,729 participants - 24% male) in the general public on women's social, legal and political rights. About 423 meetings were conducted by anti FGM and Underage Marriage Committees (UAMC) to develop action plans and have managed to organize campaigns on traditional harmful practices and communicable diseases (Malaria, TB, and HIV/AIDS) targeting over 300,000 citizens;
- The 16 days campaign of Violence Against Women spearheaded by the NUEW in collaboration with stakeholders has been conducted throughout the nation every year in November. The campaign has raised consciousness and responsibility on Gender Based Violence (GBV) such as FGM-C, underage marriage, rape and their forms of violence;
- The International Women's Day is celebrated as a National Holiday and is used to mobilize Eritrean communities, families and individuals in the respect and protection of women's rights;
- The Girls' international day is coordinated by the NUEW, MOE and UNICEF is celebrated every year (since 2017) and is being used as a platform for the advancement of girl's education.

*Structural and Systemic Measures Promoted*

45. The establishment of anti FGM-C and UAM-C throughout the nation at grass root level since 2006 is the effective innovative strategy to fight and eliminate against these harmful traditional practices. A total of 548 committees nationwide are functioning at all levels; 6 at regional levels with 70 members (82.9% male), 82 at sub-regional level with 798 members (73.6% male), 460 at village and locality level with 3,666 members (61.7% male) and are working effectively.

46. Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) are also transformed to serve as change agents in the communities campaigning against FGM. Specific awareness campaigns and meetings of Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) have been conducted to consolidate their role. Nurses and midwives have never been involved in the FGM-C practice and every effort is made to ensure their professional integrity and code of conduct.

47. A National Steering Committee (NSC) is currently playing a leading role in the overall struggle against these practices and brings on board all stakeholders, religious leaders, elders, community leaders, line ministries and local governments. The regional and sub regional committees at grass roots level established since 2006 are working in tandem with the technical committee (TC) established under the NSC. Members of the NSC are at ministerial and NUEW President level, while TC members are at director general level. The NSC, has developed a three-phase approach: capacity building, sensitization and campaigning phase, so as to declare FGM/C free communities, a zero-under-age marriage and a zero tolerance against all other forms of violence against women.

*Prevalence rate of FGM and Actions to Address Effects*

48. The assessment on prevalence rate of FGM-C universally made among all women and girls in 1995 was 95%, the same approach that followed in 2002 resulted to be 89%. EPHS (2010) for the age group 15–19 of age showed a result of 68.8%. In 2014 selected mapping conducted in 135 villages for girls under age of 5 showed a dramatic drop of 90% registering the prevalence rate for the first time to be 6.9% and for under 15 years of age 18.2%. Note should be made that the prevalence rate in certain regions is higher than this, and remains a challenge that needs a concerted effort.

49. Proclamation No.158/2007 Article 4 specifies the penalties for practicing FGM-C, with imprisonment two to three years and fine five thousand up to ten thousand Nakfa fine. And in case of those who incite, promote and making request for FGM-C is punishable with one to six-month imprisonment and a fine of three thousand Nakfa as an accomplice to the crime. Within the reporting period, a total of 250 cases related to practicing FGM-C have been presented to the court, 163 cases decided or judgment given and 67 cases are pending.

50. The Control Division of Communicable Diseases (CDC) reports from MoH shows that post exposure prophylaxis treatment for HIV, STI and pregnancy for women who presented with case of rape was given for 175 women in 2015 and 183 women in 2016. The DHIS2 reported a similar number. The upward trend suggests increased awareness and improved health seeking behavior. Additionally, increased access is now guaranteed as anti-retroviral treatment is available at the primary care level administered under proper counselling.

**Rape cases nationwide in 2013–2017**

<i>Sexual Offences</i>	<i>Year</i>					<i>Total</i>
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	
Rape	152	122	126	160	136	696

*Source:* Office of the Attorney General 2017.

51. The Lots Quality Assurance Sampling survey (LQAS) done in 2013 by the MoH documented the extent of gender-based violence in Eritrea, and showed less claims of rape than physical violence. However, as the influence of cultural and traditional attitude varies across the regions, the issue of reporter bias needs to be taken into consideration. Note that data on verbal abuse was not collected. (Refer Annex 6 - Table 1).

*Women Rights in detention*

52. Pursuant to Article 10 of Proclamation No. 1/1991, the Office of the Attorney General (OAG), inter alia, regularly visits prison and other detention facilities. Furthermore, the OAG, pursuant to Article 8 of the Transitional Criminal Procedure of Eritrea, has the power to direct investigations of alleged crimes that may have been committed in violation of the Transitional Penal Code of Eritrea and other pertinent laws and regulations. The OAG involves itself in investigating sexual assaults which may have been committed upon women whenever credible information is provided. Moreover, the OAG as part of its mandate to tour prisons and detention centers, continues to interview detainees in private, thereby creating a situation where women could speak freely.

53. Female prisoners are guarded and supervised by female wardens, treated by female nurses and searched by female guards. This is strictly adhered to and carried out in all police stations and prison facilities. Humane treatment for all detainees are respected such as provision of health service, medicine, food, sanitation & hygiene etc. A Separate prison facility for women is also compliant with international standards. Temporary custody facilities in the police stations for women suspects under investigation are also separate and guarded and treated by female police officers. Gender sensitive training is provided by NUEW to all prison personnel in the female prisons and the international women's day celebration is also used as a special occasion for promoting the dignity of female inmates.

54. According to Proclamation No. 1/1991, the office of the prosecutor has the power to inspect and hear complaint of suspects under investigation in police custody. Complaint mechanism and procedure in prison facility are also in place. Whenever allegations of sexual assault and violence against women, either in the workplace, or in the general public are reported, the OAG employs the powers that are incumbent in it as explained in the preceding paragraph. Those cases are handled in a manner that does not create embarrassment to the victims, and avoid the social stigma that is associated with it. Furthermore, the OAG and its regional offices exercise full authority in investigating those alleged crimes against women.

**Article 6: Trafficking in women & exploitation on prostitution***Eritrea's Efforts in Combatting Human Trafficking and Smuggling*

55. Eritrea has been targeted under the protracted politicization of migration used as a continuation of the belligerent stance by some powers. The wrong and deliberate policies of some western countries have greatly contributed to the highly organized illegal migration, smuggling and human trafficking and exposes the dreadful and evil use of migration and human trafficking. The ill intent is the creation of a generation gap by luring the young generation and constitutes a crime against the Eritrean people that needs international accountability. This has been underlined in the official letters of the President of the State of Eritrea, HE Isaias Afwerki to the UN Secretary General HE Bam Ki-Moon on 5 February 2013. Accordingly, request was made for an independent and transparent investigation on the "hideous slavery" by migrant human trafficking networks and their handlers so as to bring justice to all culpable parties, but to no avail. The Eritrean Delegation has reiterated this position in its address to the last UNGA and further demanded compensation to the Eritrean people for the consequences of the hideous crime.

56. Trafficking is criminalized in the Transitional Penal Code of Eritrea (Articles 605–07). Eritrea is a state party to United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the trafficking protocol. The transnational nature of human trafficking and smuggling touches upon different territories and legal systems and

creates difficulties in apprehending and bringing before justice perpetrators of such crimes. Nevertheless, the Eritrean Government continues to intensify its efforts in combating trafficking in persons, including at the regional level through the AU-Horn of Africa Counter Trafficking Initiative. Eritrea is also a member state to the International Organization for Migration. Eritrea has been engaged in different international, regional and national efforts to tackle illegal migration coupled with human trafficking and smuggling including the following:

- Participated in the Palermo Convention, Valetta Summit (joint declaration and action plan), Khartoum process, Better Migration Management (BBM), the Global Compact for Migration and UNODC. Currently a steering committee has been established and it is working in close collaboration with the BMM;
- In accordance with the Palermo Convention and within the framework of the UNODC Regional Program for Eastern Africa (2016–2021), Eritrea has stepped up its engagement with regional and international stakeholders. This is to promote effective responses by member states in Eastern Africa to transnational organized crime, illicit trafficking, and illicit drug trafficking at the legal, technical and policy level. UNODC does so primarily through its regional program on transnational organized crime and illicit trafficking;
- Eritrea has engaged the UNODC ROEA in preventing transnational organized crimes and related illegal acts and the cooperation has expanded and includes the following:
  - From June 4 – 8, 2018 a training workshop for Eritrean police officers was given, in partnership with UNODC in Asmara. The objective was to enhance technical and professional capacity of police officers in combatting transnational organized crime, human trafficking and smuggling. 31 officers participated in this course;
  - From 6 – 9 August 2018, second round of tailored training workshop was undertaken, in partnership with UNODC, specifically designed for ‘training of trainers’. 16 experts took part in the training;
  - A Joint training workshop of the Ministry of Justice and UNODC for Criminal Justice experts was provided in Asmara (19–20 2018 November), and Judges and prosecutors from different courts and prosecution office levels participated;
  - On 31 August 2018, UNODC chief procurement consultant, visited and inspected the Police Academy in Dekemhare and police headquarters in accordance with the agreement reached by both parties. The objective was to identify the gaps and shortage of equipment that hinder the activities of the academy and supplying it through UNODC funded budget;
  - Eritrea participated in in the Global compact for migration conference held in Marrakesh and as a result a law enforcement workshop for East Africa countries in combating organized crimes was held in Eritrea.

#### *Prostitution*

57. According to Article 604 TCCE, habitual exploitation for pecuniary gains is illegal, and whosoever, for gain, makes a profession of or lives by procuring or on the prostitution or immorality of another, or maintains, as a land lord or keeper, a disorderly house is punishable with simple imprisonment and fine. The MoLSW takes measure to ensure that women who are engaged in prostitution are not discriminated and exploited. The Behavior Change Communication (BCC) strategy targeting sex workers and female at risk such as waitresses is a strategz depolzed extensively.

58. BCC was redefined and consolidated in 2014, to safe-guard the rights of prostitutes, ensure safe sexual life, seek an acceptable level of livelihood and develop an optimistic view about future life. To this end the following measures were taken:

- Peer facilitators and coordinators have been trained on how to conduct peer group education on HIV/AIDS and STIs, and other women related health issues. They are also trained on basic counseling and guidance, positive living, history of prostitution, problems facing prostitutes;
- Group meetings on health education were conducted twice a month using the MoH education manuals;
- Peer group facilitators submit monthly reports on the work done to the respective coordinator. After the compilations of the group's reports each coordinator submits three monthly reports to the BCC project supervisor of the Ministry of labor and social welfare;
- An annual refresher course has been conducted in the six regions in which health and psychosocial topics are covered to update the knowledge of the representatives. Meanwhile, annual evaluative meeting is conducted and future action plan designed;
- The ministry shares its progress report on BCC program and raises issues concerning the wellbeing of the prostitutes by holding annual meeting with the stakeholders (ministries, administrations and associations) and with the service giving enterprises;
- To encourage alternative life style, 56 peers have been trained in hair dressing, weaving and bee keeping in collaboration with NUEYS, of which ten are engaged in other means of livelihood than prostitution. Furthermore, 15 peers abandoned prostitution, through marriage and involvement in petty trade and employment.

#### **BCC groups on female sex workers in the last 5 years**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>Total</i>
Peers	566	608	782	804	922	3 682
Peer facilitators	25	22	27	31	35	140
Peer Coordinators	12	13	15	15	20	75
Supervisors	10	12	12	10	15	59

*Source:* Health promotion, 2017.

## **Part Two: Articles 7–9**

### **Article 7: Representation of Women in Political & Public life**

59. As indicated in various reports, the post-independence new Eritrean Constitution process took about two years as it was preceded by civic education and extensive discussions throughout the country as well as in the Diaspora was adopted by an 862-member Constituent Assembly. The political trajectory contemplated in those days was to enact subsequent laws on the various aspects of the political process of nation building. Those were not completed at the time. This natural process in the broadest sense of the term was interrupted by the border war with Ethiopia that erupted in May 1998. However, legislative elections for the National Assembly had taken place at the end of 1997 after the adoption of the new Constitution.

60. Women right to vote, to elect and be elected democratically is guaranteed and practiced. In the National Assembly of 150 Representatives women held 22% seats. By virtue of Proclamation 86/1996, Regional Assemblies are also elected in the six regions and women amounted an average of 28.7 % of the total. Their participation in regional assembly however varies from one region to the other (For instance, in Central region it is 34% while in Anseba region which is the lowest is 25%). At the lower hierarchy of the local government (locality and village levels), assembly members and administrators are elected democratically by their constituency and currently women hold 37%. Sub-regional administrator are appointed assigned/appointed by the Ministry of Local Government and women hold 20%.

61. The costly war with Ethiopia as well as dire conditions of perennial belligerency that ensued in its aftermath has adversely affected the tempo and pace of the political process of national building. Elections and related political processes were consequently kept on hold as priorities changed and the country had to grapple, first and foremost, with existential issues of preserving its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Hence only local and regional elections have taken place in this situation. The most recent is the presently ongoing local elections throughout the country. As the process is still going on, detail on the level of women representation can not be given for now, but there are indications that it has increased.

62. The representation of women in other areas of public life is promising. In the judiciary women encompass 22% of the high court judges, 14% Regional Court judges, 35.89% public prosecutors and 37% in the elected community court judges. In the executive body, Ministers increased from 17.6% to 23.5%, (a female minister of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare was appointed in 2017), Director Generals 26.1%, Directors 10.6% and Unit heads 35.4%.

63. National action plan to implement UNSC Resolution No.1325 has not been developed, but assessment has been made and will be addressed in the future. Nonetheless, Training workshop on the magnitude and meaning of the UNSC Resolution No.1325 and the subsequent resolutions has been organized in 2017/2018 by the NUEW in collaboration with the UN country team and by a gender technical expert, NUEW members and the inter-sectorial CEDAW drafting committee participated.

#### **Article 8: Women's Representation of government at international level**

64. Women's representation at international level has not changed much during the reporting period and is an area to be considered in the future reorganization of government functions and institutions. There is one Ambassador and 10% are acting as Charge de'affairs/secretaries of Eritrean Missions. However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has strengthened its profile and capacity through new young generation professional diplomats working at the HQ level with a significant number of female representations.

#### **Article 9: Nationality**

65. By virtue of Proclamation No. 21/1994, the Nationality and Citizenship proclamation ensures that there is no distinction between men and women. A child has the right to acquire Eritrean citizenship from his/her mother, including a child born out of wedlock. The citizenship proclamation is strictly implemented since its promulgation. Nationality is given in two ways by birth and naturalization. It is the fundamental right of any citizen regardless of sex, ethnicity etc. to acquire residence registration number at birth, Eritrean National Identity Card (ENIDC) at the age of 18 without any discrimination on the basis of gender. Women/girls have equal access and opportunity and no consent and approval is required from father or husband.

66. Registering a child at birth and death is compulsory in accordance to the TCCE (Articles 47–153). Record of civil status accomplished promptly within 3 months for records of birth, one month for records of death and one month for records of marriage (as per TCCE Art. 62). Failure to draw record by civil status officer and failure to make declaration within the time limit determined by law is criminal offence (TCCE Art.141/142). According to Article 623 of the transitional Penal code Eritrea, omission to register the birth of an infant, by relatives, doctors, midwives or directors or administrative officer is punishable with a fine or simple imprisonment. There is an effective registration system in place and encompasses the following:

- The Regional Administrations under the auspices of the Ministry of Local Government shoulder registration responsibility through their respective civil registry offices. Nowadays, every child at birth is registered throughout the country where residence registration number is duly given;
- BCG immunization is given at birth or a maximum of 45 days after birth and a vaccination card/record is obtained from the MOH;
- The civil registry document is a requirement for vaccination and to enrol in any educational facility throughout the country.

### **Part Three: Articles 10–14**

#### **Article 10: Women and Education**

67. The Government of the State of Eritrea (GoSE) realizes that an all rounded human resource is a pre-requisite and an essential condition for the sustainable development of the nation. Education is a fundamental human right for all Eritrean citizens and every child is entitled to get equal access and opportunity. In this vein, equity considerations are promoted to avoid any discrimination in education provision. The implementation is based on the National Education Policy (2010), the National Curriculum Framework (2009), the Government’s Education Sector Development Program (ESDP, 2013-2017) and all the attendant enforcement guidelines and regulations. They all ascertain the child’s right to education and reflect the obligations arising from pertinent international conventions of which Eritrea is a party to. They are accordingly consistent with the basic CEDAW principles (Article 10) on accessibility, acceptability, adaptability of education to protect the individual against any form of discrimination in education and to ensure her/his educational development.

#### *Girl’s enrolment and flow rates*

68. During the reporting period, the total number of formal pre-primary schools has increased from 483 in 2013 to 524 in 2017 (7.8%). A total of 44,898 children enrolled in the 2016/17 academic year, and girls constitute 48.3%. Much effort is however needed as the net enrolment ratio was 16.8% (gross enrolment of 18.5%) in the same academic year. Enrolment at the elementary level was 347,009 (45.2 % girls). The gross and net enrolment ratios of females in 2012/13 was 96.7% and 78.7% respectively and in 2016/17 was 93.4% and 80.4% respectively. Enrolment at middle was 158,123 (45.8% girls) and the Gross and Net Enrolment Ratios in 2013/14 was 64.3% and 29.1 respectively and reached 79.2% and 45.3% in 2016-17. (See annex 7 - Tables 2-7).

69. Complementary Elementary Education (CEE) program has gained momentum to provide three years education program that is equivalent to formal elementary education for out of school children whose age is 9-14 years. Girls from the disadvantaged remote rural areas are significant beneficiaries of the programme. In

2012/2013 a total of 7589 children enrolled 3247 (43.1%) of which were girls. Enrolment increased by 12.3% in 2016/17 academic year i.e. 8575 children enrolled and 3994 (46.5%) of the total were girls. CEE is provided in 9 languages and 85% (39.8% girls) of the participants continued to the middle level.

70. Secondary Education has been expanded by bringing schools closer to rural and remote areas thereby ensuring educational opportunity and continuity in particular for girls. Progression rate of all students in general and the girls from remote and rural areas in particular has been ensured by establishing boarding schools and girl's hostels. In this regard, drop out and repetition rates were less for girls and promotion rates remained higher. The dropout rate at secondary level was 8.7% in 2012/13 and 12.8% in 2016/17 (in 2012/13 was 7.7% for girls, 9.4% for boys and 10.8% for girls and 14.5% for boys in 2016/2017). The focus on enhancing girls' education has been to ensure higher participation, retention, and performance of girls. Consequently, the GPI at pre-primary was 0.93, 0.82 at elementary, 0.85 middle and 0.91 secondary in 2016/2017.) A significant leap was made in which the GPI at secondary level improved from 0.76 in 2012/13 to 0.91 in 2016/17. Despite efforts made and achievements gained, more effort is needed to lower the drop out and repetition rates in particular at the elementary and middle levels.

### Gender Parity Index

<i>Academic year</i>	<i>Pre-primary</i>	<i>Elementary</i>	<i>Middle</i>	<i>Secondary</i>
2012/13	0.95	0.82	0.80	0.76
2013/14	0.95	0.82	0.80	0.78
2014/15	0.93	0.83	0.82	0.83
2015/16	0.94	0.83	0.84	0.89
2016/17	0.93	0.82	0.85	0.91

*Source:* MoE: Eritrea, Essential Education Indicators, 2016/17.

71. To ensure educational continuity of disadvantaged groups and remote/rural areas, boarding schools and girl's hostels have been promoted. During the reporting period the total number of students enrolled in 11 boarding schools is 28,288 (23.2% i.e. 6,579 female). Furthermore, nomadic communities are served by 65 schools (some with boarding facilities) and enrol 7,528, students (46% girls). In general, more effort is needed to raise the level of girl participation and maximize the utilization of these facilities. To further improve the educational situation of nomadic communities in particular girls, Nomadic Education Policy Framework (NEPF) was developed in collaboration with nomadic communities, MOE, other ministries and bilateral and multilateral agencies.

### *Special needs education*

72. Special needs education is promoted in one governmental school for the visually impaired students and two non-governmental schools for students with hearing impairment. There is no separate school for students with developmental disability (Autism and Down-Syndrome). However, there are 11 inclusive elementary schools where they are attending promptly their studies (169 girls and 216 boys). At the middle and secondary levels, the students are mainstreamed into the general education system. However, providing access to all children with special needs remains to be one of the major challenges in the education system.

**Special Needs Education: Enrolment by year and sex**

<i>Academic Year</i>	<i>School for the virtually impaired (grade 1-5)</i>		<i>School for the hearing impairment (grade 1-5)</i>	
	Total	Female	Total	Female
2012/13	52	13	131	61
2013/14	49	18	140	67
2014/15	51	20	145	69
2015/16	35	17	146	71
2016/17	35	15	145	40

Source: MoE, Eritrea.

*Expansion of schools*

73. Priority is given to disadvantaged areas and social groups and continuous effort and progress has been made to bridge rural/urban parities. The demographic distribution of education in rural areas has made significant progress during the reporting period. At independence in 1991, the total number of schools was 132 and in 2016/2017 it has reached 1987 schools (524 preprimary, 970 elementary, 371 middle and 108 secondary) and 80% are in the rural areas. Despite the huge progress, the challenge still remains significant and more effort needs to be made to close the gap. (See annex 8 table 8).

74. Significant investment has been made in building schools especially in the remote rural areas. The total number of schools (elementary/middle) was 925 in 2012/13 and 993 in 2016/2017, a total of 68 additional schools and 7.3% increase has been registered mostly in rural areas. In addition to this enhancing boarding schools is one of the strategies pursued to expand opportunities among the different ethnic groups and the disadvantaged areas. The prime targets include girls and children affected by low socio-economic conditions, home-school distance, cultural influences, orphanage, disabilities, and nomadic life style.

75. One of the major strategies taken in bridging urban-rural gap is bringing of elementary schools closer to the disadvantaged groups and areas. In 2016/2017 the number of elementary level rural students reached 209,848 as compared to 137,161 in rural areas and girls account to 44%. At the secondary level, however, there are 35,885 students in rural schools compared to 50,736 in urban, showing that more intervention is required despite the rapid increase in the number of Secondary schools (they now constitute more than 47% of the total number of secondary level schools).

76. The final year of high school (Grade 12) takes place in The Warsay-Yikealo Secondary School (at the Sawa Training Center) since 2003. This is a sequel to the introduction of a new curriculum designed to improve the quality of education. As a result, high school duration was extended from three to four years. This required new additional space and facilities for grade twelve in all secondary schools. The availability of facilities and utilities to accommodate tens of thousands of grade 12 students at one time was solved by establishing the Warsay-Yikealo Secondary School at the Sawa Training Center. It became a centre for all students after finishing grade 11 secondary education in their respective schools. Coming from diverse ethnic, geographic and cultural backgrounds it enabled for social interactions where students can exchange different experiences and thus strengthen their unity. It also offers the same playing field to compete equally in the Secondary School Leaving Exam.

77. The Warsay Secondary School at the Sawa Training Center follows the national curriculum under the full control, management and supervision of the MoE. All the

teachers and supervisors are civilian staff of the ministry. The goal is to prepare students for the National Secondary School Examination. Once the students finish the National Exam, they attend the National Service training for three months under responsible military trainers. Finally, they are enrolled in different institutions of higher learning or technical and vocational training in accordance to their performance in the Secondary School Leaving National Exam. Nonetheless, a zero-wastage policy is being implemented and the following multiple tracks of opportunity and continuity are guaranteed in accordance to their achievement with no one left behind both in education, training and employment:

- Those who score passing marks join the higher learning institutions and continue education at degree and diploma levels and after graduation are deployed various government bodies and national institutions;
- Students who fail to achieve a satisfactory level of passing marks to qualify in the above higher learning institutions continue at the Sawa Center for Technical and Vocational Education; they gain middle level technical skills and are similarly deployed to the work places;
- The rest who completely fail are given opportunity to acquire the one-year minimum level of practical vocational skills in the recently established vocational center in around some of the transformational development projects of the Government (they accommodate over 6000 trainees at a time) and directly employed in the labor market.

78. Furthermore, the Sawa Training Center and the national service has been transformed into an institution of learning and preparation of the youth for further education, training and employment. Besides the grade twelve final secondary education that is being given as a preparation for participating the Secondary School Leaving Examination in the Warsay Yikealo Secondary School, it also hosts the Sawa Vocational Training Center established in 2007. The center has five vocational schools and caters 19 specializations accommodating more than 3000 students in each round.

79. TVET training is also provided in the fields of surveying, woodwork, mechanics, electricity, and computer technology etc in the two years training in the 8 TEVT Schools after the completion of the 10-year secondary education. Girls are 47.1% of the students in TVET programmes and 52.6 % in the Sawa Vocational Training Center and is considered a significant achievement in gender parity in the technical fields.

#### *Female teachers*

80. The total number of teachers is about 15,855 (31.3% female). Their representation at elementary level is 30.6% and 23% at secondary level. In technical schools their number increased from 15.7 % in 2012/13 to 20.6% in 2016/17. Despite efforts made female representation in the management of the school system as directors and supervisors requires further effort. Most of the female directors are at elementary level (4.6% of the total) but there are no female directors at the secondary school level. (See annex 8, table 9).

81. Asmara Community College of Education (ACCE) has been elevated from a department to a fully-fledged College of Teacher Training at Diploma programme in 2013. This is a significant progress in improving the quantity and quality of the teaching force. The number of female participants increased from 230 (31.9%) in 2012/13 to 416 students (48.5%) in 2016/17 and has raised the representation of female teachers.

*Higher education and Gender Parity*

82. Equal right and opportunity are guaranteed and female enrollment in higher education has progressed in the seven higher learning institutions (Eritrean Institute of Technology, College of Business and Economics, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Asmara College of Health Sciences, College of Marine Science and Technology; Hamelmalo Agricultural College, Orotta School of Medicine and Dentistry). Girl's participation in higher education has increased from 32.8% in 2013/14 to 42.4% in 2016/17. The career and social mobility motivation of the female students and the encouragement given from families and communities has driven their better participation in higher learning institutions. Furthermore, female participants in science and technology as well agriculture related areas are higher indicating a radical shift from the traditional professional and career paths.

83. About 31,786 students were granted educational opportunity in the last three academic years at masters, bachelor, diploma and certificate levels. The average yearly female representation is significant and stands at about 42.4%. In the 2017/2018 academic year, the sector level participation reached 50.4% in Marine Science and Technology, 50.5% in Agriculture, 41.6% in science and technology, Health Science 44.5%, Business and Economics 44.3%, Arts and Social Science 43.4%). During the same year, 48.7% (5267 students) studied in the Institute of Science and Technology campus (an increase of 8.4 percentage points from the previous academic year). This is a significant achievement in the human capital formation signifying important success in gender parity.

84. Government scholarship awards are periodically given for Masters and PhD programs. However, the female participation is very low and demands critical consideration. During the reporting period, a total of 257 scholarships were granted to graduate assistants and other faculty members of the higher learning institutions for Masters studies with a low female representation of about 8.5%. Furthermore, there were only 3 PHD candidates out of a total of 45. Furthermore, attempts to recruit female Graduate Assistants are so far minimal and need further consideration. Participation of professional women in research has, however, improved. An example could be their high participation (31% of the total) in the National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI) of the Ministry of Agriculture. They are involved in the research activities to disseminate to farmers the desirable tested supplies and best practices in animal science, natural resource and improved crops.

*Adult and Non-Formal Education*

85. The Department of Adult and Non-Formal Education provides Literacy and Post-literacy education and training opportunities. The Literacy Program focuses on adults and out of school children and youths. The medium of instruction is the mother tongue and the programme focuses on numeracy and literacy skills, whereas the Post Literacy Program integrates sciences and social studies. The majority of the participants were females and comprise 88.1% (41,216 attendees) in 2013/14 and 88.7% (35,690 attendees) in 2016/17. The completion rate during 2013/14- 2016/17) was an average of 74.5% (See Annex 9; Table 10). Most of the literacy classes are in the rural areas and 40% of the teachers are women. Presently the literacy rate has reached 80% at national level.

86. Continuing education opportunities at middle and secondary levels have been provided to adults and youth who discontinued their education for various reasons. Female participants are the main beneficiaries of this program. During the 2016/17 academic year a total number of 6034 enrolled and 35.9% of them were girls.

*Sports, culture and health activities*

87. Sports, culture and health activities are promoted at regional, sub-regional levels as well as in schools and colleges. School co-curricular activities entertain a variety of sports and cultural activities. Girls participate in football, basketball, cycling, athletics, indoor games is significant and there is no sex-based discrimination. There are thirteen sport federations functional on various sport areas. They have elected bodies every four years and at least one seat is reserved for women and they can contest in the rest of the seats. A women's sport affairs desk has recently been established in the Commission of Sports and Culture and a female expert has been assigned to oversee women's sports participation and coordinate efforts and resources in the various institutions, activities and federations. Female soccer, cycling, basket ball, volleyball, table tennis, badminton, etc talents are flourishing. Eritrean female cyclists athletes have also emerged in continental and international women's competitions. The progress is promising but more needs to be done.

88. Life skills education is part of the extracurricular programme. It addresses issues of FGM, UAM, HIV/AIDS as well as menstruation thereby building the confidence of girl students and promotes dignified life and attendant rights. NUEW conducts School-based gender and health training in at least five schools of each region and about 13,275 students and 6,927 women from 3 regions have been trained.

89. A study on Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) in Eritrean Middle Schools was done in collaboration with UNICEF's global WASH in schools for Girls project (2017). The main objective was to identify the challenges faced by school girls during menstrual period and come up with recommendations that could address the challenges. A manual has been prepared as a result and has been used as a reference and awareness raising material for teachers and other stakeholders.

**Article 11: Women and Employment**

90. The 1994 Eritrean National Charter explicitly states that, 'In Eritrea, there shall not be any position exclusively reserved for men that cannot be attained by women'. Hence, at policy level there is no segregation at the outset. Enshrined by this policy, the legislative measure taken was the establishment of Labor Proclamation No.118/2001. Article 65(1) of this law clearly prohibits occupational segregation by stating that women may not be discriminated in employment and remuneration, on the basis of their sex.

91. There is no occupational discrimination that prevents female employees from entering certain occupations. Recent surveys show that as of 2015/2016 there were 1,435,886 employees in Eritrea (51 % female). Furthermore, there were 52,642 unemployed persons, (3.5 percent of the total labor force population and 3.7% for females). The occupational distribution of men and women differ in scope. Women are over-represented in services and trade (18.9%), craft and related trades (13.3%) and clerical services (6.9%). Considering the rates of informal employment, the rates are generally higher in the 35 to 44-year group. Out of the total labor force in the working age population about 31.5% are employed in the informal sector (31.5% female and 27.3% male).

## Female and Male Labor Force Participation

*Numeric and percentage distribution of Labor Force population*

Sex	Working age population	labor force population	Labor force participation rate
Male	883,460	732,820	83.9
Female	1,038,050	755,708	72.8

Source: MOLSW 2015/2016.

## Occupations with the highest employment

<i>The Top 9 Occupations</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Eritrea		100	100	100
1	Agricultural, forestry and fishery workers	42.6	42.8	42.4
2	Service and sales workers	13.7	8.4	18.9
3	Technicians and associate professionals	11.6	19.7	3.7
4	Craft and related trades workers	10.2	7	13.3
5	Elementary occupations	8.3	8	8.6
6	Professionals	5.5	6.1	4.8
7	Clerical support workers	5.3	3.7	6.9
8	Plant and machine operators and assemblers	1.6	2.8	0.3
9	Managers	1.2	1.3	1.1

Source: MLSW, 2017.

92. The Labor Proclamation provides protection and avoids discrimination on the grounds of sex in employment and occupation. Article 65(1) denotes that women may not be discriminated on the basis of their sex. An employee encountered with gender-based discrimination may directly complain to the Minister on the basis of Art 65(2) and have the right to appeal to the high Court as per Art 65(3) of the Labor Proclamation. The labour proclamation ensures equal remuneration for work of equal value. According to article 4(1/2) wages are determined by collective agreement and an employer shall pay equal starting wage for the same type of work. Hence women employees are protected legally. Nonetheless, traces of discrimination on equal opportunity, equal pay, etc do appear in the private sector and remains a challenge to the inspection activities of the labour department. and requires further efforts.

93. Offences committed in violation of the labor proclamation (Art.157) are adjudicated by first instance labor court. Violations of employee's dignity (Art.203), occupational Safety & health (Art.20 - 4), unfair labor practice, discrimination on the grounds of race, color, social origin, nationality, sex, political orientation or religion (Art. 118 - 7) are brought to justice. Although the labor proclamation does not directly & explicitly address the issue of sexual harassment, it is a crime punishable pursuant to the TPCE of the State of Eritrea.

94. By virtue of Article 5 of the labor proclamation, a job seeker may apply for a job to the employment services unit of the Ministry or to a private employment agency or directly to the employer. Notwithstanding the fact that the regulation on private employment agency is still in the of drafting process, employment can be ensured through the other two methods, and the protection provided in article 118 (7) of the labour proclamation could ultimately be applied in case of discrimination on grounds of sex.

## Article 12: Women and Health

95. 95. The Government of Eritrea exerted enormous efforts to promote equitable access and quality health- service with particular focus given to primary health care. The primary health care consists of three levels, namely, the health stations covering up to 5,000 -10,000 population, the health centers that cover 10,000-50,000 population and the community hospitals that provide service to 50,000 – 60,000 population. This has so far ensured health service to more than 60% of the population residing in a distance of 5 km radius of a health facility and 80% within 10 kms radius, (was 8% at independence in 1991). Promotion, prevention and curative maternal and child health services are part of the primary basic health care package mostly given free of charge or at affordable nominal fee.

### *Antenatal Care and Postnatal Care and Delivery in Health Facilities*

96. As shown in table below, based on the 2013 and 2017 LQAS Survey, which is a population based representative national survey regularly undertaken by the MoH, the proportion of mothers of children 0-11 months of age who attended at least one ANC visits during last pregnancy stands at 96 %, while delivery in a health facility was 62% as of 2017.

### Findings on Antenatal Care, Postnatal Care and Delivery in Health Facilities

<i>Maternity Services</i>	<i>LQAS 2013</i>	<i>LQAS 2017</i>
Proportion of mothers of children 0-11 months who showed maternal health card	64	62
Proportion of mothers of children 0-11 months who attended at least 1 ANC visits during last pregnancy	93	96
Proportion of mothers of children 0-11 months who attended at least 4 ANC visits during last pregnancy	61	61
Proportion of mothers of children 0-11 months who visited for prenatal care during the first trimester of pregnancy	30	30
Delivery at Health Facility	55	62
Proportion of mothers of children 0-11 months who received PNC within seven days of child birth by qualified health personnel	88	82
Proportion of mothers of children 0-11 months who received PNC within two days of child birth by qualified health personnel	82	83

Source: MoH 2017.

### Number of pregnant women who received ANC by year

<i>ANC</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>
1st visit in number	90,017	87,588	93,270	79,414	87,112
ANC First Visit coverage	66.2	62.6	64.8	53.5	57.6

Source: MOH DHIS2 data base.

97. The Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) is notably successful in Eritrea, achieving virtually universal (98%) immunization coverage rates. Subsequently, Eritrea was awarded by GAVI (Global Alliance for Vaccine Initiative) on October 17, 2009 in Hanoi Vietnam for the high and sustained immunization coverage. Information reflected in vaccination cards and mother's reports indicates that 95.4% of mothers received at least two TT doses and 76.8% received all of the five TT vaccinations. Mother and child health care (MCH) services are effectively utilized

with a reliable antenatal care coverage and the vaccination programmes are successful.

#### *Family planning*

98. Though the total Fertility Rate (TFR) has gone down from 6.1 babies in 1995 to 4.8 in 2002 it remained stagnant until 2010 (EPHS, 2010), but declined to 4.0 in 2017 (UNDP 2018). The 2010 EPHS revealed that, among the currently married women, 8% were using any of the methods available, 7% percent used modern methods and only 1% percent the traditional method. The LQAS 2017 study showed that 69% of the mothers of children 0-11 months had their last planned pregnancy and 6% prevented pregnancy using modern contraceptive methods. Pregnancy planning rates show regional variations and were 72% in Anseba, 80% in Southern, 46% in Gash Barka, 87% in Central, 60% in Northern Red Sea, and 88% in Southern Red Sea Regions..

#### *Contraceptives services*

99. The most preferred family planning method is Depo-provera, a hormone given by injection for free. The use of Norplant and male condoms has increased. However, family planning utilization still remains low. The 2013 LQAS survey showed that nationally 59.8 % and 56.1% of the hospitals and primary level health facilities respectively show readiness to deliver family planning services. Adolescent and Youth Friendly Sexual and Reproductive Health services (AYFSRH) was adopted in 2014 and implementation started in 2017. The MoH has a written guideline (Attach Copy) that allows adolescent use of contraception without parental consent (Countdown, 2015).

#### **Family planning utilization by method and year**

<i>Family planning method</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>
Female Condom client	52	57	380	129	30
Depo Provera injection clients	60,796	36,502	21,966	36,951	55,564
Injection Noristerat client	231	175	232	156	170
Intrauterine Device (IUD) client	192	317	179	285	170
Male Condom client	9,115	12,955	19,387	14,578	19,564
Norplant_Clients	17	9	15	27	112
PILLS Low Dose clients	6,074	20,156	15,913	15,520	13,915
PILLS Progestin Only client	3,654	4,178	2,109	3,136	3,340
Total number of Referrals	160	194	50	77	274
Visits for Information and Counseling Only	3,443	2,849	1,753	1,979	2,910

*Source:* MOH DHIS2 2017.

#### *Abortion and post-abortion care*

100. Most cases of abortion that sought treatment were spontaneous and with complications. Courses on the management of abortion and post abortion care were given every year on life saving skills for 200 health workers (nurse midwives and associate nurses). As abortion is prohibited by law, medically approved cases of abortion and post abortion care remained limited but administered in line to the MoH guideline.

*HIV/AIDS and Other Health Issues*

101. The prevalence of HIV in the general population was 0.93% in 2010; and the prevalence among women of 15–19 years was 0.2% and it is high at 2.9% for those in their late thirties (EPHS 2010). The 2017 National HIV, Syphilis, Hepatitis B, and Hepatitis C Antenatal Sentinel Surveillance (ANC) Survey (MOH, 2017) revealed that overall HIV prevalence among pregnant women aged 15-49 attending ANC for their first pregnancy in 2017 was estimated to be 0.65%. Trend analysis of the Antenatal Sentinel Surveillance results revealed that the HIV infection rate among pregnant women in Eritrea has shown steady and significant decline in the last 15 years. The prevalence has significantly declined from 2.4% in 2003 to 0.65% in 2017, at an average annual declining rate of 5.2%.

*Other Health Issues and Women*

102. The Roll Back Malaria Strategy was launched in July 1999 and since then the overall malaria morbidity has decreased by 90%, while the overall mortality has decreased by 86%. In this regard, Eritrea's exemplary achievement has got recognition of the AU and on January 30, 2016, Eritrea received the Alma Award for Excellence in the Fight against Malaria. Currently, Eritrea is working towards pre-elimination phase in malaria control.

103. Diarrhea is one of the three leading causes of mortality among under-5-year children, and of morbidity among the general population. Rural Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) is thus a priority to make rural villages "Open Defecation Free (ODF)". As of December 2018, 924 villages (one third of the total around a third) declared ODF. Eritrea has drawn a road map to end open defecation by 2022.

104. There are no nationally representative population-based surveys that on child mortalities estimates since EPHS 2010. Eritrea adopts the UN estimates which are comparable with the MOH estimates for its annual updates in early childhood mortality. Based on the UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UN IGME) estimates under-five Mortality Rate per 1,000 LB was reduced by 71 % from 151 in 1991 to 44 in 2016. It also reveals that infant mortality rate was reduced from 93 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 33 in 2016. Neonatal Mortality Rate per 1,000 LB was reduced by 46 % percent from 33 during the same period. In 2016, neonatal mortality in Eritrea accounted for more than half (54%) of the infant deaths and about 40% of under-fives deaths.

105. Eritrea is among the ten countries in Africa region that achieved MDG4 by 2015, and under-five mortality by two-third. It had been among the countries on track since 2006 and already achieved the target by 2013.

106. The Trends in Maternal Mortality: 1990 to 2015 Estimates by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank Group and the United Nations Population Division reveals that the Maternal Mortality Ratio has declined from 1,590 per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 501 in 2015 (WHO, 2015). Accordingly, MMR decreased by 68.5% from 1990 to 2015. The annual rate of reduction for Maternal Mortality Ratio during 1990-2015 was estimated at 4.6%.

107. Life expectancy at birth increased significantly from 48 years in 1990 to 65.5 years (male 63.4 and female 67.7 years in 2017 (UNDP, 2018)). The positive growth is partly due to the reduction in infant and child mortality as well as the reduction in adult mortality due to malaria and other communicable diseases.

108. Malnutrition remained one of the top causes of morbidity and mortality in the under-five age group in the years 2013-2017. The MOH took the initiative to decentralize the treatment of the acutely sick children to the lower levels of services

by adapting the community based therapeutic feeding program as well as allowing children to be treated at their homes without having to be admitted to hospitals for a prolonged period of time. In addition, the supplementary feeding program was also made available at the lower level health facilities which enabled access to the treatment certain. In this regard, community nutrition promoters, mostly women, were recruited to assess malnourished children and refer them to the health facilities when necessary. In general, awareness on the problem increased over time. Moreover, the existing IMNCI guideline was up-dated to concur with the guidelines of the nutrition program and improved detection of common childhood illnesses. In addition, infant and child feeding program or optimal and adequate complimentary feeding has been introduced. Feeding during pregnancy and the post-partum period was also addressed. The MoH, with its partners, is now working on the utilization of locally available resources like sea foods which is rich in most of the micro-nutrients that children are deficient with. (Refer attached IMNCI guideline- Annex 10)

#### *Health Sector Budget*

109. According to reports on health financing and consultations conducted with the MoH, MoF, MoND and Partners, there has been some key achievements in health care financing which include; cost recovery through the levying of nominal registration fees at the primary level and user fees at the secondary and tertiary levels. Institutional arrangements to ensure the user fees collected are contributing to improvements in service quality. An exemption mechanism is in place to limit the financial burden of health care on the poor, and selected groups such as those with some chronic diseases like HIV/AIDS, TB, Hypertension and Diabetes etc.

#### *Human resources*

110. Health training institutions and centres have expanded and strengthened and have boosted the human capacity (Annex 11, Table 11). More than 800 students graduated (2014-2018) in various health fields from various health institutions. These include 324 associate nurses from the three schools of associate nurses in the towns of Barentu, Ghindae and Mendefera; 150 Diploma in Comprehensive Nursing and Midwifery from Asmara College of Health Sciences (ACHS); 45 with Diploma Nurse upgraded to Degree Nurse (BSN) from (ACHS), 46 at MSC level in various health fields from ACHS and various overseas universities (Dundee University, ROMA university, London University, University of Gezira) and about 120 doctors from Orotta School of Medicine and Dental Science in Eritrea. Despite regular production and recruitment of new health workers, staffing norms are not yet met, especially for specialists at hospital level, including surgeons, radiologists, internists, etc. To date Eritrea has reached 1 doctor to 16,000 patients, which was 1:37,000 in 1991.

#### *Health promotional activities*

111. To reduce teenage pregnancies through the provision of appropriate information, the MoH has introduced health promotional activities, i.e. behavioral change communication (BCC) activities. The behavioral change program is acknowledged and fully supported program that has in turn assured its sustainability. Women have contributed in the program at all levels as peer coordinators, peer facilitators, supervisors and participants.

112. MoH has introduced healthThis programme has been on/going in at least five pilot schools and about 13,275 students (6,927 females) from 3 regions have been trained. Reproductive Health Committees have also been established in 5 junior and senior secondary schools in each region (as pilot) and awareness raising campaigns for students on gender issues, reproductive health and transmitted diseases have been conducted. The exemplary role of women and girls in many activities has been

rewarded with 95,913 energy saving stoves in all rural areas (11,275 between 2014 and 2015). It is playing a big role in improving their health status and the household.

### **Article 13: Economic and Social Life**

113. Proclamation No.58/1994 and the Land use directive No. 2/29.09/ are fully implemented and women are acquiring land for subsistence farming, housing as well as commercial farming. Land allocation committees are elected by the village community and one seat is necessarily reserved for women. The thinking and practice on women equality in land use has greatly improved and there is a strict guidance and supervision by the Department of Land as well as by all levels of administrations.

#### *Business licence*

114. Women have equal opportunities to acquire license in all sectors of the economy without any restriction and discrimination. Licensing procedures have been simplified and provide quick and efficient business licencing services. During the reporting period out of the total licences issued 58.8 % were acquired by female applicants and the type of business activities included agriculture (horticulture, beekeeping, dairy farm, poultry, flower), fishing, artisan, whole sale and retail domestic trade, cosmetics, pharmaceutical, land transport service, kindergarten facilities, audit service, hospitality and catering services, etc. Most of the activities are of low capital nature with significant turnover.

### **Article 14: Rural Women**

115. The GoSE development policy capitalizes on equity consideration and the equitable distribution of wealth and resources and priority is given to disadvantaged areas, groups and sections of the population. In this vein, bridging rural-urban disparity remains an important goal. This is driven by an essential principle in the 1994 National Charter that states ‘narrowing the development gap between rural and urban areas, between the center and periphery and ensuring balanced and fair distribution of economic development in the whole country’. Successful measures have been taken within the limits of the situation and capability and much more needs to be done in the future to achieve the goals set.

#### *Rural women in Agriculture*

116. About 70 percent of the Eritrean people depend on agriculture for their livelihood and land is a central issue in the sustenance of a sound economic and social development. The institutional and legal basis to address the land issue is laid in the Land Proclamation No 58/1994. The proclamation clearly stipulates that land is administered by the State. The government in turn ensures usufructuary right of citizens to be beneficiaries in accordance to the law. The proclamation thus ensures the right of every major age citizen (18 years and above) in the rural areas to access agricultural and residential plots of land. The requirement is that they have to fulfill their national obligations outlined by law and in Land Proclamation. This has been a major action and development and ensured women’s access to equal land ownership. 2016/2017 Reports indicate that the equity in land distribution and management is also guaranteed. Data so far shows that 32% of land is distributed to female-headed households. Women are gaining more independence in the economic life of the household and the society.

117. The proclamation also promotes sustainable land management. Accordingly, the land tenure and management has become an important issue in the empowerment of villagers. Based on the provisions of the Land Proclamation the inhabitants of a village are organized in committees and ensure their decisive role both as

beneficiaries and participants in the decision-making process. They actively participate in the process of identifying the land potential and screening of applicants. This has ensured the sense of belongings and encourages farmers to manage their land properly. Women are playing significant role in decision making in their respective land tenure and management committees.

118. An innovative approach that transforms household and rural farming is the Minimum Integrated Household Agricultural Package (MIHAP). It is a programme introduced in 2012 by the Ministry of Agriculture. Each household acquires one improved cross-breed dairy cow or 6 shoats, (to be kept inside and fed through cut and carry) 25 chicken, 2 beehives, a vegetable plot and 20 trees (10 fruit trees, 5 leguminous trees like moringa, leucinia etc. as feed supplement to the cow, 5 trees for fire wood) in addition to the land used for crop production. Access to appropriate technology, improved agricultural inputs, seed and crop varieties as well as training in modern farming methods, support rural women to form farm cooperatives (over 45 women cooperatives established since 2013) have improved food self sufficiency and income generation of the rural households.

119. Women farmers are encouraged to participate in livestock production (milk and milk products, meat products and honey) and the Ministry of Agriculture is providing equipment and training on modern production techniques. This includes the support given in modern beekeeping to 321 women (17.2% of total), meat and milk production to 330 women (14.9 % of total) and other similar areas. Furthermore, the micro credit and saving scheme provides loans with no distinction on the basis of sex and women are the main beneficiaries and the most successful in the repayment of the credit.

#### *Rural women and the micro-credit scheme*

120. The national Saving and Micro credit program (SMCP) under the MoND targets among others to support female-headed households and women entrepreneurs to be economically self-sufficient. According to the 2014 SMPC profile 28,098 women benefited from this program through 609 village banks. This is about 50 % increase from that of 2008. The total loan disbursement was 299.29 million Nacfa. In 2017 the total total number of beneficiaries increased to 65,032, female beneficiaries were 36,012 (55.3%), compared to 458 beneficiaries in 1996. The loan disbursement through 664 village banks was 131.27 million Nacfa of which Agricultural loan holds 70 %. The principal borrowed ranges from 6,000-150,000 Nakfa (almost 600 USD to 10, 000). The range of business activities is diverse and includes fish-vending, handcraft & pottery, weaving, car tire repair shops, horticulture, goat and sheep fattening, mini retail shops, animal husbandry, shoes and dress shops, driving schools, restaurants and hairdressing. During the reporting period, the total number of beneficiaries was 295,824 and women beneficiaries hold 147,912 (49.8%).

121. In addition to this, NUEW in 2014/16 provided micro credit schemes in different economic activities for 5,418 women beneficiaries. Furthermore, a total of 694 women farmers in five regions have been supported to establish cooperative agricultural working on 104.3 hectares of land.

#### *Rural women and education*

122. During the reporting period pre-primary level increased by 41 and elementary by 62 schools mostly built in the rural areas. The medium of instruction at pre-primary and elementary education is the mother tongue, and is one of the successful measures taken to expand equal right and opportunity education.

123. Adult education program is one of the major interventions which impacted in the overall transformation life style of women by eliminating illiteracy. During the reporting period a total of 156,761 women participated with a 74.5% completion rate.

*Rural women and access to Justice*

124. Extensive efforts to secure access to Justice and promote equality and fairness, ensure timely case processing, maintain institutional integrity and uplift public confidence in the performances of the justice system but more effort is still needed. Equality before the law is guaranteed and no discrimination is made based on race, colour, religion or sex of persons in the Eritrean justice system. The Eritrean Judiciary is composed of hierarchical courts and the Community Courts (CC) were established at village and locality (cluster of villages) level to promote equitable access and coverage. Community court judges are democratically elected by their communities. One of the three seats is reserved for women to ensure their participation and role in the justice system but they also contest on the rest.

*Rural women and access to health service*

125. About 70% of the primary health service facilities are located in rural areas and provide easy access and service to women and girls. To ensure mother and child safety, deliveries are made at health stations and health centers where 460 facilitators have reached out about 107,113 mothers (3.64% of whom were pregnant women). As a result, 6354 delivered in these local clinics. The estimated home delivery rate is 51.7%, and waiting homes were pregnant women from remote areas can stay for two weeks not far from the vicinity clinics have been introduced. Eritrea has one of the highest coverages of infant immunization rate of more than 98% covering all children in rural areas, especially BCG immunization which is given usually at birth or 45 days after birth. Malaria prevalence in rural areas is at the lowest level, almost 3.5%. campaigns on sexual reproductive health and prevention of mother to child transmission (PMTCT) encourages visits to clinics by couples.

*Obstetric Fistula cases and repair*

126. Almost 2000 cases of obstetric fistula (mostly from rural areas) were seen at the outpatient level nationally in the last five years whereby 12% of the cases undertook repair surgery. There is one repair center in Mendefera Hosital (in the Southern region). The table below shows the number of Fistula cases secondary to obstetric complications that were presented at the OPD and that received operative intervention.

<i>Parameter</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>Total</i>
Fistula cases seen at the OPDs at national level	335	347	376	495	379	1932
Surgery performed for Fistula repair at the fistula center	45	40	39	72	36	232

*Source:* MOH, DHIS 2.

*Rural women and environment*

127. Land degradation is one of the overriding factors affecting biodiversity and climate change. Women benefited and worked out to sustain environment and climate change through a project launched on August 4, 2003 and financed by the Global Environmental Facilities (GEF/SGP). In 2010 NUEW, developed two projects financed under GEF-phase four and implemented in 23 community-based interventions focusing on the thematic areas of biodiversity, climate change and land degradation. As a result, 252 households benefited from solar light instalations. This was also extended to public utilities including a secondary school, mosque, church and a clinic in each village.

128. Rural women are decisively involved in decision making, consultations at village level with investment companies and in particular where mining projects operate to address the environmental impacts in their livelihood, provision of community assistance programmes and training on employment opportunities. Community assistance plans in the areas of operation by mining companies includes water supply, energy, rangeland development and diversion canals for irrigation.

*Rural women and efficient use of Energy*

129. Rural electrification is a priority and presently the rural coverage is 22.6%. In the Eritrean household lifestyle, the biggest energy consumption in many parts of the rural area is the process of preparing Injera and/or bread (traditional food). However, the traditional oven consumes large quantities of firewood, which is scarce and affects health conditions in particular for women (because of strong emissions of smoke). The new smokeless and energy-saving oven (named Adhanet – meaning saviour) was developed by Ministry of Energy and Mines and is promoted by the Ministry of Agriculture in households. It has many benefits including saving about 50% of firewood demand, avoids health risks for women in particular and the family and saves time. During the reporting period 33,779 improved smokeless ovens were installed in rural villages.

*Rural women and access to Clean potable water*

130. Safe, potable water sources are established in rural villages and administered by the village. Women play a decisive role in the WASH committees comprising 34.5% of the administration capacity (33% in financial management of the committee, 13% secretaries, 86% sanitation and 5% in coordination roles). During the reporting period 80 villages of 182,790 population size benefitted from newly established water resources in their villages. Since independence 1517 water provision systems have been established nation wide and the total potable water supply coverage is currently 85% in rural and 92% in urban areas. Rural women have become the main beneficiaries from both the water supply and energy provisions of the integrated rural development plans of the government.

*Rural women in natural resource management*

131. Rural women play a very important role in community based natural resource management. This has been evident in many communities led Soil and Water Conservation (SWC) activities done in many rural areas of Eritrea. In the SWC campaigns a total of 467,110 (55% of total) rural women participated during 2013 - 2017. The most common SWC activities done by women are hill side terracing, soil bunds, on-farm soil conservation measures and tree planting.

## **Part Four: Articles 15–16**

### **Article 15: Equality before the law**

132. The Transitional civil code Eritrea stipulates the principle of equality before the law on the right to domicile, movement, access to justice, legal defense, marriage and divorce, inheritance, child custody, adoption, maintenance, contract, etc. There is no distinction or discrimination between men and women in our laws. Men and women have equal access to justice, meaning equal access to courts and tribunals, to police protection and public prosecution services.

133. These de jure rights are augmented by awareness raising campaigns to know and exercise their rights. To enhance the de facto rights and duties of women and community at large, the Ministry of Justice has been conducting awareness programmes

via the media outlets and other platforms. A column in the national profile under the title “law for development and social harmony” is publicized once a week and raises legal issues and familiarizes the provision available in the laws; twice a week national TV broadcasts discussion by legal professional aired also by national radio outlets to reach remote areas.

134. Dejure equality before the law is ensured, specifically when all the laws were reviewed and repealed in 1991. However, it has remained a challenge to fully apply the defacto equality. Some of the factors that still remain as a challenge are however, the existence of traditional prejudice and attitudes, lack of knowledge of one’s rights, insufficient legal counseling services, low level of illiteracy etc.

#### **Article 16: Equality in marriage and family**

135. The Transitional Civil Code of Eritrea extensively deals on family law and inheritance. This regulates matters concerning family relationship, betrothal, marriage, divorce, child custody, filiations, adoption and maintenance (support). The provisions of the family law do not apply to the followers of the Islamic faith. Therefore, matters of divorce, maintenance, paternity, child custody and inheritance are adjudicated by Sheria’ courts. However, if the parties consensually choose to celebrate marriage other than Sheria’ law, then the provisions of the code are applicable.

136. The age of marriage is 18 for both sexes in accordance to Art.581 TCCE and if not adhered strictly is a criminal act (in accordance to Art. 607 as amended). All persons involved in celebrating such arrangement of marriage, the civil registry officer, parents, fiancées, etc are hold liable for their act. It is vital to conduct a massive awareness raising activities to discourage the practice of underage marriage. One of the preconditions of marriage as a contract is consent, and if the girl is not in agreement marriage cannot be concluded, otherwise it becomes illegal (in accordance to Art.616 TCCE). The law of succession deals with matters of inheritance and gives equal right of succession for women. Child marriage does not specifically persist in Muslim community and the Sheria’ law does not pursue child marriage.

### **III. Conclusion**

137. As intimated earlier, the present Report is discussed at a time of a new reality of peace between Eritrea and Ethiopia and renewed efforts for regional peace, security and development. The rapprochement between Eritrea and Ethiopia has created a new reality of peace, friendship and cooperation. This development is having a far-reaching positive effect in regional peace, security, economic development. Eritrea is determined to seize this historic opportunity to redouble its development efforts and consolidate the progress achieved and address the challenges faced in the last 20 difficult years.

138. The 6th periodic report covering the period 2013-2017 has reflected the achievements made including the challenges faced, the best practices promoted and the lessons learned, on women’s right and empowerment. Although a remarkable stride has been made, yet a lot remains to be done. The government of the State of Eritrea once again renews its commitment to further consolidate the achievements made and address the challenges still faced in several areas.

139. In this regard, the Government will continue to strengthen the decisiveness of the people, in particular women and youth, to ensure transformations that lead to change as part of the internal dynamics of development. Accordingly, consolidating the mainstreaming of women equality and empowerment in all sectors will be

expanded and reinforced. Moreover, engagement and cooperation based on dignity and partnership will continue as a major goal that befits the ideals of humanity. This aims to promote mutual understanding, respect and benefit.

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